

Misconceptions

Dick Meredith





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MISCONCEPTIONS

by

Dick Meredith

CAST

NEW WAITRESS: Willow Creek Retirement Center staff member. Any age. Rough around the edges who tells it like it is.

JUNE: Willow Creek Retirement Center resident. Sophisticated, well-mannered, love interest of Richard.

RICHARD: Willow Creek Retirement Center resident. Highly regarded, friendly and sensitive, love interest of June.

DONALD: Willow Creek Retirement Center resident. Sarcastic, wise-cracking, loyal friend of Richard's. Beth's husband.

BETH: Willow Creek Retirement Center resident. Outspoken, feisty friend of June's. Donald's wife.

HELEN: Willow Creek Retirement Center gossip. Eavesdrops and gossips, believing she is everyone's confidant.

MARGARET: Willow Creek Retirement Center director. Any age. Professional and respected.

Place

Willow Creek Retirement Center.

Time

The present.

Scene 1

Setting: Early morning in the dining room of Willow Creek's Retirement Center. Stage Left is Margaret's office with a desk, two chairs, a computer and a phone. Behind Margaret's office are two tall plants separating the office from an easel with poster board visible to the audience. Center stage is the dining room table with chairs. Stage Right is a garden area with bench and arch, if possible. (A wedding table with cake may be substituted in Scene 4 if no arch is available.)

At Rise: Richard, June, Beth, Donald and Helen are at the breakfast table talking in the Willow Creek Retirement Center's dining room.

DONALD: That was a great breakfast this morning. Breakfast is my favorite meal. Next to lunch and dinner.

NEW WAITRESS: *(enters)* While you're all here, would you like to put in your breakfast orders for tomorrow?

BETH: Sure. Thanks. 2 eggs over easy with toast.

JUNE: I've been putting on a little too much weight lately. I'll just have tea.

DONALD: Pancakes, bacon, coffee, 2 eggs.

HELEN: Just oatmeal for me.

RICHARD: You're new here, right?

NEW WAITRESS: Yep.

RICHARD: Just tell the cook to make Richard's special.

NEW WAITRESS: *(sarcastically)* Ah, sorry. I guess I'm her too. The cook's on leave.

RICHARD: Here's what you do. In the blender, put in 4 ounces of carrot juice. If you look on the shelf, the cook has all my ingredients in one place. There's a box of dried seaweed. Put in 2 TBSP of that.

NEW WAITRESS: Got it.

RICHARD: Then add 4 dried prunes, a TBSP of wheat germ, and a cup of freeze dried spinach.

NEW WAITRESS: Uh huh. (*Knowing this will take a while, she pulls up a chair and sits.*)

RICHARD: Up on that shelf you'll see I purchased some small cans of oysters. Add one small can of raw oysters. Now you'll need one half cup of apple cider vinegar, 1 TBSP of chia seeds, and one TBSP of brewer's yeast. Then top it off with one half cup of canned soy milk.

NEW WAITRESS: (*gets up*) Got it.

RICHARD: Blend it until it has a smooth consistency.

NEW WAITRESS: Got it. (*starts to walk away*)

RICHARD: (*motions her back*) Also, she has 20 oz. cups back there. Just fill one of those. Got that?

NEW WAITRESS: Got it. (*makes a face to audience, then exits*) And the only thing that makes this job better is the no tipping rule.

DONALD: How could you possibly drink that conglomeration? It turned my stomach just hearing you rattle off those ingredients.

RICHARD: It's really good. I've been drinking it every morning since I moved here. It invigorates me. I feel like I can accomplish the impossible. Donald, Tai Chi's at 10:00. Let's get going. (*exits*)

DONALD: (*tells the ladies while exiting*) Just getting it down would be accomplishing the impossible.

JUNE: Beth, I was wondering if you can check on my apartment while I'm gone. I'm going to be leaving for a while. I want to visit my sister in Denver.

BETH: Sure. How long?

JUNE: I'm not sure. Just for an extended visit. I'll stay in touch.

BETH: Is everything all right?

JUNE: Everything's fine. There's something I have to take care of. Thanks, Beth. I'll see you later. *(walks to Margaret's office)*

BETH: *(exits)* See ya later.

(Margaret enters her office. June enters Margaret's office. As June walks over, Helen, the local gossip, turns her head quickly like a gopher to watch June walk to Margaret's office. Helen stands up looking in the direction of the office, crosses upstage of the table to the right and tries to hear.)

MARGARET: Hi, June. What can I do to help you today?

JUNE: Good morning, Margaret. I wanted to tell you that I'll be away for a little while. I need to get a medical procedure done. I really don't want people to know. I'm just telling people that I'm visiting my sister.

MARGARET: I understand.

JUNE: I've been having problems with my tonsils.

MARGARET: I'm sorry to hear that, June.

JUNE: Can you believe it at my age?

(Helen works her way over to the poster pretending to read while eavesdropping. Helen hears June say, "Can you believe it at my age?")

MARGARET: Whatever I can do to help. You can rest assured that I'll keep your information in confidence.

JUNE: Thanks so much, Margaret.

HELEN: *(quickly moves to the center of the room when she realizes June is coming out of the office)* June, is everything OK?

JUNE: Yes. I just needed to take care of some business. *(Helen and June exit.)*

MARGARET: (*answering the phone*) Hello. Willow Creek Retirement Center. How may I help you? (*listens, chuckles, and repeats*) June Thomas? It's funny. There are only two people here named June, and the other one just left my office. What can I do for you, June? Oh? The baby's due a lot earlier than you thought? It's a good thing you took your leave this week. I understand. Don't worry about a thing. Just concentrate on that precious baby. We'll take care of everything, June. (*hangs up*)

(*Helen enters and sneaks back over to the poster to eavesdrop some more.*)

MARGARET: (*dials the phone*) Sorry to bother you, Mr. Abrams. This is Margaret Long from Willow Creek Retirement Center. Sir, we have a problem. You know last week I spoke to you about June's pregnancy? (*listens*) Yes, Sir. I just spoke with June, and, well, I think we are going to have to deal with this baby issue sooner than we anticipated.

HELEN: UHHHH. (*gasps*)

MARGARET: Mr. Abrams, all the residents like her and they'll miss her. (*listens*) Oh, I think they can handle that but we're going to have problems after the baby's born.

(*Helen peers between the trees and reacts, scurries offstage to tell others.*)

MARGARET: (*stands to take full focus*) I'm sure I can find another cook to replace her.

(*Beth enters the dining area reading her mail. Helen enters, sees her and hurries over looking like she is about to explode.*)

HELEN: (*almost shouting surprises Beth. Beth's mail goes flying.*) Beth, I'm so glad I found you. I want to tell you a confidence. Our friend June is pregnant.

BETH: (*comes to June's defense*) That's impossible. I don't believe it.

HELEN: I accidentally overheard June and Margaret discussing it. Promise you won't say a word. (*exits*)

BETH: (*going to Margaret's office*) Got a minute, Margaret? I just heard some disturbing news about June.

MARGARET: Did June tell you?

BETH: No, it was someone else who told me in confidence.

MARGARET: Sorry, Beth. I can't discuss June's health issues with you. If June wants to discuss it, she'll have to do it herself.

BETH: (*realizing it's true*) I understand. Thanks, Margaret.

MARGARET: No problem, Beth. (*exits*)

(*Beth leaves the office and meets with her husband Donald as he enters the dining room.*)

BETH: You're not going to believe what Helen told me.

DONALD: (*skeptically*) Helen?

BETH: She told me that June is pregnant. I didn't believe it either but I talked to Margaret and she sorta confirmed it. I mean she couldn't come right out and say it but she pretty much implied that it's true.

DONALD: That's impossible. How old is June?

BETH: She's younger than I am...64.

DONALD: Who's the father?

BETH: Who do you think it is?

BETH & DONALD: Richard?

BETH: They've been close friends since he moved in here. They're together almost every day.

DONALD: (*exiting with Beth*) Wow, that's hard to believe. It must be that breakfast drink!

(*A lively song could be played to indicate a scene change.*)

Scene 2

AT RISE: Beth and Donald are seated at the dining room table talking.

HELEN: *(enters and sits with them)* Donald, have you heard the news? June is pregnant! Of course, Richard's the father.

BETH: I still don't believe all this. You can't have a baby at sixty-four, can you?

HELEN: I just read last month on the internet that a seventy-year-old woman in Ecuador had triplets.

DONALD: You know, maybe they don't want anyone to know yet. Let's just play this cool and see if they share it with us.

(Richard enters the dining room and joins the group at their table.)

DONALD: Hey, Richard, you dog you! *(Beth slaps Donald on the arm to shut him up. Richard looks puzzled.)*

NEW WAITRESS: *(enters) (to Richard)* So, how was your breakfast drink this morning? I tried to follow all of your directions.

RICHARD: It was perfect. Usually new people making it don't get it just right the first time, but you certainly did. Thanks.

NEW WAITRESS: Hmmm. Well, I felt like a witch over a cauldron. So while you're waiting for dinner, do you want to put in your orders for tomorrow's breakfast?

RICHARD: You know what I'm having.

DONALD: You know, I've been wanting to try your concoction. I'll have the same.

HELEN: And I'll get one to go for my husband.

RICHARD: *(confused)* I thought you guys were disgusted with my breakfast drink?

DONALD: Well, it obviously works.

NEW WAITRESS (*exits/to audience*) And I thought truckers were weird.

DONALD: Richard, by the way, where's June?

RICHARD: She said she wasn't feeling well this morning so she's skipping dinner, but she should be along pretty soon for our evening walk.

BETH: I certainly remember that feeling. (*Richard looks at her with a very confused look and shrugs.*) Time for our belly dancing, Helen. (*exits dancing*)

HELEN: Right behind you. I've been practicing. (*exits dancing*)

(*Belly dancing music could be played*)

DONALD: (*pats his belly*) I should be the belly dancer. (*Richard and Donald laugh at Donald's humor. Then Donald gets serious.*) Richard, gotta minute?

RICHARD: Sure, over by the garden OK? (*They get up and walk over to the garden area down stage right.*)

DONALD: Richard, you know I have come to think of us as, you know, best friends.

RICHARD: So, have I, other than maybe June. I feel closer to you than anyone I know.

DONALD: It kind of hurt my feelings when I had to find out about you and June through the grapevine.

RICHARD: (*quizzically*) What about June and me?

DONALD: I know maybe you two didn't want anyone to know yet. You know about June being pregnant.

RICHARD: (*silently gasps and mouths*) Pregnant?

DONALD: But big gossip Helen overheard June and Margaret talking about her leaving to have the baby. Hey buddy, Beth didn't believe it so she went right to Margaret, and I guess Margaret confirmed it.

RICHARD: (*confused*) She confirmed it?

DONALD: Everyone knows you and June are an item, so we all immediately knew you were the father.

RICHARD: (*trying to hide his emotions*) Donald, have you talked to June about this?

DONALD: No, we kind of figured you guys would tell us when you were ready. Didn't want to interfere.

RICHARD: Good, please don't say anything to her about this yet. June and I have a lot of talking to do and you understand, don't you?

DONALD: Buddy, of course, I understand. I don't know what Beth and I would do if we were in your situation right now. I'll tell everyone not to talk about this to June.

(When June enters the stage there can be an option of having two extra women standing by the entrance whispering to each other. As June walks by them, they immediately look guilty, snap to attention and whisk away staring at her over their shoulders. June looks at them questioningly.)

(Donald leaves the stage and Richard sits, rubs both hands across his face in disbelief. Donald and June cross paths as June enters, and Donald looks curiously at June's belly. June looks puzzled for a second.)

JUNE: (*to Richard*) It's starting to get a bit nippy, don't you think?

RICHARD: (*quietly pauses for a moment, obviously in deep thought*) What, what did you say?

JUNE: (*concerned*) Richard, are you all right?

RICHARD: Sure, I'm fine... just collecting my thoughts. Do you think it's too chilly for you to be walking tonight? (*stands and helps her sit on the bench, treating her delicately*)

JUNE: Richard, I'm a big girl. I think I can take a little cool air.

RICHARD: (*sitting*) Can you believe we've been here four years already?

JUNE: (*sitting*) You've been here four years. I've been here almost six.

RICHARD: It seems so short because of you. If I were here alone, I know I wouldn't be so happy.

JUNE: You've got me blushing.

RICHARD: (*taking June's hand between his hands*) June, I realize now that maybe I haven't been all that you have needed in a man. (*She starts to speak and he touches her lips with his finger.*) Please, this is difficult. Let me say what I need to. I can't tell you how much you have meant to me since we became friends. I have to admit I am a little slow in the romance area. I know I have been selfish. I only thought about what made me happy.

JUNE: Richard, you've been a perfect gentleman.

RICHARD: I guess, maybe that's the problem.

JUNE: What do you mean?

RICHARD: I never thought about the, you know, needs of a woman. June, I want you to believe it when I tell you it's my fault, and I don't care what has happened before right now.

JUNE: (*confused*) Richard, what are you trying to say?

RICHARD: (*dropping to one knee*) June, I love you and I promise to be a more considerate lover. Will you marry me?

JUNE: (*pulls him up from the floor*) Yes, I love you too. I would love to be your wife. You have obviously put a lot of thought into this. (*Richard nods.*) When do you want to get married?

RICHARD: It only takes a couple of days in this state to get a license. How about right here--on Saturday?

JUNE: Dear, don't you think that's rushing things a little?

RICHARD: No, no I don't want to wait a minute longer than we have to. Let's do it Saturday. I'll make all the arrangements.

JUNE: Richard, I don't know. I had planned to go to Denver for something I had to get done. I think I should tell you—

RICHARD: (*interrupting*) No, I think going to Denver or anywhere else you want to go should be after we are married. I want to be part of everything in your life.

JUNE: OK, but I have to warn you, marrying me now will turn you into a nursemaid for a while.

RICHARD: I'm ready for anything that I need to do.

JUNE: I'll have to let my sister know. I'm sure she could fly in on short notice. Let's do it. (*June hugs Richard.*) I really do love you. Well, no time for a walk. I've got to call my sister right now.

RICHARD: I love you and I should have said it a long time ago. We can do the impossible together!

Scene 3

At Rise: (As an option, again the two extra women can be standing by the entrance, again whispering and again repeating the same reaction as the first time. June enters the dining room carrying her wedding jacket and humming along with music. Helen chases June in.)

HELEN: How are you feeling today, my dear?

JUNE: Fine, why do you ask?

HELEN: I guess I am the one who has to tell you. Everyone here knows about--your condition and why you're going out of town.

JUNE: How did everyone find out?

HELEN: Well, apparently someone overheard you and Margaret talking about (*cups her hand next to her mouth like she is telling a secret*) your situation. My dear, I know you are embarrassed, but I want you to know I am here for you.

JUNE: (*a little perturbed*) Thank you, Helen, but I think I can handle 'my condition.'

HELEN: What are your plans? This is not something most people our age go through.

JUNE: I'll be OK. People have been going through this procedure for a very long time.

HELEN: What do you plan to do when it's out of you? Are you going to keep it?

JUNE: (*in disgust*) Of course not. As soon as they're out of me I am leaving them at the hospital.

HELEN: (*astonished*) Them—

JUNE: (*interrupting*) Helen, I'd like to stay here and talk to you but I have a lot to do. I'll see you later. (*June walks off leaving Helen standing in the center of the stage.*)

HELEN: (to self) Them? Them?

(*Donald and Beth enter the dining room and Helen runs to them.*)

HELEN: (*breathlessly*) You won't believe what June just told me. June is not just having a baby. She is having twins.

BETH: (*astonished*) Twins?

HELEN: Yes, twins, and what's even more shocking-- she says she is giving them up.

BETH: (*doubtful*) Helen, are you sure June told you this? Why would June confide such a private thing to you?

HELEN: Beth, many people here look upon me as a close confidant. You know I have been taking a psychology course at the community college. I am not saying I'm a healer or anything but my knowledge combined with my natural empathy draw troubled people to me. I guess June just felt she needed to unburden herself.

BETH: I still can't believe June would share such a personal decision.

HELEN: June stood right there and told me as soon as they were out of her she was leaving them at the hospital. Will you excuse me? I have some important business to attend to. *(Helen scurries off.)*

BETH: Donald, I know you promised Richard we wouldn't talk about this to June, but this just doesn't sound right. I think I should talk to June.

DONALD: Honey, I think we should let Richard and June tell people when they're ready.

BETH: But Helen? I just know June wouldn't tell Helen anything, at least if she is in her right mind.

DONALD: Maybe, you know, in her condition, she might not be thinking just right.

BETH: OK, I'll hold my tongue but I think you should have another talk with Richard. *(Beth and Donald exit)*

RICHARD: *(enters dining room with June excitedly)* Honey, I've arranged everything. I hired a wedding planner. Actually it's Mrs. Broderick. She has four daughters and claims to be an expert. Joe Goodman is still clergy and he'll marry us. Will your sister be able to get here?

JUNE: Her plane gets in this afternoon, and she reserved a room at the hotel across the street. She'll be here for the wedding. Which reminds me, I have a jacket I need to alter. I'll see you tonight, Honey. *(exits) (Richard walks over to the garden area for some fresh air.)*

DONALD: *(enters)* Richard, how are things going?

RICHARD: Busy, I didn't know how much work was involved in preparing for a wedding. All I did for my last one was show up. But, I don't want to overtax June, so I'll handle it.

DONALD: It's none of my business and you can tell me that, but are you sure you and June are making the right decision?

RICHARD: About getting married?

DONALD: No, I'm talking about giving them up.

RICHARD: (*confused*) Giving who up?

DONALD: I know I keep sticking my nose in where it probably shouldn't be but everything June tells Helen, she blabs over the entire neighborhood. June apparently told Helen that you guys were having twins, and she planned on giving them up.

RICHARD: (*breathlessly*) Twins?

DONALD: I know you guys are trying to deal with this but you act like you don't know you're going to have two babies.

RICHARD: Don, I really need a friend right now--one that can keep a secret, to the grave.

DONALD: (*putting his hand on Richard's shoulder*) I promise you. I am that friend.

RICHARD: Not even Beth.

DONALD: You have my word.

RICHARD: I didn't know about the twins. I didn't even know about the baby. I'm not the father. It-- or they-- may not be mine but I am responsible. I guess she needed more than I was ready or willing to give. Don, I drove her to someone else who apparently isn't in the picture now.

DONALD: What does she say about all of this?

RICHARD: We haven't talked about it. I think she has tried to tell me but I just kept stopping her. I want us married before we make any decisions. I am afraid if I tell her I know now, she'll call off the wedding to protect me.

DONALD: What are your plans for the children?

RICHARD: It's going to be her decision, but I am going to let her know I will be there to raise them as my own if she wants to keep them.

DONALD: What will you do about living here?

RICHARD: We can buy a house in the country. I don't know. I might make a good father. I know June would be a wonderful mother.

DONALD: You know you would have to get like to biblical age to see grandkids.

RICHARD: You still want to be my best man?

DONALD: The only question I have is... do you want a stripper for the bachelor party? Sara Hawkins in 307 was in Vaudeville.

(Striptease music could be played softly.)

RICHARD: *(laughing)* No, the picture you just put in my head will be enough.

(Richard and Donald exit)

Scene 4

At Rise: (It is wedding day. Everyone is dressed in wedding attire. Beth is putting the final touch on the wedding arch or table. Donald is standing beside her.)

BETH: *(stopping with a determined and stern look)* I can't do it. I can't let my friend walk in here today to get married not knowing everyone here knows about her pregnancy.

DONALD: What are you going to do?

BETH: I have kept quiet up until now because you asked me to, but I just can't do it any longer.

DONALD: Beth, please, you don't understand what's going on here. I can't say anything. We can't say anything. I made a promise I will not break.

BETH: That's between you and Richard, not me and not June. I'm going to talk to her. She may get mad at me, but friends don't keep these kinds of secrets from someone they care about. *(Beth looks at her watch.)* As a matter of fact, June will be here any minute.

(Donald shrugging walks offstage, and June enters wearing her bridal outfit and walks over to Beth in the garden area. Stage left, Margaret quietly goes to her office.)

JUNE: I'm as nervous as a school girl.

BETH: June, I have to talk to you about all of this.

JUNE: The wedding?

BETH: No, about the babies.

JUNE: *(perplexed)* Babies?

BETH: I know. Everyone knows about your condition.

JUNE: What does my condition have to do with babies?

BETH: We know you're pregnant.

JUNE: Pregnant? Where In the world did you ever get a crazy idea like that?

BETH: You're not pregnant?

JUNE: Of course not. How in the world would I get pregnant at sixty-four years old?

BETH: It all started with Helen hearing your conversation with Margaret last week. Helen said she overheard you and Margaret talking about you having a baby. I didn't believe her so I asked Margaret about the rumor and *(Beth stops and shakes her head.)* Margaret said she couldn't discuss your private medical condition.

JUNE: So, how did pregnant get into this conversation? I'm having my tonsils taken out. Let's go talk to Margaret. (*They walk over to Margaret's office.*) Sorry to bother you, Margaret, but there seems to be a very confusing rumor going around here...that I am pregnant.

MARGARET: Pregnant? Who in the world said that?

BETH: Helen said she overheard a conversation between you and June about her being pregnant.

MARGARET: Our cook June Thomas is having a baby.

BETH & JUNE: Helen!

JUNE: Beth, you believed Helen?

BETH: No, not at first but when Richard confirmed it and said he was the father, we assumed it was all true.

JUNE: Richard, my Richard said it was true?

BETH: Yes, and he made us promise not to tell you about everyone knowing about it. Even when we found out you were giving up the twins.

JUNE: So, now I'm having twins and giving them up? Where did this come from?

BETH: Helen said you told her.

JUNE: I think I see. Helen approached me the other day and said everyone knew about my condition. I thought she was talking about my tonsils. She asked me if I was going to keep it. I thought she meant the tonsils. I told her I was leaving **them** at the hospital.

BETH: The twins!

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