

Reunited

Penny Petersen



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REUNITED

By Penny Petersen

CAST

The 'Sexy Six,' as they were known at the University of Nebraska:

HELEN: A neatly dressed military widow. Never worked. Neatnik, borders on OCD. Picks up after others. Loves crafts/ decorating. Host of the gathering. Gail's roomie.

BETTY: Retired chemistry teacher. Overweight & obsessed with it. No sense of fashion. Married to Bob. Turns 65 during the play. Sara's roomie.

GAIL: Lawyer & Former Homecoming Queen. Two years younger than others. Never married. Cynical & sarcastic but not mean. Lives in D.C. Helen's roomie.

JOANN: A strong, take charge woman. Sensitive and positive. The only one still in Nebraska, with husband, Ken. She's an AA member. Marge's roomie.

SARA: A free spirit, a bit ditzy sometimes. Divorced, living with a younger man. Ran away after domestic abuse. Hippy, bohemian tendencies. Betty's roomie.

MARGE: (*voice only*) The only one of the 'Sexy Six' who has passed. An excellent painter. One of her paintings hangs on the wall. Joanne's roomie.

Their Men:

BOB: Betty's husband. A retired coach and golf nut with a drinking problem. He and Betty live around the corner from Helen.

PAUL: An attractive widower whose wife died of cancer. He's the photographer for the local paper. Dating Helen.

Place:

The living-dining area in HELEN's home in an Active 55+ Community in Arizona.

Time:

A week in the spring.

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Setting: HELEN's tastefully decorated Arizona home. On the wall is a painting of a peaceful outdoor midwest scene painted by MARGE, a friend who has passed. SR door leads to the kitchen. USL is hall to the bedrooms. The main entrance is UC. There is a window in the SL wall. A table and four chairs are just outside the kitchen. A couch that can seat three, a small coffee table, a rolling bar cart, and two additional small chairs complete the decor.

At Rise: HELEN and BETTY wait for their friend GAIL to arrive. HELEN is sewing letters on a robe. There are four robes, one for each of the women friends. Each is decorated with a Nebraska 'N' and the name of the character. HELEN is dressed perfectly. BETTY is dressed casually, in non-matching colors, and appears agitated.

BETTY: Hurry, she'll be here any second.

HELEN: Done. *(they hold up the robe so audience sees the name GAIL)* What do you think?

BETTY: Best housewarming gift since Marge gave each of us a painting 30 years ago! I miss her every time we get together. *(she gestures toward the painting)*

(Each time the painting is referenced, it glows a bit. Doorbell rings. HELEN opens the door and GAIL enters. She is used to being the smartest and most attractive. Dressed in a DC business suit, she carries a purse large enough for a bottle of scotch. They all hug during dialogue.)

HELEN: Gail! I thought you'd never get here.

GAIL: The plane was delayed. DC always has storms this time of year. *(looks around)* What a perfectly appointed home. And what a great place for Marge's painting. You two look wonderful. And what a fabulous robe! Even has my name on it! *(she takes off the suit coat and tries on the robe)*

HELEN: For the pool. Did you bring your suit?

GAIL: First thing into my bag. *(commanding)* O.K.! Time for Ritual #1--The secret handshake! *(They laugh and do a hammy five- or six-step handshake that includes hand slapping and hip bumping. They count as they go.)*

ALL: Go Big Red. Nebraska forever!

HELEN: I'll get your stuff out of the car. (*she exits*)

BETTY: You didn't have to rent a car. I would have...

GAIL: You know I have a thing about having my own wheels.

BETTY: Always been a damned control freak!

GAIL: How is Helen doing?

BETTY: She still gets teary a lot. But it's been two years since Bill's death. We try to help. Bob and I have spent a lot of time with her.

GAIL: Any new men?

BETTY: There's a guy named Paul, but he's known as having two or three women at a time.

GAIL: I've heard of 'two-fers' but that's ridiculous. When does Joann arrive?

BETTY: Less than an hour. I'm picking her up.

GAIL: Then we'll all be here.

BETTY: No! Not all.

GAIL: (*disgusted, sarcastic*) Don't get into that sentimental drivel.

BETTY: It's not drivel, and it's just so strange. One day Sara is there and the next she's gone.

GAIL: People change. It's been over forty years since we graduated. You have to expect that at least one of the original (*she shimmies*) 'Sexy Six' would blow us off.

BETTY: Not funny, smart, creative, capable Sara!

GAIL: Maybe she didn't want to be perfect any more. Maybe she just wanted to run away. Haven't you ever felt like that?

BETTY: Not around my girlfriends, but I guess.

HELEN: *(enters with a suitcase and hanging bag which she leaves on stage)* You guess what?

BETTY: I guess I like being alone sometimes.

HELEN: Not me! I'd take one of those 'blow up' male dolls from the sex store just to have a man around the house. *(she pantomimes blowing up a male toy)*

BETTY: There's Paul...

HELEN: *(smiles)* Yeah, Paul. He's nice, but he's kind of messy, leaves things all over the place. I have to spend an hour cleaning up every time he comes over.

BETTY: Watch out, your Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder is showing. *(HELEN flashes her a dirty look)*

GAIL: Oh, You gotta see this! *(she takes a velvet bag out of her luggage and removes a bottle of high class scotch)* Straight Scotch. Worth \$500. I bid on it. Got it for \$100. *(they pass the bottle around as they talk)*

HELEN: Have you tried it yet?

GAIL: Nope! I've been saving it for us!

BETTY: Don't let Bob get near it. *(GAIL looks at HELEN as if to say, "what's the problem?")* I'll put the luggage in your room. *(BETTY exits to hallway)*

HELEN: Thanks. Bob's drinking. It's a problem.

GAIL: Ouchh! Too bad. *(GAIL starts toward door)* I'd better get my computer. I'm expecting an important e-mail, about a judgeship.

HELEN: Wow! Relax. I'll get it. We're always at your service, Madame Senator.

GAIL: Hey, drop that! My crazy run for the Senate was 34 years ago.

BETTY *(entering)* Good thing you didn't win. By now you'd be a 24-carat control freak with a sarcasm fixation.

HELEN: But we had the best time, all six of us knocking on doors all over the state.

BETTY: Remember that old fat guy? (*gestures tight-fitting tiny swimsuit*) He was almost naked, belly hanging over a blue Speed-o.

GAIL: That was gross!

HELEN: (*dreamily*) I'd take any guy who looks good in a Speed-o!

GAIL: Can you image six women under thirty campaigning door to door today?

BETTY: Nobody goes door to door anymore. They use the internet and twitter.

HELEN: I walked through three pairs of shoes that fall.

GAIL: And you had fourteen other pairs in the closet, lined up neatly and arranged by color.

HELEN: And remember Marge in those awful oxfords? She'd imitate anybody. She could always make us laugh. (*the painting glows slightly when MARGE is mentioned*)

BETTY: And Sara too.

GAIL: (*coldly*) That's different. Sara isn't dead!

HELEN: I still think of Marge every time I look at her painting. She would have been a world famous artist by now.

BETTY: First Marge gets cancer, then Sara vanishes without so much as a "screw you, girlfriends."

HELEN: Then Gail goes to Washington DC. I never understood why you left. We could have elected you eventually.

GAIL: No way. The Nebraska power brokers don't believe women can think. I came to my senses one night when I had a dream about pooping corn husks. Couldn't get away fast enough after that.

BOB: (*Enters carrying a large box of beer and a banner which he hides. He looks like a coach who stopped exercising. He's jovial, friendly and an alcoholic.*) Anybody want a beer?

GAIL and HELEN: Sure. Why Not? (*ad lib as they get beer*)

BETTY: *(slight judgmental tone aimed at BOB)* No thanks. It's a little early.

GAIL: Bob! My favorite guy.

BOB: Still looking like a princess. Wow!

GAIL: You're terrible. I love it.

BOB: Now that I'm here, let's start ritual #2.

HELEN: Ritual #2, the continuous week-long cut-throat bridge game! I'll get the cards.

BOB: Hurry. We only have a week.

HELEN: Oh, we can't. Betty has to pick up Joann.

BOB: Then I'll just drink. Beer & beautiful women. What more could an old guy want?

HELEN: Reminds me of the good old days, playing cards, talking about diets and boyfriends. Anybody remember Bob's frat buddies we all dated?

BETTY: I remember Toby, Mr. octopus-hands. He crawled all over gals he didn't even know. Smart guy though. We thought he'd do something great. Toby...uh?

GAIL: Toby Thompson.

HELEN: You dated him our senior year, didn't you?

GAIL: Right. One night after a lot of wine, we promised if we were single at thirty, we'd marry each other. He didn't last a year. His gargantuan libido ran his life.

HELEN: I know what happened to Toby. He did do something great. He helped develop the GPS system. My Bill worked with them a little. Every few months, the team of engineers and their wives got together for dinner at someone's house. Oh my, the shabby condition of some of their homes. *(they all give her that "OCD is showing" look)* And it was excruciatingly boring. Can you think of anything duller than a room full of engineers?

GAIL: Yeah, a room full of patent attorneys.

HELEN: Toby moved to California. He met a gal who was going to be a nun. It was love at first sight.

BETTY: Love at the first sight of Toby? That's scary.

HELEN: They married, then had four boys in five years. I think she was PG before she left the convent.

BETTY: I told you he had octopus hands.

GAIL: (*sarcastic*) From nun to housekeeper, now that's a real professional upgrade.

HELEN: Anybody want chips with your beer?

BETTY: No chips! I have weight-watchers tomorrow.

HELEN: Don't tell them. Nobody'll ever know.

BETTY: Oh yeah? (*acts like an obese person*) Little white lies turn into big yellow fat cells!

BOB: Honey, you don't look that bad!

BETTY: Humph! Thanks. Well, I'd better get going. Sky Harbor's a zoo.

GAIL: May I go along?

BETTY: Sure. Come on. (*They exit. HELEN calls after them.*)

HELEN: Drive carefully! (*HELEN shuts the door, turns to BOB. Mood changes.*) Did you get the cake?

BOB: Yup! I brought the birthday banner too.

HELEN: Good. How about the check?

BOB: I gave that to you yesterday. You put it in the hall closet. (*HELEN exits. BOB gets banner out of kitchen. He speaks to HELEN in a flirty manner.*) We're alone now. Come give me a big hug, and maybe a kiss?

HELEN: *(She enters carrying a large cardboard check, a mock-up of a Social Security check. She gets in his face, angry. As she gets close to him, she smells his breath.)* No, Bob! No! Oh my, you've been drinking already! *(She turns abruptly and hides the check behind the couch. As BOB hands HELEN one end of the banner, he tries to hug her. She moves away. They hang the banner during the following conversation.)*

BOB: But you said you loved me, ever since our freshman year.

HELEN: I had a crush on you. Captain of the football team, homecoming king, smart. Everybody had a crush on you.

BOB: But you said, "love."

HELEN: It was a weak moment. Good Lord, Bob! Your wife is my dearest friend.

BOB: She's my dearest friend too. It doesn't mean I don't love her.

HELEN: Men! You're such dunces. *(angrily pointing her finger, she backs him around the room)* I'll tell you what it means. It means the death of something—a friendship, a marriage, a person! *(she turns abruptly and goes down the hall)*

BOB: *(Follows her to hall and talks to her. We still see BOB.)* So why did you say that?

HELEN: *(first part offstage, returns with plates and décor)* My husband had a heart attack and died instantly. I was in shock. I was lonely, feeling helpless. I didn't know how to live without a man. You came over. You repaired my car, you fixed my sink. You're warm, friendly and safe, or so I thought.

BOB: So, it was a lie?

HELEN: No. Not a lie. I do love you, but not like that. Go get the cake. *(BOB exits to kitchen. HELEN puts the finishing touches on the table. BOB enters carrying the cake.)* Oh Bob, it's beautiful. *(HELEN places the cake in the middle of the table. When she steps back to admire it, she backs into BOB. He hugs her. She pulls away.)* Don't do that! Bob, this isn't...*(The doorbell rings. Startled, they jump apart.)*

BOB: Who's that!

HELEN: It must be Paul. He's early. *(BOB heads for the bathroom. HELEN straightens herself, crosses to the door and opens it.)*

PAUL: (*PAUL enters*) Hi sweetie, you look surprised.

HELEN: No, No! I was just concentrating on something else.

PAUL: Wasn't I invited?

HELEN: Of course you were invited. You're just a little early that's all. I haven't combed my hair.

PAUL: Where is everybody?

HELEN: Betty and Gail went to pick up Joann at Sky Harbor. Bob's in the bathroom. We've got everything just about ready.

PAUL: Nice banner.

HELEN: Bob ordered it. Did you bring the Margarita mix?

PAUL: Yup. Shall I bring it in now?

HELEN: Sure. Good idea. We'll get it ready in the kitchen. (*He leaves. HELEN talks to BOB who remains offstage.*) Are you OK?

BOB: Be right out.

HELEN: Don't ever touch me like that again!

BOB: You liked it. You liked it, didn't you?

HELEN: Don't you ever, ever...(*BOB enters all slicked up and carrying a large box*) What's in the huge box?

BOB: Betty's birthday present. A watch and two tickets to Hawaii. I put them in a big box so she'd think it was something big.

HELEN: Hawaii's pretty big.

PAUL: (*he enters carrying margarita mix*) I think this should be enough. Hi Bob. What's in the box?

BOB: Betty's birthday present, a watch and two tickets to Hawaii in a big box.

PAUL: Hawaii's pretty big.

HELEN: Put the box next to the table. I'll go freshen up. *(HELEN exits)*

PAUL: When's the Hawaii trip?

BOB: Open-ended. You and Helen want to come along?

PAUL: No more trips for me with single women. They start thinking they own you. Then, it's harder.

BOB: What's harder?

PAUL: When you want to move on. It's harder. I lost a wife who suffered for four years. After she passed, I grieved non-stop for the next three years. After thousands of dollars talking to a shrink, I came back to life. I meet lots of ladies working photography at the paper. I decided to go out with as many as I could until I met someone who blew me away. I don't lie to them, I just don't want to be owned.

BOB: But, you could have Helen any time you want her. And you'd get tired of that? I wouldn't get tired of that!

PAUL: Intimacy leads to complications. When they start to call you 'honey' and plan parties assuming you'll be there, you're in trouble. Yep, you're in trouble when they start calling you 'honey.'

BOB: I don't think I understand exactly...

HELEN: *(HELEN enters looking lovely. They both turn.)* Honey? Honey, would you please...*(They both stare at her. She looks questioningly at PAUL.)* What's the matter? What did I say?

PAUL: Nothing. Nothing at all.

BOB: Let's get the stuff ready. *(he fusses at the table)*

PAUL: Good idea. I'll get the margaritas ready. *(PAUL exits to kitchen)*

BOB: *(He pulls HELEN away from the kitchen area talking secretively.)* Do you love him?

HELEN: I think so.

BOB: You shouldn't.

HELEN: He's safer than you! *(Lights go down to denote passage of time. The phone rings. Lights come up. HELEN answers.)* Hello. OK. Gail, we're ready. They're here. Gail's going to distract Betty so we can see Joann first.

JOANN: *(She bursts in the door. She is a large, muscular, powerful, woman, the stereotype of a Midwest farm wife only with 'smarts and class.' She's assertive, yet the peacemaker of the group. She dresses like a man, only softer. Her flamboyant 'grande dame' side shows up in her entrance. She arrives waving a large University of Nebraska flag.)* I'm here! Let the party begin!

BOB: Good entrance, Joann. *(he gives her a hug and takes the flag)*

HELEN: Gimme a hug, girl! Ritual #1! *(HELEN and JOANN do the handshake)*

JOANN: You ready?

HELEN: Yes. *(JOANN goes to door and motions outside. The others ad-lib until GAIL enters with BETTY. PAUL comes back in the room.)*

GAIL: We're here! We're here. *(she pulls BETTY to the center)* Surprise!

ALL: Surprise! Happy Birthday! *(They all sing "Happy Birthday" to BETTY who is really surprised, but doesn't seem excited. PAUL is immediately smitten with GAIL and moves in her direction.)*

HELEN: Surprised?

BETTY: You betcha! How did you do it?

HELEN: Bob and I have been sneaking around, *(like oops)* uh, running around all week.

BETTY: Just look at all those goodies! *(BOB and BETTY look at cake and packages)*

HELEN: *(she takes PAUL to JOANN)* Joann, this is my boyfriend, Paul. He takes pictures for the local paper.

JOANN: Glad to meet you, Paul.

HELEN: Joann is from Fremont.

PAUL: There's a Lutheran college near Fremont.

JOANN: Yes, Midland Lutheran, how did you know?

PAUL: My dad was a Lutheran minister.

HELEN: Joann and her husband Ken run a farm and a fitness center.

JOANN: Karate actually. Black belt. *(She jumps at him with an impressive karate move and stands posed. At first he seems stricken, then laughs.)*

PAUL: I'm impressed.

HELEN: *(She drags PAUL over to GAIL. The painting lights up slightly and stays lit until HELEN's line "Attention!")* And this is Gail, an attorney who left Nebraska to save the world in Washington D. C.

PAUL: *(He takes GAIL's hand and holds it a little too long. He tries to be next to her for the rest of the scene.)* Lawyer, what a shame.

GAIL: Lobbyist actually. Environmental issues. And I adore lawyer jokes. *(flirty)* I'll tell you a couple of good ones later.

PAUL: Great. That's a date.

HELEN: Attention! Before the cake, we have a presentation. *(HELEN positions BETTY so the audience can see her and she's the center of attention. She gets the huge replica of a social security check.)* Here's the best part of turning 65, a Social Security check! Yea, Social Security! *(they all clap and chant)* Social Security! Social Security! *(HELEN hands BETTY the check and they all clap. Everyone thinks it's funny. BETTY doesn't laugh. She looks at the check, and studies it. She throws the check on the floor and has a tantrum.)*

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!