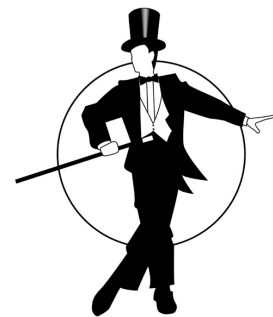# The Code

Donald R. Fried

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THE CODE

by

Donald R. Fried

THE CODE

ROSE and CHARLIE are senior citizens who meet at a cafe on a blind date set up over the Internet. CHARLIE thinks he is meeting an attractive younger woman. So does ROSE!

CAST

ROSE: Age 80 or older. Confident, aggressive, a tough old lady.

CHARLIE: Age mid 70s or older. Neatly dressed in a sports coat. Trying to appear suave, but he's nervous.

Place

A small cafe, with an implied entrance to one side and a service counter to the other. The only stage pieces are a table and two chairs.

THE CODE

At Rise: ROSE enters, carrying a handbag and a single long-stemmed rose. She looks around the room, confidently, but as though searching for someone and then sits down at the table. She takes a piece of paper which has been printed on a computer out of her handbag and examines it, takes out a compact and examines herself, combs her hair, rearranges the rose on the table, checks her watch, etc., all the while continuing to search the room and the entrance. Eventually, she rises, still checking the entrance. She takes a few moments deciding what to leave to reserve the table. She takes a book out of her handbag, and leaves it on the table, carefully arranged with the rose, and exits toward the service counter. CHARLIE enters, carrying a small wooden horse. He searches the room, spots the rose, and comes to the table. He looks around and when he doesn't see anyone, he sits. He puts the horse on the table, carefully arranging it with the rose. Finally, he gets up and heads toward the service counter, nearly running into ROSE as she enters, carrying a cup of coffee. She stops short, spilling some of the coffee.

ROSE: Ouch! *(under her breath.)* Dammit.

CHARLIE: *(he looks at her inquisitively, and visibly decides she's not who he's looking for. As he starts to walk on.)* Sorry.

ROSE: You should watch where you're going.

CHARLIE: *(shocked by her rudeness.)* What?

ROSE: *(she thinks he's hard of hearing. Louder.)* I said you should watch where you're going.

CHARLIE: *(also loud.)* I said I'm sorry.

ROSE: And I said if you were more careful you wouldn't make people burn themselves and you wouldn't have to apologize.

CHARLIE: No you didn't. You said I should watch where I was going.

ROSE: Well, it's what I was going to say next. And you don't have to shout.

CHARLIE: I'm shouting at you because you're shouting at me.

ROSE: You're hard of hearing.

CHARLIE: No, I'm not.

ROSE: But you--oh, never mind.

(They dismiss each other angrily. CHARLIE exits toward the service counter. ROSE sits down at the table, notices the horse and looks around in surprise. After a few seconds, CHARLIE enters with a cup. He sees ROSE at the table and does a double take.)

CHARLIE: *(under his breath.)* Oh, no! Oh, well. *(aloud. Now they are talking at normal volume.)* Are you Rose?

ROSE: *(a little surprised.)* Do you live at Golden Acres?

CHARLIE: No. Golden Meadows.

ROSE: I almost moved there. Do you like it?

CHARLIE: Yeah, sure.

ROSE: I thought there were too many old people there.

CHARLIE: Oh, and they're all young at Golden Acres?

ROSE: No! It could be worse, I guess. You could be at Senior Acres, or Century Manor. My kids wanted me to move there.

CHARLIE: I know what you mean. My daughter'd almost signed the contract at Golden Village Meadows before I put my foot down.

ROSE: Golden Village Meadows. Is that the one on Fulton?

CHARLIE: No, that's Century Village Meadows. Golden Village Meadows is the one on Newton.

ROSE: Oh, right.

(During the next couple of speeches, ROSE continues to look around for someone.)

CHARLIE: You know I heard on the radio a couple of days ago that there are over a million words in the English language. *(beat.)* Of course, that includes scientific and technical words. Even without those, there's still over half a million.

ROSE: Is there a point to this?

CHARLIE: You aren't interested in linguistics?

ROSE: Listen, I'm sure there's someone you can talk to about linguistics--or anything else you want--at Century Meadows.

CHARLIE: Golden.

ROSE: What?

CHARLIE: Golden Meadows.

ROSE: Century Meadows, Golden Meadows, Senior Country Leisure Gardens World! Does it really make any difference?

CHARLIE: That's why I started talking about linguistics. With all those words in the language, you'd think they could come up with more than the same ten to use for the names of retirement communities. It's as though someone made two columns of five words each. And there are these trained rats, and every time the rats select one word from column A and one word from column B, they name a community after it and they get a food pellet.

ROSE: Who?

CHARLIE: Who what?

ROSE: Who gets the food pellet? The rats or the builders?

CHARLIE: The...oh, ho! That's good, Rose.

ROSE: You still haven't told me how you know who I am. *(CHARLIE looks confused and picks up the rose. ROSE takes it away from him.)* So everybody who carries a rose is named Rose?

CHARLIE: Isn't that your name?

ROSE: Just my luck. I knew I should have taken the alstroemeria when I left the apartment this morning. Even if you'd recognized it, you'd have given yourself a hernia trying to pronounce it.

CHARLIE: *(amused, he laughs.)* May I sit down?

ROSE: No. I'm waiting to meet someone.

CHARLIE: Yes, me.

ROSE: No, not you.

CHARLIE: No, really. *(he picks up the horse.)* I'm Charlie. Rose, the rose? Charlie horse?

ROSE: Oh, my. Yes, I suppose you'd better sit down.

CHARLIE: You know, you're not exactly what I was expecting.

ROSE: What were you expecting?

CHARLIE: *(taking a piece of paper printed from a computer out of his pocket and unfolding it.)* "Senior seeks soul-mate for intimate, loving relationship. Young-looking older woman, slender, vivacious, intelligent, fun."

ROSE: Yeah, so?

CHARLIE: Don't take this the wrong way. I mean you're not bad looking for an old lady, but don't you think you got a little carried away with the description?

ROSE: The descript--ah! You know, you're not exactly what I was expecting, either.

CHARLIE: Why? In my email I just said, "My name is Charlie, and I think I'm exactly what you're looking for." What were you expecting?

ROSE: Just what the ad said. A young-looking older woman! *(CHARLIE, who has been sipping his coffee, spits it out, chokes and starts to cough.)* I thought Charlie was Charlene. *(beat.)* Are you OK?

CHARLIE: *(puts up a finger asking her to wait. Then...)* I think so. Why didn't you say you were looking to--go the other way?

ROSE: I did. "Slender, vivacious" and all the rest was supposed to be what I'm looking for, not a description of myself.

CHARLIE: Well I didn't understand it.

ROSE: And that's my fault?

CHARLIE: Yes. Why didn't you use the code?

ROSE: The code?

CHARLIE: Yes. If you'd used 'I-S-O--In search of,' then I would've known that what you wrote was what you were looking for instead of how you were describing yourself. And you should have said you were looking for an 'L-F.'

ROSE: 'L-F'?

CHARLIE: Lesbian Female.

ROSE: And I'm supposed to know all that? I can't even get my microwave to record the TV programs I want.

CHARLIE: *(incredulously.)* Micro--*(he realizes he's being put on and chuckles.)* You really are good. You could have asked someone, you know. About the code, I mean.

END OF FREEVIEW
You'll want to read and perform this show!