

TRUE LOVE

Written by

Name Redacted IV

FADE IN.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

DING. Doors open as a fit COUPLE in their early 40's step in.

MARC MAROTH wears a thin red sweater and khakis. He yanks at the collar and scratches his neckline.

His wife GRETCHEN sports a stylish white blouse and jeans.

Despite their best efforts, they each look a bit ragged and sleep deprived, Gretchen bordering on miserable.

The MUSAK version of "WHAT IS LOVE" blaring through the sound system certainly isn't helping.

MARC

Can't believe you're making me do
this. We don't need this, Gretchen.

Gretchen moves as far away from Marc as the elevator allows, and jabs at the "Door Close" button.

Marc holds the doors open, allowing an appreciative DELIVERY MAN to board. He holds a massive vase of RED ROSES and the biggest heart shaped BOX OF CHOCOLATES on the market.

The flowers intrude on Gretchen's personal space, forcing her against the back wall. She doesn't seem thrilled about it.

MARC

(whispering to Gretchen)
Someone's overcompensating.

Gretchen closes her eyes and inhales deeply through her nose.

DING. The doors open and Gretchen storms past Delivery Man.

Marc lets Delivery Man out and darts off after his wife.

GRETCHEN (PRE-LAP)

Are you familiar with the 12 Days
of Christmas?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

A static shot of a DOOR with a placard beside it that reads:

"Dr. Tilly Friedman. Marriage Counselor."

INT. DR. FRIEDMAN'S OFFICE - LATER

The massive bouquet of roses and chocolate box now sit atop a large tan desk - the only bit of color juxtaposed against the almost clinically white walls.

DR. TILLY FRIEDMAN, 50's and distinguished, sits in an off-white love seat with a TABLET in her hand.

MARC (O.S.)
Why does she get to lay down?

Across from Dr. Friedman, Gretchen lays on a matching off-white sofa. Marc sits on the armrest uncomfortably.

DR. FRIEDMAN
So Gretchen, you say the problems started with a bad Christmas gift?

Marc shakes his head knowingly.

Gretchen looks at Dr. Friedman and only Dr. Friedman.

GRETCHEN
Allow me to set the tone. Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring... except my first gift.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

SUPER: **THE FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS - DECEMBER 25th.**

Big, modern, dark and silent, except for a CLUCKING sound.

Gretchen, in Christmas pajamas, hides behind the door frame holding a golf club in fear, intently listening.

GRETCHEN
Hello? ... Santa?!

The clucking gets closer. Gretchen jumps out ready to strike, and looks down upon a stubby cute little PARTRIDGE.

She stares at the bird in confusion, snickers.

INT. DR. FRIEDMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Friedman looks up from her tablet, perplexed.

MARC

I also planted a pear tree in the backyard, but who cares, right?

GRETCHEN

Can't want to enjoy our *delicious* homegrown pears in three years. When's the last time you've even seen me have a pear, Marc?

Marc smiles, tries to answer. Before he can--

GRETCHEN

He's about to make an inappropriate joke about my breasts.

Marc closes his mouth. Busted. He was.

DR. FRIEDMAN

Marc, you bought her a bird?

MARC

Bonaduce.

DR. FRIEDMAN

I'm sorry?

MARC

The partridge. We named him "Bonaduce."

GRETCHEN

HE named him Bonaduce. He named all the stupid birds!

DR. FRIEDMAN

... all the birds?

INT. KITCHEN - FLASHBACK

SUPER: **THE SECOND DAY OF CHRISTMAS - DECEMBER 26TH.**

Gretchen flips pancakes for her 8 year old daughter, MACKENZIE, who sits at the counter ogling Bonaduce in joy.

ALL OF A SUDDEN two WHITE BIRDS fly past Gretchen. She jumps back in shock, looking in all directions.

GRETCHEN

Marc? Did you leave the door oHHHH--

The birds fly back in the other direction, startling her.

DR. FRIEDMAN (O.S.)
 I'm sensing a pattern. You couldn't
 have possibly--

INT. KITCHEN - FLASHBACK

SUPER: **THE THIRD DAY OF CHRISTMAS - DECEMBER 27TH.**

Mackenzie feeds two caged TURTLE DOVES some seed, while
 Bonaduce perches on her shoulder like a parrot.

Gretchen and Marc watch. Marc smiles. Gretchen stone-faced.

MARC
 (to Mackenzie)
 Do you like our new pets, hun?

MACKENZIE
 I love them!

MARC
 Welllllll--

GRETCHEN
 Marc, what're you doing?

Marc opens a box and 3 FRENCH HENS walk out CLUCKING.

INT. DR. FRIEDMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Friedman eyes Marc incredulously. He shrugs.

MARC
 I know. I'm *extremely* thoughtful.

MONTAGE

SUPER: **THE FOURTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS - DECEMBER 28TH.**

Mackenzie feeds two turtle doves and FOUR LITTLE BLACK
 CALLING BIRDS.

Mark watches and smiles. Gretchen is ghost white.

A bird takes a shit out of the cage and onto the floor.

MARC
 Hey, that's good luck!

SUPER: **THE FIFTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS - DECEMBER 29TH.**

Marc hands Gretchen a beautifully wrapped BOX.

She tentatively opens it to reveal... FIVE GOLDEN RINGS.

She peers in every direction anticipating another surprise.

A rush of relief washes over Gretchen as she slides a ring on her finger and marvels at it. She's about to warm back up to Marc WHEN a calling bird flies by and jolts her back in fear.

MARC (O.S.)
Oh sure! Just gloss over the
jewelry gift...

SUPER: THE SIXTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS - DECEMBER 30TH.

Marc collects EGGS from a GOOSE. In the background five more HONKING GEESE chase a screaming Gretchen.

SUPER: THE SEVENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS - DECEMBER 31ST.

SEVEN SWANS chase a terrified Mackenzie through the kitchen. Marc follows soon after with a giant NET.

SUPER: THE EIGHTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS - JANUARY 1ST.

It's the birds' house now. The kitchen is a wreck.

Gretchen, disheveled, opens the window in hopes they fly away. Instead a HAND pokes in and hands her a jar of MILK.

Gretchen pops her head out and is met by a MAIDEN and a COW.

Behind her SEVEN MORE MAIDENS MILK SEVEN MORE COWS.

GRETCHEN
MARRRRRRRRRCCCCCCC!

INT. DR. FRIEDMAN'S OFFICE - LATER

Dr. Friedman is now standing and pacing back and forth.

DR. FRIEDMAN
What were you thinking?!

MARC
That my wife would have her most memorable Christmas? We can't all be Mr. Roses and chocolates over here. Where for art thou, Romeo?

DR. FRIEDMAN
(unconvincing; snooty)
I'll have you know my husband gets me... lovely gifts.

Marc and Gretchen shoot her a look - "You sure?"

DR. FRIEDMAN
This isn't about me. ... Your
gifts. Tell me they stopped there.

MARC
What would be the point of that?!

Dr. Friedman MUMBLES the "12 Days of Christmas." Stops.

GRETCHEN
It's nine ladies dancing. That was
a strange site to wake up to. I
think that gift was for himself.

Marc brushes that off with guilt in his eye.

DR. FRIEDMAN
(sing-songy)
Ten Lords a leaping...

GRETCHEN
Each equipped with a trampoline and
fake crowns.

MARC
Yeah, sorrrrry... Cirque Du Soleil
wouldn't return my calls.

DR. FRIEDMAN
Eleven... duh-nuh-nuh-nuh...

GRETCHEN
How could you forget the Piper's
piping?! Our neighbors sure didn't.

MARC
Hey! They liked them more than the
twelve Drummers drumming!

GRETCHEN
Right there with em.

MARC
I'm aware, Gretch. You put the
"cuss" in "percussion."

Gretchen absorbs that, then hides a little laugh.

Dr. Friedman scribbles on her tablet in a daze, at a loss.

DR. FRIEDMAN

Gretchen... I'm curious. What did you get Marc for Christmas?

MARC

This uncomfortable-ass sweater!

That hangs in the air for a beat.

Then, Marc and Gretchen start cracking up hysterically.

Gretchen sits up, and Marc plops next to her. She touches his shoulder. He puts his hand over hers lovingly.

Dr. Friedman watches in utter disbelief. Gretchen notices.

GRETCHEN

Oh come on! Saying it all out loud, it's kinda... funny. I've been so stressed out for the past month or so, I haven't been able to really register it all. It's... kinda sweet. It's... very Marc.

MARC

That's what I was going for!

Gretchen slides over to Marc. He puts his arm around her, and plucks a FEATHER off her back with a laugh.

DR. FRIEDMAN

Sweet? What he did sounds downright selfish and irresponsible.

MARC

Yo!

GRETCHEN

Maybe to you... but I'm realizing this type of stunt is kinda why I married him in the first place.

DR. FRIEDMAN

So then... now what?! What's the plan going forward, Marc? You just own a bunch of cows? And a house full of--how many birds?

MARC

Twenty three birds.

GRETCHEN

Twenty-two.

Gretchen cringes, inhales through her teeth.

MARC
What? ... When? Which one?

GRETCHEN
The other day while you were at
work... one of the calling birds...

MARC
Murray? Murphy? Martin?
(off her look)
FARLEY?! No, not Farley!

Marc hangs his head in sadness. Gretchen consoles him.

GRETCHEN
It's ok, we'll get through this.

Dr. Friedman watches them, bewildered, still trying to wrap
her head around the whole situation.

GRETCHEN
Ya know, they're a handful, but I
think we can make them work.
(off Marc's face)
No breast jokes!

Gretchen laughs at Marc's dismay.

DR. FRIEDMAN
... What's happening here?

GRETCHEN
Kenzie loves them. And I guess
we'll never run out of eggs.

DR. FRIEDMAN
But they're goose eggs!

They both stare at her for a beat. Go back to their moment.

MARC
Or milk.

DR. FRIEDMAN
Oh, and you know how to pasteurize?

MARC
Obviously I'll learn!
(to Gretchen, re: Doctor)
Can't get anything *past your eyes*.

They laugh. Gretchen really liked that one.

DR. FRIEDMAN

Next you're gonna say you can eat
the birds if they get out of line.

MARC

Whoa! They're family!

GRETCHEN

What's wrong with you!

DR. FRIEDMAN

Wha-- Gretchen, you may be rushing
into this change of heart. I really
think you need to consider what
he's put you through--

GRETCHEN

And do what? Leave him? Why,
because he got a little too
ambitious to make me happy?

MARC

Who'd get custody of the cows?!

Gretchen smiles. Dr. Friedman feels undermined.

DR. FRIEDMAN

At the very least you should--

GRETCHEN

At least he didn't buy me a boring
bouquet of roses. Talk about
overcompensating. That's a gift
from a thoughtless man.

Marc nods, satisfied.

Dr. Friedman eyes up her roses. It's sobering.

DR. FRIEDMAN

(muttering)

... I don't even really like
chocolate...

Gretchen turns to Marc and kisses him.

DR. FRIEDMAN

We don't need this, Marc.

They get up to leave.

DR. FRIEDMAN

Wait. You still have twenty
minutes.

Marc walks over to Dr. Friedman's desk and picks up the box
of chocolates.

MARC

You mind?

Dr. Friedman shakes her head "no," confused.

Marc hands it to Gretchen.

MARC

Figured I'd go generic this time.
Give ya a break.

Gretchen smirks and accepts.

GRETCHEN

There better be more.

DR. FRIEDMAN

So, That's it?

(confused beat)

If you insist. I guess I'll wish
you two the best of luck with your
newfound aviary. You're certainly
birds of a feather.

Marc and Gretchen cringe.

MARC

I give that joke a goose egg.

(to Gretchen)

Like a zero...

GRETCHEN

I got it. You're such a cornball...
but that's why I love ya.

Marc holds his arm out, and Gretchen happily locks in. She
takes one more look at the roses and TISKS at Dr. Friedman.

GRETCHEN

Thanks for the chocolates.

They leave Dr. Friedman in a fog.

She gets up and studies the bouquet of roses.

She plucks a little card off the stem, and reads it aloud.

DR. FRIEDMAN

To my True Love...

She rolls her eyes in disgust and pushes the vase of roses
off her desk and into a garbage can.

FADE OUT.