

PLATINUM

A play in one act

By Roger Bonner

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CHARACTERS

MABEL Eighty-seven years old

ARCHIE Ninety years old

SETTING

London, the living room of Archie and Mabel. She's wearing fluffy pink slippers and a housecoat. He's wearing baggy trousers and a cardigan. Both are sitting in old armchairs facing the audience, which is the telly. There is a small folding TV table between them with two cups of tea. Mabel is knitting a scarf with large needles. Archie holds a remote control in his hand.

TIME

The eve of their 70th Wedding Anniversary, called Platinum.

ARCHIE. Why do they mumble like that in these modern films? Can't actors pronounce their words anymore? And there's a commercial every ten minutes!

MABEL. (*Knitting*) Now, now Archie, don't get so upset. Your blood pressure, you know.

ARCHIE. What a ridiculous story! Do you understand what's going on?

MABEL. Of course. It's quite simple.

ARCHIE. Simple! The scenes change so fast that I can't keep up. Why don't they make films like they used to? Back in the old days the actors could still act and the story wasn't muddled.

MABEL. Well, if you wouldn't keep falling asleep, you might understand what's happening.

ARCHIE. I wasn't asleep. I was merely resting my eyes.

MABEL. Then why were you making such funny noises?

ARCHIE. What funny noises?

MABEL. (*Stops knitting and makes gurgling, gasping noises*) Like that.

ARCHIE. I was clearing my throat.

MABEL. (*Knitting again*) It sounded like the pump in the aquarium when it's on the blink.

ARCHIE. Speaking of funny noises, what was wrong with you last night?

MABEL. What do you mean, wrong with me?

ARCHIE. In the middle of the night I thought that digital alarm clock you got me for my 90th birthday had gone off. I was groping for it when I realised it was you!

MABEL. (*Stops knitting*) I sound like a digital alarm clock!

ARCHIE. That's right. You were going DEE...DEE...DEE...DEEE. I poked you and you turned over so I could finally doze off.

(*Silence*)

MABEL. It wasn't always like that, Archie.

ARCHIE. What do you mean, Mabel?

MABEL. When we first were married. Do you remember?

(*They both lapse into a reverie*)

ARCHIE. Are you thinking about our honeymoon in Ramsgate?

MABEL. It wasn't Ramsgate! It was in Margate.

ARCHIE. Oh, I keep mixing up these two seaside resorts.

MABEL. Well, it was Margate in that little hotel near the harbour. Such pretty pink curtains in the room, and that bed...

ARCHIE. (*Chuckling*) Aah, yes, the mattress with those coiled springs. What a creaky, bouncy bed that was.

MABEL. (*Giggling*) We were so in love that we missed breakfast!

ARCHIE. (*Laughing*) And lunch!

MABEL. We didn't miss lunch. We went down to the beach. You rolled up your trousers and waded in the water. And what a lovely day it was. Hardly a cloud in the sky and the sailing boats on the horizon with those gulls swirling about. You stubbed your toe on a rock.

ARCHIE. I did not.

MABEL. Yes, you did.

ARCHIE. I cut my finger on a seashell. I was trying to listen to the song of the sea.

MABEL. (*Laughing*) Oh, that's right. We missed lunch on the second day.

ARCHIE. I thought it was on the third day.

MABEL. No, Archie, it was the second day. The maid barged in on us and wanted to clean the room. I was so embarrassed!

ARCHIE. I wasn't embarrassed.

MABEL. Of course not. You kept winking at her!

ARCHIE. I did not!

MABEL. And you were grinning like the Cheshire Cat.

ARCHIE. (*Pointing the remote control at the audience*) Weather report says we're in for a wet weekend. Blustery winds...rain and a sunny spell or two.

MABEL. (*Angrily knitting*) Don't change the subject.

ARCHIE. I had to change the channel. Film was driving me bonkers. Must they have that silly banner running along at the bottom of the screen? (*Leaning forward and peering*)
....**Climactic...charge in...attic...** Someone climaxed in the attic! Sounds like fake news.

MABEL. (*Stops knitting and shouts*) It says **CLIMATIC CHANGE IN ARTIC!** Put on your glasses.

ARCHIE. I can see perfectly well.

MABEL. Sure, like your hearing.

ARCHIE. I don't have an earring!

MABEL. (*Annoyed*) Oh, for heaven's sake, turn that bloody telly off.

ARCHIE. (*Raises remote control and turns telly off*) You are in a rather bad mood this evening, Mabel. What's the matter?

MABEL. (*Sullen; knitting again*) We were talking about our honeymoon.

ARCHIE. Oh, yes, Ramsgate.

MABEL. MARGATE! When I think of it, you certainly behaved like a horny ram!

ARCHIE. No, more like a sweet lamb. Now, what did we do in the evening?

MABEL. We ate in a proper restaurant. It was full moon and the sea was glittering.
(*Sighs*) What a romantic atmosphere.

ARCHIE. Funny, I remember a fog horn.

MABEL. That was on the second night.

ARCHIE. Oh, never mind. What did we eat? Beans on toast?

MABEL. We did not eat beans on toast! We had something special – fish and chips with those lovely mushy peas.

ARCHIE. Are you sure?

MABEL. Quite sure. It was in that place down by the promenade.

ARCHIE. Oh, yes. We didn't have much money. We had to share the fish and chips.

MABEL. (*Surprised*) That's right. You kept picking out the chips.

ARCHIE. (*Thinking*) How many is that again?

MABEL. How should I know? You ate almost *all* of the chips. I didn't count them.

ARCHIE. Not the chips, the years! How many years have we been married?

MABEL. (*Putting down her knitting and staring at him*) SEVENTY!

ARCHIE. (*Aghast*) Has it been that long?

MABEL. That's right. I deserve a medal.

ARCHIE. What about me? What do I get?

MABEL. I'm knitting you a scarf, so you won't catch your death!

ARCHIE. Charming. What's it called?

MABEL. The scarf?

ARCHIE. No, seventy years of married life! Isn't that named after some stone or metal, or *martyr*? Do they even count that far?

MABEL. Of course they do. Just the other day I read in the paper that a couple celebrated their 90th Wedding Anniversary.

ARCHIE. (*Whistles*) Must have been married as babies.

MABEL. (*Smug*) And they are still in love.

ARCHIE. So what's seventy called?

MABEL. Platinum.

ARCHIE. Plankton?

MABEL. (*Shouting*) I said PLATINUM!

ARCHIE. You don't have to shout. What is platinum anyway?

MABEL. It is a particularly *dense* metal, dear. More precious than gold.

(*Doorbell rings*)

ARCHIE. Now who could that be?

MABEL. We're not expecting anyone.

ARCHIE. (*Standing up*) I'll get it. (*Shuffles to the door offstage*) Come in, come in.

DELIVERY PERSON. (*Carrying a box*) Here's ya food, sir.

MABEL. (*Standing up*) We didn't order any food.

ARCHIE. (*Sly smile*) Yes, we did, Mabel.

DELIVERY PERSON. That'll be 14.50. Better eat them while they're hot. (*She or he puts the box on the TV table*).

ARCHIE. (*Taking out a twenty pound note*) Here you are, twenty quid. Make that fifteen.

DELIVERY PERSON. (*Gives him change*) Thanks a lot. (*Smirks, then leaves*).

MABEL. (*Sitting again*) How come you ordered food?

ARCHIE. (*Opening the box*) Take a look.

MABEL. Fish and chips! And even mushy peas! Oh, Archie, you didn't forget.

ARCHIE. How could I, Mabel? Seventy years with the most wonderful woman...

MABEL. You were having me on. You knew all the time that it's our anniversary today!

ARCHIE. (*Smiles and sits down*) Of course. Give us a kiss, love. (*They kiss*) Well, let's tuck in.

MABEL. Now, don't you go eating *all* those chips again!

CURTAIN