

Richard Simmons:
Sweat in Peace

ADAM'S VOICE: Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls, Children of All Ages, please give a very warm welcome to... Richard Simmons!

Richard Enters, in exercise garb, all excited and everything.

RICHARD: Thank you! Thank you all! Oh, you're all so great! Give yourselves a hand! C'mon! And thank you Adam, for that lovely introduction! That was really sweet! (*claps by himself for Adam*). Well anyway, let me just fill you all in on what's going to happen here today with this filming. Now you know about the video I did with Oldies music. And then there was the one with disco, and the one with show tunes, and... gosh there've been a lot of them, haven't there? So I thought to myself, now Richard, what kind of music haven't you used? And of course I thought of it in a jiffy: college a cappella! So I called some of my a cappella angels, and they were just as excited as I was about it! So ladies and gentlemen, please give a big happy welcome to Brown'sTones and The Bear Necessities!

Bears and Tones run onstage, line up in three lines for a big exercise thingy.

RICHARD: Aren't they precious? Oh, they're just the best. Let's talk to a few of them, shall we? What's your name, mister?

PETE: My name is Pete.

RICHARD: Well it's nice to meet you, Pete. And may I say, those are lovely suspenders! That whole look is just so perky!

PETE: Um, thanks.

RICHARD: And what's your name, madam?

SHAINA: I'm Shaina, and I just wanted to say what a big fan of yours I am!

RICHARD: Well I'm a big fan of yours too, Shaina! (*laughs*) Alright, is everyone ready to lose some weight?!

BEARTONES: (*surprisingly enthusiastic response*)

RICHARD: Great! Then let's get started! Singers, if you please...

Transmissions start to sing "At The Hop." In the fourth bar, Richard counts out:

RICHARD: A one two, a one two three four -

Just as he gets to four, the lights go out, and chaos ensues. When the lights come back on everyone is far away from center stage, where Richard lies dead.

PETE: Oh my god! Richard Simmons is... Dead!

BEARTONES: Gasp!

A Brown'sTone faints with a high-pitched squeal.

PORTER: (*investigating the body*) It looks like he was suffocated with a Wendy's Double Bacon Cheeseburger!

A Bear faints with a high-pitched squeal.

APRIL: Who could have committed this heinous crime?

VALERIE: (*leaping to the stage*) Let me answer that!

APRIL: Who are you?

VAL: I'm Valerie Linhart, Ace Detective, and this is my sidekick Buttons!

She doesn't look at or gesture towards Buttons at all. There is a BRIEF pause while the groups looks around for Buttons.

VAL: I'm here to find out who did in our fine fat-free friend.

FINE: But who could it have been, Valerie?

VAL: A good question, citizen. We've got a room full of suspects, all of whom look as shady as a woodland forest. Well let me ask you all this: who among you wanted to see Richard Simmons dead?!

BEARTONES: *(after a brief pause, whole group raises hands)* I did. I hated the guy. He was annoying. etc...

JONATHAN: *(stepping forward)* It's not that we're all killers at heart, Valerie. It's just that Richard was so damn annoying, it was sometimes hard not to find yourself visualizing him being run over by a cement mixer.

BEARTONES: *(nods, mumbles of agreement)*

PORTER: Besides, he was about to make us *exercise*. That really sucks.

BEARTONES: *(vehement agreement)*

VAL: Well, it looks like we've got our work cut out for us, Buttons. There's not a man woman or child in this room that didn't want Richard dead. There's only one thing to be done.

Absurdly long pause while it becomes apparent that Valerie isn't going to tell us what. Finally:

SHAINA: What's that, Valer-

VAL: Detective work, Buttons! Come on!

Valerie exits, as we prepare for the first song.

SWEET CHILD TROUBLE ME

VAL: That was an excellent song! You guys are wonderful! I'm sorry one of you is a cold-blooded murderer.

RENEE: Do you have any idea who did it, Valerie?

VAL: As a matter of fact, while you were singing I was doing a little research in Brown University's Richard Simmons Video Library.

RENEE: What did you find?

VAL: Well, did you know that several members of your little singing groups are former dancers in Richard's videos?

BEARTONES: Gasp!

VAL: That's right! Martha "Muffins" Tack, step forward!

MOLLY: Who, me?

VAL: That's right! Were you ever in a certain exercise video called... Sweatin' to the MOLDIES???

BEARTONES: Gasp!

SHILPA: Um, that's "oldies," Valerie.

VAL: Right - Sweatin' to the OLDIES????

BEARTONES: Gasp!

MOLLY: *(very nervous)* Well, uh, no... I wasn't in that video...

VAL: That's right, you weren't!

BEARTONES: (*disappointed*) Oh...

VAL: But you WERE in THIS clip from the cutting room floor!

BEARTONES: Gasp!

VAL: Buttons, roll the videotape!

Video Flashback

Five exercisers, including Molly, line up upstage. The Transmissions are stage right.

Richard Simmons enters in exciting garb.

RICHARD: Okay everybody, we're gonna do this take *one more time!* Yay!

DANCERS: Grumble grumble...

RICHARD: Okay guys, start singing!

Transmissions start singing.

RICHARD: Okay, guys, let's do it again! A one two three four!

Everyone starts the dance step. Richard interjects frequently with exuberant comments.

Molly can't quite get it right. Will really sucks. This goes on a little while.

VAL: Okay, pause it Buttons!

Everyone freezes, Molly steps forward.

VAL: Molly, is that you in the videotape?

MOLLY: Well, yes, but -

VAL: Aha! Let's keep watching...

Video resumes.

RICHARD: Hold it hold it everyone! Just stop right there. Thank you singers, you guys are angels! Aren't they great everyone?

DANCERS: (*vaguely appreciative mumbles*)

RICHARD: Now someone here isn't quite with us on the dance. (*Everyone looks at Will. Will stares at the floor*) Isn't that right... Molly?

MOLLY: I know it's not perfect, Richard, but I -

RICHARD: Well, you've been working a long time, and we really need to move on.

You know, maybe this whole exercise video thing just isn't for you. We don't all have the same abilities, you know. A person with your diminished skills can still make a fine telemarketer, or US president.

Molly starts to cry, everyone freezes.

VAL: That was you, wasn't it Molly?

MOLLY: Yes, it was. But I wouldn't kill him for that!

VAL: Wouldn't you? That seemed pretty harsh of Richard to me. Let's watch that clip again. Buttons, rewind the tape please...

Everyone rewinds.

RICHARD: Isn't that right... Molly?

MOLLY: I know it's not perfect, Richard, but I -

RICHARD: You know, maybe you just need to own up to the fact that you're a TERRIBLE DANCER! I've never seen someone as physically incapable, inept and inadequate as you! I could dance better than that when I was three hundred pounds in high school! On crutches! Missing two toes! Maybe that hot young dancer, E. Gordon Gee, can fill your place, god willing...

VAL: Let's watch that *one more time*, in *slow motion*.

Everyone rewinds again.

Richard beats up Molly in slow motion.

Back to present. Molly in tears.

VAL: That was pretty traumatic, wasn't it Molly?

MOLLY: Yes, it was horrible! I couldn't dance any more! Richard had me blacklisted in the exercise video Mafia! I couldn't get a job anywhere, and in order to feed myself I had to make money writing skits for a cappella groups. *Sob, sob...*

VAL: Yes, you were pretty mad alright. Mad enough perhaps... *to kill????*

BEARTONES: Gasp!

MOLLY: Yes, I was mad. But not at Richard, that sexy hunk of man-meat. No, I was mad... at Will!!!!

BEARTONES: Gasp!

MOLLY: He was standing right next to me, and he was much worse than I was! Why did Richard pick on me??

WILL: *(with emotion)* I know! I'm so sorry! You were much better than I was! You didn't deserve that horrible, brutal beating!

MOLLY: Oh Will!

WILL: Oh Molly!

Big Embrace. Audience goes Aw.

MOLLY: Now we can get married.

Both exit.

VAL: Yes Buttons, springtime weddings *are* nice. But you know who *won't* be getting married? Yes, Richard Simmons. Because he's still dead. Why don't you all sing another song, while I gather my wits. Oh, there's one! *(goes off to find it)*

SATURDAY NIGHT'S ALRIGHT WINDMILLS

Richard lies dead on the floor.

VAL: And you, young man, what are you doing here?

JARROD: Sweatin' to the Oldies. Duh.

VAL: Conveniently enough, you were RIGHT HERE IN THIS VERY ROOM WHEN RICHARD DIED!

JARROD: Yeah, me and 49 other folks.

VAL: Are you a fan of Richard's?

JARROD: I wouldn't say that, no.

VAL: And why not? Are you jealous of his bulging thighs? Do you wish you , too, could look that fab in overly low-cut tank tops?

JARROD: No, I-

VAL: Is it his hair? Guys dig the hair; isn't that so, Mr...

JARROD: Mr. Fischer.

VAL: Ah. Mr. Fischer. Now if that's not it, why area you so jealous of Richard?

JARROD: Who said I was jealous? I'm not that jealous. For your information, I can rock a unitard just that well. Only I try to dress a little more conservatively.

VAL: Are you claiming to not be jealous of Richard?

JARROD: I envy that man one thing and one thing only.

VAL: And what is that?

JARROD: His e-mail address.

BEARTONES: Gasp!

VAL: What do you mean by that, Mr. Fischer?

Jarrold steps forward to narrate to the audience.

JARROD: You see, it all began when I first came to Brown at the beginning of the year, to work as an office assistant... for the President of the University. Yes, that's right, I am the secretary, of our very own Ruth Simmons!

VAL: The facts, ma'am, just the facts.

JARROD: What? Those were just the... Oh whatever. Anyway... Each morning, I am responsible for bringing Ruth her Fair Trade coffee from Ocean. While she sips her latte, I read her headlines from The Onion, and I sort through her email. Ruth gets so much fanmail, she couldn't possibly find time to read it all **and** inspire thousands of people each day, so I read it all first and save the important ones for her to look at.

VAL: And this makes you mad enough ... to KILL RICHARD SIMMONS?

JARROD: Whoa, easy tiger, settle down; we're not there yet. Now, here's where things get tricky: The email address that Ruth wanted, Ruth_Simmons@hotmail.com, has been taken... for years.

VAL: So you decided to kill Richard Simmons.

JARROD: Hey, still not there yet. Just calm down. The person who took that email address isn't even really named Ruth. He's named Richard. Richard Simmons.

VAL: Now why would he do a thing like that?

JARROD: I joined his class in order to find out the answer to that very question. And now he's dead, and I can't even ask him.

VAL: We'll never know. But we can guess at what he might have said... for example, he might have said:

Richard stands up and speaks to the audience.

RICHARD: I might have said that I enjoy living under a "pseudonym", that it excites me to assume this alter ego, to *become* this "Ruth Simmons" character, even just for a few moments each day when I read my email.

Richard returns to his dead position on the floor.

JARROD: So anyhow, because Richard had already taken Ruth_Simmons@hotmail.com, we, Ruth and I, that is, had to settle for Rsimmons@hotmail.com. But do you know what address appears on the Richard Simmons website? RSIMMONS@HOTMAIL.COM !

VAL: Now why would he do a thing like that?

JARROD: I meant to ask him that, too. But we'll never know the answer.

They stare a long while at the floor, waiting for Richard to rise and enlighten them, but he doesn't.

JARROD: So every single morning of my life I have to sort through dozens, nay, hundreds, nay, billions of fawning emails and compromising photographs intended for Richard, not Ruth.

VAL: And this made you mad? MAD ENOUGH ... TO KILL?

JARROD: No, not really. More just sort of curious to meet this man behind this false Ruth mask.

VAL: I think it made you mad enough to kill.

JARROD: No, I tell you, it wasn't me! I would never do that! Well, maybe if he killed my dog. [*Pause.*] But he didn't. So you've got the wrong person!

GALILEO

VAL: Not many people know this, but I used to be in Brown'sTones.

LAURA: Um, I knew that.

RUBENZAHL: Yeah, me too. You just graduated last year. I thought that was why you came tonight.

VAL: I came to see justice done! But there are a lot of former Brown'sTones in the audience tonight who might be able to help, so why don't we have them come up on stage. Justice might be done a little more quickly if we sing another song.

UNDER AFRICAN SKIES

VAL: Well that was very pretty, but back to the business at hand. I have solved the murder! Eugene Song, isn't it true that you killed Richard Simmons?

BEARTONES: Gasp!

EUGENE: Uh, no.

VAL: Oh. (*Pause*) Aha! But you were in one of his sweaty classes, weren't you?

EUGENE: Well, um, yeah. I used to be a little overweight.

VAL: A *little* overweight?

EUGENE: OK, OK! I weighed 300 pounds!

VAL: I rest my case.

EUGENE: Wait, but that doesn't mean that I killed him.

VAL: Oh. (*Pause*) Aha! But it so happens that on this videotape of ours is a segment of one of your workout sessions.

EUGENE: Hey, how'd you get that?

VAL: I'll ask the questions around here! (*Pauses as if to ask a question, gets disappointed at not having one*) Roll the tape, Buttons.

RICHARD: and one ... and two ... and one ... and two, feel the burn! One ... and two ... Don't forget to work your toe muscles! (*Starts walking around the class*) And how are you doin' Eugene?

EUGENE (*out of breath*): I feel really good. I think I'm ready to stop for now.

RICHARD: Oh, come on. We can do it! Just a little more!

EUGENE: We've been doing this for three hours. I'm really ready for a break.

RICHARD: Keep going Eugene! Work your toe muscles!

EUGENE: My toes are about to fall off! I'm stopping.

RICHARD (*angry, grabs Eugene*): No! One! And two! And one! And two!

VAL: And you did lose weight, didn't you.

EUGENE: Yes! Oh, God, yes! I went from 300 pounds to 50! (*breaks down crying*)

VAL: How did that make you feel, to be a fraction of the man you once were?

EUGENE: OK, I'll admit it. I was angry.

VAL: Angry enough ... *to kill*?

BEARTONES: Gasp!

EUGENE: Uh, no.

VAL: Oh. (*Pause*) Well, why don't you keep these fine folks entertained while I cook up some more unsubstantiated accusations. Come on, Buttons.

BRANDY

VAL: Let's have a word with... Erica Woodland!

ERICA: Yeah?

VAL: Tell me about your love life, Erica.

ERICA: At the moment, I'm having a bit of a... problem.

VAL: Can you tell us about your... problem?

ERICA: Well, I've been seeing this guy named Richard Simmons for a while-

VAL: Did you say... Richard Simmons?

BEARTONES: Gasp!

ERICA: Yeah, and Richard and I met in his sixty-day "Dance Your Pants Off!" weight-loss program, and now we've been together for exactly sixty-three days. And you know, I thought everything was going great, but then three days ago we started having this... problem. And things have been a little rough, ever since this... problem started.

BRAD: Why don't you just stop referring to me as "the problem", Erica?

BEARTONES: Gasp!

VAL: Aha!

BRAD: That's right, Richard and I have been hot and heavy for three days now, and he's never been happier in his life. We're *both* glad to be rid of you!

BOY IS MINE

VAL: (*after applause dies*) Well, it looks like we have a motive right here! High passions on the high seas! All's fair in love and calorie-counting! Take 'em in, Buttons!

ERICA: Um, Valerie, sorry to interrupt, but what the hell are you talking about?

Brad also looks confused.

VAL: Why, didn't you both hear? Richard Simmons is dead!

ERICA and BRAD: Gasp!

ERICA: My Snuggle-Pumpkin!

BRAD: My Cupcake!

ERICA: He let you call him cupcake?

BRAD: Well, they're low-fat cupcakes.

ERICA: I like cupcakes...

BRAD and ERICA: Oh! (*embrace longingly*)

ERICA: Now we can get married.

BEARTONES: Awwww....

ERICA: Valerie, would you be my maid of honor?

VAL: I've always wanted to be in a wedding!

All three exit. After moment of confusion, next song is sung.

**RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW
JIG IS UP**

VAL (*very pleasantly*): Buttons, what you see before you is a suspect line-up. (*not so pleasantly*) State your name and any associations you may have had with the victim.

FINE: My name is Lauren and both of my previous assassination attempts have failed due to my poor coordination.

RUBENZAHN: My name is Lauren, and I hate men.

LAURA: My name is Laura, and I hate exercise.

LIEVA: My name is Lieva, and although that rhymes with Teva, I hate shoes.

LILA: My name is Lila Rose, and I have loved Richard Simmons since I was six years old. Well, six and a half, to be precise. Richard loved precision.

VAL: Five women, with five names, and five motives. You know, Buttons, I've always said that five is a very suspicious number. Well, Lauren, Lauren, Laura, Lieva, and Lila Rose, I think that—Wait a minute! Lila Rose! YOU have a middle name!

BEARTONES: Gasp!

VAL: That makes you very suspicious indeed. Is it hyphenated? Richard Simmons always had a thing for women with hyphenated names.

LILA: No! It's not hyphenated! And he never loved me! Ever! Even though I came to his studio every day, waited for him to emerge, covered in his splendid Simmons sweat, and he would come out and I would say, (*rolled R*) "Richard! I want you to want me!"

MEDLY

VAL: That was another lovely song. But I have a question to ask you all. How many of you have been in one of Richard's weight-loss programs?

Everyone scoffs. Everyone pauses. Everyone awkwardly raises hand.

VAL: Hm, interesting... Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE: Who, me?

VAL: Yes, you. No, not you, Buttons. Why don't you tell us what the program was like?

CHARLOTTE: Well, you know, nothing special. I wanted to take off a few inches, you know. (*gestures to her waist*)

VAL: And, did you?

CHARLOTTE: Um, yeah, sure...

VAL: Let's see a photo of you from back then.

CHARLOTTE: No, please don't! Wait!

Suddenly Tanya is revealed, with a caption "Before" beneath her. Someone holds up an "After" next to Charlotte. Music cue of Carmina Burana? Charlotte hides her face.

VAL: Aha, you certainly seem to have ... lost a few inches, eh?

CHARLOTTE: That's right! I was a six-foot-seven and bound for the NBA when I went into Richard's program, and now look at me!

VAL: Well, good things come in small packages.
 CHARLOTTE: I know, but -
 VAL: You can't judge a book by its cover.
 CHARLOTTE: Yes, but -
 VAL: Six of one, half dozen of the other.
 CHARLOTTE: But I'm still really upset.
 VAL: I see. Upset enough... *to kill!!!!*
 BEARTONES: Gasp!
 CHARLOTTE: No! I could never kill Richard Simmons. Richard Simmons is... my mother!
 BEARTONES: Gasp!
 VAL: Speaking of mothers... Dov Lebowitz-Nowak, step forward!
 DOV: Who, me?
 VAL: Yes, you Dov. Now let's see... Lebowitz-Nowak is your maiden name, isn't it?
 DOV: Er, yes...
 VAL: And what was your married name?
 DOV: Well...
 VAL: It was Simmons, wasn't it!
 BEARTONES: Gasp!
 DOV: Yes, it was!
 VAL: And you're not really nineteen years old, are you? Aren't you in fact... seventy-three?
 DOV: Yes!
 VAL: And isn't it true that your famous allergy to strawberries is entirely fabricated?
 DOV: No!
 VAL: And aren't you in fact the mother of exercise guru Richard Simmons!
 DOV: Oh, Richala! (*old jewish music comes on?*) He was such a *good boy*. Always cleared his plate at every meal. Had some *meat* on his bones. But then he started this fecockta exercise and diet schmegegigie, and he got skinny as a string bean! Look at this photo! (*Richard cameo, grinning real big*) He's so skinny! The boy doesn't love his mother, who raised him, and fed him and kept him warm all those years, (*lapses into a string of yiddish curses*).
 VAL: You're pretty mad at your son, aren't you Ms. Simmons?
 DOV: The ungrateful meshugenuh.
 VAL: Were you mad enough... *to kill?????*
 BEARTONES: Gasp!
 DOV: Well, no, of course not. I'm not actually his mother, I kinda thought you knew. I'm only nineteen. And my name is Dov. And I'm a boy.
 BEARTONES: You know, he's right. Yeah he his. etc...
 VAL: Well, this is getting tricky. But the murderer is somewhere in this room! And you're all suspects! In fact, there are some *former* Bear Necessities in the audience tonight who are acting pretty suspicious.
 ANUP: But Valerie...
 VAL: No buts! Get up here! All of you! Let's see if you can defend yourselves.

STREETS OF PHILADELPHIA

RHYTHM NATION

VAL: While you were singing, Buttons and I were looking into all of your academic records.

TANYA: What did you find, Valerie?

VAL: Well, it looks like a certain Casey Gould has been taking quite a lot of classes S/NC!

BEARTONES: Gasp!

CASEY: (*stepping forward*) Heh heh, yeah, it's pretty cool. So what?

VAL: I have no idea.

CASEY: Okay. (*steps back*)

VAL: But I also discovered that Andy, Lieva and Shekinah are all concentrators in Biology and Community Health! Isn't that so?

(*all three step forward*)

LIEVA: What's your point, detective-lady?

SHEKINAH: Yeah, what's your point?

ANDY: Yeah!

VAL: Well, my three-headed friend, weren't you all going to do a thesis together this year?

L, S and A: (*in unison*) Yes.

VAL: And wasn't that thesis going to be on the health impact of Wendy's fast food chain?

L, S and A: Yes.

VAL: And didn't you all drop that project, for secret and mysterious reasons last month?

L, S and A: Uh... maybe...

VAL: You did a video interview with Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's. Buttons, please play that videotape.

L, S and A sit across from Dave Thomas, who is actually Richard Simmons in glasses and a bow tie. Andy sits next to Dave Thomas, eating fries out of a Wendy's bag.

LIEVA: Thanks for agreeing to meet with us, Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's.

RICHARD: Oh, any time.

ANDY: Hey, don't I recognize you from somewhere?

LIEVA *smacks* ANDY.

SHEKINAH: So tell us about your hamburgers, Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's.

RICHARD: We use only the highest quality beef in our hamburgers.

ANDY: No really, you look really familiar.

SHEKINAH: Shhh!

LIEVA: But in a recent random test, your hamburgers were found to consist of 85% beef fat, 10% fat substitute, and only 5% actual meat-product.

RICHARD: (*a little shifty*) Well, we're no less healthy than the next fast-food chain...

ANDY: No, look, I'll show you.

ANDY goes over to Richard, removes glasses and tie. Richard has a big goofy Richard Simmons smile.

LIEVA: Gasp!

SHEKINAH: It's fitness guru Richard Simmons!

ANDY: Yeah, but when he turns his head this way (*turns Richard's head*) don't you think he looks kind of like Alex Trebek?

End of Video Clip

VAL: Aha! Our clever friends discovered Richard Simmons' dual identity as Dave Thomas founder of Wendy's! Take them to the police station, Buttons!

TANYA: Hold on, Valerie. So they discovered Dave's secret identity. But why would they want to kill him?

VAL: Because of the LIES, oh God, the LIES! (*breaks down in tears on the floor*)

LIEVA: Alright, you've caught us! After discovering Richard's little secret, we couldn't stand the deception!

ANDY: He was making money off feeding people fat, and making money by helping them lose it. We vowed to end his health-related reign of terror!

SHEKINAH: When we heard about "Sweatin' to the A Cappella," we knew that was our chance to bring down Richard Simmons and Dave Thomas in one fell swoop.

LIEVA: We saw our chance!

SHEKINAH: We made our move!

ANDY: He will Sweat No More!!!!

BEARTONES: Hooray! etc...

VAL: Well, it looks like this is just about wrapped up. Richard Simmons, fitness guru, hero to millions, collector of rare dolls, is dead. Three people stand in handcuffs...

SHEKINAH: (*confused, showing her hands*) Uh, Valerie...?

VAL: (*cutting her off*) Shh, don't speak! It's times like these that I like to recall the words of William Shakespeare: Don't count your chickens if you're bad at math. C'mon Buttons - to the Batmobile!

And like that (poof), she's gone.

BLODGETT: Well, it looks like the three of you will be going to jail for a long time, now that you've confessed to killing one of the most loved and most hated men in America. Before the police burst in and drag you away screaming, do you have a song you'd like to sing? Preferably one about death and murder and sorrow and rock'n'roll?

L, S and A: (*in unison*) As a matter of fact, we do!

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY