

MARRIAGE 2.0

A Short Play by Lisa Parker

Reworked for Virtual

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE: This couple has been married for 20 years. Like many long-term relationships, there's love and commitment underneath it all that gets overshadowed by the frustrations of daily living. They take each other for granted, they bicker, etc. but underneath it all they do care about each other. The audience should never get the feeling that the arguments are angry, malicious or excessive in any way. Rather, their arguments play out like familiar dance steps and, like a lot of long-time couples, they rarely look directly at each other. They glance towards each other, of course, but that's about it until otherwise indicated in the script.

This play breaks the fourth wall. When they address the audience, they lean forward and talk directly into the camera. At that time, HER displays no cold symptoms and is feisty and funny and a little frustrated with HIM, while HIM is congenial, friendly and very likeable. The switch into and out of the fourth wall can be signaled by a bell or other device, OR by simply having the actor lean very close to the camera, looking right into it, and then leaning back to signal the action is back in the living room.

At the start, HER has a terrible cold and speaks in a nasal, stuffed up voice, and HIM is tired from a long hard day and just wants to relax in front of the television, which is in front of them.

CAST:

HER – The wife

HIM - The husband

TV NEWS ANCHOR - (This should be a convincing TV Voice, and we never see the actor/actress.)

The setting is modern day in an ordinary living room in an ordinary house. We see two comfortable armchairs with a small table between them. On the table are tissues, cold medicine, and the TV remote.

At rise, HER is sitting in her armchair, feet on the ottoman, wearing her pajamas, bathrobe and possibly covered with a lap blanket. She has a miserable cold and is holding a cup of very hot tea. HIM is offstage in the kitchen. He's had a long day.

HER (*We see HER attempt to sip her tea, it's too hot. She calls out to HIM offstage*) Are you in the kitchen?

HIM Yeah, why?

HER Can you bring me an ice cube?

HIM *One* ice cube?

HER Yes.

HIM Why?

HER (*To herself.*) Seriously? (*To him.*) Why else? My tea is too hot and I need to cool it down.

HIM enters with a beer and the ice cube, which he hurriedly drops into her mug.

HIM Damn! That's cold!

HER Yes. It's *ice*.

HIM plops down in his chair, picks up the remote and changes the channel.

HER Hey! I was watching that!

HIM C'mon, you weren't really watching that! That show is the most idiotic thing on TV, and trust me, the bar ain't that high.

HER (*Deliberately.*) But. I. Was. Watching. It.

HIM (*Jovially.*) And I saved you!

HER I don't need saving. (*Coughs hard.*) I need rest. And quiet. And drugs. And the remote!

HIM I just want to watch a little of the game.

HER Can't you go watch it in the den?

HIM (*Distractedly, staring at TV.*) I want to stay in here... with you... in case you need me.

HER Yeah, right.

HIM C'mon, you know that show is stupid.

HER So I guess that makes *me* stupid for liking it.

HIM I never said you were stupid.

HER Well you certainly implied it!

HIM You know what your problem is?

HER Yes, as a matter of fact, I do! It's...

HIM (*Cutting her off.*) You're too sensitive!

HER My problem is you! You and your macho bullshit and your unrelenting desire to get your way all the time, and...

BELL DINGS, she stops and freezes. HIM leans in, speaks to the camera, confidentially talking to the audience.

HIM I know what you're thinking right now. "Why would I waste 35 minutes to watch a play where all they do is argue? I could stay home and experience it live! (*Laughs.*) You're right! You could. In fact, I bet you've had this exact same conversation about the remote, am I right? (*As if noticing someone's reaction in audience.*) Ma'am, you're nodding. Am I right? And more than once, right? And you're wondering why guys always do that – grab the remote like they own it, right? Well, to be honest...I don't know why.

BELL DINGS. HIM leans back again.

HER Change the channel.

HIM I will in a minute.

HER (*Coughing again.*) I may not live another minute.

HIM (*With exaggerated chivalry.*) Well in that case, I give you the royal remote. Now you have a reason to live!

HER My hero.

BELL DINGS. HER leans in and talks to the camera.

HER It wasn't always like this. Us, bickering like a couple of old farts. It's become a bad habit. I'm not even sure how it happened, really. I vaguely remember falling in love, getting married, having a couple of kids, then a bunch of soccer games, birthday parties, graduations, and off they went to college. It feels like *that* (*snaps her fingers.*) doesn't it? Do you ever feel that way? (*Acknowledge someone in audience as HIM did earlier.*) And here we are. Just me and Mr. Control-freak Wrench-set Pickup-Truck Bud-Lite Manly Man. (*She sighs.*) Happily ever after.

BELL DINGS. HER leans back and sneezes loudly.

HIM You sound worse.

HER And believe it or not, I feel even worse than I sound.

HIM How about if we watch a little bit of the news and go to bed? I just want to catch the scores.

HER Okay.

HIM clicks the remote.

TV NEWS ANCHOR And a lot of folks across the state are left up in the air with regard to their legal status after the sudden death of attorney Arthur P. Kendricks, best known for his showy television commercials and silver handlebar mustache. Kendricks suffered a fatal heart attack three days ago aboard his yacht, the Sweet Tort, reportedly following an intimate evening with his 22-year-old secretary. According to police, when the next of kin unlocked his office, they found thousands of documents stashed in a hidden compartment, including wills, pre-nups and divorce petitions going back for decades that apparently were never fully executed. It appears Kendricks spent client fees on a lavish lifestyle while taking advantage of people too trusting, distracted or uninformed to follow up. More details will be forthcoming as police investigate...

HIM mutes the television.

HER Uhh...

HIM Uhhh...

HER Is that...?

HIM He looks like...

HER Yeah. Wasn't he the lawyer who handled your divorce from what's-her-face?

HIM Yeah.

HER *(Realization dawning.)* Is it possible...?

HIM Ummm...

HER *(Anxious, and getting a little steamed as a result.)* Oh my god! Say something! TELL me you got your divorce papers!

HIM Uhhh...I'm pretty sure I saw papers. I think I remember some papers...

HER Do you still *have* the papers?

HIM Um.....

HER C'mon! What happened to Mr. "I've got everything under control"?? Think!

HIM I can't think if you yell!

HER Aw, really? Now who's too sensitive?!

Uncomfortable pause

HIM (*Slowly.*) I suppose I could call...

HER No!

HIM But she might have the...

HER I said no! You can't *possibly* have her number. TELL me you don't have her number!

HIM (*Very quietly.*) I don't have her number.

Brief pause.

HER (*Sudden realization, sits up tall.*) Oh my god, what if your divorce never went through? That would mean we... we... oh my god... our children are bastards!

HIM Don't say that!

HER I can't help it! (*She lets out a huge sneeze and sinks down in her chair.*)

BELL DINGS. HIM talks to the camera nervously.

HIM Okay, so have you had *this* conversation at home? You know, the one that goes "the lawyer spent my money on a yacht and now I'm probably still married to someone my current wife...uh...my current "roommate?" calls "That bleached blond from Sarasota." (*Nervous chuckle.*) Kinda makes you want to go back to that little argument about the remote, doesn't it? Ah, those were simpler times.

BELL DINGS. He leans back.

HER (*Softly.*) What do you think we should do?

HIM (*Trying to reassure.*) Let's wait a few days to see what they find in Kendricks's office.

HER But what if we're not married?

HIM Honey, I'm sure we're married!

HER But what if we're not?

HIM We'll fix it.

HER How?

HIM I don't know. Yet.

BELL DINGS. HER leans forward with a lot of emotion.

HER Can you believe this? Can you freaking believe this? Wow, not in a million years would I have seen this coming. It's a shock, really. ... I don't know how to feel! Should I be... afraid? Or hopeful? No, I

can't summon up hopeful. Maybe I should be angry... Angry at him for not following through twenty years ago! Wait...should I be mad at myself for not double checking *twenty years ago*? I mean, who double checks? *(To an audience member.)* Ma'am, you, in the blue shirt, would you have asked to see the divorce papers before marching down the aisle? *(slight pause.)* Right! No one would. Am I overreacting? *(slight pause, as if hearing their answers.)* I'm mostly worried about my kids... *(To herself with a touch of "here's a bright side" in her voice:)* Although, my kids don't need to know. *(To audience.)* The kids don't need to know, right? I mean, they're off at college so why distract them with this when it could be nothing, right? *(As if audience agrees. Takes a deep breath.)* Thanks, this was helpful.

BELL DINGS. *She leans back and coughs.*

HIM *(Trying to be optimistic. He wants to fix it somehow.)* You know, honey, we don't know for *sure* if we're actually affected by this Kendricks thing, right?

HER *(Cautiously.)* Keep talking...

HIM On Monday we can go downtown and check to see if my paperwork was filed. Shouldn't be too difficult. So for now, there's really no reason to panic.

HER I reserve the right to panic as needed.

HIM So granted.

HER Thank you.

Pause.

HIM *(Again, he's determined to find a bright side.)* Hey, think about it this way... At least as of this moment, we might be married, or...we might just be a crazy-hot couple shacking up!

HER The only thing that's hot is my forehead.

HIM That's not true! You're still hot! And I mean in the sexy-hot way, not just the raging fever way. Last month when we went to your reunion and you wore that little black dress? You were plenty hot!

HER How about my lumpy old bathrobe? Does that do the trick, too?

HIM It doesn't matter. I love you no matter what you're wearing.

NARRATOR: *He steps towards her, gets down on one knee and reaches for her hand.*

HER What are you doing?

HIM Honey, will you do me the honor of re-marrying me?

HER *(Truly surprised and a little confused.)* What?

HIM Will you marry me again?

HER Wow!

BELL RINGS. She leans in.

HER Yeah, yeah, I know I was just here, but I don't know how to feel again! Is he joking? Or is he serious? I can't tell. *(As if she heard someone.)* You think he's serious? Oh! *(Pause.)* But if he is serious and he's really asking, then does that mean I really have to answer? I don't mean that "of course she'll say yes" answer, I mean really consider the question and answer as of this moment in time. *(Pause.)* Do I want to marry him? Do I want to be married...to him? *(Pause, a great idea comes to her.)* Well, I'll tell you one thing, if I do say yes, we're going to have to change a few things around here. This is gonna be "Marriage two-point-oh" -- new and improved, with a lotta bugs worked out! *(To audience, as if to get approval.)* You know what? I'm going for it! I'm going for the reboot with special upgrade features!

BELL DINGS. She leans back.

HIM Will you?

HER *(Now somewhat playfully.)* That depends. Can we have a romantic honeymoon this time?

HIM Yes, anywhere you want to go!

HER *(She's pleasantly surprised by his willingness to please her.)* Okay. Maybe Hawaii.

HIM Whatever you want. Do you want to have another wedding? Bridesmaids, presents, cake?

HER Absolutely not. I didn't enjoy any of that the first time. That was all for my mother. This one is just for us. Let's keep it...intimate.

HIM Agreed. What else?

HER *(She thinks.)* A bigger diamond?

HIM How *much* bigger?!...Wait, it doesn't matter. Anything you want. What else?

HER Just one more thing. *(gently.)* When we get back from Hawaii I don't want to fall back into our old, bad habits. I don't want to be bickering all the time.

HIM Agreed. We can reboot the romance in Hawaii and then keep it going, hopefully, forever.

HER You said "reboot."

HIM I did.

HER I was thinking this is Marriage 2.0.

HIM Really?

HER Yes. (*Smiles*) We seem to be...compatible.

HIM Agreed! In that case, let's shut down for tonight and hope for the best tomorrow.

HER Agreed!

The End