



FIRST ACT – SAMPLE

By Robert J. Wheeler, 15 Windsor Cres., London, ON N6C 1V6 Canada Revised Mar. 7/26

Setting – Two average living rooms. Run time -- approximately 90 minutes.

Actors – 4 M – 2 F -- 2.

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My scripts are on PGC site.

<https://www.canadianplayoutlet.com/pages/search-results-page?q=robert%20wheeler>

Email robwheeler999@gmail.com if you would like to read the play for a possible production and I will email it to you.

CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
MARK	Dentist, husband of Mary <i>(can have English accent)</i>	30-65	Male
MARY	Artist, wife of Mark <i>(accent same as Mark)</i>	30-65	Female
ERIC	Teacher, husband of Emma	30-65	Male
EMMA	Massage therapist, wife of Eric	30-65	Female
O.S. VOICE OR MASTER OF CEREMONIES	Performs pre-show announcement	Any	Either

The actors need to be of similar ages.

SETTING

Three similar living rooms.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

ERIC – Has an A type personality with an elephant-sized ego; is an avid reader; the high school teacher everyone hated because he always knew everything and never hesitated to let those around him know.

EMMA – The forever busy wife, always needs something to do. She's addicted to cleanliness; a massage therapist who has recently sold her massage business and is desperate to massage someone, anyone. Eric's massage-weary body has been her massage dummy since the sale of her business.

MARK – A type B type personality, who creates photos of flowers and insects with his camera, enjoys jogging, staying fit; he loves being a dentist and helping people. Mark thinks the best of people and life in general. He is a procrastinator, so wife Mary needs to remind him of tasks he's promised to accomplish but hasn't gotten around to doing.

MARY – A dedicated fine artist who needs her work to be perfect, so spends much of her time painting and repainting her canvasses. Painting has become the focus in her life.

HOUSE LIGHTS DIM:

A light on base of stage or curtain. An O.S. voice or master of ceremonies takes the stage DS of curtain, moves into light.

VOICE OR M.C. Welcome everyone to *(name of theatre)* and our production of “Kinky Obsessions”. Thank you for coming. We have a short announcement. So everyone can enjoy the play equally, we ask that you refrain from revealing the identity of the interloper appearing in the last scene after leaving the theatre. Thank you.

The master of ceremonies leaves, the curtain rises.

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

LIGHTS UP:

Time: Morning

Place: Mark and Mary’s House Livingroom

A few bars of “OH WHAT A BEAUTIFUL MORNING” plays.

DR -- A door into the house with a small porch outside.

UC -- Openings into bedrooms and kitchen areas.

DC – A sofa and sofa chair, both are covered in matching colorful throws. Under the sofa is a 20” x 16” blown up photo of an ant.

UC -- End tables with two lamps with colorful lampshades are on either end of the sofa.

DC -- An easel with an approximately two-foot square canvass positioned diagonal DC, it’s back faces the audience.

DR -- A 20” x 16” photo of a large flower on a wall.

Mary stands behind a 20” x 16” canvass, in an artists’ smock. She holds her brush and palette with confidence as she paints in broad strokes, then other strokes are done with precision. The song ends.

Mark ENTERS through the DR door dressed in running attire a little out of breath.

MARY *(absent minded, glances back)* Good run?

MARK *(heavy breathing)* Mary, my love, it’s a fantastic Saturday morning.

Mark does cool down exercises behind Mary.

Mark cringes when he sees what Mary has painted.

MARY What do you think?

Mark stops exercising, looks closely at the painting, gives a pained expression like he’s stubbed a toe, but she doesn’t see him.

Mary glances back to Mark. Mark instantly changes his expression from pained to pleased. Mary looks at the painting as Mark looks away.

MARK About what?

Mary turns, motions to the painting.

MARY My abstract.

Mary turns to the painting.

MARK Love, I'm just a lowly dentist, not an art critic.

MARY *(glances back)* As my husband, I'd like your unbiased opinion. Honesty is a quality I love about you.

Mary moves back, stands beside Mark, puts an arm around him as they both observe the painting.

How does it make you feel?

MARK It makes me feel . . . uhhhhh . . . I don't know.

Mary gasps, pulls away.

MARY You don't know?!

MARK *(determined)* Okay. Let's see.

Mark looks critically at the painting.

(wrinkles face) You're having a stroke?!

MARY *(aghast)* It's an abstract! Think abstract!

MARK Right. Abstract. Humm. *(thinks)* Like a stroke but ab . . .

Mark moves closer to the painting.

Mary, I'm beginning to sense it. A definite presence. It's coming through . . . I'm starting to . . . yes, I'm feeling it!!!

MARY *(sarcastic shout)* Like your flaming hemorrhoids?!!

MARK *(sarcastic comment back)* Not entirely.

Mary reacts.

MARY *(insulted)* So you're saying . . .

Mark gets a new idea while staring at the painting.

MARK *(interrupting)* It's giving me a definite feeling.

MARY What now? A heart attack?!

Mary smiles.

MARK It's got me feeling hungry!! Breakfast?!!

MARY Food?!?! How does it make you feel about yourself in the world? Joyous?
Happy to be alive? (*frustrated*) What?

MARK Visually impaired!

Mary seethes.

Is there a demand for blurred art?

Mary gasps.

Mark moves to a different position, views the art.

I'm seeing it for the first time! I see it! She's beautiful.

Mary's happy to see her painting is having an impact. Mary moves beside Mark.

It's a gorgeous nude stepping into her bathtub!

Mark reaches to give Mary a hug.

She moves away.

He hugs thin air.

She gives him a questioning look.

Stepping out?

MARY An assortment of colorful, curved, diagonal, vertical and horizontal lines!

MARK I'm calling her Hildie.

MARY If I painted a nipple, you'd see an orgy. Hildie?

MARK For her hills.

MARY It's either food or sex with men!

MARK Wrong.

MARY What?

MARK Football. Green Bay Packers.

MARY How's your picture snapping coming along?

MARK I'm a photographer. Photography is my artform.

Mary moves to the photograph of the flower on the wall.

MARY More big flowers?

Mark joins Mary.

MARK Big flowers were last month.

MARY What's big this month?

MARK I've got a fabulous shot of one of my ants.

MARY Aunt Emily or Aunt Mable?

Mark takes down photo of the flower, slides it under the sofa, takes the photo of a HUGE ANT from under the sofa and hangs it where the flower was.

MARK Isn't Fred a handsome fellow?

Mary reels back in disgust.

MARY Fred's creepy.

MARK He's a perfect specimen. Nicely defined.

MARY What's it saying to the viewer?

MARK The viewer?

MARY Fred's sending a definite message.

MARK What's Fred saying?

MARY Run for your lives, monster ants are coming to devour you!

MARK Because of global warming, insects are dying. I'm taking pic . . . photographs of every insect species for posterity.

MARY Or you're coming the entomologist calendar market.

MARK Making Fred famous.

MARY How many photos have you taken?

MARK A few. Fred's my favorite.

MARY You're getting them in alphabetical order. I expect you'll immortalize a bee next. Have you been on the deck lately?

MARK No.

MARY Bees are entering and exiting between the deck boards. Bees are living under our deck. You know I'm allergic to bee stings. Can you take time from you're your picture taking challenge and eliminate the hive?

MARK Sure, but first I'll get my photograph.

MARY Maybe we should have professionals remove them.

MARK Nonsense. I've eliminated wild beehives many times before. Not a problem.

MARY There's not a lot of head room under the deck.

MARK Stop worrying. Bees like me. I like bees. Once I send out the right vibrations, they'll leave me alone. It's when people get fearful, that's when they strike. Like tiny sharks, they sense fear, then swarm. It's the fearful that who get stung.

Mark sits on the sofa and looks into his cellular phone.

MARY Are you doing it today, tomorrow, next week or next year?!

Mark jumps up.

MARK Today! I'm going to the mall for bee removal stuff.

Mark moves toward the DR door.

MARY Park on the street when you get back. Emma's coming by to wash their car in our laneway. She can't wash it at the apartment.

MARK No problem. Have Emma in for tea. Introduce her to Hildie.

Mark moves further toward the DR door. Mary jumps up.

MARY *(frustrated)* Hildie exists only in your imagination!

MARK You put her there.

Mary moves to the painting on the easel, looks critically at it while speaking.

MARY *(waves him away)* I've got work to do.

Mark moves closer to the DR door.

MARK After the car washing, get Emma to freshen up in the basement bathroom.

MARY Your workshop bathroom?

Mark shrugs.

Mary gives Mark a condemning look.

It's filthy, isn't it?!!

MARK *(hesitates)* Emma loves to clean, so . . .

MARY *(interrupting)* I'm not taking advantage of Emma's cleaning compulsion.

MARK Think symbiosis with a bathroom twist? She'll enjoy doing it. She'll thank me.

MARY Emma will wash up in the upstairs bathroom, then we'll have tea in the kitchen, away from weird Fred.

Mary talks while painting till the end of the scene.

Go ahead, smoke the bees out.

MARK Smoke not required. My system is foolproof.

MARY I've heard smoke is affective on bees.

MARK Mary Love, trust me. I've done it many times.

MARY After you've eliminated the bees, we're going to Emma and Eric's for dinner and drinks.

MARK Okay.

Mark EXITS out the DR door. Mary looks critically at painting.

MARY *(scratches her head)* Hildie?

LIGHTS OUT

End of Act One, Scene One

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

LIGHTS UP:

Time: Morning

Place: Eric and Emma's Apartment Livingroom

A few bars of "OH WHAT A BEAUTIFUL MORNING" plays.

DR -- A door into the house with a small porch outside.

UC -- Openings into bedrooms and kitchen areas.

DC -- The same plain looking sofa and sofa chair as in the previous scene, but the covers are off; the lamps on the end tables have plain colored shades.

SL -- A CD player, CD holder with CDs on end table with phone

DR -- A traditional print is on a wall.

Eric reads from the newspaper on the sofa chair.

Emma ENTERS through the DR door in work wear, yellow rubber gloves, Swifer-type mop and mops the floor.

Eric reads the newspaper disinterested during the following dialogue.

EMMA I washed the car.

ERIC Good.

Eric shows the newspaper to Emma.

It says here taxes are going up three point two per cent a year for the next three years. I'm glad we don't live in a house.

EMMA All taxes?

Eric puts down the newspaper.

ERIC Everything.

Emma takes off the gloves, leans the mop on a wall, stands behind the sofa Eric sits on.

EMMA Then our rent will be going up.

ERIC We don't need to live in a three-bedroom penthouse apartment.

EMMA I like living above the traffic noise on the twenty-third floor.

ERIC I can always go back to tutoring.

EMMA You teach for ten months a year. We can afford an increase without you needing to tutor.

ERIC I remember; they can't raise it more than one percent because of the lease.

EMMA Good. You up for a massage?

Eric makes a terrified face.

Emma massages the back of Eric's neck.

I'm still the best massage therapist in town.

Eric is uncomfortable, stands, edges away from Emma.

Emma moves with him, massaging.

ERIC Uh. *(stalling)* Emma, I was thinking of going *(thinking fast)* of of going . . . to the . . . what was it . . . right . . . to the library.

Emma pushes Eric onto the sofa, massages his shoulder.

EMMA Your traps are tense, like boards, need loosening up.

Eric tries to get up, but Emma aggressively massages behind his neck and shoulder.

Emma stops messaging, jumps back.

The library?!

ERIC I read.

EMMA Or it's a library rendezvous?! You could succumb to the allure of a clever woman!

ERIC When I turn on my superior reading charms women will . . .

EMMA *(interrupting)* You're forgetting an important charm!

ERIC What's that?

EMMA Me!!!

ERIC After an enormous struggle, the frumpy librarian was no match for the magnetic allure of wife Emma. *(hugs her)* What are your plans for today?

EMMA I've been feeling restless since selling the massage clinic. I thought I could practice on you, relax your tired, tight muscles. You're tense! I know you need it.

ERIC You gave me a massage a couple days ago. If my muscles relax more, they'll dissolve! I've got bruises.

EMMA Bruises?

ERIC Invisible ones, not seen but definitely felt. Emma listen, we need to establish a monthly massage quota.

EMMA Four?

ERIC Two!

EMMA Three!

An evil look from Emma.

ERIC *(speaks quickly and loud)* Two and a half. Done!

Eric steps away, happy to change the subject.

How about having Mark and Mary experience your healing massage talent?

EMMA They don't have a massage table.

ERIC *(wanting to share the pain)* Too bad.

Eric enjoys the thought of other massage victims.

ERIC It's obvious they both need help. Being a dentist Mark's always bending over patients and Mary spends most of her time bent over a canvass painting. We could give them one from the clinic.

EMMA Yes, there are a few in storage and maybe include a free message?

ERIC Perfect. A free message for each of them. You know they need it.

EMMA Full body?

ERIC Absolutely, maybe two each. Why should I be the only one to experience your . . . talent? How's your day shaping up?

EMMA I need to clean the car's interior. You can walk to the library.

ERIC It's supposed to be hot later.

EMMA I'll pick you up, so it'll just be one way.

ERIC *(shrugs)* Shopping again?

EMMA I'm driving Mary and the girls to mahjong Wednesday night, so I need it clean.

ERIC Didn't you clean the interior a week ago?

EMMA Our car's interior accumulates a month's dirt in a week.

ERIC Emma, listen carefully. You're a glass is half empty person.

EMMA No.

ERIC You think your glass is half full?

EMMA My glass is clean and in the cupboard.

ERIC I should have guessed.

EMMA Mary and Mark are coming for dinner, expected at six, so no dentist jokes. Mark's very sensitive. Mary told me Mark's got an insect problem he needs to deal with, so they could be late. Mary noticed bees living under their deck.

End of Act One, Scene Two

LIGHTS OUT

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE

LIGHTS UP:

Time: Evening

Place: Emma and Eric's Apartment Livingroom

A few bars of Restaurant Ambience Music – Cozy Restaurant BGM, Lounge Music, Dinner Music – Instrumental Jazz (on YouTube) or something like it.

ERIC (O.S.) We could retire to more comfortable seating.

EMMA (O.S.) Absolutely. Sitting on dining room chairs is uncomfortable.

Eric and Emma ENTER from the dining room area holding full wine glasses. They sip wine.

MARY (O.S.) It was a wonderful meal.

EMMA Unfortunate Mark felt he had to stand the whole time.

Mark has difficulty speaking over the next few dialogues.

MARK (O.S. painful, stilted talking) What I managed to eat was de . . . good.

ERIC I wouldn't have thought a few bees could affect anyone's appetite.

EMMA Mark was very brave.

ERIC Or stupid.

EMMA Eric!

Mark and Mary ENTER from the dining room, each carry wine glasses with wine.

Mark has ten red dots over his face, his cheeks are puffed out, possibly cotton batten or paper towel.

All but Mark sit on the sofa.

MARY (motioning to Mark) I got the stingers out. Ten bites on the face alone, more elsewhere.

MARK There's a grand total?

MARY Ten bee stings on your face, back . . .

MARK (interrupting) They don't need to know where!

MARY Forty-seven in all.

Pained look from Mark and everyone.

- MARK Hard to chew, *(motions to face)* Cancelled office appointments for week. Secretary and hygienist got holiday. Bees cost me a weeks' work!
- ERIC I'll take care of the bees tomorrow with my never-fail beehive elimination system.
- MARY Mark had his bee system. Look at him. Those bees aren't normal. They're demon sharky bees. They read his mind, sensed his fear, were on him from the start.
- ERIC *(to Mark)* Have a seat. After the day you've had, you deserve to relax.
Mark starts to sit on the sofa chair, stops, tries again, and stops.
- MARY *(to Mark)* Go ahead, Hon, it should be okay.
Reassured, Mark, slowly, painfully, gingerly, starts to sit on the sofa chair.
- I got most of the stingers out.
Mark's face explodes with pain as he drops himself into the chair.
- MARK *(sarcastic whining)* Thanks, Hon. *(painful whining)* Thanks a lot.
- ERIC *(to Mark, feeling his pain)* Got yu.
Eric and Mark do fist bumps.
- Was it your plan to knock the hive into a garbage can then slide the lid on?
- MARK It's always worked before. Hit nest with hockey stick, supposed to fall; wouldn't fall; the more I hit it the more that came after me; gave up, crawled out; but they didn't give up; *(voice breaking)* followed me out; stinging and stinging!
- MARY You must have given off the wrong vibrations.
Mark's pain increases with Mary's comment.
- ERIC Vibrations?
- MARY Mark says . . . what was it, Love? Something about if you like bees, bees will like you . . . about sending them happy vibrations? Wasn't that it, Hon.?
Mark returns a pained look to Mary.
- They sensed your fear, so they attacked like little sharks. Isn't that right, Love?
Mark returns another pained look to Mary, then looks to Eric.
- MARK *(to Eric)* What's your system?

ERIC You gotta use a metal garbage can with a metal lid, with gas in the can. Put it under the beehive, cut the nest down with my long-handled pruning snips, right into the can, then pop the lid on top. Fumes take care of them. I've got the can and snips in the storage area. We can get them out for the onslaught.

Mark and Eric EXIT through the kitchen entrance.

MARY Do you think Eric can manage the garbage can, the lid, gas, and send out the right vibrations?

EMMA Eric doesn't believe in vibrations.

MARY Eric's a teacher.

EMMA So?

MARY He's good at instructing, but what about doing?

EMMA Eric can be a mister-know-it-all at times.

MARY But not a mister-do-it-all?

EMMA Eric's more of an instructor on how to do things than about doing things.

MARY He sounds like he knows about bee elimination.

EMMA *(shrugs)* Eric knows how to teach and golf. That's all.

MARY After seeing what happened to Mark, I'd be afraid. Why isn't Eric afraid?

EMMA *(gleeful)* Eric's never been stung.

MARY He doesn't know what he's missing.

EMMA *(gleeful)* I've never taken stingers out before. It sounds like fun.

LIGHTS OUT

End of Act One, Scene Three

ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR

LIGHTS UP:

Time: Evening.

Place: Eric and Emma's Apartment Livingroom.

The song "HURTS SO BAD" plays. The song starts to play from the words "Hurts so bad . . ."

Four pieces of large luggage sit at the front door.

Mark still has ten bee stings on his face, sits on the sofa chair, drinks a beer from a bottle or can.

MARK *(placid, but loud)* I like your 23th floor penthouse apartment, especially your beer. I usually drink lager. Your ale's refreshing.

ERIC *(O.S.)* You're not furious?

MARK *(placid, loud)* Not particularly.

ERIC *(O.S.)* How come?

Mark stands, paces in front of sofa.

MARK *(placid, loud)* I've learned to see the entertaining big picture.

ERIC *(O.S.)* The nasty big picture!

Mary and Emma ENTER from the DR door.

MARY *(on seeing Mark)* What's going on?

MARK *(placid, stares off into space)* Nothing.

Mary takes Emma to the side.

MARY When Mark's overstressed, he mellows out. Outwardly he's placid, but he's screaming inside.

Mary turns to Mark, pronouncing words slowly.

Why did Eric telephone to tell us to meet here?

MARK *(placid)* Did he?

MARY That's our luggage!

MARK *(placid)* Luggage?

MARY *(to Emma)* See. *(loud to Mark, points to luggage)* That!

Mark twigs to the luggage, snaps out of placidity.

MARK Eric should be the one to impart that information with the not so glad tidings. Eric!

Eric ENTERS from the kitchen area. He holds tweezers and staggers.

There are seventeen red marks (bee stings) on Eric's face, puffy cheeks and his hair and clothes are sooty.

The women jump back.

ERIC The bee, uh . . .

MARK *(interrupting)* . . . fiasco didn't . . .

ERIC *(interrupting)* . . . plan! didn't go . . . well.

MARK Our onslaught became our unslaught.

Emma moves to Eric, takes the tweezers from Eric's shaking hand.

She tries to take stingers out of Eric's face, but he waves her off.

EMMA They swarmed you?!

ERIC A swarm of little sharks, biting and biting.

MARK *(sarcastic)* I've heard somewhere bees sting, they don't bite.

Smile from Mark. Eric returns a condemning look.

EMMA Hon, you're a mess.

Emma looks closely at Eric's face.

It was a feeding frenzy.

ERIC *(waves her off)* It was . . . *(in pain)* nothing.

Mark, Mary and Emma stare at Eric.

MARK It looks like something to me.

ERIC Okay, next to nothing.

Eric is in pain as he tries to sit in the sofa chair.

MARK *(smiles)* I know the feeling.

Eric gives a twisted smile as he drops on the sofa chair, then a look of agony.

The ladies sit on the sofa.

MARK I was the hero of the day, wasn't I Eric?

ERIC Mark pulled me out . . .

MARK *(interrupting)* . . . by the ankles, with no concern for my own safety.

ERIC After it went off.

MARY Went off?

EMMA What went off?

MARK *(stands)* The garbage can went whoooosh *(gestures)* practically exploded.

ERIC Sorry about the deck.

MARY Our new deck?! Our only deck?! Please don't tell me . . .

Mary jumps up distressed.

MARK *(interrupting)* Blew up, then burned up. You know . . . gasoline?

Mark and Emma join Mary.

ERIC *(motions that it's hard to talk)* Hit the nest with my long pruning sheers; nest was cemented between joists; didn't fall in can; they stung and stung me, then . . . *(out of breath)*

MARK *(interrupting)* . . . the pruning sheers dropped on the metal garbage can, I emphasize the word metal; then came the whoooosh, probably due to a spark; flames shot up from the gas in the can like a massive blow torch into the bottom of the deck.

MARY *(moaning)* My deck's gone?

MARK *(shrugs)* Gone.

Emma stands beside Mary, puts an arm around her.

MARY *(distressed)* What about the house?

MARK Saved.

MARY *(happy, relieved)* Saved.

MARK Mostly.

Mary reacts.

Water damage.

MARY *(distressed)* Water?

MARK Fire department.

MARY *(distressed)* My abstract?

MARK Saved.

MARY *(happy, relieved)* Saved.

ERIC Mostly.

MARY Mostly?!

MARK It has more of an abstract bent.

ERIC Yeah, bent.

MARK It's the ultimate abstract, an abstract abstract.

MARY No!!!

MARK You remember Hildie, my favorite nude?

MARY I'd like to forget her.

MARK *(sad)* Her hills are gone. Hildie's now Harry!

MARK One of the firemen liked it, offered a hundred for her, him.

ERIC Mark said he's gay.

Mary and Emma look horrified at Mark.

MARY Mark?

EMMA *(to Mary)* Mark's gay!!

MARY *(to Mark)* You're . . .

ERIC *(interrupting)* Not Mark.

EMMA *(to Eric)* You? You're gay?!

ERIC *(laughs)* No, not us! The fireman!

MARY *(to Mark)* Hon, you're sure about not being . . .

MARK *(interrupting)* Yes, Hon.!!!! I was referring to the fireman, not me or Eric!

MARY Did you sell my abstract to the fireman?

MARK No! It's still your . . .

Mark shrugs, looks to Eric.

ERIC *(interrupting looking away)* . . . significantly visually challenged painting.

MARY *(distressed)* Ahhhhhhh! Where is my abstract?

MARK In the back bedroom.

Mary rushes into the back bedroom.

MARK My ant Fred is dead!

ERIC I killed your aunt?!!

MARK My ant Fred!

EMMA A family member has died?

MARK *(near tears)* I'll miss ant Fred. Couldn't take the heat. Cremated. Terrible.

Emma moves behind the chair Eric is sitting on, both horrified.

ERIC We should notify the authorities.

MARK *(resigned)* Ant Fred was as close to perfect any ant can get. I'll try to forget.

ERIC Your Aunt Fred lived, died, cremated, remembered, and now forgotten, all in the space of two hours?!

MARK Never forgotten! Fred was my favourite ant.

EMMA *(staggered by the news)* It's a tragedy!

Mary ENTERS from the back bedroom holding her abstract. We only see the back of the painting. Mary sits dejected on the sofa looking at her abstract.

MARY *(numb)* The bees are gone, so it wasn't a complete waste.

Emma and Eric are aghast, mouths agape.

ERIC *(to Mark)* What'll you do?

MARK I called the insurance company.

ERIC You insured your aunt?

MARK Unfortunately, priceless ant Fred wasn't insured, although the house was.

ERIC

AND

EMMA *(fearful)* And?

MARK They said they'd cover everything but our accommodations for three months, the time needed to repair the damage.

ERIC You're staying with us!

EMMA *(to Eric)* In our apartment?

ERIC Certainly! We have three bedrooms, lots of room.

MARK Rent free?

ERIC Of course.

MARK Beer free?

ERIC *(shrugs)* Sure.

MARK Penthouse living with beer benefits.

Emma leans into Eric, huddle away from Mark and Mary. Mark sits with Mary, discuss the painting which we don't see without sound.

EMMA If Mark had an Aunt Fred, he'll have an Uncle Alice.

ERIC What are you saying?

EMMA He's nuts! We can't have crazy people live with us.

ERIC We've known them for years.

EMMA Does anyone ever really know anyone else?

ERIC *(reels back)* Yes, we do! It's the strain of the ordeal!

EMMA What about my night-time democratic rights?

ERIC *(reels back)* What rights?

EMMA My nighttime freedom of expression!

ERIC I'm mostly responsible for this disaster, so they'll expect us to pay for them to stay in a hotel for three months, and I wouldn't blame them.

EMMA Good point.

Mark moves to Eric.

ERIC Mark.

MARK Yes, Eric.

ERIC You and Mary are staying with us until your house has been repaired. You'll love the view. The building comes with a workshop for guys who like to tinker. Interested?

MARK *(shrugs)* Sure.

ERIC It'll take our minds off our discomfort.

Mark and Eric EXIT out the DR door.

Mary puts the painting behind the sofa. Emma joins Mary on the sofa.

EMMA You and Mark certainly have unusual family members.

MARY There's black sheep in every family. We've got our share.

EMMA Would Mark be considered a black sheep or possibly . . . mentally unstable by his family?

MARY Not Mark. Mark's brother is a saxophone player. I could tell you stories.

EMMA Oh?

MARY Dentists are normal people.

EMMA What about the recent death of a family member?

MARY I don't recall one.

EMMA What about Aunt Fred?

MARY Ant Fred?

EMMA Tell me about . . . Aunt Fred.

MARY Getting rid of ant Fred was the only positive thing to come out of this disaster. Mark's ant was creepy! I would have loved to see that creep burn!

Aghast, Emma reacts, could pass out.

LIGHTS OUT

End of Act One, Scene Four

ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE

LIGHTS UP:

Time: Morning

Place: Eric and Emma's Apartment Livingroom

A few bars of Restaurant Ambience Music – Cozy Restaurant BGM, Lounge Music, Dinner Music – Instrumental Jazz (on YouTube) or music like it.

Eric reads from a novel on the sofa chair. Mark reclines on the sofa sipping a can or bottle of beer. The red bites and effects from the fire are gone. They are in casual attire.

MARK Wives who love to shop gives us a chance to buddy bond.

ERIC *(silently reads)* I don't buddy bond. I read. *(puts down book)* So, how much longer until your house is repaired.

MARK And deck.

ERIC Right.

MARK The insurance adjuster said it would be another two months before everything is finished. I hope having us here for the last month hasn't been too much of an inconvenience.

ERIC You're both welcome to stay as long as it takes. You're still planning on having a renovation homecoming party?

MARK Once everything has been repaired and we're moved back, we're having the biggest home-coming party ever.

ERIC It's all Emma talks about.

MARK The same with Mary. They love shopping together for replacement clothes, curtains, appliances, furniture for the opening. It goes on and on.

The phone RINGS, Mark, being closest to it, answers it.

(into phone) Mark and Eric's joint, Mark speakin'. *(pause, eyebrows go up)* Yes Monique, he's here. Just a moment.

Eric snatches the phone, returns to his chair. Speaks into it.

ERIC Hi Monique. Yes, it's me. *(pause)* Just a friend.

Eric turns away, tries to muffle his conversation.

Of course, I'll be there.

(MORE)

Mark moves to Eric trying to hear who he's talking to on the phone.

I'm looking forward to our next meeting. *(pause)* Goodbye Monique.

Mark swiftly returns to his previous position.

Eric hangs up the phone, sits in the sofa chair and reads from his novel.

A silence between them.

MARK Girlfriend?

ERIC Associate.

MARK Nice voice.

ERIC Somewhat.

MARK Young?

ERIC Fairly.

MARK Sounded quite young.

Eric shrugs.

Young . . . pretty . . . and friendly?

ERIC *(looks into the book)* Yes, I suppose so.

MARK I love young, pretty, and friendly.

ERIC *(looks into the book)* Good.

MARK Knowing young pretty friendly females would help since I've no house, deck or beautiful Hildi thanks to . . .

Eric slams down his book, weary.

ERIC *(interrupting)* This is personal, highly personal.

Mark slumps to his knees in front of Eric, begs.

MARK Please please please level with me. I'm dying for some young pretty friendly.

ERIC *(reluctant)* It's a surprise for Emma.

MARK *(lusty look)* Monique sounds like the type of woman who'd surprise a wife.

ERIC Not girlfriend!

MARK *(disappointed, stands)* No?

ERIC You're aware Emma likes to dance?

MARK Emma and Mary are both good dancers.

ERIC And I'm a terrible dancer.

MARK I won't pick on your dancing. I'm as bad, probably worse. I shuffle to the left, to the right then back to the table, any table, as fast as possible.

ERIC Same.

MARK So?

ERIC *(hesitates)* I've enrolled in a dance class, learning to dance, so once your house grand opening eventually blossoms, I'll surprise Emma with my dancing expertise.

MARK You'll glide to the music with Emma and I, the host, will stumble around with Mary like always. Embarrassing. I wish I could afford dancing lessons.

ERIC *(hesitates)* I'll pay for your dancing lessons if you'll let up about me burning your bee infested house and deck.

MARK And my fantastic Fred, and don't forget what happened to gorgeous Hildi.

A glare from Eric.

Expensive?

ERIC Five hundred. Ten lessons. Waltz, Salsa, Polka, Tango, Cha-cha, Foxtrot. They hold the lessons in the basement at the library.

MARK We'll surprise our wives.

ERIC So there'll be no more whining about your burned-up house, and deck. I'll get you signed up. It's Wednesday nights.

MARK Could there be a second young, pretty, friendly, instructor?

ERIC Monique and Isabella conduct the class together. Both are quite attractive.

MARK *(eager)* Our wives go to mahjong Wednesdays. The apartment will be vacant.

ERIC What are you getting at?

MARK I'm self-conscious about my inability to dance, don't want others to see . . . you know.

ERIC So?

MARK Maybe the class could be here, just for us. Private lessons?

ERIC Here?

MARK We could move the furniture back.

ERIC It'll cost more.

MARK I'll help with the extra cost.

ERIC We're both dance deficient, so . . . yes, I'll talk to them after we have our first lesson, see if they can teach us here after they finish the regular classes.

MARK *(big smile)* I've heard some young women like older men. It's possible they could teach us more than dancing.

ERIC *(smiles)* The possibilities are endless.

LIGHTS OUT

End of Act One, Scene Five

ACT ONE, SCENE SIX

LIGHTS UP:

Time: Afternoon

Place: Eric and Emma's Livingroom

A few bars of "LOVE WILL KEEP US TOGETHER" plays.

Mary sits on the sofa holding a clipboard with papers and pen, looks at the clipboard as she speaks.

Emma ENTERS from the bedroom area, joins Mary on the sofa.

EMMA What's on the agenda today?

MARY It's a long list. I've ordered the curtains and dining room suite. *(looks up from clipboard)* We need everything else. I wish I knew more about appliances.

EMMA I love appliance shopping. We should get moving. Price matching appliances will take time.

Mark ENTERS from the bedroom doorway dressed in casual attire that includes a bright shirt.

MARY What's the occasion?

MARK I ran around the building six times, came in, showered, feel great, so wanted to look great.

EMMA I wish I could get Eric to run.

MARY Emma's helping me select appliances and furnishings for the house before we join the mahjong ladies.

Mary and Emma move toward the door.

MARK Better Emma than me. I hate shopping.

MARY That's what I told Emma you'd say.

Mary and Emma EXIT the apartment but leave the clipboard behind.

Mark looks through the book Eric has been reading, shakes his head, puts it down, then goes to the stereo, takes a CD from a holder, puts it in the player.

The CD player doesn't need to be plugged in as Mark shows the CD to the audience, stands in front of the player, slides the CD on top of the player. Audience will assume it's in the player.

The sound of Foxtrot, Spanish or Salsa dancing music. Mark dances stiffly around the room with an imaginary partner. (AD can choose which dance to use as some dances can be challenging for some, however, whatever is chosen needs to continue throughout the play.)

The DR door opens, and Eric ENTERS. He is in casual attire.

MARK *(continues dancing)* Greetings to the charmer of the mysterious Monique.

ERIC Me? I saw you laughing it up with the lovely Lucille.

MARK *(continues dancing)* Dancing is good for us. I've had a run and have energy to spare. The class has me feeling ten years younger. It's good they agreed to have classes here. I'll show Lucille my technique. Are you sure you gave them the right address?

ERIC Yes, I had them write it down.

MARK You should have given directions.

ERIC It's our first private dance lesson, so I realize you're excited, but relax. They'll be here on time.

MARK Right.

ERIC You're doing it all wrong.

Mary and Emma move onto the DR porch from O.S., hear unfamiliar music, cautiously approach the door.

You need more flexibility. Here . . . I'll show you. Think of me as lovely Lucille.

Eric dances with Mark -- Foxtrot, Spanish or Salsa. What works for you're AD and actors. I like salsa.

If you move to the music, you'll get it. More flexing.

Emma quietly pushes the door open.

Both women see the men dancing together for about five seconds, but don't hear them. The women show shock.

EMMA I don't believe my eyes.

MARY Our husbands are dancing?

EMMA Together? Eric dances like a drunken sailor with me, but he's dancing like a Latin lover with your husband.

MARY Mark's a bad dancer; never wants to dance with me, but . . .

EMMA *(interrupting)* They hate dancing with us, but look at them breezing around like pros. It makes no sense.

MARY Yes, it does!

EMMA What?

MARY Our husbands have become fond of each other.

EMMA No! Not that.

MARY What else can it be?

The ladies react. The men don't hear Emma and Mary's comments.

EMMA We don't need the clipboard. Let's go to mahjong?

Emma pulls the door closed. Emma and Mary turn and EXIT.

The men do not see the women.

ERIC Now you've got it.

The men stop dancing. Eric turns off the music.

Eric sits on the sofa and Mark on the sofa chair.

You'll impress Lucille, although you'll need to lead.

MARK Lucille's quite the looker. I think she likes me.

Eric shrugs.

ERIC I know Monique likes me, but it's probably just the money. It is hard to tell what motivates women.

MARK *(twisted face)* I agree. You're probably right about why their so friendly. Money talks, *(brightens)* but on the other hand, you might not be entirely right.

Eric checks his watch.

ERIC Let's move the furniture back. Monique and Isabella will be here *(checks watch)* in five minutes.

MARK Right.

The guys start to move the furniture toward US.

LIGHTS OUT

End of Act One, Scene Six

ACT ONE, SCENE SEVEN

LIGHTS UP:

Time: Afternoon

Place: Eric and Emma's Apartment Livingroom

The song "CHAIN OF FOOLS" plays.

Mary and Emma rush into the apartment, sit stunned on the sofa. Mary picks up the clipboard that holds her list.

The song ends.

EMMA Eric's car is gone, so they're out on the town.

MARY Together.

EMMA If we hadn't returned for the clipboard, we wouldn't have caught them.

Emma takes the clipboard from Mary, breaks it over her knee and throws it. Mary is surprised at Emma's aggression.

MARY What are we going to do?

EMMA Eric and Mark are so different.

MARY They say opposites attract.

EMMA Yeah! Eric practically told me he had a secret rendezvous at the library.

MARY Your Eric pushed Mark into it! Eric's responsible.

EMMA Not Eric!

MARY Who?

Emma shrugs.

The fireman?!!!

EMMA Impossible!

MARY *(thinks)* Two guys live together in the same apartment, what can you expect?

EMMA It's hard to fathom.

MARY Eric and Mark? It blows my mind.

EMMA Mine too. *(gestures -- exploding mind)*

MARY Our husbands are are . . .

EMMA *(interrupting)* Don't say it!

MARY Ho, Ho . . .

EMMA *(interrupting)* No!

MARY I don't know . . . uh . . . how about we say they've . . . ambiguous sexual preferences?

Mary and Emma jump up, look at each other then DS.

MARY
AND
ANNIE Ahhhhhha!.

MARY What are we going to do?

Mary starts to cry.

EMMA How about a gin and tonic?

MARY I'm not a drinker so . . .

EMMA *(interrupting)* To dull the pain?

MARY Okay, I'll have a little. A little can't hurt.

Emma moves towards the kitchen.

LIGHTS OUT THEN COMES UP AGAIN (INDICATES TIME PASSING)

Emma and Mary are on the sofa.

Mary holds a water glass. Emma pours a little gin into Mary's water glass, looks at the teary, sniffly Mary, adds more gin, looks again at teary, sniffly Mary, shrugs, adds more. Emma pours the same into her water glass. The glasses are half full. They start to drink.

If Mark and I never moved in with you and Eric we would have gone on as always, now . . .

Mary throws arms up. Emma ignores Mary's comment.

EMMA *(wailing to the ceiling)* Men are impossible to understand.

MARY *(wailing to the ceiling)* Why?!!

LIGHTS OUT THEN COMES UP AGAIN (INDICATES TIME PASSING)

There can be a hidden pail or plant to pour the gin from the glasses into when the lights are out.

Emma is slumped down a little on the sofa with her full glass of gin.

Mary staggers around drinking from a full glass of gin. They drink gin like water. Both slur words.

MARY I forgot. What are we celebrating?

EMMA Not celebrating! We're decelebrating!! Remember, our husbands have become overly familiar? It's all Mark's fault!

MARY Not Mark!

EMMA I know it's not Eric's fault!

LIGHTS OUT THEN COMES UP AGAIN (INDICATES TIME PASSING)

Emma and Mary have slid off the sofa, both drunk on the floor at the foot of the sofa. Emma drinks from the bottle.

Emma jumps up.

EMMA The queen bee!

Mary jumps up.

MARY Right! It's the queen bee's fault!!

EMMA High five!

The ladies wind up for a massive high five, their hands miss, momentum taking them to the floor. Both look at their "high five" hands, wondering what happened.

If that queen bee didn't move in under your deck our husbands would still love us.

LIGHTS OUT THEN COMES UP AGAIN (INDICATES TIME PASSING)

The ladies are passed out in awkward positions on the floor in front of the sofa.

Mary wakes, jumps up.

MARY It's not the queen bee!

EMMA *(Emma wakes up)* Feels so right.

MARY You've got your need to clean, and I've got my need to paint!

Emma jumps up.

EMMA Are you saying we, us, we're responsible?!!

Both are sober.

MARY It was my painting!

EMMA And my cleaning!

MARY We're obsessed!

EMMA Our obsessions turned them away from us . . .

MARY *(interrupting)* . . . toward . . . each other! It was us?!

EMMA How could we not see it?!!!!

MARY (*eager*) Maybe it's not too late. We'll encourage our guys back!

EMMA I'm going for Eric's legs!

MARY Legs?

EMMA Yeah. Break 'em!

MARY That could be considered an over reaction.

EMMA Not for me.

MARY Do you want to end up like the mahjong women?

EMMA No. How can we encourage them back.

MARY We turn up our bedtime feminine charms!

EMMA Eric and I've been stuck in low gear, but we're not stalled!

MARY It's been a while since . . . you know . . . there was a lot of hot passion with us.

EMMA Hear yu. Remote control. We could shop for some, some, uh, flattering fashions.

MARY Absolutely.

EMMA We'll reinvent ourselves, become hot hot hot.

MARY We'll acquire more, more . . . expressive fashions. Do you ever get tired of shopping?

EMMA Never.

MARY Never get tired of shopping.

EMMA It's our DNA molecules. We got the "love to shop" molecules.

MARY Mark's got the "hate to shop" molecules.

EMMA Same with Eric.

MARY They've got other molecules.

EMMA The "constant need for sex" molecules!

MARY That's the ones.

EMMA Let's toast shopping. (*grabs gin bottle*) To shopping.

Emma takes a slug from the bottle, passes it to Mary. She drinks from the bottle.

MARY To intense bedtime attention!

Mary takes a slug from the bottle, passes it to Emma. She drinks from the bottle.

EMMA Night heat for our guys!

They pass out onto the sofa.

LIGHTS OUT

End of Act One, Scene Seven

ACT ONE, SCENE EIGHT

LIGHTS UP:

Time: Morning

Place: Eric and Emma's Apartment Livingroom

The song "LOVE HURTS" plays.

Eric, looking dishevelled, in pain, pale and walking like he's been kicked in the testicles, ENTERS from the bedroom dressed in pyjamas, sits in the sofa chair, picks up a book, tries to read, drops the book, curls up to sleep.

Mark staggers in from the bedroom in his robe, walking the same way. The song ends.

Eric notices Mark.

ERIC What happened to you?

Mark is almost to the sofa, stops.

MARK *(in pain)* Pulled something.

ERIC Something?

MARK A muscle. *(loud)* Big one!

Mark grunts as he collapses on the sofa.

ERIC *(finger to lips)* Shuuuuuush.

MARK *(softer)* Right.

ERIC *(desperate under his breath)* Don't wake them.

MARK You look like shit.

ERIC So do you.

MARK I woke up . . . exhausted.

ERIC Insomnia?

MARK Something else. What's your excuse?

ERIC *(whining)* I don't sleep, so tired . . . no energy.

MARK Tennis players eat bananas for energy.

ERIC There's a bunch in the kitchen.

MARK It's your kitchen. A banana might get me through the remains of my day.

(MORE)

Eric struggles up, EXITS into the kitchen walking like before, ENTERS with two bananas, throws a banana at Mark. Mark tries to catch it with one hand. It hits him on the head.

Pulled muscle?

ERIC It could be . . . It seems that . . . uh. I'm pretty sure . . .

MARK *(interrupting)* What?

ERIC We've pulled the same muscle.

Eric sits with Mark. They simultaneously half peel the bananas.

Bring the banana toward their mouths, stop, pull it back, look at each other for two seconds, break pieces of the banana off and eat it that way.

Neither wants to give the impression they could be gay.

MARK For the last five nights Mary's turned into a hot hooker.

ERIC My Emma wants it all night!

MARK Shussssh.

ERIC *(hushed)* It started five nights ago. Three times a night for us since then. There's a limit.

MARK Lucky you?

ERIC Why?

MARK Three and . . . uh . . . for me.

ERIC And a what?

MARK And a half.

ERIC A half?

MARK Went unconscious. I got thirty minutes sleep.

ERIC Forty-five minutes for me.

MARK Our wives play mahjong with their friends. Mahjong must be an aphrodisiac.

ERIC It's an ancient dice and tile game! Not aphrodisiac.

MARK Usually we have sex once or twice a week, occasionally we skip a week, depending, but now . . . it's more.

ERIC My Emma's become a sex machine.

ERIC Every night for five nights!

MARK That's when it started with us!

ERIC Weird.

MARK Could be the moon.

ERIC Not the moon.

MARK A virus?

ERIC *(shakes head)* If it were a virus, we'd have caught it by now.

MARK Right. No moon, no virus, no cause.

ERIC But a definite effect.

MARK Big effect.

ERIC I've never said no to sex.

MARK Too much is never enough.

ERIC That's been my motto until . . .

MARK *(interrupting)* Now?

ERIC Yeah.

MARK Ditto.

ERIC Yeah.

MARK What'll we do?

ERIC We're not equipped to deal with sharkie bees or sexually deranged wives.

MARK We're missing the "say no to sex" molecule.

ERIC It's our DNA's fault.

MARK Therapy?

ERIC A therapist would laugh and toss us out on our ears. It's Kafkaesque.

MARK Kafka what?

ERIC Kafka wrote about weird stuff happening.

MARK We've got weird.

ERIC In his *Metamorphosis* a man awakes one morning to find he's been turned into a six-foot bug.

MARK *(jumps up, frozen in fear)* An ant!!

ERIC Beatle, I think.

MARK How did it end?

ERIC Not good.

MARK For the bug or man?

ERIC Both.

Terrified, Mark looks at his hands, arms.

MARK My stomach is churning. I'm feeling more and more . . . (*desperate*) ant-like!

Eric grabs Mark.

ERIC You're not turning into an ant! It was a story. Get a grip, man!

MARK (*sits*) Thanks. Between Mary and that damn hound at the other end of the building howling on and on, it's left me jittery, exhausted.

ERIC That wasn't a hound.

MARK Wind? We're on the twenty-third floor. Wind can distort sound.

ERIC Emma enjoys her night-time freedom of expression. It's sexual.

MARK Democratic sex?

ERIC Keeps me interested and occasionally awake.

MARK I'm living with silent sex.

ERIC Be grateful.

MARK Is it genuine?

ERIC That's what I mean! I don't know! Ever since that eighty's movie with Meg Ryan, Billy Crystal, guys don't know.

MARK What about the neighbors?

ERIC I've been telling everyone it's the hound at the other end of the building.

MARK What'll we do?

ERIC About?

MARK Our bedtime . . . challenges!

ERIC We could find something to do to get us out of range.

MARK Good idea.

ERIC Do you golf?

MARK No.

ERIC But you'll do it?

MARK (*desperate*) Anything!

ERIC Tomorrow night?

MARK Night golfing?

ERIC I wish. Afternoons.

MARK How's that supposed to help?

ERIC If we've played thirty-six holes, come in exhausted, they'll have mercy on us.

MARK *(happy)* A night off would be appreciated.

ERIC We should discover other activities.

MARK How about another banana?

ERIC You get them. I've gone numb from the waist down.

Mark struggles up, takes both banana skins, moves toward the kitchen opening. "LOVE HURTS" plays.

LIGHTS OUT

End of Act One – END OF SAMPLE