
MISADVENTURES IN MARRIAGE

A comedy in two acts

FIRST ACT – SAMPLE

Robert J. Wheeler
15 Windsor Cres.,
London, ON N6C 1V6
Canada

robwheeler999@gmail.com

519-642-4844

www.wheelerscripts.com

© Copyright Rob Wheeler 2019

Revised August 19, 2024

MISADVENTURES IN MARRIAGE

By Robert J. Wheeler

FOUR ACTORS REQUIRED

2 males: 20-22, 26-30 -- 2 females: 20-25, 28-3

<u>CHARACTER NAME</u>	<u>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>GENDER</u>
BILLY A.K.A. William, Hayseed	Young university student	20-22	Male
JEREMY	Senior university student	26-30	Male
SUZANNE	Billy's hot cougar girlfriend	28-35	Female
TRISH	Young university student	20-25	Female

SETTING

University student's living room.

ACT 1, SCENE 1

Time: Night.

Place: Billy and Jeremy's student apartment.

LIGHTS OUT.

BILLY *(O.S. sound of key in door)* I must have left the door unlocked, or maybe there's thieves! Wait here until I'm sure it's safe.

LIGHTS DIM ON:

A typical student apartment -- used furniture, a few posters (one of Yoda) adorn the living room.

D.R. is the entrance to the apartment with a hall tree that has coats and sweaters and a cowboy hat on top (looks like a man) and a wall mirror.

U.C. is an entrance into the bedroom and bathroom.

M.L. and D.L. is a small kitchen with stove, fridge and microwave with a dinette with chairs. A textbook is on the table. Next is a large window with a radiator under it. In the living area D.C. are a sofa, storage bin for a coffee table, old TV on a stand with a plastic drinking glass on top of the TV.

BILLY (A.K.A. HAYSEED and WILLIAM) (21) ENTERS through DR door, turns on lights.

LIGHTS UP:

Billy closes the door, rushes around.

Jeremy! Jeremy!

Billy rushes into the bedroom and back out, looks up.

Thankyou God for half price wing night.

Billy opens the door and looks out.

Suzanne my love. No thieves. We're safe.

SUZANNE (35ish) ENTERS. She's a voluptuous brunette -- class with a touch of brass -- in a fetching black evening dress, long black boots, black leather coat with black purse, but then there's the earrings. Her look screams "experience".

I'd hate for anything to happen to you, Dearest.

SUZANNE Chivalry is alive and well in you.

Suzanne big kisses Billy.

Isn't love wonderful?

BILLY *(staggered from the kiss)* Fabulous.

SUZANNE William dearest, you're my everything.

BILLY I'll get changed, unless . . . we could have one of our . . . time outs? *(sex)*

Suzanne checks her watch.

SUZANNE No time. Later.

Billy throws his coat on the sofa back.

BILLY Okay, my Love. Make yourself comfortable.

Billy RUNS into the bedroom. Suzanne starts to put her coat on the sofa back, stops, looks closer at the sofa back, puts her coat on his coat.

Suzanne struts around the apartment, looks out the window.

SUZANNE William!

BILLY *(O.S.)* Yes, Precious?

SUZANNE I thought you'd live in a more upscale neighborhood.

BILLY *(O.S.)* Medical students don't start at the top, my Love.

SUZANNE But you'll get there?

BILLY *(O.S.)* A ninety-two average puts me at the top of the class.

SUZANNE Lovely.

BILLY *(O.S.)* This is home sweet home for now, Precious.

SUZANNE William Dearest, you desperately need a competent decorator.

BILLY *(O.S.)* When I'm a doctor, with a lucrative practice, I'll have the best of everything.

Suzanne moves to the TV, looks at it's top, wrinkles her face, opens and looks into her purse, puts the purse on the dinette table, takes a HANDGUN, wallet, set of keys from the purse and lays all individually on the table.

Suzanne takes a tissue pack from the purse, takes a tissue from it, leaves the pack on the table, moves toward the TV, stops,

goes back, gets another tissue, puts it over her first finger and thumb, goes to the TV, grasps the drinking glass by the lip with the tissues over her fingers, tugs up on it but it doesn't move, leaves the glass, wipes the top of the TV with tissues over her finger, looks at tissue -- black smudge -- makes an "icky" face, goes to the garbage can and drops the tissues into it.

SUZANNE Your cleaning service needs to be replaced. I know a good one.

BILLY (O.S.) Sorry. Tomorrow's cleaning day. Have a seat. Relax.

Suzanne moves to the sofa, about to sit, sees something on the sofa, takes a finger, rubs it back and forth on the sofa, takes a ball of fur from the sofa, holds it up and out.

SUZANNE You have a pet?

BILLY (O.S.) Just you my love.

SUZANNE Sweet.

Suzanne takes the ball of fur to the garbage can, drops it in, takes a tissue from the pack, wipes her fingers, goes to the garbage can and drops the tissue in the can, moves to the dinette table, puts the tissue pack into her purse.

William!

Suzanne puts the keys into her purse.

BILLY (O.S.) What would you like, my Precious?

SUZANNE Why is your sofa clogged with fur? Cat I think.

Suzanne puts the wallet into her purse.

BILLY (O.S.) Got it second hand. My dad insisted. He's a bit of a tightwad.

SUZANNE (angry) Better than my dad.

Suzanne takes the GUN.

BILLY (O.S.) He a tightwad too?

SUZANNE (loud) Alcoholic gambler!

Suzanne points the gun at hall tree that looks like a man with the broad rimmed hat on top.

(softly) Bang. (loud) You don't drink a lot, do you William? (softly) Bang.

BILLY (O.S.) No, no, no. Hardly at all. Just socially.

SUZANNE (loud) Gamble? (softly) Bang.

BILLY (O.S.) Never! I don't have money to throw away.

SUZANNE (loud) Good! Drinking and gambling destroy relationships. (softly) Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang.

Suzanne lowers the gun, marches to the hall tree, kicks it over, jams her foot on it's centre, puts three imaginary head shots into the hat, goes to stomp the hat, foot in mid air, catches herself, stops, turns and slinks to the table, puts the gun into her purse.

William, you make me feel like a queen.

Suzanne lowers her top to expose more cleavage, poses.

Billy DARTS in, wears slacks, sport jacket and tie.

My king.

BILLY Not over dressed?

SUZANNE You'll never be over or under dressed for me, My Love.

BILLY So, dinner and a play?

SUZANNE Reservations at Chez Jacqueline and then the play. Something by Neil Simon.

BILLY Chez Jacqueline? Sounds ex . . .

SUZANNE . . . citing!

Billy is bewildered. Suzanne pulls him to her.

We finish each other's words! It proves we belong together.

BILLY (timid) . . . pensive?

SUZANNE You're not pensive. You're hot. We both are.

BILLY Never been hotter.

SUZANNE My friends are envious because I'm dating a hot young man and yours are envious because . . . well . . . you've got me.

They put on their coats, move to exit the apartment. Billy notices the toppled hall tree. He stands it up.

BILLY Sometimes the coats get off centre and it falls over. Dumb hall tree.

Billy turns off the lights. They EXIT the apartment.

LIGHTS OUT

End of Act One, Scene One

ACT 1, SCENE 2

LIGHTS DIM ON

Time: The next day.

Place: The same.

JEREMY (28), in cheap, flashy clothes, RUSHES into the apartment, turns on lights.

LIGHTS UP

Jeremy has a poster-size framed picture of the Mona Lisa.

Jeremy takes down a picture of a bowl of fruit, replaces it with the picture of Mona Lisa.

Jeremy staggers into the kitchen gets a can of Brainy Buckeroo from the fridge, opens it, has a slurp, takes it to the kitchen table, opens the textbook that is on it and reads from it.

Jeremy gradually gets groggy, slowly slides down the chair then his head rests on the book and he snores.

Billy ENTERS through the front door wearing the same slacks, jacket and coat, sees Jeremy's asleep, tiptoes in, drops his keys, Jeremy stirs, Jeremy is larger than Billy.

JEREMY *(startles awake)* Uhummmm. *(sees Billy)* Hayseed!

Billy jumps.

BILLY Jeremy, my name is Bill or Billy, even William will do.

Jeremy's groggy, holds up a hand to block the glare.

JEREMY But I see you as Hayseed. Nicknames are good, personal.

BILLY I've had a pleasant evening of dining and theatre, so don't spoil it.

Jeremy holds up his can of Brainy Buckeroo and book.

JEREMY Brainy Buckeroo cram session. Psych quiz.

Jeremy sips from the can and puts it down. Billy hangs his coat on the hall tree.

BILLY How do you expect to become a doctor if you fall asleep on the book? Osmosis?

A quizzical look from Jeremy.

JEREMY *(blinks repeated)* My eyes won't focus.

BILLY You're tired. Go to bed.

Jeremy guzzles Brainy Buckeroo.

JEREMY Repetition trains the mind to remember.

Billy goes to the pictures of Mona Lisa.

BILLY What's this?

Jeremy moves to the picture.

JEREMY My new and only girlfriend, Mona. Mona, this is Billy my room mate.
(pause) Say something to her.

BILLY Hello Mona. Pleased to meet you.

JEREMY Did you see her nod? Quick nod. We met online.

BILLY You've gone mad.

JEREMY Breaking news! Teresa, Christine and Sandy. I've ghosted them. Three ghost ships have passed in the night. Any calls for me from a female voice, I've moved to Alaska. I had to take a stand.

Billy looks around.

BILLY Where'd you put it?

JEREMY Haw, haw. I expect to graduate, so . . .

Shrugs.

BILLY *(interrupting)* You've still got a couple months.

JEREMY I need to prepare my lungs. Up for a jog?

BILLY It's 3 a.m.! *(Jeremy shrugs)* If you jog for a quiz does that mean you'll study for a marathon?

JEREMY It's my system.

Jeremy and Billy sound Yoda-like.

Balance this one requires. Yoda knows.

BILLY May the focus be with you.

They talk normal. Jeremy guzzles from the can, holds it up.

JEREMY Allows me to focus like never before. My brain, heart, soul, my entire being is part of my super synchronized self.

Billy flops on the sofa. Jeremy does leg stretches.

- BILLY You smoke cigarettes and pot, drink like a whale, and worst of all, you gamble most of your money away! You can't afford a coat because . . . Jeremy, it's getting colder.
- JEREMY So, I'm not perfect. What happened to you?
- BILLY Me?
- JEREMY Yeah. You look rough.
- BILLY I drove home, helped with chores on the farm. Just got in.
- JEREMY You were at your parents' farm the whole weekend?
- BILLY I was.
- JEREMY Odd, a car, with your licence plates, was in the Uni. bar parking lot. You sell it? Stolen? I was at the back, saw your doppelganger with a hot brunette.
- BILLY So, Suzanne and I dropped in for a beer after the game. You were supposed to be going for half price wings then to your parents.
- JEREMY It's many miles to the homestead.
- BILLY You bet on some game and lost the gas money.
- JEREMY *(shrugs)* What about your Honey, Suzanne?

Jeremy jogs on the spot.

Where'd you meet her? Down on the farm, milking a Clydesdale?

- BILLY Holstein.
- JEREMY Clydesdale has the ring of country, like Hayseed has the smell.
- BILLY We're trying to keep it low key.
- JEREMY I won't broadcast it. I'm your roomie!
- BILLY About a month before you moved in. The championship game. *(fondly)* A night to remember.
- JEREMY A night I'd like to forget.
- BILLY Andy, the Gazette photographer came down with the flu, asked me to cover for him.
- JEREMY Isn't there a tiff going on with you two?
- BILLY *(shrug)* I had the university camera, but it was too complicated, so I used my own. Suzanne was covering the game. One look at her is all it took.

JEREMY Both covering the game?

Billy nods.

Cozy. You snap a photo of her?

Billy winces.

More?

BILLY A hundred and twenty-nine.

JEREMY And the game?

BILLY *(shrugs, under breath)* None.

JEREMY That explains Andy.

Billy stands, walks around.

BILLY She was magnificent, radiant.

JEREMY Your Sweet Suzanne's a Cougar, way older, old enough to be your m . . .

BILLY *(interrupting)* Don't say it! Don't you dare!

JEREMY Older cousin? Aunt?

BILLY Don't!

JEREMY I won't.

BILLY Good.

JEREMY Grandmother!

Billy reacts.

BILLY She's thirtyish something!

JEREMY Thirty what? Come on, give.

BILLY One.

JEREMY Wake up! She's over forty! What are you, nineteen?

BILLY Twenty-three. Old enough to know my own mind.

JEREMY You're twenty-one.

BILLY How do you . . .

JEREMY *(interrupting)* Checked your drivers' licence when you were showering.

Billy glares. Jeremy shrugs.

I'll be a doctor in less than a year. You've got four tough years ahead. Hayseed, she's out of your league. She'll eat you up, spit you out, leave you a cold, want-to-be-doctor. Suzanne . . . I know that face and name from somewhere.

BILLY You watch TV?

JEREMY The TSN sportscaster?! That Suzanne! On with Terry and Chuck with the morning update! Her mother was Nancy Something, the NBC news anchor. Was it two or three years ago she died?

BILLY Two and a half. Cancer. She was close to her mother.

JEREMY She lives on the estate her mother left her. She's loaded. Being a high-profile media person, they hush that up.

BILLY We never talk about money.

Jeremy jogs to the door, takes a sweater off the hall tree, puts it on.

Going out?

JEREMY Twice around the building. Can she cook? Brownies?

BILLY Double chocolate.

JEREMY My mom's Tupperware could stand a brownie fill up.

BILLY We need a code for entering the apartment.

JEREMY To enter my own apartment?

BILLY I took you in because I needed money to entertain Suzanne without my father finding out, so it's my apartment.

JEREMY Wasn't it my lost lamb impression?

BILLY I told Suzanne I live alone, so . . .

JEREMY *(interrupting)* What's the code?

BILLY There's a white tack on the outside door frame. We're both at home so the tack is on the frame. When you bring a fair maiden home, stick the tack on the door near the handle, then knock.

JEREMY As I told you, Mona, the one on the wall, is my steady.

BILLY If you come home and see the tack by the door handle, it means I'll be at home with Suzanne.

JEREMY I knock, then what?

BILLY After you gently knock, we'll talk in the hall, and decide what to do. Suzanne and I spend most of our time at her place, so I don't think it will be a problem.

JEREMY Okay. Don't forget my brownies.

END ACT 1, SCENE 2.

LIGHTS DOWN

ACT 1, SCENE 3

LIGHTS UP ON

Time: The next day.

Place: The same.

Billy sprawls on the sofa. Jeremy, not wearing a coat, ENTERS from outside, holds his hands out. Rubs his hands.

JEREMY It's damn cold! Cold! Cold! Cold!

BILLY You need a coat!

JEREMY Yeah.

BILLY But you never get one!

JEREMY Haven't seen one with long sleeves.

BILLY Coats have long sleeves!

JEREMY I don't like gloves. Long sleeves means warm hands.

BILLY You're incessant whining is driving me crazy! Get a coat!

JEREMY What's gotten into you? Or maybe the other way around.

BILLY Ha, ha.

JEREMY So?

BILLY Football! I bet on the Browns.

JEREMY Against Dallas? Nobody bets on . . . didn't the Browns win?

BILLY *(discouraged)* I made five hundred.

JEREMY You're miserable because you won five hundred dollars?

Billy nods.

That's it! I've entered a parallel universe where winning is a form of torture, or one of us is on serious hallucinogens.

BILLY No!

JEREMY Parallel universe. Give.

Jeremy sits beside Billy.

BILLY Last week Suzanne said the Bills were due to win, and the week before she said the Bengals were due for a win, and I didn't bet on either team.

JEREMY They won. This week you bet on the Browns because she said they'd win?!

BILLY Yeah.

Jeremy jumps up.

JEREMY I've joined your perfect parallel universe! Your Suzanne, the TSN journalist, picked three long shot winning NFL teams on consecutive Sundays! Three trap games! That's insane!!!

Billy jumps up.

BILLY Her father was an alcoholic gambler, so she hates alcoholics and gamblers! If I tell her I bet on her tip, she'll dump me.

JEREMY Don't tell her! Tell me!

Billy flops on the sofa, still glum.

I could have been a tad hasty saying you and youthful looking Suzanne won't work out.

BILLY Really?

JEREMY Many young men are attracted to older women and vice versa. Age, after all, is a state of mind.

BILLY Now you're saying age doesn't matter?

JEREMY Not as much as it did a minute ago. If you tell her, you'll have no true love and no money. You can't have that . . . and neither can I.

BILLY What have you got to do with it?

JEREMY Hayseed. I'm your buddy, your bro! Remember when I shared my car with you when your brakes let go and you needed to visit your sick grandmother? Had it over a week. My dream car. Very important to me. I wouldn't lend it to just anyone.

BILLY I had to replace four bald tires with new ones before I'd drive it.

JEREMY Buddies share stuff. Betting tips?! Quid pro quo?!

BILLY But . . .

JEREMY (*interrupting*) Hayseed, Suzanne has a unique talent. We need to respect her unique talent.

BILLY How?

Jeremy, hands in pray mode, slides on his knees.

JEREMY By telling me what team is due to win! It's a sin to waste opportunity when it knocks.

A KNOCK on the door.

BILLY Opportunity's back again. Go into the bedroom. It might be Suzanne.

Jeremy complies. Billy answers the door. TRISH, a perky 22-year-old, storms in.

TRISH *(harsh)* I was told your car is . . .

Trish and Billy are immediately attracted to each other.

(softer) . . . blocking, the, driveway.

Jeremy STROLLS in from the bedroom chewing on a beef jerky.

BILLY *(soft)* Mine's parked underground.

JEREMY Is it executive grey with a gleaming chrome leaping jaguar on the hood?

TRISH It's grimy grey with a dullish chrome blob on the hood.

JEREMY My God, girlie, that's a \$100,000 Jaguar X-Type. An exquisitely crafted machine, not a dog sled.

TRISH I've got furniture being delivered and the truck needs to pull up to the door.

JEREMY I was cold, fingers were icicles.

TRISH Cars have heaters.

EREMY Mine kicks out just enough for the windows but none for me.

TRISH A hundred thousand and no heat?

JEREMY It only cost me ten grand. Scooped it at the police auction.

TRISH Right.

JEREMY Of course I had to fix the bullet holes . . . and clean the reddish stain off the driver's seat.

Trish holds up her cellular phone.

TRISH I've got the tow company number. Should I call or . . .

Jeremy moves to the door, EXITS. Trish puts her phone away.

(to Billy) I'm Trish.

BILLY Hi. I'm Billy, William.

They shake hands.

TRISH I've seen you around somewhere.

BILLY Have a seat.

Trish starts to sit, looks at the sofa, decides to stand.

TRISH I sit too much. I'm a university student. Moving into 717.

BILLY Jeremy and I are medical students. Sorry about the car problem.

TRISH I work summers in my aunt's cleaning company.

BILLY I flipped burgers last summer.

TRISH I could come in and clean your place sometime.

BILLY I'll have to talk to Jeremy.

TRISH The jerk.

BILLY Jeremy was cold when he got in.

TRISH There are no parking signs all around the building.

BILLY He probably forgot where he left it. He's crazy about his Jag. Bought it with his \$10,000 winning lottery ticket.

TRISH Lucky.

BILLY Not if you consider what he spends on lottery tickets.

TRISH He's an inconsiderate, narrow minded . . .

BILLY *(interrupting)* I monitored one of his psych classes. Seen him psychoanalyze. He has a knack of cutting through a patient's defense mechanisms and getting to the root of their problem.

TRISH *(sarcastic)* Right. *(nice)* I'm in Theatre Arts.

BILLY An actor?

TRISH Aspiring.

BILLY Jeremy's in his last year and I'm in my first. Eventually we'll both be doctors.

Jeremy RUSHES in.

JEREMY I'm going in for shrinking heads. Do you know how much a Big Apple shrink makes?

TRISH Did you move your dog sled?

JEREMY My Jag is parked legally around back.

TRISH It was nice meeting you Billy.

Trish EXITS. Billy's panted on smile lingers as he stares at the nearly closed door.

JEREMY I've been snubbed.

Jeremy sees Billy's smile, goes to the door, slams it.

What about my brownies?

Billy pulls a Tupperware container out of his bookbag. Jeremy rushes to it. Billy pulls it back.

BILLY I finished them off at a stop light on the way home. I'll get more. What are you, a forty?

JEREMY I'm twenty-seven!

BILLY Coat size.

JEREMY Probably.

BILLY I've got a fully sleeved coat that'll fit you.

LIGHTS DOWN

END ACT 1 SCENE 3.

ACT 1, SCENE 4

LIGHTS UP ON

Time The next day.

Place The same.

Jeremy ENTERS from the bedroom with the Tupperware container full of brownies, eats a large brownie.

Billy RUSHES in the front door, distraught, throws his coat, book bag on the table, crashes on the sofa.

JEREMY What's up, Bro?

Billy pushes his face into a cushion.

Don't tell me Miss Wonderful broke off with you!

Billy shakes his head, no.

(relieved) Whew. You should be jumping for joy. You've got Miss Right! I've had to settle for Miss Almost Right, in lean times, Miss Altogether Wrong.

BILLY I can't talk about it.

JEREMY In desperate times, Miss Absolutely Crazy.

Jeremy puts a four-inch brownie in his mouth, has chocolate icing on his face.

Look at me! Proof things can get worse.

Billy looks at him, laughs, pushes his face into the cushion.

BILLY The subject of intention came up.

JEREMY Invariably does. When that happens, you change the subject. Did you change the subject, say to the Patriots or Buccaneers?

BILLY No.

JEREMY Bills or the Raiders?

BILLY No.

JEREMY Saints or the Pack?

BILLY No.

JEREMY You changed the subject, right?

Billy winces, flings the pillow aside.

BILLY I spent my savings. Got her an engagement ring. I . . . proposed.

JEREMY Ahaaaaaa! She dumped you! You've killed our golden goose!??

Jeremy sits beside Billy, puts an arm around him.

Rejection happens to the best and worst of us. Pull yourself together. You can get a bigger ring, try again.

BILLY She said yes.

JEREMY She actually wants to marry you?!

BILLY We love each other.

JEREMY Have I got this right? You and the woman of your dreams, your fiancée yet, love each other and your miserable about it.

BILLY Yeah.

Jeremy jumps up.

JEREMY In this parallel universe true love is torture. I thought I'd heard it all, but . . .

Billy jumps up.

BILLY *(interrupting)* She's been married before!

JEREMY A woman her age is bound to have been married before. It's a good thing. Experience. Cheer up.

BILLY I'm having second thoughts.

Billy sits on the sofa. Jeremy goes down on one knee, takes a brownie, takes a bite, talks through eating it.

JEREMY Billy Boy, promise me you won't turn out our goose that laid our financial future and heavenly brownies!

BILLY Jeremy.

JEREMY Listen! You don't have a fiancée.

BILLY No?

JEREMY You've got a gold mine!

Billy turns away. Jeremy puts down the Tupperware.

Her tips have turned my life around. You told me you love each other, right?

BILLY Yes, but I wonder if it'll work out, you know, long term.

JEREMY So she's been married before.

Billy jumps up.

BILLY Five times?

JEREMY Five engagements. She broke them off and that was that.

BILLY Five marriages!

JEREMY That's im . . .

BILLY (*interrupting*) She has five wedding albums!

JEREMY Five different husbands?!

BILLY Yes! Over the last ten years she's had five marriages and five divorces. She marries on even years and divorces on odd years.

JEREMY A serial marrier! Addicted to marriage!

BILLY I feel like I'm on an assembly line!

JEREMY And the other.

BILLY Other?

JEREMY Disassembly.

They sit on the sofa.

Buck up. Minor psychological problem. An easy fix.

BILLY Minor?

JEREMY An obsessive compulsive disorder. I'm familiar with it. No big deal.

BILLY No?

JEREMY Look on the bright side.

BILLY Bright side?

JEREMY She could be a serial killer.

Billy jumps up.

BILLY Whoopee. I'll live to be miserable.

JEREMY Not necessarily.

BILLY She'll kill me?

JEREMY Not necessarily.

BILLY I could end up a victim?

JEREMY Not unless you provoke her.

BILLY What's that supposed to mean?

JEREMY Look. She's got a disorder I can fix.

BILLY We have to think about my future.

JEREMY Think of her as your Miss Right But Temporarily Crazy.

BILLY But Jeremy . . .

JEREMY Don't provoke her.

BILLY Provoke?

JEREMY Agree with whatever she says.

BILLY She says I'm her soulmate and I feel like she's mine. If she hadn't married so much it would be perfect.

JEREMY It's a simple mental condition.

BILLY You make it sound like an ingrown toenail.

JEREMY I'll make an accurate diagnoses, have a few therapy sessions with her, treat and cure her. She'll be as sane as you or I.

BILLY I told you, I don't want her seeing you.

JEREMY Forgot. We'll improvise. Get me her wedding albums. Find out about her past. Both are crucial.

Jeremy moves toward the bedroom.

BILLY You're tired?

JEREMY I need to study. My psych text has a whole chapter on OCD.

BILLY Good. I've got a quiz in the morning.

Jeremy EXITS into the bedroom. Billy looks into his laptop computer on the dinette table.

A KNOCK on the door.

(loud) Stay in there. It'll be Suzanne at the door.

Billy opens the door. Trish ENTERS with a mop and pail, dressed for cleaning.

TRISH I normally charge ten dollars an hour but decided to charge five, so you don't need to talk to Jeremy.

BILLY How about seven fifty?

TRISH Sure. Where do you want me to start?

They look around.

BILLY Uh, anywhere, I guess. In this room, of course.

Trish leans the mop in a corner, takes a spray bottle and a cloth from the pail.

Billy goes to the laptop on the dinette table and looks into it.

Trish moves to the TV, tries to move the glass, won't move, palm hits it into her other hand (CRACK), drops it in the kitchen garbage can, sprays the top of the TV, scrubs it with a cloth.

I've got to catch up on biology, so . . .

TRISH I like it quiet.

Billy looks over the laptop, watches her work.

Jeremy ENTERS, stops at the doorway from the bedroom, sees Billy watch Trish.

JEREMY What's going on here? I can't afford a cleaning service.

BILLY I'm paying.

Jeremy puts down the book, goes to the storage bin, takes out a white apron, puts it on Trish.

JEREMY We don't want our neighbor Trish absorbing bachelor dirt, do we Billy?

Trish scrubs the top of the TV, her rear moving from side to side. Jeremy notice Billy notice this.

BILLY No.

Jeremy goes to the bin, take another white apron and puts it on Trish backwards.

TRISH Is there a vacuum?

BILLY Under the counter.

Trish gets the cannister vacuum, vacuums the sofa.

Jeremy sees Billy is even more attracted to her.

Trish sneezes. Jeremy goes to the bin, takes a small, white breathing mask out, puts it over Trish's face.

JEREMY No sense in Trishie getting ill from our dirty bachelor sofa, is there Billy?

Trish vacuums the sofa. Billy continues to watch her over his laptop. Jeremy notices Billy notice Trish.

Trishie, Hayseed and I have serious business to discuss. We need you to leave now.

BILLY *(to Trish)* Can you come back and finish up tomorrow?

TRISH Sure.

Trish puts the vacuum away and EXITS the apartment.

JEREMY Your first priority is to get me Suzanne's wedding albums, not cleaning the apartment! You're not focused. I agreed to help you, but I need you to be focused. Can you focus?!!

BILLY I'm not a thief.

JEREMY Borrow them!

BILLY Maybe tomorrow.

Jeremy picks up the book and reads from it.

JEREMY Many OCDs need everything to be either perfect all the time or they have a massive load of repressed anger. *(to Billy)* You should be able to tell me which.

BILLY I don't know?

JEREMY It's your future. Think!

BILLY Her place is very clean. I guess it's perfect all the time.

JEREMY Really?

BILLY Yeah.

JEREMY She's dating you.

BILLY So?

JEREMY You're as worldly as a country mouse. Maybe she met you on a bad day.

BILLY Are you saying . . .

JEREMY No, on second thought, you'd be perfect for an OCD. Young, naive, going to be a doctor with higher-than-average income potential, and you don't look that bad. Something she can mould.

BILLY I feel a bout of OCD coming on.

Billy sprawls out on the sofa.

JEREMY Not contagious. Did she mention anything about bad teams winning? The Chargers, Bills, Browns? Raiders might be due?

BILLY You're a compulsive gambler! It's a disorder!

JEREMY When it's a sure thing, it's not gambling. I'll need to interview Suzanne's ex's.

Billy jumps up.

BILLY Oh God, not her ex's?

JEREMY They'll confirm reoccurring behavior patterns, unless . . .

BILLY What?

JEREMY Did you quiz her on her past, before her first marriage? A dysfunctional family, abused as a child, that sort of thing.

BILLY I tried, but . . .

JEREMY Her exes will be eager to tell us all we need to know, probably more.

BILLY I'll talk to her again.

JEREMY Does she know about your family?

BILLY I'm keeping Suzanne from my parents as long as possible. They have traditional values.

JEREMY Make up a weird family. It'll help her open up and spill her dark secrets.

BILLY You want me to lie about my family?

JEREMY You want her cured don't you?

Jeremy moves toward the door.

BILLY Where are you going?

JEREMY Smokes. I'm out.

Jeremy EXITS. Billy takes a textbook to the sofa and sprawls on it as he reads.

LIGHTS DOWN

END ACT 1 SCENE 4.

ACT 1, SCENE 5

LIGHTS UP ON

Time Same day.

Place The same.

*Billy reads on the sofa.**A KNOCK on the door.*

BILLY Come on in!

Suzanne ENTERS with a cardboard box.

SUZANNE William!

Billy snaps to attention, takes the box and puts it on a table.

BILLY A second, My Love.

Billy scoots out the door for two seconds then bounds in.

SUZANNE I brought you some of my past.

BILLY You've packed your past in a box? How . . . portable.

SUZANNE My wedding albums. My marriages are a big part of my past. We can have a cozy evening curled up mulling over my misadventures in marriage.

BILLY Uh, that sounds very, unusual, but, (*uncertain*) it'll be fun?

SUZANNE That's what I thought, too. We think alike. Let's get comfortable.

BILLY The sofa's been cleaned.

SUZANNE Good.

Suzanne puts her coat on the hall tree, takes the box to the sofa, puts it on the floor. Billy and Suzanne snuggle on the sofa. Suzanne takes an album from the box, looks into it.

Ah. Andrew, my first. Very sweet, caring, but intensely, boring. Came over him right after the wedding. He drank a lot to break the boredom, so he had to go. I thought it was going somewhere, but it wasn't, all because of boredom, and of course his drinking. He looked okay, right?

BILLY His curly blonde hair was his best feature. Look at that chin!

SUZANNE Point taken.

She puts the album on the sofa arm and takes another and looks into it.

A LOUD BANGING on the door.

BILLY I wonder who that can be? *(knowing it's Jeremy)* Excuse me my Love.

SUZANNE I'll check my messages.

She pulls out her cellular phone and looks into it. Billy goes to the door, opens it to Jeremy.

BILLY You have to leave.

JEREMY Can't. Got to study. I need my computer. I'll sneak into the bedroom. You won't hear a peep.

BILLY I don't want her seeing you. Wait.

Billy closes the door, scoots to the storage bin, grabs two white aprons, the breathing mask, feather duster, floppy brimmed hat from it, gives them to Jeremy and closes the door.

SUZANNE Is it important?

BILLY No, my Love, just the cleaning service. She's got work to do in the bedroom.

Billy opens the door. Jeremy dressed as a cleaning lady -- face mask, aprons, hat with the feather duster, ENTERS.

Suzanne this is Claudia, my cleaning service.

Jeremy uses Yoda's voice.

CLAUDIA Hello, my Dear.

Suzanne glances at Claudia, does a double take.

SUZANNE That's a cleaning service?

BILLY Claudia's got a germ phobia.

Suzanne looks back into her Smart Phone.

CLAUDIA Takes all kinds, don't it?

SUZANNE A cleaning bot with a fear of germs? I know that voice from somewhere.

BILLY *(softly to Jeremy)* You're using Yoda's voice. Can't you . . .

JEREMY *(to Billy)* Yoda is as feminine as I get.

Claudia (Jeremy) dusts. Billy returns to Suzanne, look into an album.

SUZANNE Oh yes, Mark. He was okay except for his dirty bad habit.

BILLY Dirty bad habit?

CLAUDIA Dirty bad habit?

Billy glares at Claudia. Suzanne is oblivious. Claudia dusts closer to the couple, tries to look over Suzanne's shoulder to the album she looks at.

SUZANNE A car nut, buying, selling, working on the damn things, had black grease on his hands, in his fingernails, very black, so he had to go.

Billy checks his fingernails, does a "eikes", wipes the ends of his fingers on his pants.

I thought it was going somewhere, but it wasn't, because of his dirty . . .

CLAUDIA . . . bad.

BILLY . . . habit.

SUZANNE Very nasty.

Claudia dusts the album on the sofa arm, knocks it off, picks it up, looks through it. Billy tries to wrestle the album from Claudia. Suzanne takes and looks through another album.

Paul. Right. Paul. That union lasted a whole two months, shortest of 'em all. Paul had aggression issues, always wanted to fight somebody.

Billy and Claudia fight for the album behind Suzanne while she looks into the album.

BILLY (to Suzanne) Fight with you?

They stop fighting, wait for the answer.

SUZANNE No, he knew better than to do that.

She holds up her purse then puts it down. They shrug and continue fighting for the album behind her.

It tainted the relationship, spilled into our personal lives, so he had to go. It could have gone somewhere, but he was way too . . .

BILLY Thankfully I'm not aggressive, in a destructive way. Of course, I am when it comes to getting ahead in the medical profession.

Billy wrestles the album from Claudia, pushes Claudia back, puts the album on the sofa arm, faces Suzanne.

SUZANNE My William. Doctors know so much.

Claudia looks over Suzanne's shoulder to the album Suzanne holds. Suzanne and Claudia come face to face. Billy pushes Claudia away.

BILLY Jer, Claudia! Your work is in the bedroom!

CLAUDIA Okay, Master William. I'll clean up your mess, no matter how distasteful. I find germs so, so . . . threatening.

Billy motions Claudia toward the bedroom.

Claudia puts down the duster, opens a cupboard, takes out the canister vacuum cleaner, plugs it in, starts it and vacuums the living room, hedges closer to the couple, has the hose wrapped around a leg

Billy glares at Claudia. Suzanne puts down the album, looks into the last two albums.

SUZANNE The last two. I knew there was a reason they had to go at the time, but now it escapes me. It doesn't change anything between us, does it, Precious?

BILLY Not at all! I love you all the more for your honesty.

Claudia tries to open an album while vacuuming near it.

Claudia! The bedroom!

CLAUDIA There's still quite a mess to deal with here.

BILLY *(to Claudia)* Bedroom! Now!

Claudia withdraws dragging the vacuum with the hose wrapped around a leg and cord wrapped around the other leg, almost falls, exits into the bedroom.

(to Suzanne) Claudia's a little slow on the uptake. We were talking about your past. Please go on, my Love.

SUZANNE That's all, for now. No! I remember. Steven developed a very nasty twitch, you know, with his eye. Then the other one would start up, almost on purpose, like a warning sign you see on the highway, the yellow ones that blink back and forth? Drove me crazy, so he had to go too. I thought it was a good choice when I married him, but flashing eyes made it impossible.

BILLY Didn't the vows mention anything about for better or worse, until death do us part?

SUZANNE Nothing on eye twitching though. Oh, you're upset, thinking what might happen if your eye twitches. William, my Love, when true love happens, eyes don't twitch.

BILLY *(his eyes bulge)* That's a relief.

SUZANNE You must think it odd I can't remember the last divorce.

BILLY Tom.

SUZANNE It was an extremely stressful time for me. I must have blacked it out. You know, like when they black out football games for poor attendance.

BILLY Empty stadium.

SUZANNE Once more fans buy tickets the black out goes away.

BILLY Oh God, I hope it does.

LIGHTS DOWN

END ACT 1 SCENE 5

ACT 1 SCENE 6

LIGHTS UP ON

Time: The next day.

Place: The same.

Jeremy ENTERS from the bedroom with a large stack of books, reads from the top one, puts the books on the dinette table, sits at it, reads, closes the book, puts his head on the book.

Billy ENTERS from the outside with a full book bag. Jeremy straightens.

JEREMY Got our winnings?

BILLY Yeah.

Billy puts his coat on a chair, bag on table, goes to Jeremy, gives him a wad of bills. Jeremy stands, counts his money.

Two thousand each.

JEREMY I love winning. Love it! I think I'll bet my whole five thou on this Sunday's tip. What about you?

BILLY That's fine.

Billy moves to the table, opens the knapsack. Five small wedding photo albums spill out.

JEREMY Tremendous. The clues are here.

BILLY All I could see was Suzanne's hopeful, beaming face with Andrew, Mark, Paul, Steven, and Tom.

They leaf through the albums.

JEREMY Is that the order she married them?

Billy thinks about it, counts on five fingers.

BILLY Yes. Andrew was her first, then . . .

JEREMY She's picked her husbands in alphabetical order. Typical OCD. That's gotta tell us something.

BILLY She calls me William.

JEREMY You're special because you're a "W".

BILLY I feel so very . . .

JEREMY Pathetic, right?

They look into albums.

Pitiful?

BILLY Very William.

JEREMY Whatever that means. Look for anything that was consistent during every wedding.

BILLY The dates on the photos. The first Saturday in January for every wedding!

JEREMY Your wedding is?

BILLY First Saturday in January.

JEREMY Bingo! She can't get past the first Saturday in January on an even year without getting married to somebody.

BILLY I'm a somebody.

JEREMY Not as pathetic as William, but still pretty bad.

Billy goes to punch Jeremy who jumps away.

I need to focus. She needs to be cured before your wedding. It'll never work after. The dress! It's the same one.

BILLY Her mother's wedding dress. Wears it for all her weddings.

JEREMY The same hair do and same church in the photos.

BILLY Right! What now?

JEREMY We put the pieces together, cure her so we can live happily ever after.

BILLY What's the standard treatment for my fiancée nutcase?

JEREMY Shock treatment. Most likely more than one.

BILLY Electrical?

JEREMY Emotional! We change everything. Arrange for her hairdresser to be out of town. Lose the wedding dress. Make the church unavailable. Bribe the photographer to cancel last minute. Once we get past the first week in January you can marry her in any of the other fifty-one weeks.

BILLY Her mother's wedding dress means a lot to her.

JEREMY Okay, we keep the dress. Everything else is fair game, right?

BILLY I suppose.

They sit on the sofa.

- JEREMY Did you tell her about your parents, get her to open up about her past?
- BILLY My father's a dairy farmer. We've had a typical life. I had to lie, so I told her my dad was a boxer. I'm his only son. He wanted me to follow in his footsteps, become a contender.
- JEREMY A contender. Like it.
- BILLY We boxed. He knocked me out quite a lot. I never won a fight with him, but vowed someday I'd amount to something, be a healer, not a fighter, be a man who puts people back together, not one who takes them apart.
- JEREMY Did she buy it?
- BILLY Loved it.
- JEREMY Did she spill her past?
- BILLY Her father was John Wilson, a truck driver. Suzanne's mom was happy with John; getting married to him; had the wedding dress; invitations sent; church booked; photographer; reception set; even flowers; then it happened.
- JEREMY What it?
- BILLY She found out she was pregnant with Suzanne. When she told John at first he said everything was cool, then he started drinking and gambling. He gambled all their money away, then on their wedding day he didn't show up. He left her at the altar. Called a week later, said he did it because he didn't want a kid.

Jeremy stands.

- JEREMY She was abandoned by her father while still in the womb?
- BILLY Yeah.
- JEREMY That's God awful. A major shock.
- BILLY Mom told her he was an alcoholic gambler, so even though he left her without a cent, her consolation was she didn't have to live with his abuse.
- JEREMY She has to be pissed at him.
- BILLY Since her mother died Suzanne thinks about her father a lot.
- JEREMY Probably wants to kill him.
- BILLY I can see why.
- JEREMY Most women deal with husbands like they learn to deal with their father.

BILLY Whoa, Jeremy, that's a red f . . .

JEREMY Probably nothing.

BILLY I could be the target of pent-up hostilities aimed at a father who's a complete jerk! That's nothing?

JEREMY Really, it's nothing. Anything else?

Billy hesitates.

Billy, you're holding back. She told you something else.

BILLY I can't tell anyone. I promised her I wouldn't.

JEREMY Do you or don't you want a happy life with her?

BILLY Damn! I hate! . . . Suzanne told me she was stood up at the altar by her fiancée a year before her first marriage.

JEREMY Oh, my, God! Abandoned by her father while in her mother's womb, major shock. Caused her mother to be abandoned, major shock. Suzanne suffers the same fate as mom, abandoned by her fiancée, major shock. Triple major shock! She's not an OCD!

BILLY What?

JEREMY She's a total screw up!

Billy flops on the sofa.

She's an RSS. It's very rare. Repetitive Shock Syndrome. I need to fight fire with fire. You've seen them back burn wildfires? It's the same. Big shocks start the fire. Little shocks put it out. I'm going to put her crazy wildfire out.

BILLY Odd.

JEREMY How?

BILLY You're putting my fire out.

JEREMY Each wedding validates her self worth, then later, she gets to punish the father who abandoned her mother and the fiancée who abandoned her by punishing groom after groom.

Billy goes to the picture wall, leans his back into it.

BILLY Why do I feel like I'm being marched to a bullet scared Mexican adobe wall where I'll turn and face my personal firing squad?

JEREMY To some women, husbands act like father stand-ins. The more screwed up the father, the more affected the daughter, and the more abuse the stand-in is in for.

BILLY Bang!

*Billy staggers to the sofa back, rolls over it, lays on the sofa.
Jeremy ignores him.*

JEREMY We need to talk to the dumbass who left her at the altar.

BILLY She told me dumbass was a student.

JEREMY She likes 'em young. That figures. What else?

BILLY When I pursued it, she gave me her crazy look! I see the look, I drop the subject.

JEREMY I hope you don't mind but I invested some of our winnings, hired a private eye, had him track down Suzanne's father.

BILLY Not at all. We're making real progress?

JEREMY Good news. John Wilson drove long haul trucks all over North America. Bad news. He got run into by a drunk in Norfolk, Virginia. Saved his co-driver from the burning wreck but died a week later of complications.

BILLY That doesn't jive with Suzanne's mom's story.

JEREMY He's been posthumously recognized as a genuine hero.

BILLY Didn't he leave Suzanne's mom because he didn't want a kid?

JEREMY According to John's best bud, the guy he pulled from the wreck, John left Suzanne's mother because she wanted him to.

BILLY She wanted him to leave her?

JEREMY Back then she was a rising want-to-be news anchor. Getting ahead meant everything. Didn't want John around.

BILLY Because?

JEREMY John had a stutter. Not when he drank, just when he didn't. Unfortunately, John didn't drink much, but did the night John and Suzanne's mom got together. She didn't want Suzanne learning John's stutter, so, the rest is a lot of stuttering, stammering, tears, lies and saving face.

BILLY He wasn't such a bad father after all.

JEREMY No. Mom turned Suzanne against John so Suzanne wouldn't learn his stutter and have a career in broadcasting. She knew the lie would keep Suzanne from wanting to know him

BILLY The diabolical bitch.

JEREMY The co-driver said John loved Suzanne from afar. Kept a scrapbook of Suzanne's career at TSN and when she was at local news stations. I'm having it sent over.

BILLY Too bad he's dead.

JEREMY For him, but not for us.

Jeremy goes to the storage bin, takes a white wig and puts it on his head.

I'll be John for a night. Long enough for a reunion of sorts. A friend in the drama department will make me to look old.

BILLY What makes you think you can be her father for a night?

JEREMY *(old man's voice)* Hello my dear. It's been a long time. My heart is breaking.
(normal voice) How's that?

BILLY Thank God you didn't do Yoda again.

LIGHTS DOWN

END OF ACT 1 – END OF SAMPLE