

THE MARRIAGE PICKLE: UNTYING THE NOT

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A Play in Two Acts

by

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## Cast of Characters

- LIV TORGENSEN: 66 - Tall, Attractive, intelligent, strong-willed wife of JOHN. Mother of JANET and BECCA. Editor in Chief for one of the last remaining newspapers. Loves working, so much so she lives to work.
- BECCA: 40 - The daughter of LIV and JOHN. The fixer. Smart and unmarried. Devoted to family and keeping it together.
- JOHN TORGENSEN: 66 - Tall, well built, strong, attractive. Husband of LIV. Father of Janet and Becca. Retired building contractor. Easy going but with a definite breaking point. Determined to enjoy the next fifty years.
- JANET: 45 - The daughter of LIV and JOHN. Wife of a soldier. Feisty, funny and sarcastic.
- DAVID: 58 - Well-dressed Dentist who is a full-fledged germophobe. He tries to hide his inner pirate but can't control it to the point Pirate Davy takes over.
- JD (VO): JD - 40's - Trying his best to be an Assistant Editor. JD is exuberant, naïve, driven, and believes wholly in his answers.
- WAITER: Any age. Male. A stuffy yet funny Paxton Whitehead type character. Deadpan.

## Scene

A split-level set. Living room, coffee shop, and high-end restaurant.

## Time

The present.

The Marriage Pickle: Untying the Not

## SCENES

### ACT I

Scene 1	LIV'S living room	Early evening.
Scene 2	Coffee shop	One month later, morning.
Scene 3	LIV'S living room	Early evening. One week later.
Scene 4	Diner	Breakfast. Five weeks later.
Scene 5	LIV'S living room	Evening. Same week.

### INTERMISSION

### ACT II

Scene 1	LIV'S living room	Friday late afternoon.
Scene 2	Interior. Very nice seafood restaurant	Evening. Same night.
Scene 3	LIV'S living room	Later that same night.
Scene 4	LIV'S living room	The next morning, ten o'clock.
Scene 5	LIV'S living room	The same day an hour later.
Scene 6	LIV'S living room	Late afternoon the following Thursday.
Scene 7	LIV'S living room	Late evening. The next night.

## SET VISION

This is a split set. 2/3's of the set is Liv's living room. It is one step higher than the restaurant downstage left and the coffee shop area downstage right. A curved wedge out of the living room on both sides of the downstage areas allows restaurant scenes with a walk area between those two sets to be used.

The living room reflects a nice home. There is a dining area stage right. A couch is center with a coffee table and some side chairs with end tables. A usable large picture window is in the center on the back wall. The front door is on the mid-stage-right wall. A hallway to the bedroom upstage left wall and a door to the kitchen is downstage left. Nice things are peppered around the room including an expensive-looking vase and a golf trophy. There is an imaginary mirror facing the audience.

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING: Early evening. LIV'S living room.

AT RISE: JOHN is standing in the living room holding two suitcases. LIV is offstage left throwing clothes.

JOHN

(calling)

Liv, this doesn't need to get messy.

(Men's clothes are thrown at JOHN from offstage.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

You brought this on yourself!

LIV (off)

Ha!

(More clothes are pitched at JOHN as he tries to gather them all.)

JOHN

Change your mind and all of this goes away!

(Starched stiff boxers with hearts are flung and hit JOHN in the face.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Ouch!!! No starch in the drawers! Liv, I can't take all of this now.

(LIV marches in wearing distinctive, dated glasses. She is dressed classy casual carrying a golf club dangling his suits. Around her neck are golf shoes tied together. LIV marches to the window. She opens it.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

You wouldn't dare!

LIV

Fore!

(LIV throws the club and suits out the window. LIV dangles the golf shoes and drops them defiantly.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

That tears it!

(JOHN drops everything and moves toward LIV. Her mood goes from defiant to seething to scared as she dances around the furniture to avoid JOHN. LIV picks up a golf trophy.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Put that down!

(LIV runs to the window, JOHN in hot pursuit. LIV dangles the trophy out of the window. JOHN quickly grabs an expensive vase. LIV gasps.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

I always hated this old thing, reminds me of your mother!

(JOHN extends the vase over his head. LIV threatens. JOHN threatens. LIV slowly brings the trophy inside as JOHN slowly lowers the vase. LIV extends the trophy to JOHN as he extends the vase. LIV takes it. John takes the trophy. LIV quickly puts the vase in a safe spot as JOHN puts the trophy down and grabs some of his clothes. LIV pretends to walk around touching some knickknacks. As soon as she has a chance she snatches the trophy. JOHN grabs LIV as they both struggle for the trophy. LIV raises her hands holding the trophy. JOHN grabs LIV in a bear hug facing her and lifts her off the floor. LIV softens.)

(She takes the trophy and tosses it on the couch. She takes JOHN'S face in her hands looking him deep in his eyes. Both JOHN and LIV stare into each other's souls and begin frantically kissing as they melt onto the floor. They roll around when JOHN suddenly stops. LIV continues to kiss him. JOHN moves LIV and stands.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

I can't!

LIV

You can! You can!

JOHN

No, I can't!

LIV

I said you can!

JOHN

And where will that leave us?

LIV

Panting and smiling.

JOHN

No, Liv, I can't! This isn't working. We've tried over and over to fix this and the problem still remains. I deserve better! I'm leaving.

(JOHN tries to walk. LIV latches onto his leg. JOHN drags LIV with every step.)

LIV

But John, we love each other!

JOHN

You love your work more!

LIV

That isn't true!

JOHN

Every time the phone rings, you shoot out of here like a bullet. Back to work you run and I'm left frustrated.

LIV

I'm here, you're here, the bed's in there...

JOHN

No Liv. I'm not a piece of meat!

LIV

(lets go of JOHN)

Who is she?

JOHN

Are you kidding me?

LIV

Is she pretty?

JOHN

(helps her up)

Yes, you are, but you're married to your work.

LIV

I said I'll retire!!

JOHN

You've been saying that since you turned sixty-four! We agreed to retire together. That didn't happen. I've waited two years for you. I'm not waiting anymore! I'm tired of being number three in your life.

LIV

You are not!

JOHN

God, The Paper then me.

LIV

I'm making a difference! So, I work a little overtime.

JOHN

A little overtime? The last time I saw you Mel Gibson was a saint and Jane the Virgin was still a virgin.

LIV

I'm here, now, breathing heavily!

JOHN

And when the phone rings, you're gone and I'm left breathing heavily... without you! Enough, Liv. All those cold showers are making me prune.

LIV

I'm going to retire; I just need a little more time.



JOHN

Heard it! I'm going to find someone who wants to share my life.

LIV

But The Paper needs me...!

JOHN

I need you! I've been the poster child for patience! I want a passionate future with the woman of my dreams. Not a life trying to recall what my wife looks like.

LIV

I had dinner with you!

JOHN

Two bites of a salad with your purse in your hand is not dinner!

LIV

I had a breadstick too!

JOHN

You have one foot out the door!

LIV

I do not!

JOHN

You stuffed two chicken wings in your purse! Liv, I love you. Don't make me do this! Please just retire!

(LIV'S cell RINGS. They both look at the cell then at each other. LIV grabs her cell.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

That's your answer? I'm leaving you and you're running off to The Paper???

LIV

(answering the cell)  
LIV.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I love you Liv but this marriage is over. I'll have my Attorney call you.

LIV

You have an Attorney???

(whispers in the phone)

Send Megan to the fire and have Graham get the art.

JOHN

We're fighting for our marriage and you take a call from The Paper!?!

LIV

(hangs up)

I'm still here with you!

JOHN

Partially here. You can't wait to get back to work.

LIV

That's not true!

(LIV'S cell RINGS. They both look at the cell. LIV sends the call to voice mail.)

LIV (CONT'D)

See! I'm here for you.

JOHN

You're chomping at the bit to call work back.

LIV

(stares at her phone)

Am not! Why are you doing this to us?

JOHN

I need to share my life with someone warm and breathing, preferably hot and heavy in my ear. I want her to be you, but work is your love. I want to travel and see the world.

LIV

You just got back from Bora Bora!

JOHN

A romantic get-away in an overwater bungalow with my *sister* is not what I had in mind!

LIV

It was either take Lana or lose the money for the ticket!

JOHN

But my sister!?!

LIV

The ticket was under L. Torgensen. She was the only choice!

JOHN

You were my only choice, Liv! Only you!

LIV

I said I was sorry I couldn't go. It's not like we can't plan another trip! Besides, it was an emergency!

JOHN

It was our second honeymoon. Where were you? At The Paper!

LIV

Sardonica invaded Rhatmistan! The world was in chaos!

JOHN

Rhatmistan?!? A population of thirty is a family reunion, not a country!

LIV

We scooped everybody! No other paper picked up the story!

JOHN

Because nobody cares!! You blew off our second honeymoon for a country that isn't even on a map! If you loved me, really loved me, you would retire instead of letting me walk out that door.

LIV

Just give me two more years. I'll quit, I promise!

JOHN

You have one choice, retire or divorce.

LIV

That's no choice! There has to be a door number three! Please, John, we can work this out!

JOHN

Goodbye Olivia.

LIV

Where will you go?

JOHN

Janet's going to put me up until I find something.

LIV

Janet?? Janet knows?? Does Becca know too? What did you do, publish it?

JOHN

If I had, maybe you would have taken me seriously.

LIV

You never said you were serious!

JOHN

Maybe if I had invaded Rhatmistan I would have had your attention. Congratulations. I hope you and your job will be very happy.

(JOHN takes his suitcases and whatever he can carry except the heart underwear. JOHN exits. LIV collapses in tears. She blubbers loudly, comically. LIV spies the heart underwear and carries it to the couch. She flops down and lovingly strokes the underwear to her cheek.)

LIV

Ouch!!!

BLACKOUT

(END SCENE)

ACT IScene 2

SETTING: Coffee shop. One month later, morning. A couple of tables and chairs.

AT RISE: BECCA is seated with a cup of coffee in front of her. There is a menu at the empty chair. BECCA is looking at her menu as JANET enters wearing sunglasses. She drags herself to the table.

JANET  
You couldn't pick a place with booze?

BECCA  
Janet! It's ten in the morning?

JANET  
Your point?

BECCA  
You look like a bad mug shot. Why are you drinking this early?

JANET  
D. A. D. I've been up since five-thirty...again!

BECCA  
What in the world are you doing up that early on a Saturday?

JANET  
He never sleeps! Dad's up at all hours and you know he never learned to whisper. He talks on the phone full volume at one in the morning.

(dad's whisper)  
'Did you see the ears on her? She could fly with those things!' His laugh shakes the house. Dad makes the most grotesque green blended things and shoves them at me, 'Drink this! You'll thank me.' This morning he started the blender and I shot out of bed like I was electrocuted!

BECCA  
Have a heart! It's only been a month. At least pretend to show a little compassion. He's going through a tough time.

JANET  
I'm the one in need of compassion... or a really big drink.

JANET (CONT'D)

Got an extra Xanax or twenty lying around?

BECCA

Drugs? You? The poster girl for a Drug-Free World?

JANET

He's driving me to rehab! This morning dad found me under the table trying to commit Hari Kari with a butter knife.

(grabs BECCA's arms)

I want my life back!

BECCA

Trying for the Academy Award again, Janet?

JANET

Becca, I need sleep! Seriously, if I make it past the blender noise, he knocks on my door at six and says, 'You going to sleep all day?' He brings the paper into the bathroom and you know what that means which makes me late for work. He sings constantly and badly.

(dad singing 'OLIVIA THE  
TATTOOED LADY')

He's out till all hours and when he finally gets home, he whistles or sings. He then starts lifting weights and for the next hour, I get to hear him grunt and hum 'Olivia the tattooed lady' incessantly, badly, and always off-key.

(sings funny grunting sounds)

And to top it all off, his golf shoes are making divots on my new hardwood floor!!

BECCA

He doesn't sound miserable.

JANET

Thank you!

BECCA

I thought he was looking for his own place.

JANET

He can't find one he likes! He wants a pool, a tennis court, and a gym. It has to be close to the golf course and a hiking trail. He's obsessed with fitness! Dad. Our couch potato, TV watching, ice cream eating father!

BECCA

Since when?

JANET

He's determined to live to a hundred and twenty. He found Genesis 6:3 and now he's on a fitness kick.