

***George and Emily Get Married***

A play by Rick Mokler

(Draft 1-22-23)

Host: Good evening and welcome to the Jurkowitz Theatre.

The title of our play is *George and Emily Get Married*. It shouldn't be too hard to guess what it's about.

Tonight's play is inspired by act 2 of *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder. Don't worry if you haven't seen it. There's no quiz or anything like that, but I will give you a little background so you can sort of see what we're trying to do here tonight.

Act Two of *Our Town* takes place in 1908 in the small town of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire and is titled "Love and Marriage." It depicts the events leading up to the wedding of George Gibbs and Emily Webb.

Our play takes place in 2023 in our not-so-small town of Santa Barbara, California and does pretty much the same thing.

Some things haven't changed much in the last hundred and fifteen years. The sun still comes up every morning and the tides still meander in and out on their regular schedule. Babies are still being born and old folks are still passing away. No, those things haven't changed much. Those eternal things. .... But almost everything else has. Thus, tonight's play.

As a member of tonight's audience, you will be guests at George and Emily's wedding and, at the end of the evening, you will be invited to join them and their families on stage for their reception where we will have food and drink for all of you to enjoy. Don't worry. None of you will be tricked into giving a speech or catching a bouquet. It's not that kind of play. It's just a festive and novel way to end the evening, with what we hope will be some nice conversation and perhaps, some memorable moments. So please be sure to join us. It is all part of the play.

*(George's family catches his eye from the wings)*

Oh, I almost forgot. The scenery. Fortunately, we don't need much. *(To the actors in the wings)* All right, you're on.

*George's father, mother and sister each bring out folding chairs and place them on the stage. They wave to the audience as they enter.*

Host: This is George's family: his mother and father and his sister, Rebecca. They don't come on till the end of the play, so they volunteered to help out. I think they just wanted a little stage time.

*As they set up, to the actors:*

Host: Remember. There are no small roles, only small actors.

*As they leave, they wave again to the audience, perhaps take a bow.*

Host: Thank you. That's perfect.

I should probably begin by telling you a little bit about our soon-to-be bride and groom.

George and Emily have known each other their entire lives. They attended the same elementary school, the same junior high school and the same high school, where Emily was valedictorian. She gave a terrific speech at graduation that made everyone in the audience laugh and cry, sometimes at the same time. That was the day George realized that this girl he'd known since pre-school might be something special. He hugged her that afternoon like he really meant it. It shocked the hell out of her. Years later, she would say it was the best thing that happened to her that day.

After high school, George went to college up north in Santa Cruz while Emily got a full ride to Berkeley. They stayed in touch, like old friends do, with Facebook and Instagram, emails, and texts.

In college, every day was a discovery filled with triumph or tragedy. You remember what it was like that first year out on your own. Astonishing. Don't you think? Yeah. Definitely "astonishing". But, like most things, astonishment soon gave way to the ordinary, and daily discoveries gave way to the gradual realization that adulthood was staring you in the face and that you didn't have a clue what to do next.

It used to be that young people got married right out of college but not so much anymore. Nowadays, they take some time to see the world or get a job, just sort of grow up a little bit. I think it's a good thing and that's what George and Emily did. They graduated from college over ten years ago and they've been living together for the last eight. George is working on a novel and Emily just finished medical school. They're all grown up and ready to take the next big step.

Experts can't seem to agree why some marriages last, and some don't, but I have a theory. I figure that the longer you've known the person you choose to spend your life with, the better the chance you may actually do it. Now sure, there are plenty of exceptions. I married my high school sweetheart and that didn't last as long as most of the wedding gifts. She blamed my chosen career as an actor for our demise. Probably right. I've been a bachelor ever since and I still can't decide if that's a good thing or a bad thing.

But let's get back to our story, shall we.

It's a gloomy Saturday morning in June and it's a big day for the Webb and Gibbs families. George and Emily are getting married.

*Mira enters carrying an iPad, struggling to find some lost document. She is frantic.*

Mira: Wally!!!

Host: That's Emily's mother, Mira. It's only 9AM and she's already a nervous wreck.

Mira: Wally!!

*She continues to fiddle with the iPad.*

Host: The truth is, she has good reasons to be nervous. You see, her husband left her about two years ago and she hasn't seen him since he walked out the door. But she'll see him today. She shed a lot of tears those first few months. She says she's okay now, but I don't know. People still worry. Change doesn't come easy after living with the same person for a third of a century.

When it all happened, Emily was smack in the middle of her residency back east and the timing couldn't have been worse. Her plate was about as full as it could get, and I don't think she ever really understood what her mother was going through. Thankfully, her brother, Wally, moved back home to help out and provide moral support. He'd graduated from one of those expensive art schools in LA, but I don't think he ever liked living there, that whole Hollywood scene. It never felt right to him. So, now he's trying to be a YouTuber. He makes videos and puts them up on YouTube and TikTok. Says there's a lot of people making a lot of money doing that. I'm not sure how it's all going to work out, but his mother appreciates him being home and he seems happy enough living in his old room, paying off his student loans, and doing pretty much the same things he did in high school. He's a nice kid. *(Pointing to Wally)* That's him right there.

*Wally enters carrying two lattes and a muffin from Starbucks.*

Mira: Where have you been? I've been looking all over for you.

Wally: Starbucks. I was...

Mira: Now is hardly the time to be...

*He sees his mother is on the edge of a meltdown.*

Wally: What's going on, mom? Are you all right?

Mira: No. I am not all right. That's what I'm trying to tell you. I made a list of everything I have to do today and now it's gone.

Wally: Let me see.

*He puts the lattes down, takes the iPad and searches for the lost lists. As he does so:*

Mira: And where is Emily? Have you talked to her?

Wally: Not today.

Mira: She said she'd be here by 9. Where is she?

Wally: She was going to have breakfast with dad and then come over.

Mira: She spent the entire night over there. How much time does he get?

Wally: Don't turn this into a big deal, mom.

Mira: She always spends more time with her father than she does with me.

Wally: She loves you, mom.

Mira: Apparently, not as much as she loves your father.

*Wally finds the missing lists and tries to hand the iPad back to his mother, who walks away a few steps.*

Wally: Everything's okay, mom...

Mira: I don't think I can do this, Wally.

Wally: ...You were just in the wrong app.

Mira: I'm not talking about the list...

Wally: Then what are you talking about?

Mira: ... I'm talking about today.

Wally: *(a beat, realizing)* What are you saying?

Mira: I'm saying that I don't know if I can do it.

Wally: Do what?

Mira: The wedding.

Wally: Oh, no. Don't do this, mom. Not now.

Mira: The thought of seeing your father....

Wally: You'll be fine.

Mira: ...is making me break out in hives.

Wally: You can do this. mom. I'll be right beside you the whole time.

Mira: Is he bringing someone to the wedding?

Wally: No.

Mira: Because I heard he was seeing someone.

Wally: He's not.

Mira: You're sure.

Wally: I am. I'm positive. Now, come on, we'll get through this.

*By now, she is near tears. Wally sits beside her and comforts her as well as he can.*

Mira: I'm sorry.

Wally: There's nothing to be sorry about.

Mira: Why do I still feel this way?

Wally: Because it still hurts. But it will get better. Today will be a step in the right direction. Now come on. Deep breaths. Just like you taught us.

*They stand up and take deep breaths together. It is a ritual they have done dozens of times over the years.*

Wally: *(inhaling)* Smell the rose; *(exhaling)* blow out the candle

*This calms her down. He seats her on a chair.*

Wally: There you go. You okay?

Mira: Yes. Thank you.

Wally: There's nothing to thank me for.

Mira: I couldn't do this without you.

Wally: You don't have to.

Mira: Thank you.

Wally: *(Handing her a latte)* Here. I went all the way downtown to get it for you.

Mira: *(recovering finally)* You're very sweet.

Wally: I know.

Mira: When did you get to be so wise?

Wally: I've always been wise, mom. You just didn't notice.

Mira: *(beat)* I'm sorry I snapped at you.

Wally: That's okay.

Mira: *(She smells the latte.)* This is lovely.

Wally: I had them put George and Emily's initials in the foam.

*She looks at the latte and they chuckle.*

Mira: Only you.

Wally: *(trying to make a joke)* They couldn't fit the date.

*They laugh harder. The tension has been broken for the moment. There is a special bond between them. They sit a moment, smiling, and drinking their lattes.*

Wally: What are you thinking?

Mira: I'm trying to remember the definition of "hypocrisy".

Wally: Mom, come on.

Mira: I think it may be: "Celebrating the marriage of one's daughter so soon after the collapse of one's own?"

Wally: Stop it. Celebrating your daughter's wedding doesn't make you a hypocrite.

Mira: What does it make me, then?

Wally: Human. Hopeful. Maybe even optimistic if you play your cards right. *(He hands her half a muffin)*

Mira: That's a nice thought. I'll try to do better with the cards I've been dealt.

*They sip their lattes and eat muffins.*

Mira: Have Emily and George talked to you about... whatever? Their dreams? Their goals?

Wally: They have.

Mira: What do they want? Give me something to root for.

Wally: They want a family like ours.

Mira: Oh, please.

Wally: They do.

Mira: What makes you say that?

Wally: Emily told me.

Mira: Emily said that?

Wally: Yep. "A family just like the one we have".

Mira: I don't believe you.

Wally: Those were her exact words.

Mira: Well, she may want to reconsider after she sees me today.

Wally: I don't think so. I'd want the same thing.

Mira: *(melancholy)* Hmm... Your father and I, we... We loved being parents: your soccer games, Emily's science fairs, teacher meetings, vacations in Big Sur.

Wally: Oh, god, I love Big Sur.

Mira: You and Emily always made us feel proud, as if we were the reason for your success...

Wally: You were.

Mira: ...but it was all... camouflage. And when you left, it was just the two of us. No life lessons at the dinner table; no excitement in the house. Just us. And gradually, your father saw clearly what had been camouflaged for so many years: that we had drifted apart. You hear it all the time, that people “drift apart”, and I think that’s a good metaphor, because it happens very slowly. We settled into a routine that we didn’t think to change until it was too late.

Wally: You did pretty good, mom.

Mira: Did we?

Wally: Yeah. You just failed to stick the landing.

Mira: You have a lovely way with words, Wally.

Wally: Maybe this will be the one that lasts, mom. Maybe George and Emily will die in each other’s arms at the age of 100 surrounded by their kids and grandkids who have come in from all over the world just to be with them when they take their final breath. Maybe their last words to each other will be “I still love you.”

Mira: Statistically that’s very unlikely, but we can hope.

Wally: You wanted something to root for.

Mira: All right. That’s what I’ll root for.

*Emily enters hurriedly.*

Emily: Hi. I’m sorry I’m late.

Mira: You’re a mess.

Emily: I know. It’s been a crazy night.

Mira: And where’s George?

Emily: He’s over at his parents’. I wanted to talk to you by myself.

Wally: What am I, invisible?

Mira: Why? Is there a problem?

Emily: With me and George?

Mira: Yes.

Emily: No.

Wally: Definitely invisible.

Mira: Well, what is it, then?

Emily: It’s dad.

Wally: What’s wrong with dad? Is he sick?

Emily: He’s nervous.

Mira: What’s he got to be nervous about? I’m doing all the work.

Emily: Seeing you.

Mira: What?

Emily: He’s nervous about seeing you.

Mira: Why?

Wally: Do we have to do this now?

Emily: He’s afraid you hate him.

Mira: Oh, please.

Emily: He is.

Mira: Does he think he ruined my life or something?

Emily: He does.

Mira: Well, he didn't.

Emily: Are you okay, mom?

Wally: Emily!!

Emily: Because until last night I didn't know how hard it was for you.

Mira: I'm fine.

Emily: I should have come home.

Mira: I'm fine. You can tell your father to stop worrying.

Emily: Are you? You have to tell me the truth.

Mira I am telling you the truth, Emily! I'm as fine as could be expected and that is good enough for now.

Emily: Would you do it over again?

Wally: Seriously, Emily?

Mira: Do what over again?

Emily: Marry dad. Knowing how much he'd hurt you.

Wally: What are you doing?

Mira: Hurt comes with the territory, Emily. The question is not if you will be hurt, but how you will respond when it happens.

Emily: So, would you?

Mira: Yes, of course.

Wally: Are you satisfied?

Mira: But I would go into it with very different expectations.

Emily: What do you mean?

Wally: Mom, you don't have to do this.

Mira: Wally, she asked a question. Let me see if I can give her an answer.

*A beat*

Emily: Thank you.

Mira: When your father and I got married, and said our vows to each other, we made certain promises: "to love and to cherish", "for better or for worse"; "till death do us part". Mistakenly, I saw those promises as a sort of... guarantee.

Emily: Of what?

Mira: I guess that... I would be loved - by the person I loved - indefinitely.

Emily: That's what we all hope for, isn't it?

Mira: Hope? Yes. But I can tell you now, that it is more than anyone, including you, can reasonably expect.

Emily: Then why go through it at all? Why make promises if we can't expect to keep them?

Mira: (*Choosing her words carefully*) Because love is so easily lost, Emily. It needs a North star. And on your wedding day, when you are certain beyond all doubt that you love each other with every ounce of your being, you give life to that star with your vows. And when things get tough – and they will – try to find that star and remember the promises you made, and then do your best to keep them. It's not as easy as it seems.

*A beat*

Wally: Nicely done, mom.

*Mira rises. She hands her latte to Wally.*

Mira; Thank you.

*She walks away, looking at her iPad, preparing to start her wedding day tasks.*

Emily: Mom!

*Mira stops and turns to her daughter.*

Mira: Yes, Emily.

Emily: What is reasonable to expect?

Mira: Dedication. Gratitude. Patience. Forgiveness. To give as much as you receive.

Emily: Thank you.

Mira: You're welcome.

Emily: I do love you.

Mira: I know you do.

Emily: And I'm sorry. I'm really, really sorry.

Mira: There's nothing for you to be sorry about.

Emily: Oh, there is. I haven't given to you nearly as much as I've received. Forgive me.

Mira: *(sitting down beside her)* There is nothing to forgive. You're young, Emily. That's all.  
You're young.

*She wraps her arms around her daughter who sinks into her embrace, and gently kisses her on the top of her head, just like she did when Emily was small.*

Emily: Can I ask you one more question?

Mira: You are full of questions today.

Wally: She's full of questions every day.

Emily: Will you walk me down the aisle with dad?

Mira: You don't have to do that. It's a lovely gesture and I appreciate the kindness, but your father would be (deeply hurt) ...

Emily: It was his idea.

*A beat*

Mira: Truth?

Emily: Truth.

*A beat*

Mira: *(To Wally)* Well, this certainly ups the stakes, doesn't it.

Wally: It's time to move forward, mom.

Emily: Say "yes", mom. It would mean the world to me and George. And dad.

Mira: *(trying to keep her composure)* I'm not sure I can do it, Emily.

Wally: You can do it, mom.

Mira: *(to Wally)* And you'll be there every step of the way?

Wally and Emily: Yes.

Mira: *(to Emily)* And this is what you really want.

Wally and Emily: Yes.

Mira: Well then. Today will be a big day for both of us.

Emily: Thank you.

Wally: What did I tell you, mom? A step in the right direction.

*Host enters.*

Host: *(to the actors)* Thank you all. That was very nice. You can go start checking things off of that list of yours if you feel so inclined.

*They leave the stage. Host signals to George off stage.*

Host: Oh, George. I'm going to need you in just a minute so if you could set up the next scene, I'd appreciate it. Thanks.

*Mira, Emily and Wally leave. George sets up the next scene.*

Host: *(to audience once again)* I don't know about you, but I am always curious about how people got to be where they are today. You remember that poem by Robert Frost – "The Road Not Taken"? It's about a fellow who comes to a fork in the road, and he has to decide which path to take. And he takes the road that has been travelled the least and... well you know the story. But the line that always sticks with me is this: "Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back."

You remember those forks in the road where you had to decide which way to go? Some moment in time when you said, "this one" or "that one"? And then it changed your life. *(He waits a second)* Yeah. So, do I.

So, I thought we might take a look at one of those moments. One of those forks in the road where the path you choose propels you forward. Yes, I like that: "propels you forward" - like a strong wind pushing the explorers across the Atlantic - and you don't know if you will ever come back this way again.

It's a rainy night in Berkeley, so if we could have a little thunder and rain, I would be eternally grateful. *(There is a clap of distant thunder and the sound of rain)*. Thank you. That's very nice.

Emily graduated from Cal at the top of her class and, for the last year, has been working as a research assistant in a lab in San Francisco, unhappily injecting mice with cancer cells. She applied to about a half a dozen medical schools in the last year and is waiting to hear

her fate. George's path was less certain. When he graduated from college, he had no idea what he wanted to do next. He was lost and adrift. So, determined to find meaning and direction in his life, he spent the next year traveling the world. Now, with his money gone and his spirits broken, rather than go home to his parents as planned, he takes an unexpected detour to visit Emily in Berkeley.

*Emily enters, looking for her keys.*

Host: Emily has just hopped off the Richmond train at the downtown Berkeley BART station and is struggling to find the key to her front door when she sees someone sitting on the stoop to her little cottage, soaking wet and freezing cold.

George: Hi, Emily

Emily: George?

George: Yeah.

Emily: Oh, my god!

*Emily gives George a hug that lasts a little longer than it should.*

Emily: What are you doing? I thought you were in Katmandu or something.

George: I was, but...

Emily: How long have you been sitting out here?

George: A couple of hours, maybe. I don't know.

Emily: Well, come in, come in.

*They go into Emily's little cottage. Emily hangs her coat over a chair and puts her small backpack on the counter. George puts his big backpack on the floor. Both are a little cautious. While she does this:*

Emily: I thought you were going back to Santa Barbara when you finished traveling.

George: I was, but... *(beat)*

Emily: Are you going back to Santa Cruz, then?

George: No. Um...I've kind of changed my plans.

Emily: *(gently teasing)* You have actual plans?

George: Well, sort of. I'm still kind of firming things up.

Emily: Okay. *(beat)* Why don't you make a fire. I'll boil some water for tea. And let me take that wet jacket. It'll warm up pretty fast once the fire gets going.

*George takes off his jacket and Emily hangs it on the back of a chair. Then he builds a fire in the fireplace while Emily starts the kettle.*

Emily: It seems like you've been gone forever.

George: It does.

Emily: How are you?

George: (*Unconvincing*) I'm good.

Emily: (*teasing*) You look terrible.

George: Yeah, well... I've been sitting in the rain for the last four hours.

Emily: That could explain it.

*She works on the tea. George sits down on the floor as the fire comes to life*

George: How about you?

Emily: Me? I'm okay. Just sort of.... You know...I don't know.

George: How's work?

Emily: Terrible. I'm stuck in a lab all day.

George: Sorry.

Emily: It's okay. It pays the rent.

George: My dad says you applied to med schools.

Emily: Yeah. I did.

George: When do you hear?

Emily: I heard.

George: And...?

Emily: I got in.

George: You did? Where?

Emily: (*embarrassed by her good fortune but also frightened by it*) Everywhere. UCLA....  
Columbia.... Emory.... Johns Hopkins.

George: Are you kidding me?

Emily: Nope. I'm supposed to start in September.

George: Oh, my god, that's fantastic.

Emily: (*Subdued*) Thanks.

George: Johns Hopkins!!!!

Emily: Yeah.

George: Holy shit. You are amazing.

*George walks to her and gives her a congratulatory hug that lasts a little longer than it should, but before he can release her, she crumbles into his arms in tears, crying those deep gut sobs that come from the bottom of her heart. George holds her for a long moment unsure how to respond. Eventually, an embarrassed Emily gets control of herself and walks to her small backpack for a Kleenex.*

George: You okay?

Emily: Yeah. I'm just being a big baby.

George: Is there anything I can do?

Emily: You're doing it, George. You really are. Just.... standing there. I'm just really emotional right now.

*The tea kettle whistles.*

George: I'll get it. You sit down by the fire and get warm.  
Emily: Thank you.

*He helps her sit down by the fire and then goes to make the tea.*

George: Green tea with honey, right?  
Emily: Yes, please.  
George: Me too.

*During the following, George makes two cups of tea, hands one to Emily and sits beside her.*

George: So, what's going on? Why the tears?  
Emily: I don't know.  
George: Come on, Em. It's me. Just say it.  
Emily: (*fragile*) I don't know if I can do it, George.  
George: Medical school?  
Emily: Yeah.  
George: Of course, you can do it.  
Emily: I don't know if I want to do it. (*Holding back the tears*) I'm beat up, George. I'm exhausted, anxious, always on the verge of tears.  
George: I noticed.  
Emily: Do you know what I did while you were running around the world for the last year?  
While you ran with bulls in Spain and ate crickets in Thailand...  
George: Those were just pictures on Instagram, Em'.  
Emily: ...While you tested your courage and made new friends and asked big questions? I played with petri dishes and studied for the MCATS. As if it were important.  
George: It is important.  
Emily: I don't know, George. I can't see the end.  
George: But you know the path, Emily. You know the path and you're on it.  
Emily: All I do is work and study. All I have ever done is work and study.  
George: It's what makes you special.  
Emily: I don't feel special. I feel lonely and tired.  
George: Can you take a break? Maybe spend more time with friends?  
Emily: I don't have friends. I have colleagues and study groups.  
George: Come on. You've got friends.  
Emily: Ask me how many friends I told that I got into medical school. (*beat*) None. Not one.  
George: Well, you told one.  
Emily: Who?  
George: Me.  
Emily: Yeah. You. Thank you, George. For being here. I'm sorry you arrived while I'm having a nervous breakdown.  
George: Come on. Deep breaths.

*He helps her to her feet.*

Emily: What?

George: Deep breaths. That's what they taught us at the Ashram in India.

Emily: Funny. That's what my mother use to tell me when I was a kid.

George: I know. That's what I told the yogi. He wasn't amused. Come on.

*Together they take a deep breath. This should look and feel like the deep breath moment in the scene with Wally and his mother.*

Emily: *(Inhaling)* Smell the rose. *(Exhaling)* Blow out the candle.

*They take a few deep breaths.*

Emily: Thank you. I should do that more often.

*She gives George a kiss on the cheek and then walks to the cupboard.*

Emily: Why are you here, George?

George: I was in the neighborhood.

Emily: *(Grabbing something from the cupboard)*. You were in Nepal...

George: Almost next door.

Emily: ...seeking truth and happiness.

*Emily crosses back to George and puts an Oreo cookie in his mouth.*

George: Oh, Jesus. Is that an Oreo cookie?

Emily: *(Sitting by the fire)* It's where I find my happiness....

George: Oh, this is good.

Emily: ...Truth is more elusive.

George: I've died and gone to heaven.

Emily: Don't tell that to a Buddhist monk.

George: Good advice.

*George sits beside her and they eat Oreo's and drink tea.*

Emily: Do you know the last time I saw you?

George: When you dropped me off at the airport.

Emily: And you didn't even kiss me good-bye.

George: I didn't?

Emily: Nope.

George: A warm hug?

Emily: Nope. Just "Good-bye, Em," and then you left me, double parked in front of the international terminal with the trunk open.

George: Another shining George Gibbs moment.

Emily: Yeah.

George: I'm sorry. That was a mistake.

Emily: Yeah. I guess we all make mistakes.

George: I make more than most people.

### *They eat Oreos*

Emily: Thank you for writing. It was nice to get actual mail in the mailbox.

George: Yeah, well... Wi-Fi was sketchy, so...

Emily: I liked your letters. Very Jack Kerouac.

George: Thank you.

Emily: You write well for a guy who couldn't spell "Nepal" five years ago.

George: It was on my luggage tag.

Emily: They weren't what I expected them to be. You sounded sad.

George: I was.

Emily: But the pictures on Instagram? They looked like you were having a great time.

George: You don't put "lonely and lost" photos on Instagram.

Emily: Maybe that's why I never post anything on Instagram.

George: It was a very weird trip, Em'.

Emily: How so?

George: I was just so naive.

Emily: What do you mean?

George: I honestly thought that if I worked on an organic farm in Germany or lived in an Ashram in India or hiked in the Himalayas, or... whatever, I'd somehow be happier when I got home.

Emily: No luck?

George: No. I mean, I just spent a year bumping around the globe looking for.... I don't even know what...

Emily: The key to happiness?

George: It sounds stupid, but... yeah. And I didn't find it. I asked the big questions over and over but in the end, every answer seemed just as crazy as the one before. I never felt enlightened, and I definitely never felt courageous. I was scared shitless by the bulls, and I hated the Ashram. I couldn't find anything to believe in, you know?

Emily: I think you have to start by believing in yourself.

George: That's always been a hard one for me.

Emily: I know. Even though there's so much there to believe in.

### *A beat*

Emily: Can I ask you a question, George?

George: Uh oh.

Emily: Do you remember spring break our senior year?

George: (*Fondly*) Of course. You met me in Santa Cruz, and we drove up to the redwoods.

Emily: The oldest living things on the planet.

George: Yeah.

Emily: You taught me how to find the North Star.

George: I remember that.

Emily: Yeah. And we ... hooked up.

George: We did.

Emily: And then I dropped you back in Santa Cruz and drove back to Berkeley and we hardly spoke for the rest of the year, which was fine. No promises were made out there in the redwoods. Then, out of the blue, you called and asked if I would take you to the airport.

George: Yeah.

Emily: You could have called anybody, but you called me all the way out here in Berkeley. And I drove all the way to Santa Cruz and then all the way to San Francisco and I took you to the airport.

George: Yeah.

Emily: And you didn't even hug me goodbye. Why was that?

George: I don't know.

Emily: It's me, George. Just say it.

George: I didn't want you to think we were something more than friends. Besides, you were all caught up with work and applying to med schools and I figured that you didn't care much about some lost kid excited to see the world.

Emily: Then why did you call me?

George: I wanted you to be the last person I saw so that I would.... *(He trails off)* I don't know. We were young.

Emily: We were.

George: I took you for granted.

Emily: We all take some things for granted, I guess.

George: I won't do it again, Emily. I promise. You're the best friend I've got.

*George walks over and hugs Emily for a little longer than expected.*

George: I'm sorry. I should have done that a year ago.

*Emily takes the package of Oreos and plops one in George's mouth on her way back to the counter.*

Emily: So, what happens now?

George: What do you mean?

Emily: Where do you go from here?

George: I'm not sure.

Emily: *(putting the cookies away)* Do you have a job waiting for you when you get home?

George: No.

Emily: A girlfriend in some far away land?

George: No.

Emily: Anywhere you need to be or anything you have to have?

George: All I need is in that backpack right there.

Emily: A man with no baggage. Nice.

George: I wish.

*(A beat)*

Emily: So, go back to Santa Barbara, work as a barista and look for a job?

George: That doesn't sound very appealing, does it. *(a beat.)* Was that the last question?

Emily: No. Here comes the big one.

George: Now I'm nervous.

Emily: Me too. *(Emily takes a deep breath)* I've been thinking I might defer medical school for a year.

George: Defer?

Emily: Yeah.

George: Do they let you do that?

Emily: I think they will.

George: What would you do instead?

Emily: Maybe get a job here in Berkeley. Something less stressful. Regroup a little bit. See if I can... find some joy.

George: The key to happiness?

Emily: Yeah. Before embarking on eight years of torture.

George: Can you afford to live here if you give up your job?

Emily: No. I'd have to move. *(a breath)* Or get a roommate.

George: Ah.

Emily: Yeah. Are you interested? Maybe just for a year. See how it goes - while we look for that key to happiness.

George: It's hard to find.

Emily: I know. I read your letters.

George: What would I do here in Berkeley?

Emily: Same thing you'd do at home. Work as a barista; maybe try to be a writer.

George: Sounds very... Jack Kerouac.

Emily: One more stop on the road.

*(A beat)*

George: You know, my last night in Nepal, I was with these two Australian guys who were about to climb Mt. Everest. They had been friends since they were little kids and they decided that the only way they could make the climb was together. I asked them if they were afraid. One of them said "Not at all" and the other one said, "I'm terrified." Then they both broke out laughing and at exactly the same time, they both said:

Emily and George together: "Perfect!!"

*They laugh at their synchronicity.*

Emily: So...? Is that a "yes"?

*George takes a deep breath.*

George: I mean, how hard can it be to make a cup of coffee?

Emily: I don't know. I've never made one.

George: I guess we'll find out.

*Host enters.*

Host: Thank you, George and Emily. You can go get changed for the wedding.

*George and Emily leave the stage.*

Host: Well. I suspect that nothing has changed more in our town than attitudes toward love and marriage. Who people marry, when people marry, and how people marry today would be unimaginable to our great grandparents.

So, before we proceed with the wedding, I thought it might be interesting to get a little background on the institution of marriage – a sort of historical perspective. So, I have invited Professor Alison Willard, from our state university, to sketch in a few details about the evolution of “conscious coupling” as one of our local residents has taken to calling it. Professor Willard.

*Professor Alison Willard, a cheerful, slightly scattered, well-meaning woman in her 50's with the slightly rumpled look of an academic, steps onto the stage. A screen drops in.*

Professor Willard: Thank you.

*A PowerPoint presentation starts. The images should be clever and funny.*

Professor Willard: Marriage is, in its essence, a legally binding agreement between two parties that carries with it rights specific to those two particular parties.

The first recorded evidence of marriage ceremonies uniting one man and one woman dates from about the third century B.C. Back then, marriage existed for purely practical reasons and had nothing to do with religion or romance. Its purpose was to bind a woman to a man, thereby guaranteeing that the man's children were truly his. Not surprisingly, married men had almost no obligations to their wives. They were free to come and go as they pleased and to satisfy their sexual urges with concubines, prostitutes, and teenage boys, while their wives were required to stay home, tend to the household, and have babies. If a wife failed to produce offspring, her husband could give her back and marry someone else. We can only imagine the joy and anticipation experienced by a 14-year-old girl on the eve of her wedding.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the doctrine known as “coverture” was written into English common law and it took things a step further. While an *unmarried* woman could own property and make contracts in her own name, a *married* woman could not. Nor could she sign legal documents, get an education, or keep money that she earned without her husband's permission. Additionally, Coverture gave a husband the right to abuse his wife

both physically and sexually, a custom that was legal right here in the good old US of A until 1980!

*She looks at the slide on the screen and realizes that the lecture is going south.*

You know, I'm having some second thoughts here. This lecture worked great in my Women's Studies class but maybe the tone isn't exactly right for a wedding. So, let's jump ahead. Things improve significantly after about 900 years.

*Rummaging through her notes as the PowerPoint slides fly by.*

Let's see... coverture, the Napoleonic code, (nope, we won't dwell on that), ... imprisonment for interracial marriage... boy it takes a while to get to the good stuff, doesn't it. *(Finding something in her notes)*. Ah!! Here we go. The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment – That's a step in the right direction.... *(More slides wiz by)* And... BINGO!! 1944. Divorce rates skyrocket.

*(A graph appears on the screen).* (<https://ourworldindata.org/marriages-and-divorces>)

I know, I know, I know! That doesn't sound like good news about marriage, but it is. This is the year that women figured out that they didn't have to get married in order to survive. So, what happened? World War II happened. Six million women took jobs in factories, volunteered with the Red Cross, and served in the military; and here's what they learned: they were stronger than they thought; they were smarter than they thought; they could make good decisions and good friends and have good times; they could earn a living and earn respect and feel proud of what they accomplished and they didn't need men to do it. They may have still *wanted* men, but they didn't *need* them and that's an important distinction.

And here's the good news: when WWII mercifully ended, the marriage rate rose even more than the divorce rate. Women had waited for peace and stability, and for the men they loved to return home safely. And when they did, they married them because they wanted to, not because they had to to survive.

By 1965, when the birth control pill came along, women finally had some options when deciding what they wanted to do with their lives, and marriage was just one of them. And men? They had a whole new world to navigate. But let's give men some credit. Many men learned to navigate like experienced seamen. That's probably a poor metaphor, but you know what I mean: men changed too. Well, some men changed... Are changing.... Slowly, but somewhat surely. Yay Men!!! I don't get to say that too often.

Today, the institution of marriage, like so many institutions, is in a state of rapid and unprecedented transformation. While most marriages today would still be categorized as "traditional", that is: one man and one woman, it is no longer unusual for people to enter into nontraditional marriages like same sex marriages and consensual non-monogamous marriages.

But perhaps the most significant cultural change is America's move away from marriage altogether. In 1970, about 7% of Americans ages 25-50 had never been married. Today, that number has risen to about 35%. The reasons for this are numerous and complicated, but the good news is this: As the marriage rate has fallen, so too has the divorce rate, meaning that people who do get married have a good chance of having it last a lifetime. And there's more good news: Research has repeatedly shown that, in general, married couples live longer, happier, healthier, and more fulfilling lives. And I think the reason is

simple: Overwhelmingly, people who choose to marry do so for the right reason – because they love each other and want to live their lives together. I am happy to say that an enduring, rewarding marriage, while still an uphill climb, is the goal of almost every newlywed, gay or straight, monogamous or open.

In summary, I would say that sustaining a lifelong, satisfying marriage can be both rewarding and challenging. Rewarding, because the benefits of marriage are numerous. Challenging because, for all sorts of reasons and in all sorts of ways, for better and for worse, people change as they age.

I think Germain Greer, the feminist intellectual whose only marriage lasted just a few weeks put it best: “A successful marriage” she said, “requires falling in love many times, but always with the same person.”

Thank you.

*Host enters as Professor Willard exits. The PowerPoint screen flies out.*

*During Host’s speech, Charles enters and arranges the chairs for the next scene.*

Host: Thank you, Professor Willard. That was very informative. Well, I guess we are ready to get on with the wedding.

George and Emily are getting married in an oak grove near Santa Barbara’s iconic Old Mission. *(a beautiful lighting effect appears on stage)*. Oh, that is lovely. *(To an audience member)* Could you remind me who designed the lights for our show? *(The audience member checks the program and does so)*. Of course. How could I forget?

As the late afternoon sun peaks through the stately trees, family members gather to mingle and await their instructions. Emily’s father is the first to arrive.

*Charles Webb, 55, wears a stylish new suit. He looks around, checks his watch, and sits on one of the chairs. He pulls a typed speech out of his coat pocket and looks it over.*

*Rebecca, 30, enters, stylishly dressed. She sees Emily’s father.*

Rebecca: Charlie?

Charles: Yes?

Rebecca: It’s Rebecca. *(Charles still doesn’t know who she is)* George’s sister.

Charles: Oh, my goodness! Becky!! I’m so sorry I didn’t recognize you.

Rebecca: Completely understandable. It’s been a long time.

Charles: Look at you. All grown up.

Rebecca: That’s what happens.

Charles: The last I heard you were getting your MBA at Penn.

Rebecca: Finished there about four years ago. I’m up at Stanford now.

Charles: Doing what?

Rebecca: Getting a PhD.

Charles: Wow! You are a highly educated young lady.

Rebecca: It’s a tough world out there. A girl’s got to be prepared for anything.

Charles: it sounds like you will be. Are your parents here?

Rebecca: They’re running a few minutes late, but they are on their way.

*Enter Wally. Mira hangs just off stage. Wally is dressed in a very hip and stylish outfit. His mother is beautiful in a lovely dress and a corsage. Wally sees Rebecca and jumps to greet her.*

Wally: Becky!!

Rebecca: Wally!!

*They hug and swing around in the air like long lost friends.*

Wally: So, are you done?

Rebecca: Almost. One more year.

Wally: God, it has been forever.

Rebecca: It will be worth the wait, I promise.

Wally: How long are you home for?

Rebecca: I'm just here for the wedding. How about you?

Wally: I'm here.

Rebecca: Living here?

Wally: Yep. I'm helping out mom and making my videos.

Rebecca: Oh, that's right!! You're a YouTuber!

Wally: That's me.

Rebecca: Are you making any money?

Wally: Some.

Rebecca: Way to go! That's a tough racket. And how's your mom?

Mira: *(entering)* She's fine.

*Rebecca notices Mira standing to the side. She walks over and gives her a hug.*

Rebecca: Oh, Mira!! I didn't even see you over there. I am so sorry.

Mira: Hello, Becky. It's nice to see you.

Rebecca: Are you excited?

Mira: Of course.

Rebecca: I love weddings. It's the only time friends and family come together, and everybody still has fun.

Mira: Let's hope you're right.

Rebecca: *(to Wally)* Are you in the wedding?

Wally: Me? No. I just helped Emily with her personal statement.

Rebecca: I don't think I know what that is.

Wally: It's when they read their letters to each other, and everybody cries.

Rebecca: Sounds terrifying.

Wally: I just helped with the ending.

Rebecca: I can't wait to hear it.

Mira: You did remember to bring it, didn't you?

Wally: Was I supposed to bring it?

Mira: Emily said that you're going to give it to her during the service.

Wally: I am but I thought she was going to bring it here.  
Mira: All I know is that it was on the kitchen table and if you didn't pick it up....  
Wally: Oh, crap.  
Mira: You have time. Just go home and get it.  
Rebecca: These things never start on time.  
Wally: But what about... I mean... Are you sure?  
Mira: I'll be fine. Just go.  
Rebecca: Why don't I drive and then you can just run in and grab it and we will be back in five minutes. We can talk in the car.  
Wally: *(asking permission)* Mom?  
Mira: I'll be fine.  
Wally: You're sure.  
Mira: I'm sure.  
Rebecca: Will you tell my parents where I am?  
Charles: Of course.  
Wally: Okay, we'll be gone five minutes.  
Rebecca: *(as they leave)* I'm parked right out front.

*Wally and Rebecca exit, leaving Charles and Mira alone. There is an awkward moment.*

Charles: What was that all about?  
Mira: Nothing. Just... nothing.

*A long beat*

Charles: You look nice.  
Mira: Thank you. New suit?  
Charles: Yeah. I didn't really have anything appropriate so... Would you like to sit down?  
Mira: I'm okay.  
Charles: Of course. *(beat)* Thank you for all the work you've done on the wedding.  
Mira: Thank you for paying for it.  
Charles: It's the least I could do.  
Mira: Emily said you all had a nice talk last night.  
Charles: We did.  
Mira: You were always much better at that sort of thing than me.  
Charles: I don't know about that, but George and Emily were willing to let me ramble on.  
Mira: They appreciated whatever it is you said to them.  
Charles: Good to know.  
Mira: And I appreciate your offer to let me walk Emily down the aisle with you.  
Charles: I'm glad you said yes. I was pleasantly surprised.  
Mira: It's the new me. Throw caution to the wind.  
Charles: Are your parents here?

Mira: Of course. They are out there wandering in the oak grove, I imagine. Looking for rare birds or something, while they wait for the wedding to start. You know them. They can't sit still.

Charles: How are they?

Mira: Getting old but doing pretty well.

Charles: Still travelling?

Mira: Oh yeah. Their goal is to see all fifty states before I take their driver's licenses away.

Charles: I'm glad to hear they haven't changed.

Mira: I'm sure they will bend your ear at the reception.

Charles: It will be nice to see them.

Mira: How about you? How's everything at the paper?

Charles: The same as it is at every newspaper: a disaster. I can't imagine we will be around much longer.

Mira: What will you do?

Charles: I'm not sure. I got a little inheritance, so I have some time to figure out what comes next.

Mira: Inheritance? Who died?

Charles: (*perplexed and unsure how to proceed*) No one told you?

Mira: Told me what?

Charles: My mother died.

Mira: (*stunned*) Judy?

Charles: Yes.

Mira: (*A long beat while she tries to compose herself*) When?

Charles: Almost 2 years ago.

*Mira is shaken by the news. She sits down on the chair next to Charles horribly saddened.*

Charles: I'm sorry. I thought Wally told you.

*(Mira cries)*

Charles: I'm sorry. This is terrible timing.

Mira: How did she die? Was she sick?

Charles: No. She fell. Evidently, she was standing on a stool, trying to get something down from a cupboard.

Mira: Please tell me it was not that rickety little green thing.

Charles: It was. And it must have slipped out from under her, and she fell and hit her head and never woke up.

Mira: Oh my god. And no one was there to help?

Charles: No.

Mira: Oh, Charles.

*Mira cries.*

Charles: I should have called you, but it was right when you and I were going through the worst of it.

Mira: It's not your fault.

Charles: I was just walking around in a fog back then.

Mira: *(beat)* I loved Judy. She was a very special lady.

Charles: She was. I miss her.

*George's parents, Frank and Julia, enter, holding hands. It is a joyous day, and they are in a joyous mood. Mira straightens herself up and wipes away her tears.*

Frank: The wedding hasn't even started yet, and you are already crying.

*Mira composes herself, rises and gives them both a warm hug. Charles shakes hands.*

Mira: You're right. I am getting way ahead of myself. How are you two?

Frank: We are doing just fine, thank you.

Julia: We had a lovely day with George. I don't think I have ever seen him so excited.

Frank: Well, it's not every day you get married.

Mira: Thank goodness.

Julia: Have you seen Rebecca? She told us to meet her here.

Mira: She and Wally had to run back to the house to get something for Emily. They should be here any minute.

Frank: Well, it is absolutely beautiful out there.

Julia: I don't think we have ever been here for a wedding. Have you?

Mira: *(Ironically)* Charlie and I were married here.

Julia: *(Making the best of it)* Then it must have wonderful memories for you both.

*Enter Wally and Rebecca laughing and having fun. Host holds near the edge of the stage*

Wally: Back in the nick of time.

Rebecca: Hi, mom. Hi, dad. You guys ready?

Wally: *(to his parents)* I just saw Emily. She is ready for you. Things are just about to begin.

Mira: I guess that's our cue to exit.

Host *(stepping in)* I think it is. You can walk right this way.

Charles: *(to the Gibbs family)* We will see you all in a few minutes.

Wally: Deep breaths, mom. You'll be fine.

Charles: I'll take care of her.

Mira: *(not unkindly)* You will do no such thing.

*Charles and Mira exit. Host moves DC.*

*George's family sets the stage for the wedding. They place three chairs on each side of the "aisle" facing upstage. The families will sit on opposites sides of the aisle when the ceremony begins. Classical guitar can be heard gently in the background.*

*Host puts on a coat and tie as he says the following speech to the audience.*

Host: Pretty much anyone can perform a wedding ceremony these days, so I am going to perform this one. I recently became an ordained minister of the Universal Life Church in order to make things legal. It wasn't hard. I filled out a form online and in a couple of weeks I got my license and a certificate so, here I am. Didn't cost a nickel.

*Now completely dressed as the officiant. Lights shift.*

Host: There is much talk about marriage these days and I would not presume to try to define it, but I can tell you this: being married is a whole lot different from not being married. It's different from going steady or being engaged or even living together.

I'm sure that some of you out there are married, so let me ask you a question. Do you remember the first time that you introduced that person sitting next to you with the words "This is my husband" or "this is my wife"? Remember how odd, yet exhilarating it felt? Like you had become a totally new person in a matter of minutes. Well, you had. You were married now. And, if you chose the right person and got married for the right reasons, it probably didn't take long for you both to feel comfortable and secure in your new roles.

Now, some people will tell you that two individuals shackling themselves to each other for life is unnatural – that there are almost no mammals on the planet that mate for life. Well, that's true, but there are a few and I like to think it's one of the things that makes human beings special.

Well, that's my sermon for today. Let's get on with the wedding.

*Host looks to the wings and sees George. He signals for George to join him.*

Host: Come on in, George. Let's get started.

*George enters from the wings, smiling and confident, nothing like the bedraggled kid we saw in the previous scene. He stops and gives his mother a kiss and his father and sister a hug before joining Host UC above the six chairs.*

*The music changes to Pachelbel's Canon in D.*

*Emily, dressed in white, standing between her mother and father enters and begins the walk toward the aisle.*

Mira: *(to the audience)* What a strange experience – to walk your daughter down the aisle arm-in-arm with the man you are divorcing.

*Emily's parents hug or kiss her and take their seats.*

*George greets Emily and playfully spins her around before walking her to the minister UC. They take their places. They are both clearly happy. The music ends.*

Host: George, Emily. Welcome to the first day of the rest of your life. A few minutes from now you will enter the world as husband and wife and you, along with your family, friends and the United States government will define your relationship in an entirely new way...

*Mira rises. A light comes up on her as the wedding ceremony continues silently UC. She addresses the audience.*

Mira: "Gray divorce." That's what they call it. It happens so frequently now that it has its own name. Couples my age who choose to live apart after years of marriage. They simply ask themselves "Am I happier married or single?" and then... I wonder, how unhappy you have to be before you leave? What if there is no abuse, no cheating, no big fights, none of the obvious signs, just boredom and a desire for something better. Should a shared history and joint obligations outweigh the chance to start fresh with new dreams and goals? I don't know.

*Mira sits. Frank stands. Lights rise on the wedding ceremony.*

Host: ... It is a union of two people who respect each other's individuality and who strive to create an atmosphere in which each feels comfortable growing into his or her full potential...

*Lights up on Frank, down on the wedding ceremony*

Frank: After college, George travelled for what seemed like an eternity. He said he wanted to find himself. He wrote beautiful, insightful letters home, but he knew he was lost, still unable to answer the question he had asked since childhood: "What will I be when I grow up?".

Then one day he called to tell us that he was moving in with Emily. Eventually, he would follow her to Baltimore where she would attend Medical School and he would wait tables and work on a novel. And I, too, began to wonder, "what will he be when he grows up?" I feared he would wilt living in her shadow, but he didn't. He blossomed. His anxiety went away, he began writing more seriously and he became a terrific cook. He lifted the burden off of Emily so that she could do what she does best and, in doing so, he discovered what he does best.

We worried that Emily would lose interest in George, but she didn't. She knew that she had something special in our son; that she and George were greater than the sum of their parts.

*Frank sits, Wally stands. Lights rise on the wedding ceremony.*

Host: ... It is a bond in which you take each other as a lover, companion and friend, and it cannot be fully realized unless it is based on trust...

*Lights up on Wally, down on the wedding ceremony*

Wally: I love falling in love. There is nothing like it: the discoveries, the easy laughter, the deep kisses, the incredible sex, the freedom, the honesty, the trust. Until one night, someone crosses a line and an eyebrow is raised, an ear is cocked and for the first time, a hint of

doubt appears. Before long, the little mundane things that used to seem charming now seem childish and it's just a matter of time before one of us moves on.

Yes, falling in love is exhilarating. There's nothing else like it.

Staying in love is impossible.

*Wally sits, Rebecca stands. Lights rise on the wedding ceremony.*

Host: Please repeat after me:

Host/George: I, George,

Take you Emily,

To be my lawfully wedded wife.

*Lights up on Rebecca, down on wedding ceremony*

Rebecca: The high regard given to marriage and motherhood simply serves as cover for men to prosper while their female colleagues take time off to have children. Men love marriage. Why shouldn't they? They get an occasional sex partner, a free housekeeper and a nanny while they climb the corporate ladder and occasionally dally in a passionate affair with an intern. I know. I'm an intern.

In one more year, I will be 31. I will have an MBA from Penn and a PhD from Stanford and, for the first time in my life, I will stand toe to toe with all those men who have looked down on me for years. Men who get by on unending arrogance, marginal intelligence and manufactured charm. And by the time I'm forty, I will be calling the shots. And when I go home, I will go home alone; to an estate in the hills or a penthouse on the park, not to some pathetic husband who wishes he could be me.

*Rebecca sits, Julia stands. Lights rise on the wedding ceremony.*

Host/Emily: ...in sickness and in health

In good times and bad,

for richer or poorer...

*Lights up on Julia, down on wedding ceremony*

Julia: Have you noticed that the name of God has not been spoken today?

The vows that my husband and I took in St. Viviana's Church 38 years ago were sacred promises that we made to each other. They were made knowing that, if we did our part, God would do His, standing beside us when we celebrate life's triumphs and embracing us when we endure life's tragedies.

I will meet my maker secure in the knowledge that Charles and I have lived our lives according to God's teachings, and our years of marriage will be the beacon that lights our way to heaven.

There are seven sacraments in the Catholic church. Six of those sacraments require that you believe in God. In Matrimony, the opposite is true: It is God who believes in you. Without God, marriage is just a long difficult journey.

*Julia sits, Charles stands. Lights rise on the wedding ceremony.*

Host/Emily/George: ...forsaking all others  
for as long as we both shall live.

*Lights up on Charles, down on wedding ceremony*

Charles: "For as long as we both shall live". I spoke those words to Mira on our wedding day, with every intention of honoring that promise; but life is long and complicated, and we could not predict the many ways we would change and grow. You can't prepare for things that have never occurred to you.

And yet I stand here today as a true believer in the institution of marriage and the promise of a life together "for as long as we both shall live". It is both boldly defiant and eternally optimistic to write the final chapter before the story has begun.

*Charles sits. Lights up on the wedding ceremony.*

Host: George and Emily, you have taken your vows and exchanged rings so there is just one thing left to do, and it's my favorite part of the ceremony. A wedding, in its essence, is a public pronouncement of private feelings. You have both written a letter to each other that you will now have the opportunity to read. *(To the audience and families)* We flipped a coin before the ceremony today. Emily won and has elected to go second. *(Back to George)* So, George, you're on.

*George pulls a folded sheet of paper out of his coat pocket, takes a deep breath, and begins to read. Both he and Emily are visibly nervous, but they cover those nerves with playfulness.*

George: Dear, Emily. I have known you my entire life. When we were little kids, you taught me how to ride a skateboard and in elementary school you drilled me on my multiplication tables and helped me with my Geography worksheets. I can still name all the state capitals because of you.

Emily: What's the capital of Montana?

George: Helena. And no more interruptions, please. *(Back to his letter)* In middle school, when I started playing baseball, you would send me YouTube videos on how to throw the curveball or lay down a perfect bunt. And in high school, you came to almost every one of my games, even though I hardly acknowledged your existence.

Emily: True.

George: The point of all this is that you have always believed in me way more than I believed in myself. You have always encouraged and supported me in everything I have tried to do, no matter how certain I was to fail. Of course, I can say the same thing about my mother.

So why am I so in love with you? There are about a million reasons but here are a few: You are not just a brilliant and dedicated doctor; you are insatiably curious and unafraid to ask the tough questions. You accomplish so much, that you inspire others, most of all me, to work hard and make a difference in the world. But the professional pressure cooker in which you work never keeps you from enjoying a weekend camping trip or a Sunday night movie snuggled in my arms. Also, the fact that you have never missed an episode of “The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills” always gives me goosebumps.

Eight years ago, sitting in the rain on your doorstep, I was lost and afraid and alone. The moment I saw you, I felt safe again, just like I did going into that Geography test in Miss Gonzales’s class in fifth grade. I think I loved you before I knew what love meant. Now I know what it means. Thank you. I love you. I always have and I always will.

*Emily is in tears.*

Emily: *(with a tearful laugh)* What was I thinking??? I should have gone first.

George: Just take a deep breath and go.

*Emily glances at Wally who brings up a nicely typed crisp piece of paper and hands it to Emily. He returns to his seat.*

Emily: Okay. *(She takes a deep breath)* Dear George. It’s funny how things happen. How a romantic night in the redwoods and a humiliating trip to the airport changed my life. How, no matter how much I studied, no matter how hard I worked, I never stopped thinking of you, wondering where you were; what you were doing; and asking myself why I wasn’t there with you, knowing that was what always brought me true joy. I have always been the girl who followed the rules and planned ahead. You have always been the boy who was willing to take a different path.

When our paths unexpectedly crossed on your way home from Nepal, you changed my life forever. I was ready to quit, but you helped me carry on. You were my strength when I was weak, you were my voice when I couldn’t speak. You always saw the best there was in me. I’m everything I am because you loved me.

George: *(laughing and teasing)* Wait a minute. Did you just lift that from that Celine Dion song?

Emily: *(To Wally)* Wally!!! Seriously??

Wally: *(defending himself)* George listens to Celine Dion??? Who are you marrying?

*Everyone laughs at the moment. It quickly morphs from embarrassment into joy.*

Emily: Oh, George, I am so bad at this sort of thing. I just can’t do it. You’re the writer in this family *(A deep breath, holding back tears)* All I know is that we are made for each other. Our story was written the day we were born. I have loved you my entire life, and I will continue to love you until the day I die.

*They kiss.*

Host: Well, I guess this makes my next line superfluous.

*When they stop:*

George: Celine Dion. Nice touch.

*Emily smacks him with the paper in her hands and they turn and face the audience.*

Host: By virtue of the authority vested in me, and in conformity with the laws of the state of California, I pronounce you husband and wife. Ladies and Gentlemen, may I present to you for the first time as a married couple: George and Emily.

*“Because You Loved Me” by Celine Dion plays as they playfully walk down the aisle. At some point, the lights dim, and the music gets softer. The action onstage becomes a silent tableau, mimicking the end of act two from Our Town. The Host steps forward.*

Host: I have married over two hundred couples in my day. Do I believe in it? I don’t know. Today I do.

*The lights return to normal. George and Emily hug members of their families as caterers enter with trays of food and drink. The Host steps forward once again.*

Host: The wedding may be over, but our play is not quite finished. On behalf of all of the members of the wedding party, I would like to invite you to join us on stage for food and drink and the opportunity to meet the bride and groom, their families and, of course, your fellow audience members as we celebrate the marriage of George and Emily. So please, as they used to say on “The Price is Right”, Come on Down.

*The music cranks up a bit and the audience comes on stage and mingles.*

*\*The cast should make a concerted effort to ask questions about the audience members’ lives rather than have the audience members asking them questions about the show. Avoid the “Nice show” conversations. Think of this time as the beginning of a wedding reception and that you are meeting and greeting people, some of whom you know and some of whom you don’t.*

*After everyone has had a chance to have some food and chat for a few moments –no more than 5-10 minutes – Charles and Frank tap their glasses with silverware to get everyone’s attention. Once the room quiets down, Charles and Frank step forward.*

Charles: Good evening. My name is Charles Webb, Emily’s father, and this is my longtime friend and now, in-law, Frank Gibbs.

George and Emily have asked us to thank you all for coming and to welcome you to this celebration of their marriage. You are here because each of you has contributed

something to their lives and ours and have made us all richer for it. Your presence here tonight, like an audience at a play, gives life and meaning to this evening's festivities.

Frank: Our two families have known each other since before George and Emily were born. In fact, I was the doctor who delivered both Emily and Wally at Cottage Hospital and Charles wrote the birth announcements for the paper when George and Rebecca were born. It has not escaped either of us that Emily, the daughter of a writer, has become a doctor and that George, the son of a doctor, has become a writer.

And George had some good news this month. His first book, *Searching for the Keys to Happiness in all the Wrong Places*, will be published later this year and he tells me that the final chapter will include a copy of this play.

Charles: As the father of the bride, it is my privilege to toast the bride and groom. After some serious arm twisting, I convinced Julia, Frank and Mira to help me out. So, if you would all grab your glass, we will give it our best shot.

*The parents gather together opposite George and Emily. Mira takes out a crumpled piece of paper on which she has written her part.*

Charles: My grandfather was a 1960's era "folk singer", and his favorite song was "Forever Young", by Bob Dylan. He sang it for the last time on my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, just a few months before he died. Through the years, the song has stuck with me, and I thought it would be appropriate to honor George and Emily tonight with those words. So, in spite of being terribly under rehearsed, here goes:

Julia: May God bless and keep you always  
May your wishes all come true  
May you always do for others  
And let others do for you

Frank: May you build a ladder to the stars  
And climb on every rung  
May you stay forever young

Mira: May your hands always be busy  
May your feet always be swift  
May you have a strong foundation  
When the winds of changes shift

Charles: May your heart always be joyful  
May your song always be sung  
And may you stay forever young

All four: May you grow up to be righteous  
May you grow up to be true  
May you always know the truth  
And see the light surrounding you  
May you always be courageous  
Stand upright and be strong  
May you stay forever young  
To George and Emily!!

*All toast*

Frank: To conclude this evening's festivities, we'd like to invite the newlyweds to the dance floor for their first dance as a married couple.

*The lights shift to something romantic. George and Emily dance to Whitney Houston's "Nobody Loves Me Like You Do." As the song plays, Frank signals for the music to be turned low.*

Frank: Now, as is traditional, we would like to invite all the married couples in the audience to join them on the dance floor.

*Married Couples join them on the dance floor. As the song progresses, married couples are gradually asked to leave the floor based on the length of their marriage, until only the couple who has been married the longest is left on the dance floor with George and Emily. When there is just one couple left, George and Emily "cut in", with George dancing with the lady and Emily with the gentleman. As the song comes to an end, the stage goes dark on everything except the two couples, now isolated in two pools of light. As flower petals fall on them from above, the lights black out.*

*Bows, then..*

Host: Well, that's all for tonight. Drive safely going home.

*As people are leaving, Wally stands on a chair and shouts:*

Wally: Tonight's show can be seen on YouTube starting tomorrow. "George and Emily Get Married". Don't forget to "Like" and "Subscribe"!

The End