



FORCED MOTEL STAY – A MOTEL PLAY

by Art Shulman

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CHARACTERS

Robin Female, 25-30

Carl Male, about the same age

TIME: Late afternoon, at the time of the COVID pandemic

PLACE: The patio outside a motel

AT RISE: CARL enters with a newspaper, sits on one side of the stage. ROBIN enters just behind, notices where Carl sits, then sits on the other side.

ROBIN

Remember, six feet! If anyone else comes out here I'm leaving.

CARL

I know. We must all be concerned about keeping our social distance.

ROBIN

Especially if they look like they might be sick. Like if they cough or sneeze or look too skinny.

CARL

Too skinny?

ROBIN

Too skinny may mean they don't eat enough and people who are sick don't eat enough. (Beat) If we want to avoid the plague we must keep our social distance.

CARL

It's a virus, not a plague.

ROBIN

It's a virus plague.

CARL

OK, I can see why you might want to keep at least six feet away from others, but why six feet from me? I'm your husband. (Beat) And we're on our honeymoon.

ROBIN

Just because you're my husband doesn't mean I can't catch it from you. The virus says, "I don't care if he's your husband or if you're on your honeymoon schmoneymoon. (*Spoken slowly and precisely*) Cackle cackle heh heh heh."

CARL

What makes you think I'm contagious? I have no symptoms.

ROBIN

Not all contagious people have symptoms. Plus, you might be contagious, based on recent events.

CARL

What events?

ROBIN

Earlier today, after we each said our “I do’s”, Marilyn, my ‘best friend’ maid-of-honor, gave each of us a big kiss.

CARL

So?

ROBIN

She kissed *my* cheek. She kissed *your* mouth. Your mouth was open, Carl.

CARL

It was open because I was about to protest her method of kissing.

ROBIN

And when she finally extracted her tongue, she said to you, “I’ll always be there for you.”

CARL

She only meant that in friendship.

ROBIN

I need to reconsider her as a friend.

CARL

She *is* your friend. After I broke up with her a couple of years ago, didn’t she introduce me to you?

ROBIN

That’s another reason I need to reconsider her as a friend. (Beat) I just want to be safe.

CARL

I know. That’s why I agreed to your idea for a virtual marriage ceremony. Online, using Zoom.

ROBIN

I thought it would be so romantic. The two of us in your living room with my ‘wonderful’ maid-of-honor and your best man.

CARL

And everybody else, even the minister, on screens, visible to us, and us to them.

ROBIN

Your mom looked so elegant in her blue dress.

CARL

We really should have let our parents attend in person.

ROBIN

There was a chance they'd pass the virus on to us, especially your mom. Her bingo games are a hotbed of interpersonal interaction.

CARL

Robin, let's just enjoy our honeymoon, now that we're here.

ROBIN

A big mistake. Most newly married couples do not spend their honeymoon at a cheap motel. I don't know if I can stand being here a whole week. Or more.

CARL

We already went through this, Robin. Uncle Charley owns this motel. We need to support family, especially during a pandemic. I know it was just going to be one night. But now, we have no choice. The Governor said everyone is in lockdown, unless they are doing something essential. Like shopping for food, drugs, like that.

ROBIN

Speaking of food, instead of dining at a fine restaurant tonight we're stuck with getting take-out from Julio's Taco stand.

CARL

It's not my fault that the state ordered restaurants to shut down, except for take-out.

ROBIN

OK, we have to do our part to deal with this emergency. So, Carl, we must use best practices to protect ourselves. Like six feet.

CARL

Best practices should not include me sleeping on the hard floor, when you lounge in bed on that comfy mattress.

ROBIN

OK, we'll compromise.

CARL

How?

ROBIN

We'll take shifts, alternate who goes on the hard floor and who on the comfy cushy mattress.

CARL

This is our honeymoon. Neither one of us should be on the floor.

ROBIN

But, as a devoted husband you should be concerned about the health of your wife.

CARL

I am. I want a healthy wife. I want an eager wife. I want to enjoy my honeymoon.

ROBIN

Maybe that's your problem. You think it's *your* honeymoon. It's not. It's *our* honeymoon.

CARL

I've been trying to tell you that.

(Beat)

ROBIN

Anything interesting in the newspaper?

CARL

It's today's newspaper but yesterday's news.

ROBIN

Then what's yesterday's news?

CARL

Federal, state, and local leaders are each accusing the other of incompetence.

ROBIN

They're all correct.

CARL

And those same panicked leaders are all telling the citizenry to remain calm.

ROBIN

Like us, which is unnecessary for me since I am already calm.

CARL

We really should have confidence in our leaders.

ROBIN

We should. It's absurd if we don't.