

THE SLEEP♥OVER

A COMEDY ♥ OF MARRIAGE

November 6-16, 2019

Black Box Theater, Main Street Landing, Burlington

~ CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS ~ SYNOPSIS ~ AUDITION SIDES ~

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

**An ensemble piece where ALL characters are onstage almost the entire play.
12 Roles: 6-7 Women & 5-6 Men**

*Looking for actors who have strong comic timing, physical comedic ability, and are able to deliver quick-paced dialogue. Just as important is authenticity; each character is multi-dimensional with a range of emotion and expression. As Brendan Coyle said, "I think great humor lies in playing the truth of a situation." Though sometimes they don't act like it, all the couples have real relationships and love each other.
Age ranges are approximate and may change.*

SUSIE - 35-45 - Life coach Susie co-facilitates the marriage retreat with her husband, Mark. An achiever, she is intuitive, energetic, fit, and generally optimistic - except when she's really pissed off. Although she can wear a sunny smile when needed, Susie is an authentic and passionate leader. As much as she is exasperated by Mark, she loves him dearly.

MARK - mid-40s-50 - A highly-educated psychotherapist - and proud of it, Mark co-facilitates the marriage retreat with his wife, Susie. Unaware of his social awkwardness, he's enthusiastic, eager, and fastidious. A "systems" kind of guy, Mark over-organizes and loves his schedule and clipboard. Often oblivious about his impact on others, especially Susie, who he adores.

SMITH - 40s-50 - A retreat junkie, there isn't a new age experience he and his wife, Jan, haven't tried. A know-it-all over-sharer, Smith is a lovable narcissist once you get to know him. His spirit animal would be Crush, the turtle, in "Finding Nemo." Underneath his unbridled intensity and impetuosity, ultimately, there's an earnestness about Smith and his intentions.

JAN - 30-50 - An airy, serene presence who attends the retreat with her "beloved," Smith. The two travel the world, going to every type of seminar they can find. She is a practitioner of yoga, aromatherapy, reiki, and tantric meditation. With a tendency to create her own mashed up "awe-maze-velous" vocabulary, Jen's vibe is chill - that is, until Smith crosses a line.

JULIE - 30s -40s - Intense and overwhelmed, Julie works full time and has three children with her husband, Scott. If someone called her pessimistic, Julie would snap back, "I'm pragmatic, asshole! And keep your stupid opinions to yourself." Though freely brash and opinionated, Julie's a marshmallow inside. Unhappy and blaming Scott, she attends the retreat begrudgingly and is shocked to see her former fiancée, Mark.

SCOTT - 30s-40s - A good-hearted man who can't stop being a victim, Scott is a bit of an Eeyore. Suspecting Julie's having an affair, he thinks the retreat will solve all their problems, until he learns the seminar leader is his wife's former lover. Nonetheless, Scott intently takes seminar notes, desperately desiring change. A hypochondriac, he fashions a neck brace out of a pillow when a trust exercise goes awry, only adding to his pouting and fear.

ROSEMARIE - 19-early 20s - A young woman from a rural town, though Rosemarie is unworldly and timid, she is genuinely kind and receptive. Recently married to Dave, the two found in each other a home of sorts. A wide-eyed virgin, Rosemarie thinks the marriage retreat will be fun, after all, she heard there were games. Little does she know the education she's about to receive.

DAVE - 19-early 20s - A young man from a rural town, Dave is his mother's son, well-loved and coddled. With an easy way of being around others, Dave's just fine wherever lands. His inexperience and naïveté make him a strange participant in a marriage retreat with seasoned couples. The newlyweds went straight from their Disneyland honeymoon to the retreat, which they received as a wedding gift from Dave's oft-married mom.

CYBIL - 40s - A whip-smart former career woman who decided to be a stay-at-home-mom, Cybil runs her household with efficiency and sits on a number of nonprofit boards. With a quick wit, she is an interesting mixture of sass and class. Cybil and her husband, Wayne, are doing well financially, but relationship-wise, they've traded in their communication for barbs, sarcasm, and blame.

WAYNE - 40-50 - A businessman who has spent more time cultivating success at work than at home, Wayne is charming and affable with a devilish sense of humor. Of late, his true caring nature hasn't been apparent, though he and Cybil are a great match with similar sensibilities. Neither expect any value from the retreat, except for mistakenly thinking it'd be a fun night without the kids at a resort.

BARBARA - 50s - Corporate executive workaholic, Barbara is as urbane as she is gritty. Suffering no fools, everything about her screams "in charge." Married to her career, Barbara inadvertently forgets about her spouse, Jesse. She attends the marriage retreat because of a bribe and has no qualms about not participating. Barbara arrives dressed for work, briefcase in hand, looking for cell service.

JESSE - late 30s-mid 40s - (any gender) A charming renaissance individual, Jesse, a sound engineer, met Barbara at a conference. Initially drawn to Barbara's boldness, Jesse fell in love with the woman underneath; one virtually unseen for years as Barbara is never available. Self-possessed and good-natured, Jesse isn't bothered by much. With a genuine ease, Jesse sees the best in most things - but, perhaps, no longer in Barbara.

SYNOPSIS

Life coach Susie and her husband, Mark, a psychotherapist, hold their first couples counseling retreat in a run-down ski lodge. Susie is furious at her husband as she'd rather be at a beachside resort. Mark tries to soothe his wife's anger, when couples begin to arrive.

Smith and Jan, self-help seminar junkies, are "stoked" to be there and know more about retreats than the co-leaders. Then, the long-suffering Scott arrives with his wife, Julie, who clearly would rather be anywhere else. Scott thinks the experience will be the answer to all their problems until he learns Mark was Julie's former lover and fiancée. Next to enter are newlyweds Dave and Rosemarie who came straight from their Disneyland honeymoon not yet having consummated their marriage. Cybil and Wayne, masters of bickering and sarcasm, arrive looking for the bar. Finally, Jesse enters with corporate workaholic wife, Barbara, who is there as a result of a bribe.

Throughout the play, the couples are led through various therapy exercises that either don't work or lead to unexpected results. Unable to get off the mountain until the next day, the couples are aghast to learn they'll spend the night sharing rooms in bunk beds. Through creative name calling and therapeutic games that involve both blindfolds and injury, each couple ends up learning something in the midst of this one-of-a-kind retreat.

AUDITION SIDES

Some scenes are condensed from the script, eliminating other dialogue, in order to focus reading.

1. MARK / SUSIE - A
2. MARK / SUSIE - B
3. SMITH / JAN - A
4. SMITH / JAN - B
5. SCOTT / JULIE - A
6. SCOTT / JULIE - B
7. WAYNE / CYBIL
8. DAVE / ROSEMARIE
9. WAYNE / CYBIL / DAVE / ROSEMARIE
10. BARBARA / JESSE / ROSEMARIE / DAVE
11. JESSE / BARBARA
12. JESSE

1. MARK / SUSIE - A

As scene opens, Mark is sitting on the couch officiously arranging his paperwork and office supplies on the coffee table, happily making sure everything is just right. Susie enters reading from the rental brochure, stunned by how crappy the lodge is while being exasperated at Mark for booking it.

SUSIE

This place is a dump!

MARK

Pens or pencils?

SUSIE

(Sarcastically reading from a brochure.)

“Experience the dream. Come to Hill House for the ultimate ski in - ski out vacation!”

MARK

I think pens.

SUSIE

(Holds her finger up, she continues reading.)

“This expansive -” Ha! There are two, just two - two bedrooms! “and lovely?”

(Indicates her surroundings.)

need I say more? “Log cabin home-”

MARK

They have that correct; it is built with logs.

SUSIE

Oh, it gets better. “With room enough for” - wait for it - “16!” Where? On top of each other? In bunk beds!

MARK

(Checks each pen to make sure it works by scribbling on paper.)

Let us use that in our favor.

SUSIE

How are we supposed to hold a marriage counseling retreat called “How To Get and Feel the Love” when people can’t even sleep together?

MARK

Susie, kindly use the entire title. We had an agreement.

SUSIE

Mark, the title is too long.

MARK

It is part of our brand. Do we need to review the larger concept and how -

SUSIE

Fine! “The Beatles Had It Right: We CAN Work It Out.” *(Mark encourages her to continue.)*

“How To Get and Feel the Love.” I had already said that part! Did you even check this place out before you rented it?

MARK

Of course! Furthermore, it is off season. That is why I negotiated such a great deal.

SUSIE

Oh, that's why.

MARK

You are simply agitated because you wanted to go to Mexico.

SUSIE

Silly me. Why go to Cancun and be on a beach - when you can be HERE!

MARK

You read it yourself. Sleeps 16. There are five couples coming - including us - that is 12.

SUSIE

Wait a minute, where are we sleeping? Not with our clients?

MARK

No! Of course not. We shall pull our mattresses out here.

SUSIE

Keeps getting better.

MARK

It is one night. Think of it ... akin to camping.

SUSIE

Since when is camping a selling point?

MARK

We even have room for two more couples.

SUSIE

From where? We're on a mountain in the forest! The only way to get here was with that guy, John Boy -

MARK

Joe Bob.

SUSIE

Who dropped us off in that scary truck -

MARK

Monster truck.

SUSIE

So unless there's a couple of bears out there who are feeling under-appreciated, I think we're capped out! *(Grabs the pen Mark is scribbling with.)* They all work!

MARK

You never know.

SUSIE

(Gives him pen and walks away, to herself, trying to calm down.)

You check every pen, but you don't check the beds.

MARK

Ma chérie, where is that enchanting smile I love so much. Come on, Susie, remember, WE are the marriage that works! ... Oh! I nearly see it! You can do it!

SUSIE

This is our first retreat, Mark, and it's important it goes well. And if we had it at a resort with a beach, it would automatically add to -

MARK

You must put the beach in perspective and let it go. Here, close your eyes, take a deep breath,

(Susie is holding her breath)

deeper, a little deeper now ... Susie, you have to actually breathe!

(Susie finally takes a breath)

Capital! Now imagine balloons filled with all of your disappointed expectations and -

SUSIE

(With eyes closed - fuming)

Rage!

MARK

All righty ... disappointed expectations AND rage -

SUSIE

Pissed-off-ness!

MARK

Susie, I get the point -

(Susie opens her eyes and gives him a look)

Right!

(Susie closes her eyes again)

Balloons filled with disappointed expectations, rage, and pissy -

SUSIE

Pissed-off-ness!

MARK

Pissed-off-ness, I was getting there! Now, gently let go of the balloons of disappointment - oh, and rage, and pissed-off-ness-ness - and let them drift away into the infinite universe. Another deep breath.

(Sees she's still not deep breathing). That will be good enough. Now open your eyes.

SUSIE

(Feeling just the same)

Still a dump. It's fine, fine, I'll be fine! You know me, I have an excellent attitude!

2. MARK / SUSIE - B - with Smith

Susie is guiding Smith and Jan through a therapeutic exercise when she gets the idea to show “an example” with Mark. She is mad at him because not only did he book the crappy lodge, but now Mark’s former fiancée, Julie, is in attendance, and she totally befuddles Mark. NOTE: no need to do any of the physical direction in the audition.

SUSIE

So Smith and Jan, you two are going to say to each other the things you’ve been holding inside. Things that have been eating at you, really pissing you off and driving you crazy and -

(Gets an idea)

Let’s give them an example, Mark!

SMITH

No way! I’m sup-stoked ready to go!

SUSIE

SIT! Both of you! We are giving an example!

MARK

(Nervous about Susie’s intensity)

Susie, perhaps, clinically, we should skip the example -

SUSIE

We’re doing it!

(Susie and Mark move in a circle, she stares at him the entire time.)

Everyone, listen up! Here are the ground rules. You get to say anything to your partner that you’ve been holding in - deep, deep, deep inside! Everything that pisses you off from stupid pet names - especially French ones! To phrases like “how is that working for you?” and “we need to dialogue about this” to stupid socks! ANYTHING that really, really makes your blood boil and -

MARK

(Fearful, high pitched)

But no physical violence!

SUSIE

(To the group.)

This is my - your opportunity to be self expressed! Say what you want to say!

(To Mark)

No matter how foul or how long it’s been eating you up inside! Just spill that venom and -

MARK

But no swearing!

SUSIE

Say ANYTHING you want to say, you can -

MARK

Stop! let me explain.

MARK (cont.)

(Tries to calmly speak to the group but is nervous about Susie behind him.)

We want you to be fully expressed, but for sensitive ears, swear words are not vocalized. Instead just rhyme the word you want to say. It is less aggressive and aurally assaulting. For example, if you are inspired to say, "Shit," you would say -

(Turns and sees Susie pumped up and seething with anger.)

SHIT! I mean, tit! No! I mean - spit!

SUSIE

(They begin moving in a circle again. Mark squelches a sound.)

For example, I might be moved to call Mark a smother-pucker!

MARK

Hey!

SUSIE

Or a ducking glasshole!

MARK

That's a low blow!

SUSIE

Ass-turd!

MARK

Hey! You can't say ass-turd, you have to rhyme it!

SUSIE

I did!

SMITH

Dude, put a B on it.

MARK

Bas -st -ohhhhh

(figures it out)

Really, Susie?

SUSIE

You might like this one better - stick, rick -

(trying to find the rhyme)

. . . give me a sec, lick, sick, brick -

MARK

We get the point! Excellent example! Everyone, round of applause! Everyone!

(Claps and gets others to warily clap along.)

Susie here is the Meryl Streep of life coaches!

3. SMITH / JAN - A - with Susie

Smith and Jan arrive at the retreat, one of many that they have attended around the world. NOTE: Don't worry about correct pronunciations - just go for it.

SMITH

Man! That was some ride!

JAN

Totally altered my space! Awemaze-velous!

SUSIE

(Aside)

God, I hope they're high-

(Super bright and cheery.)

Hi! Welcome!

SMITH

(Grabs Susie and squeezes. Jan joins in.)

Smith. I'm a hugger.

JAN

We're "hello-my-heart-sees-your-heart-huggers." Aloha, I'm Jan.

SMITH

Tena koe! Let me do you again.

(Re-hugs Susie.)

Bringin' the bear hugs!

SUSIE

(Holding her sore ribs.)

Speaking of bears, did you see any depressed ones out there...we have room for - never-mind - I'm Susie.

SMITH

(Bowing, hands pressed together)

Ahh, GuruSue.

SUSIE

What?

SMITH

I shall call you - GuruSue.

SUSIE

Okay.

JAN

(looking around room)

Wow, rustic! This is different than usual.

SUSIE

Than usual?

JAN

We're couples retreat virtu-Oh-So-love-its!

SMITH

Don't want to brag, but "been there, done that" was made for me - I mean, us.

JAN

They're mostly at nicer places, you knowster, more uplifting, I mean, I'm sure you have a point to all of this. We can't wait to find out about your work!

SMITH

Yeah! Do you do more like mindfulness or ... BAM-POW in your face!

JAN

Smith, open your mind, maybe it'll be more experiential, like that one in Teahupo'o, Tahiti.

SUSIE

Tahiti?

SMITH

Oh yeah, Chopo was ridic.

JAN

We did energy work outside the Gauguin museum - right on the beach! Awe is not a big enough word.

SUSIE

The beach?

SMITH

Soaking up the rays, feeling the vibes, transforming -

SUSIE

Excuse me! Smith! Jan, um, if you've done so many retreats - and they sound like very nice ones, indeed - why are you here? If you don't mind me ask-

JAN

We believe in the full extension of ourselves -

SMITH

And our spirits. And that we leave no stone -

JAN

Or crystal -

SMITH

Unturned in the pursuit of personal growth and expansion -

JAN

And hot sex.

SMITH

The hotter the better! *(high fives Jan)*

SUSIE

Alrighty then!

4. SMITH / JAN - B - with Mark / Cybil / Scott

Smith is eager to show he knows how these seminars work and wants to do every exercise and answer every question. This is an active listening exercise Mark is introducing.

MARK

Let's bring it back to the room. You may return to your seats. Let us see, who is next-

SMITH

(Races to the chair.)

We're up! Come on, Jan!

MARK

Alrighty, one of you will state the reason you are here. The other will listen. And then, in their own words, paraphrase what they heard. After which, we shall reverse -

SMITH

Jan and I are kick-ass active listeners.

JAN

Rockstarably! I mean, we could demonstrate.

CYBIL

Oh yes, please, let the ass kissers go first.

SMITH

Cybil, I sense some negative ions about me.

CYBIL

Wow, you're really good at this!

(Smith loves the compliment, then realizes it wasn't one.)

MARK

You may begin.

SMITH

(Does a goofy centering movement, then stares meaningfully into Jan's eyes)

My beloved first.

JAN

Smith, I wanted to come here so we can keep growing our premo-auras and deepen our spec-tack union. I love frolicking in the unknown sea of life with you, my bud, my man, my heart.

SMITH

Jan-ster, I hear you saying you want to bust out our auras in fireworks and play in the water of life with me, your heart!

(Uses his fist to make heart beat sounds on his chest.)

JAN

Ahh, Smith! You so get it.

SCOTT

(Watching anxiously hoping it works for him.)

I hope I get it.

SMITH

My turn.

(Looks deep into her eyes, intent and serious.)

Jan, I wanted to come here because our 'ship rocks. And this place - it brings our redic total marriage retreats to 25! Whoo! Whoo!! Beat my bud's record of 24!

JAN

(Breaking their loving trance - she's shocked)

That's it!?

SMITH

(Whispers.)

You're supposed to repeat what I said - WITH feeling.

JAN

You only came here to beat Kai's record?

SMITH

Yeah! 25 marriage retreats! Whoo!!

(Runs a lap by everyone to get a high five)

JAN

What about me?

SMITH

You slaughtered his record too! High five!

(Jan does not high five.)

JAN

(angry)

I'm so over this.

SMITH

(Tries to recover by returning to active listening techniques.)

Jan, I hear you saying that you feel like you're so over -

JAN

What color is my aura now, Smith?

SMITH

(Still trying.)

Jan, I hear you say the color of your aura is -

JAN

BLACK! It's BLACK, SMITH!!

5. SCOTT / JULIE - A - with Susie / Mark / Cybil / Smith / Wayne

Mark and Susie have been leading couples through the trust fall exercise. Next up is Scott and Julie. Susie is still perturbed that Julie was Mark's fiancée in college as Mark can't seem to focus when Julie is around. Meanwhile Julie is fed up with the seminar and Dave, who plays the martyr thinking Julie is having an affair with her boss. NOTE: No need to do any of the physical actions listed.

SUSIE

Julie and Scott, you're up next.

(Aside to Mark.)

Sure you can handle it, ma chérie?

MARK

Surely, you jest. Scott, stand with Susie, you will catch Julie first.

JULIE

Oh no, I trust him fine. I am not the one who needs this freakin' exercise. Scott is exceedingly trustworthy, that's part of the problem. Seriously, I wish for once Scott would NOT be there.

SCOTT

Why? I love you. I want to be there for you.

JULIE

Because it's no fun being married to a martyr, Scott. You do everything for me. And then, you point it out to me!

SCOTT

I only point it out because you don't seem to notice.

JULIE

Oh, I notice! "Julie, I washed your car, Julie, I ran you a bath, Julie, I made you dinner, Julie, I -"

CYBIL

What I'd give -

JULIE

Oh, take him! If I'm not careful he'd shave my legs and put on my deodorant.

SMITH

I wear Jan's! Why not, it's aluminum-free and-

JULIE

I meant he'd put it on me, stupid!

SCOTT

Hey, don't call him stupid!

JULIE

Why not? You just slugged him!

MARK

Whoa - someone was slugged!?

JULIE

Scott, you wanted to come here as some last ditch effort, leave no stone unturned, well, here I am! Telling you what you can do. NOTHING!

SCOTT

Nothing? You're telling me to do nothing?

WAYNE

Run with it!

JULIE

You got to let up, Scott! Just a bit. And give me a little air. A little room to breathe!

SCOTT

You won't even tell me what's happening with your boss! I'd say that's giving you room! Way big insane room!

JULIE

You're suffocating me!

SCOTT

You used to like it!

JULIE

When?

SCOTT

When we met! And now you just want to dump me like a hot potato! Just like you dumped him.

JULIE

I did not!

MARK

You did.

SUSIE

That's what he told me.

JULIE

(To Susie.)

Oh, pul-ease! You, of all people, have got to know what a pain in the ass Mark can be!

SUSIE

Well, you got a point there.

MARK

Wait a minute!

SCOTT

Julie, I've been holding us together by a string. You've wanted to bail on me for months. What? Am I a pain in the ass too?!

JULIE

Actually, yes! But you're a pain in the ass I happen to love.

MARK

(Jumping in on their private conversation.)

That doesn't mean anything! She said she loved me too!

SUSIE / JULIE

REALLY?

SCOTT

He's got a point. How do I know?!

JULIE

Scott! Focus! Scott! I don't want to bail! I'm totally reliable. And you know it. Come on!! Let's do this trust thing! NOW! You want to do something for ME, Scott? That's what YOU can do! Trust me! Come on, Scott!

(Mark and Susie take their places.)

We don't need you!

(Mark and Susie move away)

Come on, honey! You and me, Scott!! You and me, come on! You count it out, Scott! You can do it, one, two, three. You can do it!! I'm right behind you! Do it!

(Julie gets into position behind Scott.)

SCOTT

(Very nervous and excited, breathless. Stands with his back to Julie.

Crosses his arms and counts very deliberately and loudly.)

ONE! . . . TWO! . . . THREE!

MARK

Well, I loved you, Julie.

(Julie looks at Mark and misses catching Scott, who hits the floor with a thud. Everyone is speechless. Lights out.)

6. SCOTT / JULIE - B - with Mark / Susie

This “listening” exercise is in Act 2 - after Scott’s fall at the end of Act 1. Not really wounded, he uses his fall as a way to show he has a right not to trust Julie, who is actually making an effort now, although the way she’s doing it, one can’t always tell. NOTE: No need to do any of the physical activities, but when Scott’s blindfolded, he needs to act as if he cannot see.

MARK

The next exercise is for Scott and Julie. Come on up. This time only Scott is blindfolded.

SCOTT

I have enough injuries for one weekend! I’m out.

JULIE

For God’s sake, Scott, stop being a baby! I’m not going to hurt you. Don’t be an idiot!

SCOTT

Words hurt too.

JULIE

Okay! I’ll stop calling you an idiot

SCOTT

And?

(Scott continues to pantomime “And?” after each response.)

JULIE

And a jerk . . . And an ass . . . And a p-

MARK

No swearing! Only rhymes!

JULIE

(Can’t come up with a rhyme.)

Nothing rhymes with it.

(She thinks and then pantomimes petting a cat in her arms.)

SCOTT

A cat? You don’t call me a cat.

(Julie assertively points to her crotch)

Pussy?

MARK

Julie.

JULIE

He said it.

SCOTT

You call me a pussy!?

JULIE

Not to your face! Besides, that's the point, I'm not going to do it anymore.

SCOTT

Thank you?

(Stiffly turns to sit.)

JULIE

That's it. Thank you? What are you going to do for me?

SCOTT

Nothing! That's what you wanted!

JULIE

I want you to wear this blindfold. *(Julie puts blindfold on Scott.)*

SCOTT

If anything happens to me, the insurance policy is in the back of my sock drawer.

JULIE

You're such a doofus. What? It's better than pussy!

SCOTT

Easy! I have injuries.

MARK

While Susie sets the course, Julie gently spin Scott around three times.

SCOTT

(In full panic.)

Are you kidding me!

MARK

Now, lead Scott around the couch navigating the obstacles.

SCOTT

(Highly anxious and panicky.)

Obstacles?!

MARK

Then, head back to the start. Use ONLY verbal instructions. You cannot touch each other. Jesse, your path is counterclockwise and Julie you take Scott clockwise.

SCOTT

I don't understand!

JULIE

You don't have to understand, you just have to listen to me.

SCOTT

But you're not saying anything!

JULIE

Shut up! So I can! Okay, turn to your right. Don't go anywhere. Just turn! Alright, now take a step straight. You're not on a balance beam, bozo!

SCOTT

(Scott and Julie reach the first obstacle - Smith and Jan who have made the arch. Scott runs into Jan.)

Hey! There's people! Get out of the way!

JULIE

There are? I didn't see them!

SCOTT

YOU DIDN'T!

JULIE

I'm kidding! Simmer. Now, to your left - take one step. Okay, now walk through.

SCOTT

Walk thru what!?

JULIE

Remember London Bridges growing up?

SCOTT

No!

JULIE

Doesn't matter. Just go straight. Go! Take a freakin' step!

SCOTT

It's a BRIDGE?

JULIE

Just do it!

SCOTT

What kind of bridge!?

SUSIE

How about you give him a little more information so he knows what's going on.

SCOTT

Yeah! How about you give me a little more -

SUSIE

Scott, how about you just listen?

JULIE

(To Susie)

But seriously, like there could be a bridge.

SUSIE

You're the one, Julie, who mentioned a bridge. You planted that seed. You. And Scott here - he's in the dark. How can HE know if you don't tell him?

(Julie has a lightbulb moment and is totally stopped)

SCOTT

What's happening?!

JULIE

(To herself)

Shit. . . . fucking a.

SCOTT

She's not rhyming - that's not good!

JULIE

(Moves to stand in front of Scott, takes a deep breath. Sincere.)

I had drinks with Richard after work. Three. ... And a half times.

(Scott reaches to take off his blindfold.)

SUSIE

Leave it, you'll hear better.

JULIE

But that's it. I swear. I know it was totally out of line - I mean I'd hunt you down and kill you if you ever did the same - but things never went any further with Richard. I, I was ... I was just was so mad at you I wanted you to think it did.

(Julie starts to cry.)

Damn it.

SUSIE

Scott, do you have anything you want to say to Julie?

SCOTT

(Nods and then sings very softly.)

"We Can Work It Out."

SUSIE

(Gives them a moment.)

Julie, you still have a ways to go.

JULIE

(Genuinely.)

I know.

7. WAYNE / CYBIL - with Mark / Susie /

Mark and Susie lead Wayne and Cybil in a listening exercise in which Cybil can barely sit through.

MARK

(Arranges two chairs closely facing each other.)

Wayne and Cybil, if you will.

CYBIL

But I'm not speaking to him.

MARK

(Cybil and Wayne sit warily, knees touching. Cybil's arms are crossed.)

You are now. Here is how this works. One of you will state the reason you are here. The other will listen. And then, in their own words, paraphrase what they heard. After which, we shall reverse. Wayne, tell us why you are here.

WAYNE

Cybil is miserable.

CYBIL

That's not true at -

SUSIE

No talking, can you just listen?

CYBIL

I don't know, my head might explode.

MARK

Wayne, talk to Cybil, not about her.

WAYNE

Where to begin. You complain about everything, nothing's good enough. Seems there's nothing I can do right.

SUSIE

Cybil, can you tell Wayne what you just heard?

CYBIL

A bunch of bullshit.

WAYNE

Cyb, you know it's the truth, every stinkin' day, "Wayne, why do you do this, why don't you-

CYBIL

(overlapping)

What about what you do? Huh? What about -

MARK

Stop! Susie and I will demonstrate how you communicate without fighting.

SMITH

Do it justice, my man. You too, GuruSue!

MARK

It begins with listening. Susie will be Cybil, I will be you, Wayne.

JULIE

(To Scott)

Oh my god, are you seriously taking notes?

SUSIE

(Behind Cybil, speaking as Cybil.)

Wayne, I hear you say it feels like I complain about everything and that nothing is good enough for me.

MARK

(Behind Wayne, speaking as Wayne.)

Thank you, Cybil. You are a good listener.

CYBIL

I know!

SUSIE

(gripping Cybil's shoulders to silence her)

Wayne, let's try again!

WAYNE

(Looking at Cybil who's steaming)

Would you want to talk to her now?

(Cybil can't trust herself to speak, motions for him to go ahead)

Everything I do - YOU never appreciate! You nag and complain and you b-

MARK

Good enough!

SUSIE

Cybil, got it?

CYBIL

(Barely containing her outrage)

Hmm hmmm.

SUSIE

“Wayne, I hear you say -

CYBIL

(Angry, measuredly and painfully delivered)

Wayne, I hear you say, Wayne, that I never appreciate and I nag and complain.

WAYNE

And blame-

CYBIL

AND BLAME?!

MARK

Excellent! Progress in manageable increments!

SUSIE

Now Cybil, tell Wayne why you wanted to come.

CYBIL

(Sarcastic and mocking.)

Clearly, I'm a big nag and complainer and blame everything on him because he's SO god damn perfect!

(Wayne gets up to leave, Mark makes his stay.)

SUSIE

(In Cybil's face.)

REALLY?

MARK

Manageable increments!

SUSIE

(to Mark)

No. No, baby stepping!

(to Cybil)

Is that the truth? IS IT?

(Cybil shakes her head, no.)

Cybil, this is YOUR marriage! YOURS! YOUR choice what happens in YOUR marriage! You can be snarky and bitter or you could get real and make a difference and maybe, newsflash, get what you want! It's all right here in YOUR hands RIGHT now! You want one more chance!?

(Cybil nods yes and Susie moves out of the way, Mark is totally turned on by Susie, but she slaps him away.)

CYBIL

(Raw and real, close to tears.)

Wayne, I wanted to come because ... because I saw the kids playing house and Gracie was pretending to be me and Brody was being the dad and all they did was yell. At each other ... Gracie's marching around in my shoes, those burgundy ones and, and she's screaming, "Why do I bother!" and "Outta my sight!" And ... it was ... just - sad.

MARK

Wayne, what'd you hear.

WAYNE

(Gently.)

I heard we are big jerks. . . .

(Cybil looks down, Wayne lifts her chin, they look at each other)

Cyb, what was Brody doing?

CYBIL

Pretending to look for the remote, yelling, "Who took it!"

WAYNE

(Tenderly, sincere)

Well. We'll have enough of that.

(Cybil nods in agreement. They really see each other.)

8. DAVE / ROSEMARIE - with Mark / Susie

Mark and Susie lead Dave and Rosemarie through a question and answer exercise, like the Newlywed Game. Rosemarie and Dave both have their own answer on a card written in large bold letters as well as an answer for their partner. NOTE: No need to act out the cards.

MARK

Before you came, we asked each of you three questions about yourselves and about each other.

SUSIE

(Susie places two piles of cards on each of Dave and Rosemarie's laps.)

And your answers are on these cards. The blue ones, Dave. And the pink, Rosemarie. Keep them face down and we'll tell you when to turn them over.

DAVE

I don't remember what I said.

SUSIE

That's why we wrote it all down.

ROSEMARIE

All?

MARK

First question: "Putting aside money or time, if you could have one thing, what would it be?"

SUSIE

Rosemarie, what did you think Dave would say?

DAVE

That's easy.

ROSEMARIE

He's right!

(They both turn over a card that reads "PlayStation 4.")

DAVE

PlayStation 4! Whoo! Yeah!

MARK

Dave, what is the one thing Rosemarie would want?

DAVE

I nailed this one! Rosie always wanted a pig.

(Turns over card that reads "Pig.")

ROSEMARIE

I do not!

DAVE

Yes, you do! You said you liked that movie, “Babe,” so much you wanted to get one!

ROSEMARIE

The movie, Dave. Not the pig!

SUSIE

Show Dave your answer.

ROSEMARIE

(To Susie.)

I didn’t know we were going to tell each other.

SUSIE

That’s the point. It’s okay. What do you want?

ROSEMARIE

(Insecurely, turns over card.)

A real wedding.

DAVE

But you already had one.

ROSEMARIE

I know. I just didn’t have the big dress and the party and -

(to the others)

My dad died, so I had no one to give me away. So we did a kind of elopy thing.

DAVE

You said it didn’t matter.

ROSEMARIE

It doesn’t.

(Susie places her hand on Rosemarie’s shoulder.)

Okay, a little. I like the we got married part. But I wish it was special, you know. Can we keep going?

MARK

Next question. Rosemarie, how did Dave answer: What is your most difficult challenge at this time?

ROSEMARIE

(Discouragingly turns over card, even though she got it right.)

Getting to level 10.

DAVE

Man! She knows me!

SUSIE

Dave, what did you write down is Rosemarie’s most difficult challenge?

DAVE

(Happily turns over his card, thinking he’s funny.)

Deciding what to wear in the morning!

(Can tell by Rosemarie’s face he got it wrong.)

ROSEMARIE

Jeez Louise, Dave.

(She turns over her card and answer)

I said, "Starting a new life together."

MARK

Last question. Rosemarie, how do you think Dave answered this: What will you be doing two years from now?

ROSEMARIE

(She's mad, but turns over her card.)

"Holding our baby."

DAVE

(Becoming worried)

Oh man, that's a really good answer.

MARK

Show us your answer.

DAVE

Do I have to?

(Mark nods yes, Dave reluctantly turns over card.)

ROSEMARIE

(Reading Dave's card, upset.)

"Have a comfier couch and a bigger TV?!"

SUSIE

And Dave how do you think Rosemarie answered "what will she be doing two years from now?"

DAVE

(A deer in headlights, reads his answer as if tiptoeing in a minefield.)

"Still picking out what to wear."

(To Wayne)

I thought it was funny.

WAYNE

Rookie mistake.

ROSEMARIE

(Gets up and hits Dave with her cards.)

I wrote, "Having your baby!" You, you . . . butt-nugget!

(Exits running.)

CYBIL

(To Mark and Susie.)

My, you two sure have a gift.

9. WAYNE / CYBIL / DAVE / ROSEMARIE - with Mark / Smith / Scott / Julie

Rosemarie and Dave enter the lodge with their brand new luggage, having just left their honeymoon. They are sweet to each other, unsophisticated and inexperienced. Cybil and Wayne are entering right behind them. They are bickering and dissatisfied, rolling in well used, scuffed up suitcases, Cybil's luggage has duct tape. NOTE: no need to do the physical actions

DAVE

(Holding the door open for Rosemarie.)

My lady.

ROSEMARIE

Thank you, Hon-Bun. You're such a gentleman.

CYBIL

Honey, enjoy it while you can.

DAVE

(Helping Rosemarie with her luggage.)

Here, let me get it.

CYBIL

(Pointedly to Wayne.)

Gee, somebody should be taking some lessons.

WAYNE

Great idea!

(To spite Cybil, he helps Rosemarie with her second bag.)

The price tags are still on your suitcase.

ROSEMARIE

We just got them as a wedding present.

WAYNE

My condolences.

DAVE

The whole set!

CYBIL

Wow, a whole matching set. Just imagine.

(Pointing to her luggage.)

Wayne thought the gift for our tenth anniversary was duct tape.

ROSEMARIE

(To Wayne.)

Oh, no, that's not right. It's tin.

WAYNE

Same color. Common mistake.

DAVE

Num-Nums, you're so smart.

CYBIL

This is going to be one hell of a long weekend.

MARK

Susie, how about you hand out the name tags? Everyone, just write your name or nickname, whatever you normally call each other.

WAYNE

That should be easy.

CYBIL

Don't even.

SMITH

We did each others. Cooperative communication and all.

CYBIL

When are cocktails?

WAYNE

When are cocktails?

(Surprised they are on the same page.)

CYBIL

How long have you two been married?

ROSEMARIE

What time zone are we in?

CYBIL

Do they even qualify to be here? We might frighten them.

SMITH

No, it's totally cool, man. Jan and I have seen newlyweds in marriage counseling before, even for their honeymoon.

ROSEMARIE

Oh, we already had our honeymoon. We went to the Magic Kingdom!

WAYNE

Ahhh, Vegas, good choice.

DAVE

And the Wizarding World of Harry Potter!

ROSEMARIE

See? Our shirts!

SMITH

I took Jan here to Phuket, it was our honeymoon. We did this incred-diculous ride on an elephant through Thailand.

SCOTT

(To Julie.)

I took you to the Maldives.

JULIE

I know, Scott, I was there.

SCOTT

It's the "Number one, most romantic, honeymoon destination ever." Period.

JULIE

It was a long time ago.

SCOTT

For some people, memories of their honeymoon last a lifetime.

CYBIL

I've been trying to forget mine for years.

WAYNE

We didn't even go on a goddamn honeymoon.

CYBIL

I know. And I'll never forget it.

(Slaps Wayne's name tag on his chest.)

WAYNE

Do you want to ride an elephant through Thailand? Because I'll make that happen right now!

CYBIL

I forgot, I'm not talking to you.

(Instructing Rosemarie.)

Tell him I'm not talking to him.

ROSEMARIE

She's not talking to you.

CYBIL

And that I'd be happy -

ROSEMARIE

And that she'd be happy -

CYBIL

To shove that elephant -

ROSEMARIE

To shove that - elephant?

CYBIL

Up his -

MARK

Everyone please have a seat.

(Everyone finds a place to sit - Smith & Jan / Rosemarie & Dave sit next to each other, Scott tries to sit next to Julie, but is unsuccessful.)

ROSEMARIE

Cybil, that was not very nice.

10. BARBARA / JESSE / ROSEMARIE / DAVE - with Mark / Scott / Susie

Barbara has recently given up trying to get cell service and wants to get the seminar over with.

BARBARA

Let's get this charade over! I've got work to do.

SUSIE

Barbara, let me introduce you to the group. This is -

BARBARA

I am not blind!

(Proceeds to perfunctorily read aloud each name tag.)

Julie, Wayne, Scott, Cybil, Smith, Jan, Hon-Bun, Num Nums?

MARK

You're supposed to write your name, what other people might call -

ROSEMARIE

Num Nums is what Dave calls me.

DAVE

And she calls me Hon-Bun. Sweet, right?

MARK

It's fine.

BARBARA

No! It's not fine! Num Nums, have some self respect, woman. Allowing yourself to be marginalized and labeled an imbecile is at best fatuous and, at worst, pejorative! Besides it being a pernicious degradation of the female species as a whole. Furthermore -

ROSEMARIE

(Bursts out crying - Runs into DSL closet, slams the door.)

I have no idea what you said but it hurt my feelings! I'm going to the bathroom!

SUSIE

That's a closet -

DAVE

(To Barbara.)

Hey! You can't talk to my wife like that!

BARBARA

MY wife? What is she, your property?

DAVE

(Cowed by Barbara and afraid of her.)

Yes, no! No, I, I - Stop being so mean!

BARBARA

I could eat you for breakfast.

(Dave scurries after Rosemarie. Everyone voices their opinion.)

MARK

Everybody settle down!

JESSE

(Casual, used to Barbara's behavior.)

Barbs, could you reign it in?

BARBARA

No, I could not.

DAVE

(Upset, standing by the closet door.)

I call her Num Nums because she's so darn delicious! You know, num-num-num.

BARBARA

Thank you for the clarification, Dave. It is not insulting! It's dim-witted.

SCOTT

Stop picking on people!

BARBARA

Don't tell me what to do.

SCOTT

You, you ... you're not even wearing a name tag!

MARK

Susie, would you get Barbara a name tag?

SUSIE

I did!

BARBARA

(Flips open jacket to reveal name tag next to designer label.)

Satisfied?

WAYNE

Nice to meet you, Armani.

SMITH

Babs, I want you to know I "see" you and those suppressed love electrons right in there.

(taps on Barbara's chest)

JAN

(joining Smith in "helping" Barbara)

Heavy negative energy can kill you.

BARBARA

You know what else can kill you? Touching me.

MARK

All right now, everyone, have a seat -

DAVE

You okay, Num Nums?

ROSEMARIE

(from inside closet)

Yes.

DAVE

Come on out of the bathroom.

SUSIE

It's a closet!

DAVE

Num Nums, come out of the closet!

CYBIL

Be careful what you ask for.

SUSIE

(Joins Dave to coach him.)

Tell her it's okay and that we're all her friends here.

DAVE

It's okay and that we're all your friends here.

ROSEMARIE

Not that scary lady!

(Barbara rolls her eyes.)

JESSE

You made the girl cry. Go be nice.

BARBARA

Please. This is good for her. It'll build some backbone. At least one of us here will get something out of this freak-treat.

SCOTT

Hey! I'm planning to get something out of this freak-treat!

MARK

People! It's called "The Beatles Had It Right: We Can -

SUSIE

Mark, let it go!

JESSE

Barbs, if you don't go over there and apologize to that girl, I'm leaving. And if I leave, you know what I won't do.

BARBARA

Fine!

(It is obvious Jesse 'has something' on Barbara, so she marches over to closet door - Dave scurries out of the way.)

CYBIL

Wow. What won't you do?

(Barbara raps aggressively on door. Rosemarie squeaks inside closet.)

JESSE

Nicely, or it doesn't count.

BARBARA

(taps softly)

Num -

(Just cannot say the nickname, turns back to the group.)

Somebody, for god's sake, tell me her real name!

ROSEMARIE

(From inside closet.)

Rosemarie Eliza Carter.

DAVE

(Yells to her.)

Don't forget Dunleavy!

BARBARA

Rose-

ROSEMARIE

(From inside closet.)

Rosemarie Eliza Carter Dunleavy.

BARBARA

Now that we've established that.

(Yells scoldingly.)

Rosemarie! Come out of the closet, right now! It's not becoming of you and -

JESSE

(Approaches Barbara and taps her shoulder.)

You can do better.

BARBARA

Fine.

(Takes all she has to try to speak gently, so it's very awkward.)

Rosemarie?

ROSEMARIE

(Simpering, from inside closet.)

Yes?

BARBARA

What I mean to say is . . .

(Flummoxed, at a total loss of words.)

JESSE

I am sorry -

BARBARA

I am sorry -

JESSE

That I yelled at you -

BARBARA

That I yelled at you . . . ALTHOUGH I didn't really yell, I only raised my voice, which is not something to be timorous about. A woman must be able to handle inexorable and -

(Jesse signals her it's good enough, meanwhile Rosemarie comes out of the closet and hugs Barbara.)

ROSEMARIE

Thank you.

BARBARA

(Removing herself from the hug and smoothing her clothes, she takes Rosemarie by her shoulders.)

Rosemarie, you really should consider being less timid and, for God's sake, have some valiancy!

ROSEMARIE

Oh, I don't take drugs.

(She returns to her seat with Dave while Barbara throws her hands up.)

JESSE

Thank you.

BARBARA

You are welcome. Are we done here?

JESSE

Not by a long shot.

BARBARA

I could use some drugs.

11. JESSE / BARBARA - with Mark / Jan

Mark and Susie have set up an obstacle course. Barbara is to learn how to listen to Jesse. As she's only there to get Jesse to sign a document, she has no interest in participating. Jesse is ever hopeful. NOTE: No blindfold wearing in audition, but Barbara should act like she can't see.

JESSE

You're not going to fight me on this, are you?

(Puts blindfold on Barbara.)

BARBARA

Let's get this over with.

JESSE

You might like it.

BARBARA

There's nothing about this I like.

JESSE

How about me?

MARK

Let us begin.

(Scott crosses himself.)

While Susie sets the course, Julie and Jesse, gently spin your partner around three times.

JESSE

Don't worry, I'll be careful.

BARBARA

That's because it's not going to happen.

(Jesse throws his hands up.)

MARK

Now, Jesse and Julie, I want you to lead your spouses around the couch navigating the obstacles. Then you head back to the start. Using ONLY verbal instructions. You cannot touch each other.

BARBARA

Jesse! Are we starting anytime in the near future? Christ, I could be at least getting my nails done.

JESSE

Can you hear my voice.

BARBARA

It's not my ears that are covered!

JESSE

Okay, follow my voice. Take three medium steps.

BARBARA

Define medium.

JESSE

Ten and a half inches.

(Barbara takes three pronounced steps)

Great job, Barbara!

BARBARA

Don't patronize me!

JESSE

I'm not patronizing you. I am guiding you.

BARBARA

Who said I was in need your guidance.

JESSE

Seriously? You're wearing a blindfold.

BARBARA

Whose fault is that?

(Jesse and Barbara are at a stalemate.)

... Scott and Julie take some time to make it through the obstacle course, confronting their issue along the way. They succeed to applause and cheers from the group.

MARK

It took the two of you to do it. Communication does not happen alone. Indeed, it takes two.

BARBARA

Bravo, another cliché.

(She and Jesse, arms folded, are still at a stalemate.)

If you're not going to finish this task, I'll do it on my own.

(Rips off blindfold and marches around the course, through and over the obstacles, finishes, hands the blindfold back to Mark and sits.)

There, now that wasn't too difficult, was it!

JAN

I'm sorry Jesse.

BARBARA

What the hell are you sorry for?

JAN

It's just I . . . I can't imagine having a partner like that.

BARBARA

What do you mean "like that?" Me? Hah! You have no idea. You ought to see the house we live in and the cars we drive. Jesse lives in the lap of luxury because of what I do. Believe me, there should be no complaints. I give Jesse everything!

(to Jesse)

But you? You can't manage to sign documents for me unless I jump through the hoops of hell.

JESSE

I'll sign the documents. I'm done.

BARBARA

What exactly are you saying?

(Jesse shakes his head and takes a seat away from her.)

12. JESSE - with Susie /Mark

Jesse has left the retreat with Barbara, who was so mad she insisted on proving a point by walking down the mountain in a blindfold led by Jesse. Hours later, Jesse bursts back into the lodge, triumphantly and joyfully swinging the blindfold.

JESSE

You can have the blindfold back! Barbara wore it all of 10 minutes!

SUSIE

Oh, I'm so sorry.

JESSE

Sorry? I've never been happier!

SUSIE

What happened?

JESSE

(Jubilant.)

She broke her leg!

MARK

(Looking at Susie)

Here comes the insurance claim.

JESSE

(More and more jubilant as he reports what happened.)

But, first, she walked straight through a patch of poison ivy!

SUSIE

Oh, no!

JESSE

And then she fell and tumbled down the trail!

MARK

Really?

JESSE

And hit a rock!

EVERYONE

Oh!

JESSE

She's fine! Not counting the broken leg.

SUSIE

This is terrible!

JESSE

This is great!

MARK

You okay, need some water?

JESSE

Don't you see, I, me, Jesse, am going to take care of her! Barb's going to have to rely on ME! I couldn't ask for more! I gotta run, Joe Bob's waiting. I just had come back to grab our stuff and, mostly, to thank you! Both. So much! You promised transformation! And I got it!

(Shakes Susie and Mark's hands, retrieves luggage at door.)

MARK

Jesse, did you leave Barbara out there?

JESSE

Nah, she's down at base patrol. She's happy as a clam bossing everyone around. The EMT's are bringing her to the hospital.

SUSIE

Tell her to take care.

JESSE

Will do! If I'm lucky, she'll get her whole leg cast!

(Sings as he exits with luggage.)

“Life is very short and there's no time - For fussing and fighting, my friend.”