

# Happy Loving Couples Are a Thing of the Past

A very short play by  
Dawson Moore

PO Box 3505  
Valdez AK 99686-3505  
dawson@threewisemonkeys.org  
www.dawsonmoore.com

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## Characters

Peter                    A young romantic.

Katherine            His less romantic sister.

Grandpa              The elderly relative they care for.

The younger characters dress in homogenous, futuristic clothing. Grandpa wouldn't look out of place today.

## Set

A large, antiseptic kitchen. A table and three chairs. There is little personality to the room.

## Time

The future.

*(GRANDPA sits at the table. He sips a cup of coffee. He surveys the audience, then sips his coffee again. KATHERINE and PETER enter, mid-argument. GRANDPA goes on a slow boil for the rest of the play.)*

KATHERINE

I caught you red-handed!

PETER

It's not any of your business.

KATHERINE

I care about you, Peter, so it is my business.

PETER

Look, I'm happy.

KATHERINE

Oh, you think that's what's going on? Happiness?

PETER

I'm warning you, Katherine, leave it alone. Hi, Grandpa.

KATHERINE

Don't walk away from me, Peter!

PETER

Don't judge me, Katherine. Oops, too late!

KATHERINE

I am not going to let my brother continue on a destructive pattern without trying to save him. That woman—

PETER

Her name is Violet.

KATHERINE

Who cares what her name is?

PETER

I do!

KATHERINE

Fine. I'm sure "Violet" is a perfectly nice girl, why do you want to go and ruin that by adding romance?

PETER

Because the risk is worth it.

KATHERINE

I'm sure she SEEMS perfect to you.

PETER

No, she doesn't. She seems right. We don't see eye to eye on everything. It's like nothing I've ever felt before, like we're opposite sides of the same coin.

KATHERINE

Can we please talk about this rationally, without sappy metaphors?

PETER

She cares for me in ways this test-tube triad wouldn't even understand!

KATHERINE

That hurts, Peter.

GRANDPA

*(heating up)* Hungry!

KATHERINE

Fine, fine, Grandpa, I'll get you something.

*(She doesn't.)*

PETER

Just leave us alone, please. I can handle this.

KATHERINE

I can't, Peter... it's completely unhealthy. I know it feels good while you're doing it, but so does heroin, I understand. Your life is a big picture, Peter, and you've got to see the whole canvas, not just the jots of color she splashes on it. Do you get any work done when you're with her?

PETER

It's not about working. It's about the joy she makes me feel inside. The way her smile makes me feel light enough to float away.

KATHERINE

Buy an anti-gravity belt. I asked if you got any actual productive work done while you and Violet are together.

PETER

No, of course not. We're—

KATHERINE

And you don't make any money from this relationship. Just the opposite, right? Your time on this earth is precious, Peter, precious. You have an obligation to use it wisely, but instead you're wasting it. Do you want to end up a grandpa, with nothing to show for yourself?

PETER

I'm still getting my work done. I mean, not as much, maybe...

KATHERINE

Oh, Peter.

PETER

I love her!

KATHERINE

Peter, you are sick. You're unwell. Are you listening to yourself? The help is here for you, you just need to ask for it.

PETER

I don't want it.

KATHERINE

Am I going to have to call in a R.A.T.S. intervention?

PETER

What? You said I had to ask for help, now you're threatening me with an intervention... which is it?!

KATHERINE

There are lots of ways to ask for help, Peter. One of them is stubborn self-abuse. I've been very patient about this, Peter. Grandpa's been very patient.

GRANDPA

*(beginning to boil)* Dinner!

KATHERINE

Relax, Grandpa.

PETER

Why can't you just leave us alone?

KATHERINE

Peter, you know romance is an unhealthy way to relate to people.

PETER

But Violet makes me feel alive, like true love could be true, could be real!

KATHERINE

Have you been reading Twentieth Century literature again?

PETER

Well...

KATHERINE

How can you not see how unhappy those people are? Wallowing in their emotions, hurting each other, wasting the world's time on personal trivia.

Happy-loving couples are an illusion those people created for themselves, Peter.

*(GRANDPA's kettle explodes.)*

GRANDPA

Happy-loving couples suck my nuts!

*(The lights narrow around GRANDPA and the siblings turn to him and freeze.)*

I hate them. That's why I GOT RID OF THEM! Romance worked for a few people... ABERRATIONS and FREAKS who found their supposed "soul mate." But there were all these lonely people, and they were constantly having their noses rubbed in it by the couples. Not just the actual couples, but also by the relationship addicts... those deluded fools who puddle-hopped from one romance to the next, thinking each new affair was happiness, but who were really the loneliest people of all. Addicts who couldn't help coupling.

I hadn't dated for five years, and I was so horny. I was desperate to fall off the celibacy wagon. I kept trying and failing and trying and failing and trying... then SHE ambushed me. She asked me out to a titty bar, for God's sake. She portrayed herself as a needy heroine, an intellectual peer, and a sex machine. She told me she liked screaming, dressing up, sodomy. It was like my fantasies all got together and had a fantasy. And she pulled me out of my shell. What started as a need to get laid became an emotional tsunami that overcame me. I begged her not to engulf me. I said I was damaged goods. I said I was scared. I said I was falling in love with her, and that the pit of my love was so deep that I couldn't hope to have anything happen but be broken by the fall. And she said, "me, too." AND PRACTICALLY THE SECOND I SAID "WASH OVER ME I'M YOURS," SHE LEFT ME!

*(pause)* I couldn't believe it. The rage swelled within me, and I swore that I would not only never let this happen to me again, I would protect the rest of mankind. I started the R.A.T.S. movement... Relationships Are The Sickness. At first everyone ignored me. The professional psychologists pooh-poohed me, said I was preying on people's paranoia. But with enough determination, enough righteousness, nothing is impossible. Within a decade I changed thousands of years of human programming. *(to children)* Your generation can't imagine what it's like to feel the pressure to partner. I saved you from that misery. You OWE me. You ALL owe me! Where the hell's my dinner!?

*(The lights return to normal.)*

KATHERINE

All right, Grandpa! *(to PETER)* I think he's only been pretending to swallow his Prozacazene again. That's always when he gets this demanding about meals.

PETER

What a pain.

*(PETER holds GRANDPA's head back while she puts a pill in his mouth. They massage his throat to make him swallow.)*

PETER

I hope they figure out how to keep our brains alive as long as our bodies, or I'm doing myself in when I get to be 120 and that's that. I mean, you and I were incubated together... we're family. But being saddled with this fucking old nut, it's ridiculous!

KATHERINE

We're lucky... some families have to take in three or four grandpas.

PETER

God.

KATHERINE

Peter, I love you. Nobody loves you more than your family. Tell me you'll seek help.

PETER

I don't know if I can, Katherine—

KATHERINE

I'm here for you. We can do this.

PETER

*(practically crying)* I... I know I need help... maybe I could call Violet, explain it to her...

KATHERINE

Cold turkey is the only way to really quit, Peter. Anything else and you're just not shutting the door.

PETER

I'm going to miss her. You can't imagine.

*(She crosses to him.)*

KATHERINE

Here, I got you this at the free relationship clinic.

PETER

A pocket pussy? I... I don't know what to say.

*(He is overcome with emotion. They hug.)*

GRANDPA

*(lightly, drugged)* Dinner...

*(The lights fade out... end of play.)*