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A TALE OF LOVE AND RADIOLOGY

# Marrying Terry



by Gregg Opelka

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# Marrying & Terry

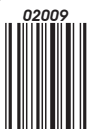
*Comedy. By Gregg Opelka. Cast: 5m., 4w. (4m., 3w. with doubling).* It's New Year's Eve at the Drake Hotel. A massive snowstorm has paralyzed Chicago. Thirty-five-year-old librarian Terry Adams has just reserved the last room at the Drake—the presidential suite—for her and Jonathon, her long-distance boyfriend who's flying in from Boston. She's hoping after three years he'll finally ask her to marry him. Meanwhile, not far away in his swank Lincoln Park condo, Dr. Terry Adams, a 35-year-old milquetoast radiologist, has just (reluctantly) gotten engaged to his girlfriend of three years, Penny Parker. When a medical emergency summons Dr. Adams to the Drake Hotel, he has no idea what's in store for him. Or for the beautiful woman who shares the same name. No one is quite whom he or she seems to be in this romantic comedy of hate-at-first-sight. Before the old year ends, Terry and Terry undergo a life-changing epiphany—with the help of a missing chest x-ray, a champagne bucket, and the poet Keats. The locale can be changed for flexibility. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 50 minutes. Code: MG5.*

Cover artwork: Evelyn Opelka. Cover photo: Victory Gardens Greenhouse, Chicago, featuring Dan Rodden and Ana Sferruzza. *Photo: Joanna Kozek. Cover design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel.*

ISBN-10 1-58342-626-4  
ISBN-13 978-1-58342-626-5



9 781583 426265



02009



*Dramatic Publishing*

311 Washington St.  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
ph: 800-448-7469



Printed on recycled paper

[www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com)

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# MARRYING TERRY

By  
GREGG OPELKA



**Dramatic Publishing**  
Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(MARRYING TERRY)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-626-5

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*Marrying Terry* had its professional premiere at Victory Gardens Theater in Chicago, where it opened Dec. 19, 2007 with the following cast:

Ana Sferruzza\* (Terry)  
Debbie Laumand-Blanc\* (Janet)  
Dan Rodden\* (Dr. Adams)  
Mary Mulligan\* (Penny)  
Ron Keaton\* (Dr. Harlan)  
Brian Simmons\*\* (Sam Samuels)  
Paul Perroni\*\* (Jonathon)  
Steve Ruppel (male reservation clerk)  
Kimberly Downes (female reservation clerk)

*(\*denotes member of Actors Equity Association; \*\*AEA eligible)*

## A word about the set design

By far the most important part of the set is the presidential suite at the Drake, which should be as lavish as possible yet still allow for quick changes into and out of that location. Next in importance is Dr. Adams' condo. The foyer and bar can be easily suggested with very minimal pieces and the shopping scene in act one requires no set pieces, just lighting cues to establish that Janet and Terry are not in the hotel lobby.

This was all very ingeniously accomplished in the set designed by Kevin Doler for the Chicago premier production where a stow-away bed folded up to become the wall of the Drake lobby and folded down to become the bed in the presidential suite.

## A word about changing the location of the play

Producing theaters are permitted to change the name of the Drake Hotel to a local hotel in the nearest major city, if they so choose. Apart from changing the name of the hotel, city, and hospital where Dr. Adams works, no other changes whatsoever to the text are permitted. Finally, while such localization of the play is permitted, it is by no means necessary for the success of the play, and the author therefore encourages the producer to keep the Chicago setting the way it is, since most audience members will either have heard of the Drake or quickly deduce that it is a very fine, top-notch hotel.



## A word about the play

*Marrying Terry* was written to be a modern-day New Year's Eve fantasy about finding love where you least expect it—in fact, while not even looking for it. The play should be performed as realistically as possible, the farcical aspects, although important, being secondary to the romance, which should be believable at all times, even when someone is getting ice water dumped over him while drunk out of his mind. Happy New Year!

— *Gregg Opelka*

# MARRYING TERRY

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

(4m., 3w. with doubling; or 5m., 4w. without doubling)

### Main characters

TERRY . . . . . a 35-year-old unmarried female librarian

JANET. . . . . CPA, Terry's best friend; about 35

DR. ADAMS . . . a 35-year-old unmarried male radiologist

PENNY . . . . . his girlfriend of three years; about 35

DR. HARLAN . . . surgeon, Dr. Adams' superior; about 45

SAM SAMUELS . . . lawyer friend of Dr. Harlan, in town  
for a convention; about 35

JONATHON . . . . . Boston D.A., Terry's long-distance  
boyfriend; about 35

KYLE WALKER (recorded voice-over) . . jolly weatherman

### Minor characters

*(These two characters appear in one scene each and they can be played by additional actors or doubled as indicated.)*

MALE RESERVATION CLERK

(can be doubled by Jonathon actor)

FEMALE RESERVATION CLERK

(can be doubled by Penny actress)

BARTENDER (nonspeaking)

(can be played by either of the two hotel clerks)

Time & Place: The present. New Year's Eve, Chicago.

Approximate running time: 2 hours.

## SCENE BREAKDOWN

The entire action of the play takes place between 7 p.m. December 31 and 8:30 a.m. the following morning. The time is the present.

### ACT I

- Scene 1 lobby of Drake Hotel and reservation desk, about 7 p.m.
- Scene 2 living room of Dr. Adams' condo, the same time
- Scene 3 shopping area (indeterminate); bar of Drake Hotel, reservation desk
- Scene 4 the presidential suite

### ACT II

- Scene 1 the presidential suite, about 15 minutes after midnight
- Scene 2 bar of Drake Hotel
- Scene 3 the presidential suite, about 3:30 a.m.
- Scene 4 living room of Dr. Adams' condo, about 8:30 a.m.

## **PROPS LIST**

### **ACT I**

#### **Scene 1:**

Registration desk phone

Room card key

Terry purse

Terry wallet

Janet purse

Visa credit card

#### **Scene 2:**

Glassware/festively decorated table

Paper bag

2 bottles of champagne

Cloth napkins

2 champagne glasses

X-ray envelope

Adams cell phone

#### **Scene 3:**

Robes

Terry cell phone

Harlan glass w/ drink

Sam Guinness

X-ray negatives

3 tequila shot glasses

Adams Guinness

15 shot glasses total, 12 empty, 3 full

Parking stub

Luggage cart

Note about credit card

Second hotel key  
Bag with a gift-wrapped box  
Wristwatches  
Harlan bourbon glass  
Janet cosmo drink  
Vial of pills

**Scene 4:**

Set dressing  
Platter of hors d'oeuvres  
2 ice buckets w/ ice & water  
1 bottle of champagne  
Coatrack  
Sandwich  
Remote control  
Note from Harlan  
Bouquet of flowers  
Jewelry box w/ ring  
\$20 bill  
Nightstand telephone  
3-4 champagne glasses  
Pewter tray  
Spoon

**ACT II**

**Scene 1:**

Hair dryer & power backstage  
Water pitcher  
Water glass  
Washcloth  
Sam wristwatch

**Scene 2:**

2 drinks

2 bourbon glasses

Beer glass

Bar tab folder & bill

Sam room key

Sam wallet

2 more bourbon glasses

1 more bourbon glass

**Scene 3:**

Penny cell phone

**Scene 4:**

Hanger w/ dry cleaner's outfit

Condo keys

Phonebook

\$100 bill

Car keys

# ACT I

## Scene 1

*(It is New Year's Eve, about 7 p.m. The place is Chicago, the lobby of the Drake Hotel. As the lights come up, through an upstage window we see that a heavy snow is falling. JANET and TERRY enter the lobby and stomp snow off of their shoes. Eventually they walk slowly toward the registration desk. The two engage in spirited best-friend sparring throughout scene.)*

TERRY. Janet, don't pretend you didn't hear me because of that bus. I hate when you do that.

JANET. I wasn't pretending. I was ignoring. There's a difference.

TERRY. I'm serious. The Drake on New Year's Eve? Isn't this just a little extravagant? You're the CPA, I'm the librarian, remember?

JANET. Terry, don't you see? This is fate. My doctor calls me this morning to fix me up with his big-shot lawyer friend from Phoenix. His flight got canceled 'cause of the storm so he's stuck at the Drake on New Year's Eve with nothing to do. *(Pointedly.)* Until now.

TERRY. Is he cute?

JANET. I said he was a lawyer, didn't I?

TERRY. Right. I forgot who I was talking to.

JANET. Anyway, we're meeting at the bar in an hour and a half.

TERRY. And I fit in...?

JANET. Terry, that's the point. In life there are no coincidences. Why the Drake? Why the same day your boyfriend's flying in? Because you are destined to book a room here tonight for you and Jonathon. And then bingo.

TERRY. Bingo?

JANET. Tonight could be the night.

TERRY. The night?

JANET. You know, for a smart girl, you can be pretty clueless. The big question night!

TERRY (*getting it finally*). Oh, come on! You don't really think so?

JANET. How long have you two been doing this long-distance thing? A year?

TERRY. Try three.

JANET. And he's never flown to Chicago—you've always flown to Boston, right?

TERRY. So?

JANET. So...you can't have the attorney general...

TERRY. District attorney...

JANET. Whatever...stay in your Rogers Park studio. You have to make his first trip to Chicago something special.

TERRY. But Janet, I can't afford this!

JANET. It's only one night.

TERRY. Yeah. New Year's Eve. I'll bet they're just giving the rooms away.

JANET. You need to stop thinking with your wallet.

TERRY. What kind of accountant gives that advice?



JANET. A CFA. A Certified “Female” Accountant. Terry, you’re thirty-five. You don’t have forever. I’m telling you—if you don’t put the man on the moon, you’ll never get the rock on the finger.

TERRY. Did you really just say that?

JANET. Come on. Let’s get you checked in.

*(JANET drags TERRY to the registration desk. The RESERVATION CLERK (male) is exhausted from the stress of all the extra customers and just wants the night to be over. JANET is never rude, but firm with the clerk.)*

MALE RESERVATION CLERK *(as if he’s said this 1000 times tonight)*. Happy New Year, welcome to the Drake. May I help you?

JANET. Yes, my friend would like a room for the night, please.

M.R.C. Oh, I’m sorry, ma’am, I’m afraid due to the storm all our rooms are taken.

TERRY *(relieved, tries to drag JANET away)*. Well, we gave it our best shot, Janet. Come on.

JANET *(not budging)*. But she has to get a room here tonight!

M.R.C. Ma’am, did you see the snow out there? I’ve got a hotel full of stranded airline passengers. There’s not a vacant room in the whole city.

TERRY. Janet, it’s all right.

JANET *(firmly)*. You stay out of this, Terry. I’ll decide what’s right here and what isn’t.

M.R.C. Okay, ma’am, look. I do have one room. I didn’t mention it right away because—

JANET. Because what?

M.R.C. Well, you see, the presidential suite isn't exactly cheap.

TERRY. The presidential suite?

M.R.C. Yes, I'm afraid that's all we have left, but the price is...

JANET. Oh, price is no object.

*(TERRY mouths a silent "What?" to JANET.)*

M.R.C. In that case, I'll just need a credit card.

JANET *(snaps her fingers at TERRY)*. Come on, Visa.

*(TERRY opens her purse, pulls out a credit card, which she doesn't hand over right away.)*

TERRY. Just out of curiosity, what is the price of the suite?

M.R.C. *(matter-of-factly, busy with his paperwork)*. It's three-thousand dollars, ma'am.

TERRY. Three *thousand*.

M.R.C. Of course, that does include hors d'oeuvres and two bottles of Dom Perignon champagne, ma'am.

TERRY. Of course.

JANET. Oh, now that's nice!

*(TERRY grabs JANET and starts to walk away, credit card still in hand.)*

TERRY. Come on, Janet.

*(JANET stops TERRY, decisively grabs the card and hands it to the clerk.)*

JANET. She'll take it.

TERRY. What!?

JANET. Will you excuse us a moment?

TERRY *(to M.R.C.)*. Don't run that charge yet! *(JANET pulls TERRY a few yards away from the desk. The two argue in a half-whisper so as not to cause a disturbance.)* Janet, are you crazy? Three thousand bucks for one night of romantic bliss? Name me one man who's worth that much money?

JANET. Jonathon!

TERRY. You've never even met him!

JANET. So? If he's my best friend's friend, he's worth it. Besides, it's not just one night. It's your whole amorous future! Now, listen, Terry. This is basic Relationship Accounting 101. You already have three years invested in this guy. If you louse it up tonight, you'll have to start all over with some other guy.

TERRY. I know, I know.

JANET. And you think you're just gonna walk into your bedroom and find one all stretched out on your bed? It doesn't work that way, Terry.

TERRY. I know.

JANET. So take the room. The money will take care of itself.

TERRY. It's always people who have money that say that.

JANET. Look, if I'm wrong, and he doesn't make you the big merger offer tonight, I'll pay for half the room. Okay?

TERRY. Okay. But this is beyond insanity.

JANET. Come on.

*(JANET whisks TERRY back to the CLERK. He holds up the credit card during his line.)*

M.R.C. Well, ladies?

JANET *(gives the CLERK a thumbs-up)*. Bingo.

*(The M.R.C. swipes the card, reading her name as he does so, and gives her a key and a receipt, but not the card.)*

M.R.C. All right then, Miss Adams. You're all set. You'll be on the ninth floor. Here's the key to the suite.

TERRY. Thank you. I guess. *(She looks at the key.)* Hey, there's no room number!

M.R.C. *(putting down her middle class ignorance)* It's the only room on the floor, ma'am.

TERRY *(a little panicked)*. Oh, my God!

JANET. What?

TERRY. The robe I bought him for Christmas is back in my kitchen. We were going to exchange gifts later on. Damn.

M.R.C. *(politely, but clearly to get rid of them)*. You know, ladies, there's an arcade of shops—just down those stairs. *(He gives a little shooing gesture.)* Right down there.

TERRY. Perfect! I'll get myself something nicer, too. I just threw this on for the office party today.

JANET. Great idea!

M.R.C. Ma'am, do you have any bags you'd like sent up?

TERRY. No, but my friend will, when he arrives. If his plane ever stops circling.

M.R.C. Yes. Good luck with that.

TERRY. Thank you, you've been very helpful. Come on, Janet. Let's go shopping.

*(They walk away from the desk and exit.)*

JANET. I don't think he was helpful. *(Both are already now offstage.)* Terry, don't pretend you can't hear me.

TERRY. I'm not pretending, I'm ignoring.

*(They exit. The CLERK suddenly realizes he forgot to return her credit card. He holds it up and calls out.)*

M.R.C. Miss ADAMS...wait! Your credit card... *(No reply. The women are gone.)* I can't wait till this year is over! *(The desk phone rings again. He picks it up. Again in lackluster voice, he answers.)* Happy New Year, Drake Hotel, may I help you?

*(Blackout.)*

## Scene 2

*(The same time. Inside a nice apartment. A small Christmas tree or wreath is in the background. PENNY is arranging food on a festively decorated table or counter, preparing for a party. DR. ADAMS enters, carrying two bottles of champagne. PENNY doesn't see him right away.)*

PENNY. Terry? Is that you?

ADAMS. I know I'm late. Sorry, Penny.

PENNY. Terry, what took you so long?

ADAMS. Well, the roads are like ice and—

PENNY. Never mind. Here, give me those. *(She grabs the two champagne bottles to put them away; looks at one. She stops.)* Terry. This is semisweet. You were supposed to buy brut. I hate the semisweet.

ADAMS. Huh? Oh, sorry. I guess I got mixed up. Here, I'll take them back. It's only ten minutes.

PENNY *(martyr act. She puts the bottles down somewhere)*  
No, forget it! There's no time. This'll be fine.

ADAMS. Tell you what. Next New Year's Eve, I'll buy you a whole case of brut!

PENNY. Unless it's about transfusions or operations you never listen. I told you in plain English "brut." I HATE the semisweet.

ADAMS. Penny, you know I'm not a drinker.

PENNY. I know. It kills me. Here. *(She pulls out a few cloth napkins from nearby and starts folding them; she hands him one to fold, too.)*

ADAMS. What kills you?

PENNY. That a man who bombards people all day with harmful X-rays won't even go near a Bud Lite.

ADAMS. First of all, the human body tolerates phosphorus radiation very well actually. And second of all... *(He reaches for a strawberry off the tray she prepared. She slaps his hand. He drops it.)*

PENNY. Honey, "second." It's redundant to say "of all."

ADAMS. And "second," I have a drink. Every coupla months.

PENNY. Wow. *(She takes an apron down off a hook and hands it to ADAMS to put on.)*

ADAMS. Penny, no, I don't need that. I'll be careful. Really.

PENNY. Terry, I'm not letting you ruin your nice Macy's outfit. Now come on. (*He submits to her tying the apron on him.*)

ADAMS. I don't know—I get the slightest amount of alcohol in me, and suddenly I'm afraid I'll do something irrational—something I'll regret when I'm sober.

PENNY (*cozying up to him*). Like...proposing matrimony to your girlfriend of three years?

ADAMS (*nervous*) Penny, cut it out. What are you talking about? Hand me that napkin, will you? We're short one.

PENNY (*stops what she is doing. Firmly*). I'm talking about us, Terry. You're not just some immature twenty-five year-old, you know.

ADAMS. No, I'm an immature thirty-five-year old.

PENNY. No, you're not. You're Dr. Terry Adams, and you're the very mature head of radiology at Grant Hospital.

ADAMS. Well, someone has to be the head of radiology. It just happens to be me.

PENNY. Don't be modest! You live in a beautiful brownstone right on the lake, you drive a brand new Lexus, you've got high-powered friends and you're not even in debt!

ADAMS. No. I've never had a credit card my whole life.

PENNY. So? What's missing from this picture, honey?

ADAMS. Penny, can we talk about this some other time? Dave and Julie will be here any minute. Why don't I just run back and get you that some of that brut?

PENNY. It's always "some other time" with you, Terry. I don't get it. I mean, what am I supposed to do? Wait another three years and just cross my fingers?

ADAMS. No, don't do that—it cuts off the circulation to the arm.

PENNY. Will you be serious?

ADAMS. All right, if you really want to know...I'm a little scared. You see...I did almost get married...once.

PENNY. What?! You never told me about this.

ADAMS. Well, it was seven years ago, honey. Way before us.

PENNY. And?

ADAMS. What do you mean, "And?"

PENNY. I mean, come on, let's rip the Band-aid off here, Terry. What happened?

ADAMS. Nothing happened. We...called it off. That's all.

PENNY. Oh, you mean YOU called it off.

ADAMS. It never would have worked. She wasn't the right person for me. And neither was I. The right. For her. Person.

PENNY. Ah-huh. So...when did you call it off?

ADAMS. You know, that's the funny part about it—it was, actually... (*nervous laugh*) the day of the wedding.

PENNY. What! And her parents didn't kill you?

ADAMS. They couldn't—I hid out in a hotel for a week till it all blew over. It didn't really hit me till that morning. But then the thought of her there in my apartment every day with her shoes and her bras and her hats...I just had to run away from it as fast as I could.

PENNY. Well, at least I hope you learned something!



ADAMS. Yeah—if you ever have to spend a week in a tux, bring a spare cummerbund. (*ADAMS laughs nervously; stony silence from PENNY.*) Listen, Penny—

PENNY. No, Terry, it's okay. That's ancient history, honey. You're a different person now. Now there's only one thing you don't have. And isn't three years a long enough time to window-shop?

ADAMS (*realizing she's serious*) Why, Penny Porter, you aren't suggesting...?

PENNY. Not if you're going to leave me at the altar I'm not. (*Pause.*) Terry?

ADAMS. Yes?

PENNY. Well, Terry...what's it going to be?

ADAMS. I guess we could...I mean...if you think... (*Atypical burst of confidence.*) Well, why not?

PENNY (*jumping for joy*). Oh, Dr. Adams, I thought you would never ask! (*She kisses him long and hard. ADAMS breaks away from her and goes to grab one of the champagne bottles. PENNY thinks he's running away again.*) Hey, where are you going?

ADAMS (*returning with bottle*) Well, you're not working tomorrow. I'm not working tomorrow. You wanna get a little "irrational"?

(*PENNY firmly takes the bottle from him and pours them each a glass of champagne.*)

PENNY. No. Let's get a LOT irrational. Let's do it tomorrow.

ADAMS. Do what?

PENNY. Take the plunge. Let's ride this wave all the way to the altar.

ADAMS. Penny, no! Tomorrow? Isn't that a little...immediate?

PENNY. No, it's decisive!

ADAMS. Besides, it's New Year's. The whole city's shut down till Thursday.

PENNY. Thursday works for me.

ADAMS. You haven't even tried the champagne. (*Lifting his glass in a toast.*) Come on, Happy New Year, darling.

PENNY. Happy New *Life*, darling. (*They clink glasses.*) Oh, did you hear that, honey? It sounds like little wedding bells.

(*Each drinks. ADAMS coughs hard after drinking.*)

ADAMS. This stuff's pretty good. I did okay.

PENNY. Don't try to charm me. I can see right through you—just like one of your stupid X-rays. So...

ADAMS. Now, Penny...

PENNY. ...it's all settled. Thursday!

ADAMS. Penny, hold on. You've got me acting like a completely different person. Look at me—the head of radiology pouring toxins into his own body!

PENNY. AND that of his fiancée.

ADAMS. And that of his... Oh my God! (*He is suddenly distracted.*)

PENNY. Come on, Terry. It's just a word. You can say it.

ADAMS. X-rays!

PENNY. What?!

ADAMS. Just now. You said X-rays!

PENNY. No, I said "fiancée"!

ADAMS (*picks up an envelope lying nearby*). Oh no! Dr. Harlan needs these X-rays for that heart operation tomorrow. Why did I take these home? I'm sorry, hon. I've gotta run these down to the hospital right away.

PENNY. But it's a blizzard out there. You'll never be back in time.

ADAMS. I'll be back in an hour tops. Penny, I promise you: I will spend this New Year's Eve with the girl I'm going to marry if it kills me. But if I don't get these X-rays to Harlan today, HE'LL kill me. I've gotta call the hospital. (*He picks up his cell phone, putting on his coat as he dials.*) Hello, Jean. It's Dr. Adams. Can I speak to Dr. Harlan, it's... He's where? (*To PENNY.*) On the eve of heart transplant surgery he's drinking at the Drake! I wish I had *his* malpractice coverage. (*Back to secretary.*) Listen, Jean, if he calls, tell him not to leave, I'm on my way over with the Sherman X-rays. (*He hangs up.*)

PENNY. Can't you just messenger it?

ADAMS. No, I need to explain it to him. Harlan can't read an X-ray to save his life. Or anybody's, for that matter.

PENNY. I want to hear you say it.

ADAMS. Penny, what are you talking about?

PENNY. "Fiancée." A minute ago you couldn't say it.

ADAMS. Oh, for God's sake, Penny, I don't have time for word games.

PENNY. It's not...

ADAMS. I've gotta run. (*He kisses her on the cheek and runs off.*)

PENNY. ...a game. (*ADAMS exits. PENNY notices he's forgotten his cell phone and picks it up. She runs toward an offstage door, phone in hand. The sound of a car*

*starting, then driving away, is heard.)* Terry! Your phone. *(Too late, she walks back, puts the phone down and takes a sip of the semisweet champagne.)* Ughk, That's DISGUSTING!

*(Blackout.)*