

# Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*

# THE MARRIAGE FOOL

A Full-Length Play  
by  
RICHARD VETERE



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to:

DRAMATIC PUBLISHING

P. O. Box 129, Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

*COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES.* This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved. *On all programs this notice should appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with  
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

SPECIAL NOTE ON SONGS AND RECORDINGS

For performance of any songs and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained; or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MCMXCVI by  
RICHARD VETERE

Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*  
(THE MARRIAGE FOOL)

*Cover design by Susan Carle*

ISBN 0-87129-731-0

In memory of my father, Albert, and for my mother Angelina, my brothers Robert and Albert and their wives June and Kathy. And for Joe Brancato, Jack Gossbart, Joan Barnett and Linda Kent for giving this play life.

*THE MARRIAGE FOOL* was given its world premiere by the Penguin Repertory Company (Joe Brancato, Artistic Director and Andrew M. Horn, Executive Director), in Stony Point, New York on August 26, 1993. The cast was as follows:

FRANK ..... Frank Biancamano  
ROBERT ..... Robert Cicchini  
SUSAN ..... Alison Sheehy  
FLORENCE ..... Alice Spivak

Directed by ..... Joe Brancato  
Produced by ..... Andrew M. Horn  
Set by ..... Bill Stabile  
Lighting by ..... Gary Marder  
Costume Design by ..... Jacque St. James  
Stage Manager ..... Kathleen J. Dooner

# THE MARRIAGE FOOL

A Play in Two Acts  
For Two Men and Two Women

## CHARACTERS

FRANK . . . . . Robert's father, recently widowed, about 60

ROBERT . . . . . a rising executive, about 30

SUSAN . . . . . also a rising young executive, about 30

FLORENCE . . . . . owns her own business, in her 50s

TIME: The present.

PLACE: The living room of a modest home in a working-class neighborhood. Maspeth, Queens, New York City.

# ACT ONE

## SCENE ONE

SETTING: *Frank's living room in Queens. There is a comfortable chair with a foot-rest, a sofa and a table in the background. The walls are painted but the colors are subdued.*

AT RISE: *It is April. FRANK and ROBERT are just coming into the house. They are both wearing dark suits and ties. FRANK walks to the table, places his keys down then takes off his raincoat, hanging it on the chair. ROBERT follows after closing the door behind him.*

FRANK. It was a nice place you picked. A nice restaurant.

ROBERT. I think everything worked out okay. But you know what I don't understand? Why do people eat so much after a funeral? Uncle Sammy devoured everything they put in front of him! And Cousin Jane...I think she took home two doggie bags! And we're talking the afternoon here...

FRANK. It's a free meal.

ROBERT (*pours himself a glass of wine*). You want me to make you anything? Coffee?

FRANK. Just a glass of water. So THEY took the check, huh?

ROBERT. Oh, yeah, don't worry. I paid it...it's fine.

(*FRANK walks to the table for a pen and his checkbook, as ROBERT gets water.*)

FRANK (*writing out check*). Be quiet. I'm paying for it. You said twenty-two people? It's a good price. I wanted your relatives to see us do the right thing for your mother.

ROBERT. I can't believe Uncle Eddie didn't show.

FRANK. Your uncle Eddie is an idiot. Your mother's side of the family are a bunch of kooks! Here...(*FRANK hands ROBERT the check.*)

ROBERT. Steve and James seem to be doing okay...

FRANK. Your brothers! They get me aggravated! Where did they find the girls they married? Those girls are nothing like your mother! The one your brother married, you know—HER! Did you see her sitting at the table all afternoon with that face? Did you see her smile, once?

ROBERT. Huh...it was a funeral, Pop.

FRANK. And they can't have kids. It's her, you know. (*Pause.*) She doesn't like me much, that one. To tell you the truth: I don't care for her much either. And your other brother...where is his head? I don't care what he says, that woman has got to be ten years older than him! You see her today? Your mother looked younger than her! She's got two kids and he MARRIES her! What is he? Twenty-seven? Huh? Twenty-eight? Your mother remembered all that. (*FRANK sits quietly for a moment.*)

ROBERT. With everything going on we hadn't much time to talk. You okay?

FRANK. Me? Oh, yeah...as long as I get my walks in every-day. What about you?

ROBERT. I'm busy at work.

FRANK. You still like that goin' into the city, huh?

ROBERT. Oh, yeah, sure.

FRANK. What do you do there? Where do you park?

ROBERT. People go out after work. There are clubs we go to...



FRANK. Everybody was asking me all day when you are going to settle down.

ROBERT. I didn't find the "right girl" yet, Pop.

FRANK. What does that mean? I never know what you mean...

ROBERT. The "right girl"...it's like the "right apartment"... the "right car"...Something that feels right...for the long haul.

FRANK. That one in blue...sitting next to your brother this morning. You were talking to her. Who was she?

ROBERT. I was talking to a couple of them.

FRANK. I know. People thought you worked there.

ROBERT. In the funeral parlor?

FRANK. You talked to every woman that walked in.

ROBERT. They were Mom's friends at work. Mom never told me she worked with so many...younger women.

FRANK (*sharply*). She probably wanted to keep her job. So, who was the one in blue? She was a pretty girl...

ROBERT. Oh, that was Linda. She lives up the hill. I stopped seeing her. She wanted to get serious.

FRANK. So, what's wrong with that?

ROBERT. She's not the right girl, Pop.

FRANK. Nobody is the right girl to you! They call what you are a "confirmed bachelor," you know that?

ROBERT. Maybe not forever.

FRANK. You ever hear from Kathy anymore? I'm just curious.

ROBERT. No. She married that guy.

FRANK. She did?

ROBERT. She wasn't really right for me. I wasn't really right for her...actually.

FRANK. You waited too long. It was college. It made you think too much about things that you should just do. How long did you go with her?

ROBERT. Seven years. I really cared about Kathy but I remember how it was every night. I'd say "So, what do you want to do?" and she'd say "I don't care—what do you want to do?" That stuff drove me nuts!

FRANK. But that's what you go through. That's what it is.

ROBERT. I remember when we rented that house on the Jersey Shore that summer. How lonely it was when it was just her and me down there. I was begging people to visit us. Anybody! People I didn't even like. "Stay the week." I would tell them! It hurt, I was so lonely.

FRANK. So find somebody else.

ROBERT. Things are different today. I work out at the gym. I take classes at night. I swim. I have a lot of friends. You get into one person you have to give all that up. (*ROBERT walks to his overnight bag.*)

FRANK. None of you boys turned out like your father. (*Pause.*)

ROBERT. Hey, Pop, I'll probably go back to my apartment tonight...

FRANK. Oh, yeah, sure.

ROBERT. It's a big house. I was talking it over with James and Steve. You thinkin' of maybe sellin' it? Or you can rent out the basement like you used to if you want to do that instead. I know this is all too soon to think about...

FRANK. The plan was for her and me to enjoy my retirement. Your mother worked just as hard as I did all those years bringing you three boys up. Taking care of me. Christ. She hadda get the same thing her mother got.

ROBERT. Maybe you can get something part-time, get your mind off of it.

FRANK. Work? I worked all my life! Why would I want to work anymore? Nawh. (*Pause.*) Hey, nothing is perfect. We didn't always talk.

ROBERT. You watched a lot of TV.

FRANK. Huh? We used to sit here...watch the TV.

ROBERT. That's what I said...

FRANK. We went out, ya know. Till you kids came. Who could afford to do anything? I wanted you three to go to college. Your mother and me gave up things to see you three were okay. We never held back...shoes or clothing or food. We always worried about you. You sit here and think, what do you have now, ya know?

ROBERT. You guys were together a long time.

FRANK. We were together for forty-one years. Most of my life, most of her life! A lot of people don't stay together that long. Her mother got divorced. That hurt your mother. She stayed with me. There were times—you don't know this but there were times she wanted to have a good time. I know that. What?

ROBERT. I didn't say anything?

FRANK. She was a pretty woman. Tell me, you know, not as my son but she was a pretty woman, right?

ROBERT (*embarrassed*). Mom was pretty. Everybody said.

FRANK. Your father did okay, huh?

ROBERT. Yeah.

FRANK. She'd just smile and I'd get, you know what you kids say, "turned on." She did that for me all these years. We danced good together.

ROBERT. You guys could dance.

FRANK. I was a good husband. I got no education like you boys but if she wanted something—I made sure she got it. Vacations, things. (*Pause.*) She never said she was un-

happy, did she? I'm asking you as my son, you know, you can tell your father. Your mother never said anything?

ROBERT. She never said anything. You know she was happy. You made her happy.

FRANK. I did. I tried. (*ROBERT puts on his raincoat.*) You should have married that Kathy. You'll be alone when you're old.

ROBERT. I'm alone now so what's the difference?

FRANK. Don't you want to share with somebody?

ROBERT. Share what? Your day? Your troubles? I don't know what you mean when you say "share." I have a lot of friends. I have women I go out with. Sometimes I go out with three different women on a weekend and the strange thing is that I don't seem to get them confused. I enjoy the diversity of personality. I know that I forgot what it feels like to be close to somebody who really gets affected by what happens to you. I miss having someone now. It would be nice to have someone, with Mom...dying...but I don't. And I didn't fall apart. I have you and James and Steve. It wouldn't be her mother anyway. It was mine...mine that died. My mother I'm going to miss. (*Pause.*) Pop, I gotta go.

FRANK. You be careful.

ROBERT. I will.

FRANK. You going to be okay?

ROBERT. Yeah.

FRANK. Call me if you need anything. We'll...I'll be here.

ROBERT. Okay. (*He hesitantly walks over to FRANK, bends down, kissing him on the forehead. ROBERT then reluctantly exits. FRANK is alone with his memories and his grief.*)

LIGHTS OUT

## SCENE TWO

AT RISE: *Four months later. August. Bright sunlight blasts through the window. The house looks the same—lived-in but neat. FRANK in an old shirt and wearing worn jeans. He is sitting in the chair watching TV while a box, half-torn open or half put back together, sets on the floor beside the chair. ROBERT enters with a small cake box under his arm and walks quickly to the kitchen to place it in the refrigerator so FRANK doesn't see it.*

ROBERT. Hello?

FRANK. I was worried about you. You said noon...

ROBERT (*from the kitchen*). Oh, I got up late. That it outside?

FRANK. You saw it?

*(ROBERT re-enters. FRANK turns to him, while struggling with the box.)*

ROBERT. The blue one?

FRANK. Brand new, huh?

ROBERT. Looks great.

FRANK. You see how it looks like a Cadillac, huh? You like the color?

ROBERT. I'd pick that color.

FRANK. How's your car? You change the oil? Always check the oil.

ROBERT. Right. (*Seeing box on floor.*) Pop, what's that?

FRANK (*motioning to box*). Read this. Here, come here.

ROBERT (*reads*). "Handle With Care."

FRANK. How am I suppose to do that? You have to be a maniac to get it apart...

ROBERT. What is it?

FRANK. It's a microwave.

ROBERT (*gets the box open*). You bought yourself a microwave?

FRANK. Steve says it's easy. SHE uses one. You know, I'm glad you're here. I can't get this damn lamp to work. It's not the bulb. I changed the bulb...

ROBERT (*tinkers with the lamp*). It's got a loose wire. Mom used to shake it...(*ROBERT shakes the lamp and it goes on.*)

FRANK. Damn mechanical things...

ROBERT (*looking around proudly*). Fixed the lamp. Saw the new car. I can show you how the microwave works?

FRANK. I don't want to look at it now. I'll try it myself tomorrow. I have nothing to do tomorrow.

ROBERT. What did you do today?

FRANK (*quickly*). Bought that. So what are you doing today?

ROBERT. Thinkin' of takin' a ride to the beach. (*Pause.*) Pop, I got somebody in the car. I got a friend in the car.

FRANK. Who?

ROBERT. Susan. You don't know her. Her name is Susan. She works with me. We worked late last night and I figured I'd take her to the beach. She's never been to the beach here. Jones Beach. Look, why don't I let her in?

FRANK. You're like a dog. At least a dog stays in its own neighborhood. And you got to be careful today. I read the paper...it's dangerous...

*(ROBERT leaves the room to get SUSAN while FRANK sits in the chair and waits. SUSAN enters with ROBERT. She is pretty and is dressed in beach clothes.)*

ROBERT. Susan, this is my father.

SUSAN (*big smile*). Hi...I was looking forward to meeting you...

FRANK. Hello. Sit down. You're going to the beach?

SUSAN. Yes. We were on our way. I haven't gotten much of chance all summer.

FRANK. I just bought a new car. It's the blue one.

SUSAN. Rob pointed it out. It's very nice.

FRANK (*quickly, with resentment*). You can't keep anything nice around here. They steal it. There's nothing I can do.

SUSAN. Huh? Oh, but you can enjoy it while you have it, right?

FRANK. Were you ever over here? My son has so many girls I can't keep track.

ROBERT. Susan was never here.

SUSAN. It's a nice house.

FRANK. My wife used to keep it good.

SUSAN. I was so sorry to hear about your loss.

FRANK. I'd rather it had been me, that's all. She was better with people. I had a lot of work done to the house. You want to see the basement? What I did to the basement?

SUSAN. Huh?

FRANK. I'll show you the basement.

ROBERT. He wants to show the work he did to it. He'll explain, I'm sure.

FRANK. You have a basement?

SUSAN. Yes. We don't go down there much...though...

FRANK. See! I'll show you a real basement! Come on...

ROBERT. Be sure to ask to see the family plot. This IS Queens, you know. And I built the bar!

*(FRANK takes a confused SUSAN by the hand leading her to the basement entrance as she glances back to ROBERT perplexed by their detour from the beach. ROBERT walks*

*around the room after they exit and picks up the TV Guide realizing that all his father does is watch TV. ROBERT then stands by the door listening to FRANK and SUSAN. He mimics what he hears.)*

FRANK (off) & ROBERT (mimicking). I wanted to have a place for family parties...So I built the basement...with the colored lights...see? And the stereo for the music. My son, Robert, built the bar...

*(ROBERT then strains to hear but the voices have trailed off. He stands at the door a moment thinking how nothing in life is permanent. He then hears voices and goes back to the sofa as the voices grow louder.)*

ROBERT & FRANK. We wanted the boys to have more room when they got older...

*(FRANK and SUSAN re-enter the living room.)*

ROBERT. You saw the basement?

SUSAN. I did. I love the way the houses are so close together...it's so cute. And so is your father. Family plot.

FRANK. I showed her the backyard from the window...and the driveway...

ROBERT. Susan grew up in Wisconsin...I bet she had a yard bigger than this block!

SUSAN. But I didn't have an ocean!

FRANK. Why not?

ROBERT. Wisconsin, Pop.

FRANK. He went to college to tell me those things. Did you two eat? I can make some more coffee and buy some cold cuts. I wanted to drive around somewhere to get somebody



jealous. (*He motions out window to neighbors.*) Show them I get company, you know? Don't want them to think they have to feel sorry for me 'cause my wife died. I want them to see I got somewhere to go.

ROBERT (*looks at SUSAN*). I don't know...

SUSAN. We planned on stopping at the deli anyway. I *am* hungry.

ROBERT. We can wait for the clouds to pass. Saw some driving here.

FRANK. You two stay here. I'll drive to the corner. What should I buy?

ROBERT. Cold cuts, like you said.

FRANK. Did you see my keys?

ROBERT. Where did you put them last?

FRANK. I put everything on the table...here...

ROBERT. That's where they are.

FRANK. Oh. I'll be right back. You're stayin'?

ROBERT. We'll have lunch with you.

FRANK. I'll be back in five minutes. Make sure nobody takes my spot. (*FRANK exits.*)

ROBERT. Thanks. We'll go as soon as we eat.

SUSAN (*looks out window*). Robert, what's a "spot"?

ROBERT (*playfully*). A spot? Well, out here in Queens, it's more than just a place where you park your car. It's an extension of your house, your family. It's territorial. It's symbolic. It represents family pride. We have to protect it from intruders. You see, when my father drives away, he puts a garbage can on his spot. That's his mark. It means that no one has the right to park in his spot but him...or me. Or my brothers. That's how we get respect. We have a SPOT. And, God forbid, when he passes away, not only will my brothers and I inherit the house, but we'll also inherit the spot. Spots are passed down from generation to

generation. We kill for our spots around here, Susan. It's ours and nobody has a right to it. And do you know what real status is?

SUSAN. What?

ROBERT. Someone who has TWO spots.

SUSAN. Is all this true?

ROBERT (*big smile*). It is. Yet, in reality, the city owns the sidewalk and the curb. But just try moving somebody's garbage can and parking in their space.

SUSAN. What would happen?

ROBERT. If you're lucky—you'll escape with four flats. Worse? Try a smashed windshield. They might even set your car on fire.

SUSAN. I don't believe you.

ROBERT. Why not? Everyone gets possessive about what matters to them. Right now, my father has his spot, and not much else.

SUSAN. I felt so bad for him.

ROBERT. I didn't plan on staying, it's just that when I visit I can't seem to leave. (*Picks up TV Guide*). It's all he does...TV. I just look at him sitting there and I can't go. I get in the car and I get depressed when I drive away. I can't live here, I'm a grownup.

SUSAN. I know.

ROBERT (*edges closer to SUSAN kissing her on the cheek*). My father likes you.

SUSAN. How can you tell?

ROBERT. He showed you the basement.

SUSAN. He probably shows every girl you take home the basement.

ROBERT. True. But he showed you the driveway and he never does that. (*ROBERT kisses SUSAN on the neck. She obviously enjoys it.*)