

LOVE SLASH HATE

a comedy slash drama

by Brett M. Rhyne

Brett M. Rhyne
100 Harvard Street
Brookline, MA 02446

617-818-5871
bmr@BrettMRhyne.com
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CHARACTERS:

MAYA & TONY, a married couple, about the same age.

AT RISE:

MAYA sits quietly on the couch. TONY enters, turns on the TV and sits down. HE laughs at something, then turns to HER for her reaction. MAYA is not amused. TONY, chastened, continues watching.

MAYA
I hate you.

TONY
I love you.

MAYA
I hate you!

TONY
I love you.

MAYA
God how I hate you.

TONY
God how I love you.

MAYA
See how you are?

TONY
See how you are.

MAYA
What do you mean by that?

TONY
What do you mean by that?

MAYA
That's what I mean by that. That. That,
what you just did. That.

TONY
What? What did I do?

MAYA

That. Here I am, all worked up over,
over... that, and all you can say is,
well, what you said.

TONY

What did I say?

MAYA

You know.

TONY

I want you to say it.

MAYA

No! I don't want to say it.

TONY

Come on. Say it. Sa-a-a-ay it.

MAYA

No.

TONY

Why don't you want to say it?

MAYA

Because I don't.

TONY

Why not?

MAYA

Because I don't, okay? I just don't.

TONY

Sure you do. Everybody does. Everybody
wants to say it.

MAYA

No, everybody most certainly does not
want to say it. Everybody wants to hear
it. There's a difference.

TONY

No there isn't. Everybody wants to say
it and everybody wants to hear it.

MAYA

Okay, if there's no difference, you say it.

TONY

Okay. I love you! I love you, I love you, I lo-o-o-ove you.

A beat.

MAYA

Oh sure, that's easy for you to say.

TONY

Now you try.

MAYA

I'm not doing this.

TONY

Not doing what?

MAYA

This. This. I'm not doing this.

TONY

First, I'm doing that. Now, you're not doing this. What are we talking about?

MAYA

Don't change the subject. You know very well what we're talking about.

TONY

Uh huh. This and that.

MAYA

Don't be funny.

TONY

I'm not being funny.

MAYA

I'll say.

TONY

What do you mean by that?

MAYA

You know perfectly well what I mean.
That's that thing that you do.

TONY

What thing?

MAYA

That thing. Here I am, trying to be serious, and all you can do is make jokes. You make fun of everything I say.

TONY

I do?

MAYA

See? See? You just did it again. See how you are?

TONY

I did?

MAYA

See? Ooh, it's so frustrating!

TONY

I'm just trying to understand what you mean.

MAYA

Well if you stopped making jokes about everything I said and took me more seriously, you might understand.

TONY

I didn't even know I did that.

MAYA

You didn't know you did that? How could you not know you did that?

TONY

How am I supposed to know I do that?

MAYA

How are you supposed to know you do that? Everybody knows you do that. It's that thing you do. All our friends know you do that.

TONY

They do?

MAYA

Of course they do. Whenever we go anywhere, you know they're saying, 'Oh here come Tony and Maya, I hope Tony doesn't do that thing he does.'

TONY

They're not saying that.

MAYA

They most certainly are. Just last week Peggy was saying, 'We'd love to have you and Tony over, only it makes us uncomfortable how Tony's always doing that thing he does.'

TONY

They don't say that.

MAYA

They most certainly do. They're always talking about that thing you do. 'Tony's thing.' It's all over the neighborhood.

TONY

'Tony's thing' is all over the neighborhood?

MAYA

Yes, 'Tony's thing' is all over the neighborhood. All over. It's gotten so bad that when other men don't take their wives seriously, they start doing 'Tony's thing.' 'Oh, there's Jim doing Tony's thing to Peggy again.' 'Have you heard? Jamal does Tony's thing to Felicia all the time now.'

TONY

That's ridiculous.

MAYA

See? See what I mean? I tell you something serious, and you think it's ridiculous. Well it's not ridiculous.

It's embarrassing. I hate to be seen with you now.

TONY

You do?

MAYA

I most certainly do. Haven't you heard them whispering whenever we go out? 'Ooh, there's Maya and Tony. He's the one who started that thing. Now all the men are doing it to their wives. Poor Maya.'

TONY

I have a thing.

MAYA

What?

TONY

I have a thing. I started a thing.

MAYA

You're proud of this?

TONY

Yes. Yes I am. I'm proud of this thing. I have a thing.

MAYA

I can't believe you're proud of this. How can you be proud of this?

TONY

You don't understand. I have a thing. All my life I wanted to have a thing. The whole time growing up I thought, 'I wish I had a thing.' Because I didn't. I had nothing. But now, I do. I have a thing. And not only do I have a thing, I have a great thing. (realizing) I have a great thing. I have such a great thing that other men want to copy it. Other men want to copy me. They want to be like me. I'm the idol of my peers. I'm a giant among men.

MAYA

You're a moron.

TONY

I may be a moron, but I have a thing.

MAYA

You don't have a thing. You do a thing.

TONY

Same thing.

MAYA

It most certainly is not the same thing. It's not the same thing at all.

TONY

Why not? Have a thing, do a thing. It's still a thing. My thing. 'Tony's thing.'

MAYA

Yes, but what is 'Tony's thing?'

TONY

What indeed. 'Tony's thing' is many things to many men. To some, it's...

MAYA

(interrupting)

I'll tell you what 'Tony's thing' is. 'Tony's thing' is that you don't take me seriously. 'Tony's thing' is that you make fun of everything I say. 'Tony's thing' is that you turn everything into a joke. 'Tony's thing' is that you make me feel stupid and useless and unimportant and you hurt my feelings. That's 'Tony's thing!' That's 'Tony's thing.'

A beat.

TONY

Funny, you don't look shrewish.

MAYA

See? See how you are?

TONY

I'm just trying to keep things light.

MAYA

Why? Why do you always have to keep things light? Why does everything always have to be light?

TONY

That's my thing.

MAYA

Enough already with the thing!

TONY

Okay, okay, enough with the thing. (pause) I don't know why I make jokes all the time. Maybe it's because... (pause) Maybe it's because... of you.

MAYA

Because of me? You make jokes all the time because of me? You're the one making jokes all the time. What do I have to do with it?

TONY

You're so... touchy. You're like a time bomb, like a hand grenade. I never know what's going to set you off. I feel like you could go off at any minute.

MAYA

I'm a time bomb? I could go off at any minute?

TONY

Any minute. (pause) You're about to go off right now, aren't you?

MAYA

Right now? I'm about to 'go off' right now? Is that what you think? Well let me tell you something. I am not about to 'go off' right now. I most certainly am not about to 'go off' right now.

A pause, while THEY look at each other.

MAYA

And if I did 'go off' right now, it would only be because you made some stupid joke.

TONY

Well if I made some stupid joke, it would only be because I didn't want you to go off.

A beat.

TONY & MAYA

(together)

See how you are?

MAYA

How can you say that? How can you say that about me? Don't make this about me. All you do is mock me and ridicule me and embarrass me, and when I say one little thing about it, one little thing, you make it all about me. Well it's not all about me. It's not about me at all. It's about you, Tony. You. You.

A beat. TONY gets withdrawn. MAYA comforts him.

MAYA

There, there.

TONY

Why? Why do you have to make me feel this way? Why? Why?

MAYA

Because I love you, honey.

TONY

You make me feel bad because you love me? You make me feel like I want to go jump off a roof because you love me?

MAYA

That's what love is, honey.

TONY

(breaking away)

Aagh! I hate you! I hate you, I hate you, I hate you! I hate you for making me feel this way! I hate you!

MAYA

But I love you.

TONY

But I hate you. I hate you more than life itself.

MAYA

You do?

TONY

God how I hate you. I hate you so much.

MAYA

I had no idea.

TONY

You had no idea? You had no idea? How could you not know?

MAYA

What do you mean, how could I not know? How could I know? You keep saying 'I love you.' 'I love you, I love you, I lo-o-o-ove you.' I thought when you said, 'I love you,' you meant, 'I love you.' What was I supposed to think?

TONY

You just said everything I say is a joke. Why is 'I love you' the one thing I say that you take seriously?

MAYA

You mean you didn't mean it?

TONY

Well of course I meant it.

MAYA

That's what I thought.

TONY

I meant it as a joke.

Pause. MAYA withdraws. A beat.

TONY
Maya?

MAYA does not respond.

TONY
Maya, honey?

MAYA
What?

TONY
Can I just say one thing?

MAYA
What?

TONY
Can I just say one thing?

MAYA
I said, 'What?'

TONY sidles a little closer to MAYA.

TONY
Are you ready?

MAYA
What?

TONY
I said, 'Are you ready?'

MAYA
I heard you. I said, 'What?'

TONY is nearer to MAYA.

TONY
Okay, here it comes.

MAYA
Will you say it already?

TONY
I love you.

MAYA looks at TONY.

TONY
I said, 'I love you.'

MAYA
I heard you.

TONY
What do you think?

MAYA
What do you think?

TONY
I think I love you.

THEY embrace.

TONY
(loudly)
I love you!

MAYA
(softly)
I hate you.

BLACKOUT