

All's Fair in Love and War

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(BRYAN and FARRAH are sitting on a couch center stage. Stage left is a therapist's office with a desk, houseplant, and various personal items. Stage right is a war scene from Iraq. BRYAN sits on the side of the couch that overlaps with the war zone. CHELSEA sits in her chair by her desk.)

CHELSEA

(Walking towards BRYAN and FARRAH.)

I see you all are early!

(Settling into her seat, looking at BRYAN and FARRAH slyly, assessing their dynamic as a couple.)

My name is Dr. Turner, but please call me Chelsea. You know, there is absolutely no judgement here, and we are simply here to work things out. Alright?

BRYAN

(Fidgeting his hands nervously, looking down and tapping his leg. He sighs.)

Yeah, of course.

FARRAH

Yes, of course, Dr. Turner! Thank you again for meeting with us. Things have been tense and moving so fast and...

CHELSEA

(Interrupts FARRAH.)

Please, call me Chelsea.

FARRAH

Oh, uh, yes, Dr.... Chelsea.

(Rambling and talking with hands dramatically.)

You see, things have been going so quickly, and we can't seem to agree on anything and we don't do things together anymore. Like we would always go out dancing on Fridays... now he doesn't even get close to me.

BRYAN

(Really laying it on. Trying to convince FARRAH and CHELSEA nothing is wrong.)

Really, dear, things haven't been that bad. I'm just a little tense is all. See, Chelsea, it has just been difficult adjusting back to civilian life, you know, having to unload the dishwasher and all that shit.

FARRAH

Well maybe if we had some little helping hands around the house...

BRYAN

(Avoiding the subject.)

Child labor... isn't that illegal? You should tell your mother.

FARRAH

(Looks at BRYAN.)

Bryan this is serious.

(Gets up from couch and begins to walk towards war-zone, comes very close to "crossing over".)

Don't joke around, and don't bring my mother into it.

BRYAN

(Apprehensively grabs FARRAH'S hand to pull her back from the war-zone, onto the couch, with obvious concern on his face. FARRAH sits down again next to him.)

There's nothing to worry about, Farrah, I promise.

(Flashes a winning smile at CHELSEA.)

FARRAH

(Visibly upset, jerks her hand away and crosses her legs with a huff.)

Seriously, Bryan, things haven't been right and you *know* it.

CHELSEA

What are the major issues? What do you think you need to work on?

FARRAH

(Getting more upset, borderline yelling.)

You don't talk to me like before. It's like you've shut down on me.

BRYAN

You haven't given me time to work through stuff. All you want to talk about is having a kid.

FARRAH

You know I don't want to rush you, but you could get redeployed at any time. What if something happens next time...

BRYAN

Look, Farrah, I'm here now. Why do you have to think negatively? I came back and I'm alright.

CHELSEA

Well, Farrah, since Bryan is not ready for this next life step, how can you help him through this transition?

FARRAH

I'm trying to help, but I don't know how! Bryan, I just want to be here for you and understand what you went through. But you have to open up to me. You can always tell me the truth.

BRYAN

(Loudly, forceful.)

How can I tell the truth when I can't face it myself?

CHELSEA

(Tries to break the tension.)

I think it's obvious that simply discussing the issues isn't working quite as well as we had hoped. For a lot of men, it's hard to face what they've been through, so you're not alone.

FARRAH

Well, he's been back for a year, Dr. Chelsea, and he still hasn't opened up to me.

CHELSEA

Bryan, if you're up for it, why don't we try a different method?

BRYAN

Okay, sure. As long as I don't have to keep talking about my "feelings."

CHELSEA

I want to try and hypnotize you, to help bring forward some repressed memories. This will help us determine the root of the problem, so you are able to see things from a different perspective, to add some clarity. So first, lay back on the couch.

(FARRAH gets up from the couch and paces nervously, while BRYAN lays down on the couch.)

Okay, now I'm going to count down from 20 and when you hear the bell, you'll fall into a deep sleep... 20... 19... 18... 17... 16... 15...

(Rings bell, and BRYAN falls asleep. Lights on counseling side of stage fade as the lights on the war scene rise simultaneously. BRYAN begins to rise from the couch and slowly head toward war-scene side of the stage.)

CHELSEA

Bryan, can you tell me what you see?

BRYAN

(Begins breathing heavy, slowly turns in circles.)

I don't see anything.

CHELSEA

Bryan, I need you to really concentrate and breathe.

(BRYAN begins to control his breathing.)

Now, tell me, do you see anything?

BRYAN

It looks like a town, but it's blurry.

(RILEY approaches.)

Someone else is here.

CHELSEA

Okay, good, Bryan. Keep concentrating and tell me what you see.

RILEY

(Looks in BRYAN's direction.)

What the hell do you think you're doing just standing there? Get your ass over here and—

CHELSEA & RILEY

Concentrate.

RILEY

Help me patrol.

BRYAN

Wait, Riley, why are you here?

(Raises arm in confusion.)

RILEY

You know, just on my mission to destroy the Death Star. Man, I feel like a Storm Trooper right now, except I can shoot way better than them. Pew pew.

(Acts out Storm Trooper movements for dramatic effect and to make fun of Bryan. CHELSEA and FARRAH standing to the side watching.)

BRYAN

What? What the hell are you talking about?

RILEY

Good thing nothing is happening... we would be toast. Now come on and help me patrol.

(RILEY and BRYAN start to patrol. Stage lights are now up to 100%. BRYAN spots a baby doll, walks over to it slowly and bends down to inspect)

RILEY

Dude, what the hell are you doing? You know not to pick anything up. Things are different, you know the rules.

BRYAN

Whatever, it's fine. No one would put something in a baby doll. You know, this war isn't just affecting us. Why do children have to be stuck in the middle of it all?

(Gently picks up baby doll.)

RILEY

Why are you being so philosophical about this... you knew what you were getting into. Just yesterday—

BRYAN

(Interrupts RILEY.)

I don't know, it just makes me wonder what Farrah would think of this. Would she really want to bring a child into this kind of world?

RILEY

(Walks over to BRYAN.)

Dude, you literally just married her like two months ago. Chill out and focus on patrolling.

BRYAN

She's the only woman I have ever been with, Riley. Excuse me for envisioning having a family with her.

(Acts exasperated.)

And I know she wants to have children.

RILEY

(Somberly walks over and puts a hand on BRYAN's shoulder.)

Well, how about we talk about that over some beers when we get back home, alright?

(Starts to walk away from BRYAN.)

Where did that doll come from anyways, there are no kids out here...

BRYAN

(drops the baby doll and starts to get up)

Yeah.

(Shots are fired and RILEY falls from a fatal wound. BRYAN tries to drag RILEY to safety, but shock makes it hard for him. CHELSEA in the background begins to take notes, while FARRAH becomes obviously concerned and is pacing back and forth.)

Riley... Riley... stay with me Riley. You are going to be okay, I promise!

(BRYAN is still trying to pull RILEY to safety. FARRAH comes up to BRYAN and starts to pull him away, really comforting and soft.)

FARRAH

Bryan, it's alright. You don't have to go through this again. Come on, let's go back.

(Gently leads BRYAN back to the couch.)

CHELSEA

It's okay Bryan, take your time.

(BRYAN is pacing back and forth. FARRAH is trying to reach out to him. FARRAH coaxes him back to the couch and BRYAN starts to calm down.)

Okay Bryan, I know you just had to relive that, but can we talk about what you just remembered? And how did all of that make you feel about your life outside of the military?

BRYAN

(Hesitant, obviously emotional.)

My time during deployment really taught me how precious life is. I don't want to bring a life into this world just for it to end.

CHELSEA

Okay, and Farrah, how does that make you feel?

FARRAH

I understand Bryan, I want to be here for you, and I don't want to force you into something that will upset you. But, Bryan, I know you would make a wonderful dad.

(She grabs BRYAN's hand affectionately.)

BRYAN

(Pulls hand away and begins to raise voice, obviously upset.)

Oh really? As a father, you're supposed to protect your children. If I couldn't protect Riley, how could I protect a baby?! Neither of you saw what I saw. There were children caught in a warzone with no chance of survival.

FARRAH

Well we aren't in a war zone over here; you won't be taking our child into that. But by being a soldier, you are protecting both the children we may have... and me.

CHELSEA

Bryan, how would you feel about at least considering it?

FARRAH

I'm not asking for this right now, Bryan. Just in the future. I need you to at least tell me that you'll consider it... that in the future, when this is all behind you, we can at least think about it.

CHELSEA

That is a good idea, Farrah. Bryan, how do you feel about that?

BRYAN

(Looking out into the distance to the war zone side of stage.)

Every time I think of having a child, the image of that dirty, worn-down baby doll can't leave my mind. And I just see Riley lying on the ground...

FARRAH

(Long pause, contemplating.)

What if we save one of those kids? What if we adopt a child, and bring them into a loving and safe home? Where you protect us and make us feel safe.

BRYAN

Well, you can't legally adopt children from Iraq...

CHELSEA

There are other third-world countries with children in need of a loving home. I can tell that you two love each other and would be great parents to a child that hasn't yet experienced that kind of compassion in their life. It would really be a great option for you two. For you, Bryan, to show love to someone that is without not only love, but the basic necessities to survive, may be very healing.

BRYAN

(Mulls over the idea.)

That sounds reasonable. I still need some time. I'll think about it.

CHELSEA

That is good progress. Farrah, how do you feel about the issue now that Bryan is willing to give it some thought?

FARRAH

I'm glad. I would love to adopt... when Bryan is ready. Plus, it spares me the pain of childbirth.

CHELSEA

I feel like we have made some good progress today. So now time for homework. Bryan, I want you to take Farrah out on a date and go dancing like you used to. Get reconnected and cherish the time you have together. See you all next time. Same time, same place.

(Lights fade slightly. CHELSEA starts to get up and walk to the side and begins to play piano. BRYAN gets up and offers his hand to FARRAH. FARRAH takes BRYAN's hand and they begin to dance.)

BRYAN

You know, I really do love you.

END