

Stay Together for the Kids

A short play

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

HARRY (25), high earning husband from a rich family celebrating his five year wedding anniversary with Liz. A poor dancer despite his efforts.

LIZ (25), socialite and owner of a cosmetics brand celebrating her five year wedding anniversary with Harry. She's a great dancer.

MAGGIE (50), Liz's mom, a refined socialite.

RALPH (50), Liz's dad, a successful businessman.

GINA (25), a medium class girl, well mannered and Harry's long time friend who's secretly in love with him.

TOM (25), a jackass yet successful business man and Liz's long time friend who's secretly in love with her. He's also a great dancer.

JUDY (25) and JANET (25), rich entitled bachelorettes, Maggie's nieces and submissive to her. Play on their phones all the time, take selfies and record videos. Constantly call Marie for pics and hit on Billy.

BILLY (20), a naive and hardworking server treated poorly by the guests and yet too gullible to notice. When people call 'Billy', he rushes nervously as fast as he can, also constantly travels to the 'bar' to switch glasses. Tries to learn from Marie how to calm down and work more efficiently. (Comic relief.)

MARIE (35), the party photographer. Employed by Maggie and submissive to her. Appeases Billy and teaches him how to conduct himself. (Comic relief: her interactions with Billy and how she takes pics at awkward moments.)

SETTING

A fancy ballroom party event (With two hundred fictitious people).
One table with chairs to one side. Another table with chairs to the other side.

A bar with empty plastic non-see-through champagne flutes.

TIME

The present.

BLOCKING - ACTORS

When not speaking or with no particular action, remember that this is a full party with two hundred people. You are 'allowed' to speak to 'invisible' people, nod, wave, take a few steps here and there, use your phones, take pics, go to the bar, sit a table, drink, offer drinks (Billy)...

LOGLINE

At their fifth wedding anniversary party, Harry and Liz make a public scandal out of their marital problems and put their marriage on a knife's edge.

SYNOPSIS

On Harry and Liz's fifth wedding anniversary party, all eyes are on them as they fall awkwardly on the ground during a tango dance. The couple gets back on their feet and the party resumes, but from that moment on, Harry and Liz begin to argue about their marriage, and eventually bring the entire party into the discussion. Both Harry and Liz are afraid of taking the definitive step that will cause their marriage to end, and dare each other to do so in front of the guests and cameras. Family, friends and the couple themselves argue and balance out the pros and cons of maintaining that marriage.

STAY TOGETHER FOR THE KIDS

(LIGHTS UP. A fancy ballroom party. At a table sit Liz's parents MAGGIE and RALPH.)

(Harry's friend GINA and Liz's friend TOM stand on opposite sides drinking champagne.)

(Liz's cousins JUDY and JANET stand at the back playing on their phones.)

(The photographer MARIE walks graciously around taking pictures.)

(The waiter BILLY walks around nervously with a tray of champagne flutes.)

JUDY

There's barely any men in here. Did Harry not invite his friends?

(Marie approaches and Judy and Janet pose for a couple of pics. As Marie moves away the girls go back to their bitch faces.)

(The couple HARRY and LIZ enter under applause. TANGO MUSIC plays and they dance. Judy and Janet record them and Marie takes pics. As the music reaches it's climax, Liz gears things up.)

HARRY

Wow.

(Harry can't keep up with her. She forces a dip and they both fall.)

HARRY

Woow.

LIZ

Ouch!

(Tom and Gina rush to help.)

GINA

You guys ok?

LIZ

It's fine.

(They stand. The MUSIC CEASES. Liz is uncomfortable but forces a smile. Harry jokes with the crowd. People laugh and clap.)

HARRY

Thank you all very much. I hope you enjoyed the show. But let's get this party going. Charlie, play us some music will yah?

(Harry signals the fourth wall and TANGO MUSIC plays.)

HARRY

No, no, no. Real music. Give us something fun!

(The band plays FAST PACED JAZZ. Harry gestures for people to dance and everybody gets in the rhythm. Liz dances but with a forced smile. She signals Billy and grabs a glass of champagne from his tray.)

LIZ

Hold on.

(Liz chugs her entire glass and collects another one.)

HARRY

What are you doing?

LIZ

What?

HARRY

Why are you embarrassed?

LIZ

Me embarrassed?

HARRY

We are among friends here. Your friends in fact.

LIZ

You were the one who dropped me.

HARRY

I see.

LIZ

Yeah. If anybody should be embarrassed that should be you.

HARRY

I don't think we handled that situation very well, do you?

LIZ

I didn't think you were actually going to drop me. I guess I'm just disappointed.

HARRY

You're joking right?

LIZ

I'm too sober for this.

(Liz sips on her glass.)

(On the other side, Tom approaches Gina.)

SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATION:

TOM

You missed the last Jenkins' party.

HARRY

Ok, sure. Wasn't I practicing? The whole week?

GINA

Did I?

LIZ

Ha... Practicing? That only works if you take it seriously.

TOM

You knew Harry wasn't gonna be there, didn't you?

HARRY

I'm making an effort here.

GINA
What?

LIZ
You're always too fucking busy with your own stupid things.

TOM
I've seen the way you look at him. Maybe you should do something about it.

HARRY
Ok, I guess I'm too sober for this too. Billy!

(Tom leaves Gina alone.)

LIZ
Five years Harry. You haven't made any progress.

HARRY
...Ok... I see what's going on here.

LIZ
What?

(Harry collects a drink.)

HARRY
Thanks Billy.

(Harry drinks.)

(Judy and Janet flirt with Billy.)

SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATION:

JUDY & JANET
Yuhuuu. Billy! Come here big boy!

LIZ
What?

JUDY & JANET
Is that your whole name? Billy?

HARRY
You're trying to embarrass me.

BILLY
My name? Is- Is... William McDaniel Hernandez.

LIZ
Grow up Harry.

JUDY & JANET
 Nhammmm. That's so big. You
 have a big one William
 McDaniel Hernandez. (Giggles)

HARRY
 Why would you start spinning
 all over the place? You
 wanted me drop you, didn't
 you?

BILLY
 Thank you my ladies.

LIZ
 Five years Harry. Five
 fucking years and I can't
 have fun!

JUDY & JANET
 Can I see it?

HARRY
 I'm not a fucking dancer!

BILLY
 What?

LIZ
 And I guess you're never
 going to be, right?

JUDY & JANET
 The big William. (Giggles)

HARRY
 I don't know. Must I?

LIZ
 If you ever drop me again this marriage is over.

HARRY
 What???

LIZ
 Forget it.

(Harry drinks.)

(Judy and Janet sandwich Billy in
 between them. Billy struggles with
 his tray.)

HARRY
 Charlie. Kill the music! Please?

(Harry does the cut throat signal.
 The music ceases.)

(Judy and Janet take a step back
 and Billy escapes.)

HARRY
 Thank you.

LIZ

What are you doing?

HARRY

Sorry everybody, I just want to take a second here to thank you all for coming... To another one of our parties. I seem to have lost count of how many parties we throw each year. It's just that we loooove parties, you see? What are we celebrating again? Honey? Wood wedding anniversary? Anyway, I I'm just a little disappointed with the way our little dance went, so we're gonna do it again! (To Liz) And I'll do my best not to drop you this time... (To the crowd) Otherwise she's gonna divorce me. (Laughs) Anyway. Billy!

(Harry and Liz finish their drinks
and place them on the tray.)

HARRY

All right! Charlie, would you do us the honor?

(TANGO MUSIC plays.)

LIZ (CONT'D)

If you drop me again-

HARRY

Maybe I will.

LIZ

You wouldn't hurt me, would you?

(They dance as before until that
same crucial moment, but now he's
able to hold her. And then he
purposely drops her. MUSIC CEASES.)

LIZ (CONT'D)

What the fuck?

HARRY

I would never hurt you. You can count on that.

LIZ

You shouldn't have dropped me.

(She stands. All eyes are on them.)

LIZ (CONT'D)

You win. That's what you wanted, right?

HARRY

That's what you wanted-

LIZ

You have to win all the time. Congratulations, I'm humiliated. If you'll excuse-me, I... Hate this fucking party.

HARRY

Well so do I.

LIZ

Why are you even here?

HARRY

What?

LIZ

You don't care. You think this is all bullshit.

HARRY

I go along with it, don't I?

LIZ

You go along with it...

HARRY

How many parties do you need? Do we really have to celebrate every fucking thing?

LIZ

No. We don't have to do shit. How about we just work and then go to sleep? Everyday, for the rest of our lives.

TOM

Just get a divorce already!

HARRY

What did you say?

MAGGIE

All right, all right, everybody calm down.

RALPH

Everybody calm down...

HARRY

What the fuck did you say Tom?

TOM

People are so sensitive nowadays.

HARRY

You don't tell me what to do.

MAGGIE

Boys!

HARRY

If I get a divorce or not that's my problem.

TOM

My friend. You're ruining this yourself.

HARRY

What?

TOM

I didn't do anything. What the fuck did I do?

GINA

Calm down Harry, it's ok. Don't listen to this asshole.

TOM

Wow!

HARRY

I'm sorry she married me instead of you. I mean, I'm sorry for me actually.

GINA

She doesn't deserve you Harry.

LIZ

Wha- What? What was that?

(Maggie blows on a TRUMPET.
Everyone is silent.)

MAGGIE

Calm down everybody. What's going on? This is a celebration. If you don't want to celebrate you shouldn't be here.

LIZ

I'm fucking out of here.

MAGGIE

No! Ok. Forget about what I said. Everybody stays. (To Liz)
You have a seat.

(Liz reluctantly complies.)

MAGGIE

Marie, darling. Have you been taking pictures?

MARIE

Yes I have.

MAGGIE

Would you show them to me before posting anything?

MARIE

Yes I would!

MAGGIE

Thanks doll. How about you Judy? Janet?

(Judy and Janet had been recording.
They put their phones down.)

JUDY & JANET

Hm?

MAGGIE

Do I need to confiscate your phones?

JUDY & JANET

Hm-hm.

MAGGIE

Do you know what's gonna happen to you if any sort of mixed message leaks in the media?

JUDY & JANET

Hm-hum.

MAGGIE

Great... Now. Billy, can you make sure that everyone has drinks? Thank you! Charlie darling. I'm sorry I took this thing. Can you please play something 'pop', or whatever kids like these days?

(POP MUSIC starts playing.)

MAGGIE

Girls, I want to see you dancing, ok? No more pictures. Leave that to Marie.

JUDY & JANET

Ok.

MAGGIE

Dance. Right now.

JUDY & JANET

Ok!

(The girls take the dance floor.)

MAGGIE

(To Harry) Care to join us?

(Harry joins Maggie, Ralph and Liz at the table.)

MAGGIE

Another one of these parties, huh? Way too many, wouldn't you agree? Harry?

HARRY

I'm sorry, I just... I have been busy lately.

LIZ

Lately? How long is 'lately' to you?

MAGGIE

But we make time for what really matters, right? That's why we're here. As a family.

LIZ

Harry's parents didn't bother to show.

MAGGIE

Well I'm sure Penelope and Howard are making better use of their time.

LIZ

I'm sure they are...

MAGGIE

The Mitchell's have never been such big fans of events like this. But we are!

RALPH

Five years of marriage is a milestone. You should be proud.

LIZ

Proud? Proud that we got through it? That we endured it?

MAGGIE

Yes. That's part of it.

LIZ

No. That's all of it.

MAGGIE

C'mon Lizzane, no need to act all rebellious, we're not hippies. Although we do throw a lot of parties, got to agree with Harry on that one. How about we change it up. How about you go on a trip! Bahamas? The alps? Anywhere you want!

(Marie approaches Billy.)

SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATION:

MARIE

Billy, right?

LIZ

Stop fantasizing about shit, mom.

BILLY

Champagne?

MAGGIE

Respect...

MARIE

(Shows her camera) No, thanks darling. I'm working, just like you.

LIZ

You always do that.

BILLY
Sorry.

MAGGIE
It's your anniversary gift.
Take it before I take it
away.

MARIE
It's good money they're
paying you right? Is that why
you're nervous? Don't worry,
you're doing great. Just
relax. You know what the
trick is?

LIZ
Well, Harry would have to see
about work, right Harry?

MARIE
Just go with the flow. You
belong here. You're a swan
gliding through the party.
Just pay attention to what I
do, and have fun.

HARRY
I'm afraid it wouldn't be
possible to leave the country-

(Marie incites Billy to imitate
her gracious way. Billy tries to
'glide' around with composure
always keeping an eye on Marie.)

LIZ
You see?

MAGGIE
I'm sure you could figure it out with Howard, a small
vacation to revitalize your marriage. Somewhere romantic.

HARRY
Do you know who's paying for this party?

MAGGIE
Excuse-me?

HARRY
Who do you think is paying for all of this?

MAGGIE
Why is that important?

HARRY
Me. Not my dad. Me alone. I don't ask him permission to go
travel around the world because none of my colleagues have
that option. That's doesn't play well anymore.

MAGGIE

I've always loved that about you Harry, you're driven.

HARRY

It's called honor.

MAGGIE

To your career. I agree. It's the most valuable pursuit in this life because it gives you purpose. And yet, it also never ends.

HARRY

Well, I'm perfectly happy in that pursuit.

LIZ

You're happy? You?

HARRY

For the lack of a better word to describe it.

LIZ

How about depressed? Does that sound the same to you?

HARRY

Well somebody's gotta support your life style, right?

LIZ

At least your job you don't take for granted. You wouldn't want to lose that.

HARRY

So you love me then? That's what you're saying?

LIZ

I don't know. I used to I guess.

RALPH

Since when is marriage about love? I'm sorry to break it down for you, but it's not. It's about courage. Persistence.

HARRY

Courage is what it takes to file for a divorce. Nearly every single marriage is in shambles yet only a minority actually goes through with it.

(On the other side, Tom approaches
Gina.)

SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATION:

TOM
Looks like they're arguing...

RALPH
You're just reiterating my
point.

GINA
What do you want Tom?

HARRY
No, I'm not. You didn't give
me a time frame. How many
years of agony do we have to
endure until we become
'happy'?

TOM
Same thing as you. It must
feel awful seeing the love of
your life married to such an
entitled rich bitch. It's
never too late though...

RALPH
You make it work. Travel,
drink, get separate beds,
separate houses... But you
make it work. Either that, or
be alone.

HARRY
And I suppose you would pay for those 'separate houses'?

MAGGIE
Money Harry... Money, money, money... That's neither here nor
there.

HARRY
Oh really?

MAGGIE
It has never had anything to do with money.

HARRY
What if I told you my parents were broke?

MAGGIE
What?

HARRY
My parents are broke.

(Meanwhile Gina collects a glass
from Billy and seats by herself at
a table and drinks.)

MAGGIE
Well that would be just fine.

HARRY

The company is going under.

MAGGIE

Harry...

HARRY

Why do you think I have been working crazy hours? Hm? Nothing to say? Well I'll be damned, why am I not surprised.

(Marie signals for Billy to follow her lead and approach the table.)

MARIE

One picture of the happy family together? (Blank faces) No? Ok...

(Marie strikes out and signals Billy to 'abort the mission'.)

MAGGIE

Billy!

(Billy freezes and turns.)

MAGGIE

What the hell are you doing? (She signals Billy for drinks.)

BILLY

Sorry!

(Billy is clumsy as he puts down four glasses and collects empty ones. The awkward silence at the table only gets worse. Billy finally walks away. The four family members drink at the same time.)

LIZ

I knew it.

HARRY

What?

LIZ

I knew it the second I signed those papers. You just used me.

HARRY

What?

LIZ

You really think I'm gonna pay alimony to you? Don't make me laugh.

HARRY

(Laughs) That's good Liz. You're good. You're funny.

LIZ

We have a prenup, don't you forget that.

HARRY

Look around you at your stupid party. You are using me!

LIZ

Five years won't render you much, I tell you that.

HARRY

I can see you have been looking into it.

LIZ

You sure you don't want to lure me into pregnancy as well? For some child support?

HARRY

I'm sure the court will take your precious vagina into account and spin things around for you. So don't worry.

LIZ

You know what? I did marry you for money.

HARRY

Well didn't that come bite you in the ass.

LIZ

But it's a pity you're incompetent.

HARRY

Do you know why I married you? Because I was attracted to your body, a long time ago when I was young and stupid.

LIZ

So was I.

HARRY

But... It was still my decision, so... I take responsibility-

LIZ

Do you want to go back in your decision?

HARRY

Do you want to end this right now?

LIZ

Do you?

(Meanwhile, alone at her table,
Gina collects another glass from
Billy and keeps drinking.)

HARRY

You know what your problem is, Liz? You can't decide shit for yourself.

LIZ

Really?

HARRY

Why do you need validation from all of these fucking people? Is it them who dictate your actions?

LIZ

Because I'm like them? And they are like me? Because we agreed we would invest in life style?

HARRY

And that's how you do it? By embarrassing us in front of everyone? Great execution Liz.

LIZ

At least I caught your attention, right?

HARRY

What is that supposed to mean?

LIZ

I told you about this party, just like I tell you everything about my life. Our life. But you don't listen. Half the time I feel like I'm talking to a door.

HARRY

I can't keep track of all your crap, Liz.

LIZ

You're a coward!

HARRY

How the fuck am I a coward?

LIZ

Because you're afraid to be happy. We're twenty five years old and we have sex once a week?

HARRY

I'm tired!

LIZ

What's wrong with your dick?

HARRY

You just wanna make me look bad in the media so you can justify breaking up with me, except you need other people to give you validation first. Don't worry. I'm gonna give that to you, right now.

LIZ

You got some serious problems.

HARRY

Yes. You are my problem.

LIZ

Thank you so much for destroying our marriage and ruining my party.

HARRY

My party. This is my party!

(Harry stands and moves to the dance floor.)

HARRY

Billy!

(Harry chugs a glass of champagne.)

HARRY

C'mon girls!

(Harry dances with Judy and Janet.)

HARRY

Marie! Are you getting this?

(Marie takes pics of Harry dancing
embarrassingly with the girls.)

MAGGIE

Don't worry, those pictures won't see the light of day.

LIZ

Maybe they should... Billy!

(Tom nudges Gina to go dance with
Harry. Gina 'snatches' Harry from
the girls.)

(Billy comes over and Liz drinks.)

SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATION:

MAGGIE

How many of those have you
had?

GINA

Harry, are you ok?

LIZ

Who cares.

HARRY

Better than ever!

MAGGIE

On that average, considering
how many parties we throw-

GINA

This is not you Harry. She
makes you like this. Edgy,
second guessing yourself,
lost...

LIZ

Too many? Gotta agree with
Harry on that one?

HARRY

I'm just having fun!

MAGGIE

I mean, no. But... It ruins
your skin after a while. For
someone who runs a comestic
company, I think you should-

GINA

Are you having fun?

GINA

You're lost.

(Harry kisses Gina. Liz notices and stops dancing. Liz kisses Tom.)

MAGGIE

Oh shit...

(Marie looks at Maggie who just shrugs her shoulders and permits her to take more pics. The MUSIC CEASES. Judy 'tosses' Billy who falls and crawls to his feet. Harry splits from Gina and looks over at Liz who stares back at him.)

TOM

C'mon baby, let's get out of here.

(Tom starts pulling Liz away.)

LIZ

...Wait... Stop.

HARRY

Go away Liz. Get out of my party.

LIZ

It's my party. You go.

HARRY

No. You go.

LIZ

You go.

HARRY

I don't love you anymore.

LIZ

I've never loved you.

(Marie keeps taking pics. Billy collects a glass and drinks.)

HARRY
Why can't I get away from you?

LIZ
Just break up with me.

HARRY
You break up.

TOM
Liz... C'mon-

HARRY
Shut the fuck up Tom.

TOM
Fuck you guys. You deserve each other.

(Tom leaves.)

HARRY
Gina, I'm so sorry...

(Gina leaves.)

MAGGIE
Charlie, will you play us some music, please?

(A CALM TANGO plays.)

MAGGIE
Judy. Janet.

JUDY & JANET
Yes?

MAGGIE
Dance.

JUDY & JANET
Ok!

(Judy and Janet tango together.)

(Ralph invites Liz to dance, she
reluctantly accepts.)

MAGGIE

Harry!

(Harry reluctantly takes Maggie's hand and they dance. Soon enough Ralph and Maggie trade partners. They dance with each other and Harry dances with Liz.)

(Billy finishes his second glass drinking on the corner.)

MAGGIE

Should we call Penelope and Howard see what this whole bankruptcy thing is about?

RALPH

Harry was bluffing.

MAGGIE

Hm?

RALPH

I spoke with Howard earlier this morning. Their company is expanding. In fact, they're getting richer by the hour.

MAGGIE

Kids these days are just way too impatient...

RALPH

At the risk of sounding old fashioned... I think youth is really lost. Society is simply devolving.

MAGGIE

How much longer do you think they'll last?

RALPH

Not long if they keep shit testing each other.

LIZ

What if I wanted to have a baby and stop working?

HARRY

To come at me for child support?

LIZ

I thought you were broke.

HARRY

I guess we could forge a contract. When the kid turns...
Three? I'll stop working, and you go back to work?

LIZ

We're gonna have a baby?

HARRY

I guess we are.

LIZ

Ok... Not tonight though, I can barely look at you right now.

HARRY

Oh yeah. My dick wouldn't get hard either.

RALPH

One bad decision after the other... This time the older
generation must be right.

(Billy finishes his third drink and
collects a tray full of glasses.)

MARIE

All right everyone. One picture of the happy family together?
Gather up, c'mon!

(The three couples stop dancing and
group together. Marie takes pics.)

MARIE

One more! Smile this time! This one is for the history books!
Cheese!

(Everybody smiles. Billy loses his
balance and falls over everybody
with a tray full of drinks.)

END PLAY