

the beginning of

MATTERHORN (from **COUPLES**)

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

(**MATTERHORN** is also in Playscripts' anthology **NOTHING SERIOUS.**)

A long, crowded line on a hot summer day at Disneyland. At the end of the line are JERRY and ARLEEN. They are a couple in their thirties, and they have been suffering through the type of long, grueling day of pleasure that only places like Disneyland can offer.

As the scene begins, Jerry and Arleen shuffle forward in line, as they will continuously during the scene.

ARLEEN

My head is throbbing.

JERRY

You want an aspirin?

ARLEEN

I want to be at the other end of this line.
I'm sick of this.

JERRY

Everybody else has to wait just as long
as we do.

ARLEEN

I keep hearing –
(sings, sorta:)
"It's a small world after all; It's a
small world after all" over and over...
God, I hate this place.
(calling out:)
Lisa, don't shake Goofy's hand.
You never know who he just touched.

JERRY

Everyone likes Disneyland.

ARLEEN

Look around you. I keep thinking if there
are this many smiling, happy faces in
one place, somewhere there has to be an
equal-sized gathering of anti-social scum.

JERRY

You're just tired.

ARLEEN

I still think we could've gotten a room with a better view.

JERRY

They said that was the best room they had left.

ARLEEN

If we were Mr. and Mrs. Somebody, they would've given us a better room.

JERRY

If we were Mr. and Mrs. Somebody, we wouldn't be staying at a Motel Six.

ARLEEN

Why I didn't insist we go to *Disneyworld*...

JERRY

We've been to *Disneyworld*. I wanted to compare.

ARLEEN

We're probably the first family in history to fly to *Disneyland* from Orlando, Florida.

JERRY

Look, Arleen, you and I agreed that we would alternate choosing vacation spots, and *no arguments*.

ARLEEN

But, Jerry, this is so stupid...

JERRY

Did I complain last year when you made us spend our entire vacation with your folks?

ARLEEN

We had a wonderful time.

JERRY

Two weeks' vacation per year; I'd rather not spend it in a mobile home park.

ARLEEN

It meant a lot to them.

JERRY

I know. Your dad got such pleasure giving me the tour of the front yard... Now I know why your parents take such little steps.

ARLEEN

At least, he doesn't floss in the living room while watching the news.

JERRY

(warning that he might actually show an emotion)

Don't start.

(calling out:)

Kevin, stop eating the grass!

(to himself, a nostalgic reverie:)

I wonder if they sell snow cones here.

I haven't had a snow cone in years...

A lime snow cone... They don't make enough things with lime flavoring...

If they can make all those things with lemon flavoring, I don't see why they can't make the same things with lime flavoring...

I wonder why there aren't more lime desserts... I think lime's my favorite –

ARLEEN

You're a marshmallow with a penis, you know that?!

JERRY

Look, *you* wanted to ride the Matterhorn; *you* saw the line; don't you dare lay this on *me*.

ARLEEN

It's not the line. It's everything. It's what you like; it's what you think. It's knowing that as long as you live, you will never learn how to fold a newspaper properly.

JERRY

So we'll buy two newspapers: his and hers.

ARLEEN

Are you honestly happy with our marriage?

JERRY

Compared to the life I'd be leading if I were with any of the women who agreed to go out with me before I met you... I'm reasonably satisfied.

ARLEEN
(calling out:)
Lisa, stop begging for change!

JERRY
You want to see another marriage counselor?

ARLEEN
I'm sick of marriage counselors.

JERRY
You want to do another one of
those weekend intensives?

ARLEEN
No, thank you. I couldn't stand another
weekend of self-absorbed neurotics
congratulating each other for being
in touch with their neuroses.

JERRY
Let's try sentence completions.

ARLEEN
Oh, God.

JERRY
"My husband gets on my nerves when he..."
(No response from Arleen.)
"When he..."
(Still no response.)
"My husband gets on my nerves when he –

ARLEEN
Makes me complete his stupid sentences!

JERRY
Then *you* suggest something.

ARLEEN
I'm sick of suggesting things... We'll just
have to make the best of it, I suppose.

JERRY
How inspiring.

ARLEEN
That's life.

JERRY
I love to hop out of bed in the
morning and "make the best of it".

ARLEEN

What else can we do?

JERRY

You want a divorce?

ARLEEN

Do you?

JERRY

No. I happen to believe in the sanctity
of the marriage unit, but if you –

ARLEEN

No! I made my bed; I'm going to lie in it.

JERRY

(calling out:)

Kevin, put that squirrel down!... All of it!

ARLEEN

We used to like each other so much.

JERRY

(remembering something
long forgotten)

Oh, yeah.

(after a thought)

How have our parents lasted?

ARLEEN

My parents hate each other's guts.
And they have for forty years.

JERRY

(mulling it over)

You know, I think mine do, too.

(getting an idea)

Hmmm...

ARLEEN

What?

JERRY

Maybe that's what we've been
doing wrong.

ARLEEN

What do you mean?

JERRY

If we can't enjoy each other's company,
and Lord knows we've tried... If we can't
get along warmly and civilly... Rather than
trying to force ourselves to like each other,
maybe we should just hate each other.

ARLEEN

Are you crazy?

JERRY

We already hate each other; all I'm
suggesting is that we give up the pretense.

ARLEEN

I do not hate you.

JERRY

Sure, you do.

ARLEEN

I am not a hateful person.

JERRY

I suppose "marshmallow with a penis"
was a term of endearment.

ARLEEN

Are you seriously suggesting we just go
around matter-of-factly hating each other?

JERRY

Yes.

ARLEEN

Don't you think that might have
a negative effect on the chil—
(calling out:)
Kevin, put your clothes back on!
Lisa, get off that dwarf!!