

Altar Ego

Setting

Time: June, Saturday, 4 PM

Place: The altar

Characters:

MELISSA, 20's - 30's. The bride.

CARL, 20's - 30's. The groom's brother.

FATHER MORGAN, 40's - 60's. The pastor.

DARRYL, 20's. The bride's brother.

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Scene 1

(A church altar at a wedding. FATHER MORGAN, dressed in black clerical clothing, stands upstage center and faces the audience. CARL, dressed in tuxedo, stands downstage and stage left of him. "Here Comes the Bride" plays and MELISSA enters stage left, approaches and looks at CARL. A moment of stunned silence.)

MELISSA

What the hell is going on?

CARL

(Cheery)

Hi, Melissa!

MELISSA

Where is he, Carl?

CARL

Where's who?

MELISSA

Your brother! My fiancée!

CARL

Actual, if it's a man the word is fiance. Fiance.

FATHER MORGAN

Um, can I ask what-

MELISSA

Where is Jason? (Shoves CARL.) Where is he where is he where is he?

CARL

He - couldn't make it.

MELISSA

He what?!

CARL

He got cold feet. Not about the marriage. Just the wedding.

MELISSA

They're the same thing!

FATHER MORGAN

Wait, you mean you're-

CARL

You know Jason can't handle crowds. He wants to marry you, but he got scared of all this. (Gestures to audience.) I went over to see him. He was in bad shape. Hyperventilating, and you know how sweaty he gets, floor was like a slip n' slide.

MELISSA

But the dress and the flowers and, and the cake and the table settings. Have you seen the centerpieces? They're little penguins! They're freakin' adorable!

CARL

He knows. He knows. And he wants the wedding to go on anyway.

MELISSA

What? How are we supposed to do that?

(CARL hands a paper to MELISSA.)

CARL

You just need a proxy.

FATHER MORGAN

I don't think you can-

MELISSA

A proxy?! You mean *you*?

CARL

Yeah. It's all there, signed and notarized.

MELISSA

He wrote this out and signed it? While flop-sweating and doing that Hwuuuuh hwuuuuh hwuuuuh (imitates hyperventilating) thing?

CARL

Well, he calmed down eventually.

MELISSA

Enough to find a notary public.

CARL

There was one, you know, around.

MELISSA

You've got Jason locked in the basement, haven't you?

CARL

Locked in the basement! Why would you accuse me of such a thing?

MELISSA

Because you've been in love with me since third grade.

CARL

That's not true. Seventh grade, maybe. (Pause.) Which is beside the point.

(MELISSA scans the document.)

MELISSA

(reading to herself)

I, Jason Lowell, do hereby appoint my beloved - that's debatable - my beloved brother, Carl, to serve as my legal substitute for my wedding to Melissa Wilkens on this 14th day of June - is this legit?

CARL

Of course it's legit.

MELISSA

And this isn't just a flimsy excuse for you to get to kiss the bride? And maybe con her into, you know, marrying you?

CARL

This seems like an awful lot of trouble to go through for just a quick kiss, wouldn't you say?

MELISSA

Yeah, like you'd keep it quick. I still remember you are Janie Derkins going at it so hard your braces got fused.

CARL

That was in fifth grade!

MELISSA

Exactly! And now you're like 20 years more lecherous!

FATHER MORGAN

Listen. I cannot allow you to do this.

CARL

Of course you can. A wedding is just signing a contract, right? A legally binding agreement between two consenting parties?

FATHER MORGAN

Well, yes, but in the eyes of the Lord-

CARL

So Jason can sign over his authority to me, his beloved (MELISSA snorts) brother. Ipso facto, res judicata, cogito ergo sum.

MELISSA

Caveat emptor?

CARL

Deus ex machina.

MELISSA

You know what? Let's do it.

CARL

Really?

MELISSA

Sure. This wedding is costing my dad ten grand, damned if I'm going to bail on my special day just because the groom has skittered behind the couch.

CARL

All right! Game on!

MELISSA

(shakes head)

Leave it to Jason to come up with some absurd idea like a wedding proxy.

CARL

He's kind of asinine like that. I've always been the level-headed one. Also the handsome one. Who earns a good twenty thousand a year more than him, by the way. To say nothing of my stock options.

MELISSA

Although, I actually kind of like the proxy idea. In fact, I love it. In fact - anyone got a pen? Father?

FATHER MORGAN

Oh, um. Yes.

(He produces a pen and hands it to MELISSA, who begins marking up the document.)

CARL

Melissa, what are you doing?

MELISSA

Can I use your back?

(CARL turns around and bends over, MELISSA writes on the paper on his back.)

MELISSA(cont.)

Well, I'm all nervous too now. So I think I'm also going to beg out.

CARL

Wait, what?

MELISSA

Fortunately, Jason isn't the only one with such helpful siblings.

CARL

You mean you're going to sub in Joanna?

MELISSA

I could. I mean, she's pretty hot, right? At least you get to make out with somebody today.

CARL

(thinking)

That's a good point.

(MELISSA signs the paper, dotting the 'I' a little hard and making CARL jump and yelp.)

MELISSA

Oh, sorry. Anyway, I didn't say sister, I said sibling. (Yells offstage left.) Hey Darryl! Drag your ass up here!

CARL

Oh no.

FATHER MORGAN

Oh dear.

(DARRYL enters stage left. He is slovenly dressed and playing a video game. He barely looks up.)

DARRYL

'Sup, Mels. Will you hurry up and get hitched already? And hey, there's an open bar at the reception, right?

MELISSA

Yes, Darryl.

DARRYL

Sweet. Aw, but we probably have to tip the bartender, right?

MELISSA

Darryl, I will tip the bartender for you. Generously, even. But I need you to do me a favor.

DARRYL

'Kay.

MELISSA

I need you to marry Carl for me.

CARL

Melissa!

MELISSA

Oh sorry. To clarify, you're not actually marrying Carl. I'm marrying Jason. You and Carl are just stand-ins.

DARRYL

(to MELISSA)

So we're like a tag team?

MELISSA

We're exactly like a tag team. (Extends her arm.)
Bring it.

DARRYL

Boom! (He slaps her hand, and they switch places.)

MELISSA

So all you have to do is say "I do" at the right time, and then kiss him.

DARRYL

(snorts, briefly looks up at CARL)

I have to kiss him?

MELISSA

Yeah.

DARRYL

(shrugs) Whatever.

CARL

Melissa!

DARRYL

What, you don't want to kiss me? You too good for me?

CARL

No, this just isn't what I had in mind.

FATHER MORGAN

Neither did I.

CARL

Oh, now what?

FATHER MORGAN

I'm afraid I can't perform this type of service.

MELISSA

What are you talking about?

FATHER MORGAN

This type of service. (points at CARL, then at DARRYL.) You know.

CARL

Yeah, Melissa. What he said.

MELISSA

Same-sex marriages are legal here. And besides, it's all, you know, proxy.

FATHER MORGAN

Maybe, but this is a Catholic ceremony, and this is not condoned by the Church.

MELISSA

What is this crap?! Carl, you gonna stand for this?

DARRYL

Yeah Carl, you gonna stand for this?

MELISSA

You're not against marriage equality, are you?

CARL

Well, er, I mean, no, but...

MELISSA

Well, there you go. See how progressive you're being? You do deserve a kiss. I mean, from Darryl.

(DARRYL snorts.)

CARL

Stop enjoying this!

DARRYL

Lighten up, dude. Reach for that rainbow!

MELISSA

(stage whisper)

Look, we're only having a Catholic ceremony to please my mom and dad (Smiles and waves to 'mom and dad' in audience). So can you dispense with the dogma and just make this happen?

FATHER MORGAN

I'm sorry, I cannot break with church teachings.

MELISSA

Please. Your religion is run by guys in dresses with gold lame accents and you're still preaching that? (Pause) But you, you look very good in basic black.

FATHER MORGAN

Be that as it may, I'm not going through with this.

MELISSA

But where are we supposed to find a - hey, I know. (Holds up paper.) Darryl, I need your back.

(She writes on his back. DARRYL starts singing "I need your back" to the chorus of "I Want You Back" by the Jackson 5. He starts swaying. She steadies his back.)

MELISSA

(To DARRYL) Darryl, we all love the Jackson 5, but give me a minute here. (To FATHER MORGAN) Okay, Father, you can go, I got this covered.

(MELISSA politely moves FATHER MORGAN out of position and takes his place.)

MELISSA (cont.)

Now we got ourselves a wedding!

(DARRYL pumps both fists and makes screechy "Ewwwhhh!" cheer.)

CARL

(To DARRYL) Really? (to MELISSA) Really?

MELISSA

Really! By the powers vested in me just now by this extremely convoluted piece of paper (shakes paper) I'm

ready to raise the roof and launch these nuptials into the stratosphere. Can I get an amen!

FATHER MORGAN

Amen!

(Everyone looks at him.)

FATHER MORGAN

(coughs.)

Ahem. Reflex. That was reflex.

MELISSA

Anyway. (Turns to CARL.) Do you, Jason, not Carl, but Jason, take this woman, Melissa, not a man, certainly not my brother, to be your lawfully wedded wife, not husband? To have and to hold, need you by my side, girl to be my pride, you'll never be denied, everlasting love?

(Silence.)

MELISSA

JasonCarlJason!

CARL

Just give me a minute, okay!

(Pause.)

MELISSA

Carl? (Pause.) Carl. Jason is locked in the basement, isn't he.

CARL

It's - it's really more of a crawlspace.

MELISSA

Wow. Wow. Why? To steal a kiss?

CARL

I couldn't bear the thought of sitting there watching you marry someone else.

MELISSA

That would be touching if it weren't coming from the dude who just tried to chain up my fiancée!

CARL
Its fiance! And I used rope.

MELISSA
Nevertheless!

CARL
(to MELISSA)
Hey, c'mon, I was willing to marry your dropout
brother just to help you out!

MELISSA
That's a twisted way of spinning things.

DARRYL
Yeah, I have my G.E.D! Dick.

MELISSA
(tears up the proxy sheet)
Besides which, I knew the whole time.

CARL
What?

MELISSA
Jason got free and called me before I walked up the
aisle.

CARL
You knew? So this whole charade was your idea?

MELISSA
(smiles and looks at Darryl)
Just following your lead. But actually, it wasn't *my*
idea.

(MELISSA looks at DARRYL, who
stares at CARL longingly. He
suddenly lurches forward and
kisses CARL, who eventually
squirms away.)

MELISSA
Unrequited love's a bitch, huh?

(DARRYL and MELISSA high-five each other. They pump both fists and make screechy "Ewwwwhhh!" cheering sound. Blackout. End of play.)