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modern love

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by Michael Cheikin

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To contact the playwright:  
[www.cheikin.com](http://www.cheikin.com)

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Production Information

Synopsis: MODERN LOVE is a one-act farce about the complexity of modern relationships.

Actors: 4-5 actors:  
2-3 Men, 40's  
2 Women, late 30's- 40's

Set: One interior--living room. Sofa, table, two doors, window. Can be simple.

Running Time: Approximately 20 minutes.

Props:

TIME : Present

PLACE: Any city

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance):

Jill 38, attractive, thin.

Jack 42, handsome, moustache.

Jim 40's, Jack's lawyer.

Jenny 40's, Jill's shrink

Jeff 40's, (can be the same actor as Jim,  
see description in text)

(TO THE ACTORS: There's no doubt that Jack and Jill are in love with, and want each other. There are just a few technical details...)

(A LIVING ROOM. SOFA, COCKTAIL TABLE, TWO DOORS AND A WINDOW.)

(BEGINS IN BLACKOUT, WITH SEXY SAX MUSIC.)

(DIM LIGHTS COME UP. A HANDSOME COUPLE IS ON THE SOFA, CLOSE TO EACH OTHER, HOLDING GLASSES OF RED WINE.

SHE'S IN AN EVENING GOWN, HE IN A SUIT OR TUX. THE ELEGANCE OF JAMES BOND WITH THE CLASS OF NOEL COWARD.)

JACK:

To Us.

JILL:

Us.

(TOUCH GLASSES AND DRINK.)

JILL:

(SEXY) Mmmmm. Love red wine.

JACK:

Me too! Also prevents strokes.

JILL:

Let's kiss.

(THEY DO.)

JACK:

I've been waiting. So long.

JILL:

Me too.

JACK:

How long have we been...seeing each other?

JILL:

Our third date. Already.

JACK:

Feels like forever.

Eternity.

JILL:

Finally.

JACK:

We consummate.

JILL:

(THEY KISS.)

JACK:

There is one thing I need...

JILL:

(SMILES, SEXY) You're not wasting any time, darling. What, leather?

JACK:

No. A letter.

JILL:

What?

JACK:

I want you to put in words--in writing, how badly you want me.

JILL:

(CONFUSED) What?

JACK:

Please.

(HE REACHES INTO HIS JACKET AND TAKES OUT A SMALL PAD OF PAPER AND A PEN.)

JACK:

Here. I don't even need it typed.

JILL:

(CONFUSED) I... haven't... don't... I'm not good with words.

JACK:

It's simple, darling, really, just document, uh, write, what you want to do to me. And what you want me to do to you, too, of course.

(PAUSE. SHE CONSIDERS.)

JILL:  
I know. (SEXY) You tell me! And I'll write.

JACK:  
Do you take shorthand?

JILL:  
What?

JACK:  
Never mind. Let's see. "Dear Jack."

JILL:  
(SHE WRITES) "Dearest Jack".

JACK:  
"I want you so bad".

JILL:  
"I want you sooooooo bad".

JACK:  
"I don't care what society thinks. I must have you."

JILL:  
"Let the others go to hell. I must, must have you." (SHE SMILES)

JACK:  
I like it. "I want you to do bad things to me".

JILL:  
(PAUSE, WRITES) "I want you to do things to me." Let's not get too detailed, OK.

JACK:  
Sure. (SMALL PAUSE) Shall I continue?

JILL:  
Please.

JACK:  
"I don't want anything in return".

JILL:

Yes I do.

JACK:

(ANXIOUSLY) What?

JILL:

(WRITES) "All I ask for, in return, is your passion."

JACK:

(RELIEVED) Great. Now sign.

JILL:

"Lovingly, Jill." How's that?

JACK:

Great. Now give it to me.

JILL:

OK.

(SHE HANDS IT TO HIM. HE READS IT  
OVER AND FROWNS.)

JILL:

What's the matter?

JACK:

There's no date.

JILL:

You can write it.

JACK:

No, no, you--no alterations.

JILL:

(GETTING A BIT FED UP.) OK, OK, just give it to me.

(SHE TAKES THE PAD, WRITES THE DATE,  
GIVES IT BACK TO HIM.)

JILL:

Here. Now put the pad away, Jack.

JACK:

Guess that wasn't too much fun for you.

A bit corporate.

JILL:

(JOKING) It's not notarized!

JACK:

Shut up. Let's kiss.

JILL:

(HE CAREFULLY FOLDS AND PUTS NOTE IN HIS WALLET OR JACKET POCKET. THEY KISS. A LONG, ROMANTIC ONE.)

JACK:

Ahhhh.

JILL:

That's more like it!

JACK:

Now there's nothing to get in our way.

(HE BEGINS TO UNBUTTON HER BLOUSE. SHE GENTLY TAKES HIS HANDS OFF HER BLOUSE AND HOLDS THEM.)

JILL:

Jack, dear.

JACK:

What?

JILL:

I'm not quite ready--

(SHE GIVES HIM A REASSURING KISS.)

JILL:

But don't worry, I won't frustrate you.

JACK:

Oh. OK. I understand. I'm a nineties guy--I can go slow. I can even give to you without receiving. Say, for an hour. Before I explode.

JILL:

Perfect.

JACK:  
What? Is that what you want? Me to do you first?

JILL:  
Actually, dear, there is something else I need.

JACK:  
What?

JILL:  
(SEXY) Guess.

JACK:  
What, a spanking? (PAUSE, OPTIMISTICALLY) A third? (PAUSE) A woman? (LONGER PAUSE, ANXIOUSLY) A man? A cigar? Banana? Eggplant? A midget!?

(SHE REACHES UNDER SOFA AND TAKES OUT A LITTLE PLASTIC CUP.)

JILL:  
A sample.

JACK:  
What!?

JILL:  
(QUICK KISS) I love your offer--to wait an hour. By the time you've finished pleasuring me, you'll be recharged.

JACK:  
You want me to go in the cup!?

JILL:  
No--come.

JACK:  
Come?!

JILL:  
Please go.

JACK:  
Why?

JILL:

I have this quick home test. Rules out all major viral contaminants: Hepatitis, HIV, HTML, you know...

JACK:

What? (PAUSE, HE THINKS A BIT.) Hmm. Maybe that's not a bad idea. What about you?

JILL:

I have something better.

(SHE REACHES UNDER SOFA, TAKES OUT A THICK FILE.)

JILL:

I've been tested after every lover. My results are on top. After that, every prior lover in reverse chronological order.

JACK:

Wow!

(HE LEAFS THROUGH THE FILE AS THEY TALK.)

JILL:

The home test only takes minutes. We used to have to wait days for outside labs.

JACK:

Talk about blue balls!

JILL:

It's not like we didn't do things while we waited.

JACK:

(CONTINUES LOOKING THROUGH FILE) Hey, I know him.

(SHE LOOKS AT PAGE.)

JILL:

Oh, him. (FORCES A LAUGH) No competition.

JACK:

(A BIT TURNED OFF) Oh. Good.

JILL:

Well, how about it.

JACK:

First give me a kiss.

(THEY KISS. THE PASSION RETURNS.)

JACK:

I want you so bad.

JILL:

Me too. Now hurry up and go come in the little cup.

JACK:

Yes! I'll do it!

(HE STANDS. HESITATES.)

JILL:

Well?

JACK:

Uh, there is something I would love for you to do while I'm in there.

JILL:

(SMILES, SEXY) Oh, of course. You want me to help?

JACK:

No, not exactly...

JILL:

Dance for you?

JACK:

No. Actually...

(HE GOES TO THE DOOR AND OPENS IT.)

JACK:

This is my friend Jim. He was in the neighborhood. Wanted to pick something up.

JILL:

(INCREDULOUS) What?!

JACK:

(CONFESSING) OK, he's my attorney. I'd like him to look over your letter. And that file.

JIM:

Nice to meet ya. Here's my card.

JILL:

What?

JACK:

Let's take all the risk out of this. Medical and legal. Here, Jim, here's the love note. Why don't you notarize it.

(HE TAKES THE NOTE OUT OF HIS WALLET/JACKET AND HANDS IT TO JIM, WALKS TO THE BATHROOM DOOR. AS HE ENTERS.)

JACK:

I don't even need a magazine. I'll just think of you.

(EXITS INTO BATHROOM AND CLOSES DOOR)

JILL:

What, exactly, is that note for?

JIM:

Jack's high up there. We need proof this is consensual. Can't risk any future allegations.

JILL:

Oh. Of course.

JIM:

Looks good.

(JIM TAKES STAMPER OUT OF HIS POCKET/BRIEFCASE AND NOTARIZES NOTE.)

JIM:

And you're obviously over 21. Even 31.

JILL:

(INSULTED) Thanks.

(HE THEN POINTS TO FILE.)

JIM:

May I?

JILL:  
Please do.

(HE BROWSES THROUGH THE FILE.)

JIM:  
Certified labs. Embossed dates to prevent alteration. Looks good.

JILL:  
I try. (THINKING TO HERSELF) Maybe I should get a lawyer too.

JIM:  
(AS HE REVIEWS DOCUMENT) Would have liked the exact sexual acts listed.

JILL:  
Each?

JIM:  
Well, at least each act of oral, anal, vaginal, nasal, bestial, ocular, and horticultural sex. Sorted in order of orgasmic intensity.

JILL:  
Do you really think that's necessary?

JIM:  
Just an informal courtesy. For now. May become standard.

JILL:  
Hmmm. How about a database on my laptop?

JIM:  
That would be acceptable. Web site would be better.

(JACK EXITS FROM BATHROOM)

JACK:  
Well, I'm back.

JILL:  
That was quick.

JACK:  
Don't worry. I can go slow--when I need to. Practice tantric sex. The cup's in there.

I'll be back.

JILL:  
(SHE EXITS INTO BATHROOM AND CLOSES DOOR.)

JACK:  
(TO JIM) Well?

JIM:  
Clean as a whistle.

JACK:  
Any risky areas?

JIM:  
I'd still use a condom. You know, paternity...

JACK:  
Even with a condom, she still can claim paternity!

JIM:  
True. It's still a good one. Hard to disprove. For now. Routine DNA testing will soon shut that door.

JACK:  
You're the lawyer. Can't she sign something now to prevent a paternity claim?

JIM:  
Jack, anyone, any time, can claim paternity. Even the Blessed Mother got away with it. And her story wasn't so plausible. If God can be found guilty...

JACK:  
--Right. Hmm. (PAUSE) Well, you at least certify her orifices?

JIM:  
Orifi. Yes. At least four of them.

JACK:  
(ANXIOUSLY TRIES TO CALCULATE, GIVES UP) But, which four?

JIM:  
(SMILES) Just kidding! Go get her, slugger. (PUNCHES HIM IN THE ARM.)

(JIM GOES TO DOOR TO EXIT.)

And Jack...  
JIM:

What?  
JACK:

Be spontaneous.  
JIM:

Right. Thanks.  
JACK:

(JIM CLOSSES DOOR BEHIND HIM. JACK TAKES A MIRROR OUT OF HIS POCKET, TAKES A QUICK LOOK, SLICKS HIS HAIR, PUTS IT BACK IN HIS POCKET AS JILL ENTERS.)

Well?  
JACK:

You're pink.  
JILL:

(NERVOUS) Is that good or bad.  
JACK:

It's wonderful.  
JILL:

(THEY ARE BOTH STANDING. SHE GOES TO HIM. A LONG, PASSIONATE KISS.)

(FROM BEHIND THE SOFA APPEARS JENNY, JILL'S SHRINK. STRONG NEW YORK ACCENT.)

Jill!  
JENNY:

JILL:  
(JUMPING, PULLING AWAY FROM JACK) Jenny!

JENNY:  
Is this the way we work on our self-esteem?

JILL:  
You weren't supposed to.

JENNY:  
You gave me no choice.

JACK:  
Who the hell is she? Your mother?

JILL:  
No-my therapist. She needed to observe me.

JENNY:  
You're just rolling over. Again.

JILL:  
(WHINING) But Jenny, I like him.

JENNY:  
No you don't. He's sleeze.

JACK:  
Hey!

JENNY:  
He's not married?

JILL:  
(IMMATURELY) I forgot to ask.

JENNY:  
Forgot!? Or didn't want to?

JILL:  
OK OK, didn't want to.

JENNY:  
Well, young lady, DO it.

JILL:  
(TO JACK) Are you, married?

JACK:  
Nope.

JILL:  
(TO JENNY) See.

JENNY:  
You're going to accept that? What if he's lying?

JILL:  
He's not. (TO JACK) Are you?

JACK:  
No.

JILL:  
See.

JACK:  
But if you need to know, I have been married a few times.

JILL:  
A few?

JENNY:  
Well, at least check his finger for signs of a ring.

(JACK OFFERS HIS LEFT HAND. JILL DOES SO.)

JILL:  
No line. Please, Jenny, he's a real gentleman. He just did the little cup thing for me.

JENNY:  
(STOPS.) (TO JACK) You did?

JACK:  
(PROUDLY) Two fluid ounces!

JENNY:  
I'm impressed. Now, Jill, for the hardest question:

JILL:  
I'm ready.

JENNY:  
How do you feel?

JILL:

(A SCHOOLGIRL, SHE CLOSES HER EYES) How do I feel? I feel... pretty... (CONFESSING)...ugly. Very ugly. I feel light. I feel a bit nervous. I feel, uh, optimistic. But cautious too. (OPENS HER EYES, TO JENNY) How was that.

JENNY:

Well, my work here is done. You're discharged, Jill. After five years of psychoanalytic psychotherapy. And long ones at that.

JILL:

Really!

JENNY:

(WAVING) See you in Bloomingdales!

(JENNY EXITS (?BACK BEHIND SOFA OR OUT DOOR?))

JACK:

Wow, not only are you physically fit, you're cleared psychologically.

JILL:

(TEARS IN HER EYES.) Isn't it wonderful! How many women can claim both!?

JACK:

You may be the first! I think I love you!

JILL:

Kiss me, darling.

(THEY KISS.)

JACK:

We can have... fun!

JILL:

You don't have anyone else in the hall? A private eye? Your ex-wife?

JACK:

(SMILES) Oh you! Like you don't have a microphone hidden in that lamp.

(NERVOUSLY GRABS HIS CHIN TO TURN HIS HEAD AWAY FROM THE LAMP)

JILL:  
No! Of course not. (QUICKLY KISSES HIM)

(HE AGAIN SLOWLY BEGINS TO UNBUTTON  
HER BLOUSE.)

JACK:  
May I?

JILL:  
You can rip it off with your teeth, my darling.

(HE CONTINUES. A SIREN GOES OFF.  
THROUGH THE WINDOW, IN BURSTS JEFF,  
AN IRS AGENT, WEARING THICK GLASSES  
AND A VISOR.)

JEFF:  
Hold it, you two.

JACK:  
Who the hell are you?

JEFF:  
I'm from the IRS. We have no record of you two filing.

JILL:  
I did my taxes!

JACK:  
So did I!

JEFF:  
Don't you read? The new copulation tax.

JACK AND JILL:  
Copulation tax!?

JACK:  
I heard of no such thing.

JEFF:  
Ignorance is no excuse. We already got your other vices covered:  
your smoking, your drinking, your dying--finally we got this one  
too. Sex ain't cheap, you know: The federal government has to pay  
for pregnancies, disease, interns. (TRULY ANNOYED) And now, dry  
cleaning bills. What next, stain-resistant formal wear? Self-

destructing sex toys? If you want to bring this gal, you have to file.

JACK:

What? What?

JILL:

But, but, we can't wait any longer.

JEFF:

Sorry, sister, without filing, you can't even think of giving his schlong an upstroke.

JACK:

We can't even think?

JEFF:

You can. If you want to get arrested.

JACK:

OK OK, here's my credit card.

JEFF:

No credit! But you do get a rebate if you have safe sex. Just mail your used condoms to the address printed on the boxtop!

JILL:

But we don't have cash. What can we do?

JEFF:

I'm sorry.

(JILL APPROACHES HIM AND BACKS HIM UP UNTIL HE IS SANDWICHED BETWEEN JACK AND JILL, WITH JACK BEHIND HIM.)

JILL:

Oh please please please. I have this terrible void. And I'm all wet, too!

JEFF:

Hooooh. (TO JACK) What about you? Backed up?

JACK:

I'm so horny, right now, even your butt is lookin' good. Maybe a short jail sentence wouldn't be so bad!

JEFF:

Well, you do look like a nice couple. Photogenic. Turn around.

(ONE OR BOTH OF THEM DO)

JEFF:

I'll tell you what. You guys let me tape you, and I'll forget the filing.

JACK:

What!?

JILL:

No way!

JACK:

Wait, Jill. (TO JEFF) Who gets to see?

JEFF:

No one except me. Hey, at least you don't have to file to poop. Yet.

JILL:

I don't know, Jack.

JACK:

(ASIDE, TO JILL) Look, we have no choice. What's the worst that can happen? He sells the tape; we sue; get rich; end up on TV; become sexual icons!

JILL:

Hmmm. You're right, Jack. This could be good. (TO JEFF) Just one thing.

JEFF:

What?

JILL:

Avoid my left side.

JEFF:

You got it, sister.

(HE TAKES A VIDEO CAMERA OUT OF HIS ATTACHE CASE).

JEFF:

