

DRAMATIC WRITING SAMPLE

*To Fall in Love*

By Jennifer Lane

CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
WYATT GRIMES	Any ethnicity	30's	Male
MERRYN THOMAS	Any ethnicity	30's	Female

#### ABOUT THE STORY & WHERE THE SAMPLE PICKS UP

Scientists claim that there are 36 questions you can ask to fall in love with anyone, coupled with four minutes of uninterrupted eye contact. But can this exercise save a marriage, splintered by a horrible accident?

Merryn and Wyatt have begun answering the questions in a list-ditch effort to save their marriage. The conversation has gotten intense, and the sample picks up right after they sleep together.

#### A NOTE ON PUNCTUATION

A dash (--) indicates that someone is being cut off, and doesn't finish the sentence or thought. An ellipsis (...) indicates that the thought trails off. A slash (/) indicates that the person jumps in on top of the preceding line, but that the original thought is still finished. A sentence fragment in brackets [like this], is unspoken intention.

#### A NOTE ON PRODUCTION

This play takes place in one time and one location. There should be no blackouts, no sound cues that are not organic to the world. We as an audience should be made to feel like voyeurs in a very intimate moment. Push into hyper-naturalism: let things take as long as they really take. The piece may benefit from being performed in the round.

#### A NOTE ON THE QUESTIONS

This piece was inspired by "The Experimental Generation of Interpersonal Closeness", a scientific study by Dr. Arthur Aron. I first discovered the study via an article in the New York Times. The study and the article explored the 36 questions that science claims can be used to fall in love with anyone. Those questions can be found, in full, here: <http://36questionsinlove.com>.

Wyatt lingers strangely, not sure what to do with himself. After a beat, Merryn comes out in pajamas.

MERRYN

So, next question, then?

WYATT

Yeah. Sure. Read on.

MERRYN

(reading)

Make three true “we” statements each. For instance, “We are both in this room feeling...”

WYATT

We are both in this room feeling...

(playful)

*Sexually satisfied.*

MERRYN

(they laugh)

We are both in this room feeling... connected. I think? Yeah?

WYATT

Oh, yeah, totally. We are happy? To be with one another?

MERRYN

We are... both wearing your clothes.

WYATT

But they look much better on you. We are both like deeply dissatisfied with the food options I’ve put before us. Aren’t we?

MERRYN

We are. We are both desirous of Pizza.

WYATT

We definitely are. We are... wondering which place to order from?

MERRYN

We are curious: Does Red House reach all the way out here?

WYATT

We are fairly certain it does not.

MERRYN

We are disappointed. But we will settle for Dominos?

WYATT

We will settle for Dominos.

(He pulls out his phone)

Are we still not eating meat?

MERRYN

We're eating whatever the fuck we want.

WYATT

Really? We're eating... Italian sausage?

MERRYN

Yeah, we are.

WYATT

And maybe some green pepper and onion?

MERRYN

We are pleased with this.

WYATT

Do you want anything like bread sticks or soda?

MERRYN

Do *I* / want?

WYATT

Do *we*.

MERRYN

We do not.

(brief pause, she watches him type on his phone.)

Do we have a dominos app on our phone? Do we order from dominos like *way too much*?

WYATT

We don't like to cook.

(brief pause, puts his phone away)

There. What's next?

MERRYN

(reading)

Complete this sentence: "I wish I had someone with whom I could share..."

WYATT

My bed. And not like in a... not like in a *sex way*, necessarily. But just like...

MERRYN

I know. You've always been a very, like, tactile person.

WYATT

Yeah, and... you know, if I'm completely honest with you, I'm ok during the day. You know? I'm good in the sun. I'm good around people. But then at night...

MERRYN

Yeah. It's all harder at night. I mean, it's like having a cold or the flu, almost. You always feel sicker at night. And this is no different, really.

WYATT

(silence)

Yeah.

(pause)

Your turn.

MERRYN

Ok, um. I wish I had someone with whom I could share... the loss of my son.

(he stares at her)

I don't mean you. I mean... someone else who gets it.

WYATT

You don't go to group?

MERRYNN

I could never really bring myself to. Do you?

WYATT

Nah.

MERRYNN

I sometimes talk to my mom about it. Super rarely.

WYATT

And...?

MERRYNN

It's terrible. I fucking hate it.

WYATT

Yeah, honestly, the only time I've been grateful that my parents were dead was after Jacob died and I didn't have to call and tell them.

MERRYNN

And even when we did talk about it... I dunno, we always just experienced it so differently. I just... feel like I'm alone at rock bottom and I just kind of wish someone was down here with me.

WYATT

You don't *act* like you're at rock bottom.

MERRYNN

What does someone at rock bottom act like?

WYATT

Like they'd rather just be dead, I mean, basically. But you live your life. Fuck, you made a point to tell me you went on a *date* recently, which just like -  
-

MERRYNN

I only told you that because I wanted to make sure that we were both in the same place. I didn't want to be accused of *cheating*.

WYATT

It *was* cheating, Merryn. *We're still married.*

MERRYNN

We don't even *live* in the same *house*.

WYATT

Only because *you made me* move!

MERRYNN

I didn't *make* you -- you *wanted* to go. You said you were -- what was the phrase you used? Oh, right: *drowning in my abject melancholy*. Write a fucking poem about it or something. Jesus.

WYATT

Yeah, well, it seems like you got happier as soon as I was gone. Must've been a relief to get laid again, since we barely touched each other the last year we were under the same roof.

MERRYNN

What a thing to bitch about, like, *literal minutes* after we just had sex. And anyway, *I didn't fuck him* I just *went on a date*.

WYATT

Well, I hope you had a great time.

MERRYNN

I did.

WYATT

Yeah? / Good.

MERRYNN

Yeah. He took me to Benihana. *It was nice*.

WYATT

*Fantastic*. Had a real connection with him? Good conversation while the guy in the stupid hat was grilling up your fuckin' shrimp?

MERRYNN

*Those shrimp are delicious*.

(silence)

I didn't cheat on you.

(pause)

(MORE)

MERRYNN (CONT'D)

I just... wanted to know if there was even life left in the world for me. That's all.

WYATT

And is there?

MERRYNN

I don't know. Maybe not.

(pause)

Not with that guy, anyway.

WYATT

No...?

MERRYNN

No.

(pause)

I mean, I met him on Tinder, so I guess I just feel lucky that he didn't try to murder me, or something.

WYATT

Wow. Tinder.

MERRYNN

What?

WYATT

No, that's like... a hookup app for twenty-somethings.

MERRYNN

It is not.

WYATT

No, it really is.

MERRYNN

Well, so how would you know, were you using it?

WYATT

I mean. I downloaded it? But I never --

MERRYNN

I *knew* it.

WYATT

What?



MERRYNN

You're all high and mighty about us still being married, but you want to get laid even more than I do.

WYATT

I mean. Yes. But the difference is that I haven't actually met anyone yet. I haven't really made the effort.

MERRYNN

You swear it?

WYATT

I swear. So it's just internet porn for me.

MERRYNN

(she smiles)

Not that I have any right...

WYATT

Of course you do. You're my *wife*.

MERRYNN

Yeah. For now.

Silence.

WYATT

Next Question. Tell your partner what you like about them; be very honest this time, saying things that you might not say to someone you've just met.

MERRYNN

Didn't we already do this kind of?

WYATT

Yeah, we basically already did this. Ok, um... Share with your partner an embarrassing moment in your life.

MERRYNN

Oh, easy, ok. In the ninth grade, I was wearing white jeans and / I bled through them.

WYATT

And you bled through them. You told me that on, like, our second date.

MERRYNY

I did not.

WYATT

You did. And in my mind I'm going, isn't telling basically a stranger this story more embarrassing than the story itself...?

MERRYNY

Wow. Judgey.

WYATT

No, I only mean --

MERRYNY

I think it was just a very formative story. Like, I *will not* wear white pants

WYATT & MERRYNY

*...to this day.*  
(they smile at one another)

WYATT

Your wedding dress wasn't even white.

MERRYNY

Oh, man. That dress...

WYATT

I thought your mother was gonna have a heart attack.

MERRYNY

I just -- Ok. My thinking / was...

WYATT

I remember.

MERRYNY

Why should this one day be... totally...

MERRYNY & WYATT

*Other.*

MERRYLYN

Exactly.

WYATT

I like dressing up, wearing something I wouldn't normally wear.

MERRYLYN

Well, I wouldn't normally wear a *ball gown* anyway. But at least the dress looked like me, looked like something I might wear.

WYATT

Yeah.

MERRYLYN

You have no idea how many traditional white dresses I tried on. Almost all of them were sleeveless with a sweetheart neckline and I looked at myself in these three gigantic mirrors and I was just like, this is not me. And on that day, I wanted to be the *most me*, the *best me*, you know?

WYATT

I do.

MERRYLYN

And *you*. You rocked that suit.

WYATT

Why, thank you.

MERRYLYN

You did. God. I remember being in that church and walking down the aisle on my father's arm, and seeing you in that three piece suit and just thinking... Man, I'd really like to fuck him right now.

WYATT

(he laughs, loudly and genuinely)

You did not.

MERRYLYN

I swear to God.

WYATT

Well. You were the only one lookin' at me.  
Everyone else in the, fuckin... *zipcode* had their  
eyes on you.

(she smiles. This is what it used to be  
like.)

What's next?

MERRYNN

(reading)

When did you last cry in front of another person?  
By yourself?

WYATT

Nicky came by to watch the Padres game last week,  
and I cried cuz they won.

MERRYNN

Yeah, you always were a crier.

WYATT

*It's healthy.*

MERRYNN

Yeah, yeah, totally. But ok, the thing about *criers* is  
that they suck up all the emotional energy in the  
space around them. Like, if you're gonna be the  
crier, then I *can't be*, you know?

WYATT

That isn't true.

MERRYNN

It is. When was the last time you saw me cry? I  
mean, not counting Jacob, when was the last time  
you saw me cry.

WYATT

Jacob counts --

MERRYNN

Yeah, but that wasn't *crying*. That was... something  
else, when was the last time I like, sniffled at a Rom  
Com or gushed over a baby?

(pause)

Yeah, you can't think of anything, can you?

WYATT

But that doesn't mean it hasn't happened.

MERRYNN

I'm telling you, I just don't really *do* it that much.  
And I think some part of that is because you cry at  
*everything*, so I don't have any space to.

WYATT

That's dumb.

MERRYNN

What?

WYATT

I'm sorry, but that's dumb. Just because I cry  
doesn't mean you can't.

MERRYNN

Well, then we're *both* balls of useless snivelling.

WYATT

So? *Join me.*

MERRYNN

(she smiles, but shakes her head)

Anyway.

(reading)

What, if anything, is too serious to joke about?

They look at one another: MerryNN has questioning eyebrows and Wyatt wears a sad sort of smile. A long silence passes. Then: an agreement.

WYATT & MERRYNN

Nothing.

They smile.