

WITH THIS RING

By Bradley Hayward

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CHARACTERS

PETER	35, handsome and charming
CAROL	30, his pretty wife
STEVE	35, a pushover
VICKY	30, his loud and abrasive wife
MARTHA	60, Carol's assertive mother
DELIVERY BOY/GIRL	
POLICE OFFICER	

SOUND EFFECTS

Doorbell

PROP LIST

Glass of water

Briefcase

Newspaper

2 large gravestones

Jewelry box

Wedding ring

COSTUMES

PETER: professional office attire

CAROL: attractive button-up, khaki pants

STEVE: torn jeans, stained shirt, baseball cap

VICKY: padded stomach, maternity dress

MARTHA: old fashioned dress, orthopedic shoes

DELIVERY BOY/GIRL: FedEx style uniform

POLICE OFFICER: police uniform

SETTING

Peter and Carol's simple living room. It is a quaint little room, with all the furnishings of a modern married couple. They are by no means rich, but Carol manages to create a cute and contemporary atmosphere.

With This Ring was first presented by Hatboro-Horsham high school on January 18, 2001 in Horsham, PA. It was directed by Zachary Vosseler with the following cast:

PETER: Jason Held

CAROL: Brittany Kirkpatrick

VICKY: Jessica Brettle

STEVE: Josh Faden

MARTHA: Emily Schy

DELIVERY BOY: Zach Palmer

POLICE OFFICER: Jennifer Hallman

This production took first place at the HH One-Act Festival. It also won awards for Best Supporting Actress (Jessica Brettle) and Best Supporting Actor (Josh Faden).

*For my mother,
who says I'm an artist...even when I color out of the lines.*

WITH THIS RING

by

Bradley Hayward

AT RISE: PETER tidies up the room. HE is a handsome man with undeniable charm.

PETER: Carol, dear. Could you come in here for a moment?

CAROL: **(O.S.)** One second, darling.

PETER: What are you doing in there?

CAROL: **(O.S.)** Nothing, dear.

PETER: Then why can't I come into the bedroom?

CAROL: **(O.S.)** You'll see later, sweetheart.

PETER: Alright.

(CAROL enters from the bedroom. SHE is pretty and almost always cheerful.)

CAROL: It's a surprise.

PETER: I won't go in there. I promise.

CAROL: You needed something?

PETER: Yes. I have a headache, but you won't let me into the bathroom to get some aspirin.

CAROL: I'll get one for you.

PETER: Thank you, dear.

CAROL: No problem. **(exits)** Why do you have a headache?

PETER: I'm not sure, really. I guess I've been busier than usual.

CAROL: **(enters with a glass of water)** Peter, dear, we seem to be out of aspirin. But here's a glass of water. I'm going into town to get my dress from the cleaners, so I'll pick up more pills then.

PETER: Thank you, honey.

CAROL: Let me kiss it better.

(CAROL kisses PETER's forehead. PETER looks at CAROL for a moment with love in his eyes.)

PETER: You know what?

CAROL: What?

PETER: I love you just as much today as the day I married you.

CAROL: I love you more. Can you believe it was ten years ago?

PETER: Where does the time go?

CAROL: Who knows. But it's been a great ten years, hasn't it?

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PETER: It certainly has. I can't think of any other couple this happy after that long.

CAROL: Happy anniversary, sweetheart.

PETER: Happy anniversary.

(They kiss.)

CAROL: Well, as much as I want to, we can't smooch all day. I have to get to my special surprise in the bedroom.

PETER: You don't have another man in there, do you? I can out-kiss him any day!

CAROL: Yes, you can!

PETER: Excuse me?

CAROL: Just kidding.

PETER: It won't be long, will it? I have reservations at the Hilton for eight o'clock.

CAROL: Not long at all.

PETER: Good. What time is it now?

CAROL: It's only noon. We have plenty of time.

PETER: Okay, you run along into the bedroom. And if the doorbell rings, just stay in there.

CAROL: Alright.

PETER: I love you.

CAROL: Right back at you.

(They kiss.)

PETER: Remember, no peeking!

CAROL: I won't. ***(exits)***

PETER: ***(makes sure SHE has left, then takes out a newspaper from his briefcase, opens it, looks at an ad)*** She's gonna love it! I know she will!

(The doorbell rings.)

PETER: ***(excitedly)*** I got it, honey!

(PETER answers the door. It's STEVE and VICKY, a constantly bickering couple. VICKI is visibly pregnant and screeches every word, while PETER obeys her every command.)

PETER: ***(deflated)*** Oh, it's just you.

VICKY: ***(to STEVE)*** I told you, we shouldn't have come over. They'll be busy, I said. They'll be having a romantic day, I said. They won't

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want visitors, I said. But, oh no, you had to come over and wish them a happy anniversary. You didn't even wish me a happy anniversary, Steve. We've been married ten years and you've never wished me a happy anniversary. Why don't you just come over here and marry Peter and Carol? You obviously like them more than you do me!

STEVE: (*ignoring VICKY*) Hello, Peter.

PETER: Hi, Steve. Hi, Vicky.

VICKY: We'll be going. I told him you didn't want us to come over.

PETER: Oh no, it's fine. Come in if you'd like. I'm sorry for sounding upset. I've just been expecting something to arrive all morning.

VICKY: (*jumps down PETER'S throat*) A parcel? A package? A person? What? What are you expecting?

STEVE: Vicky, be quiet! That's none of your business.

VICKY: It is my business. I'm Carol's best friend. I deserve to know what's coming in and out of this house. I don't deserve to be left in the dark. Like you, Steve.

PETER: Carol's in the bedroom. She's busy with some surprise, but I'm sure you can go in there.

VICKY: Oh, good! I will. I'm sure she'll tell me what's going on! Men have no idea how to communicate. Steve, don't be rude! Take off your hat!...I'll be out in a minute....Steve, I said take off your hat!...Carol, I'm here! (*exits to the bedroom*)

STEVE: Thank you, Peter.

PETER: For what?

STEVE: The aspirin. It's really been helping out lately.

PETER: (*snaps his fingers*) That's where it went! So what's gotten into her?

STEVE: She always gets this way when she's pregnant. One minute she's crying over the cookies she burned and the next she's yelling at me for not eating them. I don't know whether I'm coming or going.

PETER: I don't understand how a baby can possibly have such an effect on a woman.

STEVE: Hormones are tricky business. Take my advice and never have children with Carol. They destroy your marriage.

PETER: Oh, come now, Steve. You know how happy Carol and I are.

STEVE: And you know how happy Vicky and I were. (*PETER nods*) But the second you put a bun in the oven, she'll put you on the back burner. And there you will sit...for the rest of your life...simmering away. Not getting hotter...not getting cooler...just sitting there.

PETER: Steve, this is our big day.

STEVE: Why? What did we do?

PETER: Not you and me. Carol and me. Let's not ruin it.

STEVE: I'm sorry. The only time I get to boil is when I'm out of that house.

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PETER: I just want this to be a special day.

STEVE: So, you got any big plans for tonight?

PETER: **(excited)** Have I got big plans? I'll tell you what I've got planned!

STEVE: What? What?

PETER: I'm taking Carol to the Hilton for a candle light dinner she'll never forget. And then we're going to spend a night in the honeymoon suite!

STEVE: Does she know?

PETER: Well, she knows about dinner and the room. What she doesn't know is that I've bought her something she's been wanting for years.

STEVE: There's more?

PETER: Much more!

STEVE: What?

PETER: I finally bought her an engagement ring.

STEVE: But you're already married.

PETER: Think romantically, Steve.

STEVE: I don't know how.

PETER: Yeah, I know.

STEVE: Vicky told you?

PETER: She put it in your Christmas card. Anyway, when I proposed, I didn't have enough money to buy her a ring. After a few years, she stopped hounding me for one. But this year, business being the way it is, I decided to buy her the diamond she's always wanted.

STEVE: Peter, you've really outdone yourself.

PETER: There's more!

STEVE: More?

PETER: She's always telling me to wear my wedding band so other women will know I'm taken. But the darn thing always turns my skin green.

STEVE: Green?

PETER: When we got married, she insisted we both have wedding bands. Of course I was broke, so I bought her a silver ring like she wanted, but didn't have enough money left over to get myself one. So I got mine out of one of those machines at the mall.

STEVE: Your wedding band is fake?

PETER: Yes. **(STEVE laughs.)** Hey, it came with gum. Of course she has no idea it's fake. The rings mean a lot to her. But this year, I've finally made up for it. Not only did I get her a new ring, but I'm getting one to match. His and hers wedding bands. The ad promises that the stones are the highest quality at the lowest cost. I'm even having "his" and "hers" engraved into the inside of the bands. Isn't that wonderful? "His" and "hers"! She'll love it!

STEVE: How could you afford all that? Business hasn't been that good.

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PETER: I found a great deal in last week's newspaper.

STEVE: Really?

PETER: Yep. Here, I'll show you.

STEVE: You should have told me you were planning this. I have an uncle in the gem stone business.

PETER: You seem to have an uncle in every business. I think I'll stick to the paper. I know it's legal. **(hands STEVE the paper)** Look! Sounds great, huh?

STEVE: Let me see. **(reads)** My goodness. I've never seen rings this cheap. Are you sure this is on the up and up? Are you sure the stones are real? After ten years, I think she deserves a real diamond.

PETER: You don't think this looks legit?

STEVE: Well, what did the stones look like? Often times, fake diamonds are easy to spot.

PETER: Look like? I haven't seen them yet. That's what I'm waiting for. They're being delivered any minute.

STEVE: You haven't seen them yet? Peter...

PETER: Was that stupid of me? Oh dear!

STEVE: Don't get upset just yet. I'm sure they're real.

PETER: The guy on the phone sounded really nice. I don't think he'd take advantage of me. Although it was a 900 number.

STEVE: Don't worry. Carol is going to love it.

PETER: I hope so. But don't tell her.

STEVE: Why would I do that?

PETER: And don't tell Vicky.

STEVE: Don't worry about that. She hasn't paid attention to me for years.

PETER: Okay. It's just that this is that biggest surprise I've ever tried to pull off and I don't want it ruined at the last minute.

STEVE: My lips are sealed.

(VICKY and CAROL enter.)

VICKY: Oh, Peter! I just saw what Carol is making you! I don't think there's a chance you can get her anything better. Steve, why can't you be that sweet?! You've made nothing for me but problems! Well, maybe a few babies, but that's all! What happened to the sweet guy I married? Oh, that's right! He abandoned me after the honeymoon....Carol, he's going to love it! You're so crafty! Unlike some people I know!...Steve, you didn't take off your hat! What good are you to me? You're my husband and you won't even listen to me! I bet Peter listens to everything Carol says. Why did I even marry you? We're going.

STEVE: Good-bye, Peter.

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PETER: Good-bye, Steve.

VICKY: Congratulations, you guys! I'm so happy for you! Carol, if you need any help with his present, you know where you can find me!
Right next door!

CAROL: Thank you.

(VICKI pulls off STEVE's hat and hits him with it.)

VICKY: I told you to take off your hat!

(VICKY and STEVE exit.)

PETER: Wow.

CAROL: Promise me we'll never get like that.

PETER: I promise.

CAROL: Good. So, what are you doing out here?

PETER: Nothing. What are you doing in there?

CAROL: Nothing.

(The doorbell rings.)

PETER: Now get lost!

CAROL: Okay, okay! This must be some surprise.

(CAROL exits. PETER opens the door and VICKY barges in.)

VICKY: You bought her a ring? That's so sweet!

PETER: Shhh! I don't want Carol to know.

VICKY: Oh, sorry. ***(whispers)*** You bought her a ring? That's so sweet!

PETER: He told you? I told him not to tell you.

VICKY: Don't worry! My lips are sealed! I just think it's so special how romantic you are! Actually, I was wondering if you'd help Steve in that department.

PETER: I'll make sure to give him some pointers.

VICKY: Good! I want a new ring. The only rock Steve ever gave me is the one in his head. So how big is the stone? Pretty big, I'm guessing. You wouldn't let Carol down. Do you think it's alright if I bother her again?

PETER: Um, no. She's still in the bedroom.

VICKY: I forgot to ask if she could watch the kids tomorrow.

PETER: Just don't tell her about the ring.

VICKY: Oh, I won't! You know me! ***(exits)***

PETER: ***(to himself)*** Yes, I know you.

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(The doorbell rings.)

PETER: Finally!

(HE opens the door and STEVE is there, wearing his shredded hat.)

STEVE: I'm sorry. I had to tell her. She wouldn't quit hitting me with my hat.

PETER: I knew I shouldn't have said anything. She's in there right now with Carol. I just know she's blabbing all about the ring.

STEVE: I'm so sorry.

PETER: Well, it's not your fault. I guess she'll still love it. But I really wanted it to be a surprise.

STEVE: Maybe she won't tell her.

(They both burst into laughter.)

PETER: That's a good one!

STEVE: Maybe she won't tell her....

(VICKY and CAROL enter.)

VICKY: Thank you, Carol. This really helps out a lot. You taking the kids and all.

CAROL: Who's watching them now?

VICKY: Your mother, actually.

CAROL: Mother? She never said anything about that.

VICKY: It was a last minute thing. I knew I couldn't call you because it's your anniversary. Your mother was watering her lawn, so I asked her.

PETER: Good. Anything to keep her busy so she isn't over here.

CAROL: Peter, I asked you not to talk about Mother that way.

PETER: I'm sorry. It's just that she hates me for no reason at all. I don't smoke. I don't drink. I don't even leave the toilet seat up.

VICKY: Steve, do you hear that? You can learn a thing or two from Peter here.

STEVE: So I've heard.

CAROL: She doesn't hate you.

PETER: Oh no? For Christmas she bought me a ticket to South America. A one way ticket!

CAROL: You take her entirely the wrong way.

PETER: The wrong way? She tried to send me to Brazil. I said I'd bring back some coffee and she just laughed. Said I wouldn't be coming back. How can I take that the wrong way?

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CAROL: She's my mother and I love her. I know she's a bit hard to get along with, but... **(starts to cry)** I've tried to tell her what a good husband you are.

PETER: Carol, I know. Don't cry. I know you love your mother. And I'm sure she's very nice when she's not exporting me. **(CAROL wails)** Oh, dear. This is our anniversary. You shouldn't be crying.

CAROL: I'm sorry...

PETER: Listen. You go into the bedroom and relax.

CAROL: I can finish the surprise I have for you.

PETER: That sounds like a great idea.

CAROL: I'll see you later, Vicky. Good-bye, Steve.

PETER: You just go right on in and relax. **(CAROL exits. PETER makes sure SHE's gone.)** Vicky! Did you tell her about the ring?

VICKY: Why would I do that? It's a surprise.

STEVE: You didn't tell her?

VICKY: I'm not going to tell someone a secret.

STEVE: Oh sure! You can keep Peter's secret, but you have no problem telling everyone about my kidney infection.

VICKY: Well, that! I had to explain.

STEVE: Explain what?

VICKY: You were walking around holding your crotch.

STEVE: That's because you kicked me.

VICKY: I was mad! Well, don't worry, Peter. Steve does have a kidney infection. I wasn't lying.

PETER: Thank goodness. For a second there, I thought he was healthy.

STEVE: Vicky, I'm sure Peter and Carol would like to get on with their anniversary.

VICKY: Yes, I'm sure they do. We'll be going.

PETER: Good-bye, Vicky.

VICKY: Happy Anniversary!

PETER: Good luck, Steve.

STEVE: Thanks.

(STEVE and VICKY exit.)

VICKY: **(O.S.)** You didn't wish them a Happy Anniversary! And take off that hat!

PETER: Now where are the rings? They should have been here a long time ago. **(dials the telephone)** I mean, when you pay good money for something, they should at least be on time. **(into the receiver)** Hello?...This is Peter Harris...I have an order that was to be delivered over an hour ago and it still hasn't arrived...Yes, that's the one...Yes, two of them...The biggest stones you've got!...Yes, it was a lot of money...But my wife will be so happy...I'm going to give it to her

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tonight...She wants it alright...No, there won't be a struggle...Trust me, she's been waiting for this day for years. So have I...They're on their way, you say?...Oh, good!...Good-bye, then. ***(hangs up the phone)***

CAROL: ***(enters)*** Who are you talking to?

PETER: Nobody. I was on the phone.

CAROL: With who?

PETER: You'll see.

CAROL: I certainly hope you haven't anything extravagant planned. The hotel room alone must be costing you a fortune.

PETER: Never you mind the price. You'll love it.

CAROL: I'm sure I will.

(The doorbell rings.)

PETER: Now get lost!

(CAROL partially exits.)

PETER: I mean it! Get in there and shut the door!

CAROL: Oh, alright. I'm just so excited!

(CAROL exits. PETER opens the door. MARTHA enters. SHE's a mother-in-law with a vengeance. SHE's dressed in out-dated clothes and is never pleased with anything.)

PETER: ***(not impressed)*** Oh, Mother...it's you.

MARTHA: What kind of greeting is that? Where were you raised? And where is my daughter? You've probably got her chained to the stove or something. You never give her a moment's peace.

PETER: Carol, it's for you.

MARTHA: Trying to pawn me off on my daughter, huh? Well, it won't work. I'll always be around to supervise the goings on in this house.

PETER: Tell me about it. What are you doing here this time?

MARTHA: Vicky told me that you've smartened up and bought my daughter a decent engagement ring.

PETER: She told you?

MARTHA: Of course she told me. So I figured I'd come over and make sure that my daughter is treated right. Diamond?

PETER: Of course, diamond!

MARTHA: A diamond cluster, I suppose. You'd never spring for a real stone, now would you?

PETER: Carol! It's your mother!

CAROL: ***(O.S.)*** I'm coming!

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PETER: I'll have you know that I spent a great deal of money on her ring.

MARTHA: Not the childrens' college money, I hope.

PETER: Is there any pleasing you? We don't even have children.

MARTHA: Yet. You will. Unless you're defective down there.

PETER: We don't know if we're even going to have children.

MARTHA: Have you been brain washing my daughter? She was raised to be a mother! And if you can't provide that for her, I'll find her a new husband. I want to be a grandmother. A sweet, old grandmother who kisses her grandchildren good- night. If you can't give me that, I cannot be held responsible for my actions!

PETER: Fine. Just don't tell her about the ring.

CAROL: **(enters)** Mother, what are you doing here?

MARTHA: No reason. I just thought I'd drop in.

CAROL: Vicky said you were looking after their kids this morning. How was that?

MARTHA: Dreadful. My old bones can't tolerate it. They're so hard to handle.

CAROL: Vicky's kids are little angels.

MARTHA: I was talking about Steve and Vicky. Vicky never stops yapping and Steve...well, he's the worst husband in the world. **(looks at PETER)** The second worst. At least he bought Vicky an engagement ring...When they were engaged!

CAROL: Mother, can you please drop the ring business? You've been going on about it for ten years.

MARTHA: And I'll go on for another ten until you get your diamond.

PETER: Mother, I've just about had it! I'm a devoted husband and your daughter loves me!

MARTHA: Hogwash! She was raised with higher standards than this. And don't call me Mother!

PETER: How about "old sow?"

MARTHA: You're going to call me names, huh? Well, I have a name for you—

CAROL: Stop fighting!

MARTHA: Carol, come to your senses. Leave Peter and come home with me. My new gardener has a lovely set of...what do you call them? Buns!

CAROL: Mother! I love Peter and if you can't accept that, I can't make you. But let me live my life the way I want to!

MARTHA: I never raised you to be saucy. Peter is having negative effects on all aspects of your behavior.

CAROL: I've always been saucy, Mother. I'll have you know that I've lied to you many times.

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MARTHA: I'm not hearing this. (*puts her hands over her ears*) La-la-la-la-la...

CAROL: Remember when Peter would come over to do homework in high school? We were working hard, but not at algebra.

MARTHA: I'm not hearing this...

CAROL: And our trip to debate camp...there was no debate camp!

MARTHA: Be quiet! Alright...so you lied to me...I can get over that. But why did you marry this oaf?

CAROL: When will you realize that Peter is the sweetest man I've ever met? He's kind, gentle and very loving. He treats me with decency and respect. He makes me feel special. I love him dearly. And he loves me.

MARTHA: And I love you, Carol. But it took me eighteen years of raising you to prove my love. What has Peter done to prove it? Nothing!

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