



NOTHING PERSONAL, JUST BUSINESS

A comedy written by Landen Swain

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Cast

Peter Wilson – early twenties, servant

Reginald Forester – billionaire, middle aged

Harriet Forester – Reginald's alcoholic wife

Lilly Forester – beautiful daughter of Reginald

Fred – distraught poker player

Hank – cocky poker player

Officer Briggs

SCENE ONE

(The curtain opens revealing Reginald Forester, a plump, high class, self-made millionaire with a generous gray mustache sitting alone in an elegant chair reading the paper and smoking a pipe)

(Reginald goes through the paper looking for a specific page in the paper, when he can't find it he takes out a little bell from his robe and rings it)

REGINALD

Wilson! *(rings the bell again)* Wilson! Heaven sakes *(he gets up and yells up the stairs)* where is that boy, Wilson! *(Peter Wilson, the Forester family butler, groundskeeper, and housekeeper falls down the chimney covered in chimney dust, in a chimney sweep uniform with suspenders)* What in the name of Sam Hill were you doing in the chimney, boy?

WILSON

Cleaning it like you asked me to this morning sir.

REGINALD

I know that part, what I meant was, why did you fall out of the chimney?

WILSON

Well sir, I was up there cleaning the top of the chimney when I heard the sound of your bell, and apparently the birds that were on the roof must've heard it too, cause they flew off, but it startled me half to death so I jumped back, tripped, and fell down the chimney. I hurt my neck.

REGINALD

Do you think you're going to be alright?

WILSON

I think so.

REGINALD

Good, now quit sulking, I don't pay you to sit around here and sulk.

WILSON

Um sir, you don't pay me at all.

REGINALD

Oh yeah. *(Lets out a belting laugh)* Wilson, look at it this way, you got paid in seeing your fathers happiness, he owed me a substantial debt and I forgave his debt when you promised to

work for me for life. I put clothes on your back, food in your stomach, and gave you a nice room in the basement. Sure, the basement floods every time it rains, but it's better than nothing.

WILSON

Well, I guess that's true. It was nice seeing dad happy before he died.

REGINALD

Yes, he was a good man. Now, the reason I rang the bell is because I can't seem to find the sports page of the newspaper anywhere.

WILSON

Oh, I don't think it came with the paper Mr. Forester.

REGINALD

Well that's no help to me. Go to that little machine in front of the hotel on Arnold Avenue and pick me up a new paper, and make sure it has the sports page. And hurry back - I need you to serve food at my poker night tonight.

WILSON

Sir, this may be me overstepping my boundaries, but do you mind if I join in your poker game tonight? I haven't played in years and I really want to.

REGINALD

You know what Wilson, what the hay, sure you can, but you still have to serve the food.

WILSON

I will sir, thank you sir! *(the wife of Reginald, Madame Harriet Forester, a high class alcoholic society lady comes from upstairs)*

HARRIET

Wilson, are you about to go to the store by any chance?

WILSON

Yes ma'am, in a minute.

HARRIET

\Oh good, would you mind picking up a few bottles of wine for me?

WILSON

Sure thing, Mrs. Forester. Let me just grab my bag and I'll be off. *(WILSON goes into the kitchen)*

REGINALD

Why do you need wine, Harriet?

HARRIET

Oh, it would seem as though my personal storages have seem to have run dry.

REGINALD

Didn't I get Wilson to get you some more liquor earlier this week?

HARRIET

Well, yes.

REGINALD

For heaven sakes, Harriet, you do realize drinking as much liquor as you do isn't good for you, right?

HARRIET

Oh Reginald, I can quit anytime I want.

REGINALD

Okay then, why don't you quit now?

HARRIET

What?

REGINALD

I said, why don't you quit now?

HARRIET

I said I could quit anytime I wanted to, and currently I don't want to quit.

REGINALD

Well, I would at least wish you would stop getting drunk in front of our daughter.

HARRIET

Me getting drunk in front of our daughter is no worse than you getting drunk every Christmas Eve with my father when we go over to my parents' house for dinner.

REGINALD

If you had to sit there and listen to you and your mother yapping on and on about dresses you saw in department stores, you'd get drunk too.

HARRIET

Well, I wouldn't have to drink if there was any excitement in this marriage.

REGINALD

There's no excitement in this marriage? Gee, Brazil last summer wasn't exciting at all now was it? And that trip to Rome for our second honeymoon, oh that was just a bore now wasn't it?

HARRIET

The places we went were exciting, it was only boring behind closed doors.

REGINALD

That's it, that bottle of scotch you have in the cellar is going down the drain!

HARRIET

No! That's my special bottle, I've been saving it for a rainy day!

REGINALD

Oh, but it is a rainy day Harriet, it's going to be raining gin all over the floor! *(They both run to the cellar)*

(Lilly Forester, the gorgeous only child of the Forester family comes down the stairs, hair curled, wearing a dress, checking to make sure the coast is clear, then whispers for WILSON)

LILLY

Peter? Peter?

WILSON

(WILSON enters from the kitchen) Lilly, my darling *(they embrace and kiss)* I had a dream about you last night.

LILLY

Really?

WILSON

Yes, granted eventually in the dream I was killed by an armadillo playing the piano, but for the few moments you were in the dream, it was the sweetest dream I've ever had.

LILLY

Oh Peter, why are you covered in chimney dust?

WILSON

Oh it's a long story.

LILLY

Well I be able to see you tonight?

WILSON

I can't darling, I'm playing poker with your father and his friends tonight.

LILLY

He's letting you play? That's fantastic.

WILSON

I know I'm finally making progress with your father. If I get to the point where he trusts me enough, maybe I can finally tell him about you and me.

LILLY

That would be wonderful, I hate having to run around and hide this from him and mother. Why don't we just run off and get married and then come back and tell them?

WILSON

Because that's not the right thing to do, I'm a very traditional kind of guy, and I believe in asking for permission from the father before you ask his daughter to marry you.

LILLY

I just don't want our love to be a secret anymore.

WILSON

I know, we've been seeing each other for a year and a half now, and it's only you and me that know, but I want the world to know that you're mine!

LILLY

I know you want the world to know, and I want the world to know too, but you know how my father is. He wants me to be married to some rich man that's a doctor or a lawyer. I don't think he would ever approve of you and me as a couple.

WILSON

And I know that but if he truly loves you he would realize that whatever makes you happy is what is best for you. And I try my hardest every day to be a man that makes you happy.

(They begin to kiss but stop when REGINALD and HARRIET come up from the basement, Reginald is holding his stomach)

HARRIET

And next time you try anything like that, I'll hit you even harder, you smug son of a – Lilly! Oh good morning darling, my you look lovely.

LILLY

Good morning mother.

REGINALD

Ah, good morning pumpkin.

LILLY

Good morning daddy

HARRIET

How do you like the new dress I bought you the other day, Lilly?

LILLY

It's wonderful mother. *(she does a spin, showing off her new dress)*

HARRIET

Yes, it will be perfect for our little girls' night out at the ballet, while your father is having his little poker night with his friends.

REGINALD

Wilson, I thought I sent you to the store.

WILSON

You did sir, I just came back to ask if you wanted me to put the wine on the tab or not?

REGINALD

Go ahead and put it on the tab, I'm sure it won't be too long before Mrs. Forester has to make another large purchase of liquor.

HARRIET

And while you're at the store go ahead and get some breath mints, since apparently Reginald hasn't brushed his teeth since he was a small child.

WILSON

Alright I'm off.

REGINALD

And be back quick - you still have to set up for my poker night tonight.

WILSON

Yes sir. *(WILSON exits out the front door)*

REGINALD

So pumpkin, I was in a business meeting the other day talking with one of my business buddies and he said that his oldest son had a bit of a thing for you. How about I hook you up on a date?

LILLY

I don't think so. daddy.

REGINALD

Why not, pumpkin? His father is a wealthy businessman, so he can afford to buy you all sorts of things. I guarantee you a bouquet of flowers every date you two have, and a shopping spree at the finest stores every single month.

LILLY

I'm just not into that daddy. I don't like the snooty high class kind you usually try to set me up with. Most of them are absolutely boring, all they talk about is their Ivy League Polo teams and how much money their fathers have. I don't care how much money a man has. You can't buy true love.

HARRIET

Love is a priceless thing, if you put a price on it, it is fake.

REGINALD

Well that's not entirely true, you pay me ten dollars each year to go to your house on Thanksgiving and pretend to love your mother.

HARRIET

Well, I pretend to love you every day, and I do that for free. Lilly darling, if we are going to be able to get dinner before the ballet tonight we had better go, I hear there is this lovely new restaurant on Queens Boulevard that has a new pasta that is to die for.

LILLY

What's the place called?

HARRIET

The Whiny Cow, weird name for a restaurant isn't it?

REGINALD

The Whining Cow? Must be named after your mother.

HARRIET

Oh that's funny, if they named a restaurant after you it would probably be named "The shriveling worm" and I'm sure it would get plenty of bad reviews for its very poor performances for "private parties". Goodbye Reginald. (*HARRIET EXITS through the front door*)

LILLY

I'm sorry dad, but she won that one. (*She turns and leaves, lights down*)

SCENE TWO

(Lights come back up, a poker table is set up in front of the fireplace S.R. with four men sitting around it, with various beers and poker chips on the table, sitting at the S.R. side of the table is FRED, who is emotionally distraught from a relationship he just got out of, sitting beside him to the left is HANK, a sarcastic and cocky business owner, WILSON is sitting left of HANK, and REGINALD is sitting left of WILSON)

FRED

Alright guys, read it and weep.

HANK

You have a pair of 3s, I have a pair of 10s and 9s, so you read it and weep.

REGINALD

Now, now, not so fast gentlemen, royal flush.

FRED

Great, first I lose the girl of my dreams and now I lose this too. This week is just turning out great now isn't it?

HANK

Fred, let's be honest, you need to just be glad that relationship happened at all, I mean you were dating a girl that could drive any man loco, she was out of your league.

FRED

Yeah I know, but I mean she said she cheated on me with two other guys, some rich guy and then some guy that works at some bar downtown.

HANK

And me.

FRED

What?

HANK

Oh, she didn't tell you?

FRED

Didn't tell me what?

HANK

Nothing, never mind.

REGINALD

Hank, will you shut up and deal the cards?

HANK

Alright, alright how goes things in the oil business Reggie?

REGINALD

Well gentlemen, all is going well at the Forester Oil Company. We broke ground on a brand new oil drilling station in the Gulf of Mexico. Stockholders are happy and profits are going up. It's been a good quarter.

FRED

How on earth were you able to afford to build a brand new drilling station?

REGINALD

Budget cuts. No Christmas bonuses, fire old company employees, that sort of thing.

FRED

Don't you think it's a tad bit dangerous to be drilling in the Gulf? I mean, what if something happened and the oil started leaking into the Gulf?

REGINALD

Relax, that wouldn't happen in a million years.

HANK

Say Wilson, how long have you been working for Reggie here?

WILSON

A little over five years.

HANK

Well, seems to me you do a great job cleaning this place. What's he paying you? Whatever it is I'll double it for you to come work at my house.

REGINALD

Zero times two is still zero. *(Lets out a hardy laugh)* Wilson here works for me for free.

HANK

Works for free? What did you volunteer to work here or something?

REGINALD

Nope, he's paying off a debt his dad made years ago.

FRED

Wait, are you old Charlie Wilson's son?

WILSON

Yes sir.

FRED

I remember old Charlie, he used to talk about you all the time. We had so many great times together, he was there for me when no one else was. He was a good man, and an even better friend, so sorry to hear about him dying in that car crash a few years back.

WILSON

Thank you, he wasn't fully there after his first car crash, he forgot everything. He forgot how to cook, he forgot people's names, he even forgot his own wedding, but his memory did start to come back a little, but he had the car crash that killed him before it could all come back. I miss him every day, but he's in a better place now.

HANK

Yeah, your dad was always a nice fella. *(doorbell rings, WILSON gets up and answers the door, its HARRIET being carried by the arms by LILLY and an OFFICER, HARRIET is drunk)*

WILSON

Mrs. Forester!

REGINALD

What in the name of Sam Hill is going on here?

LILLY

I'm sorry daddy, it was happy hour at the bar of the restaurant we went to, the restaurant manager called the police on her after she started cussing at the painting of Herbert Hoover on the wall.

HARRIET

That young man got exactly what was coming to him.

OFFICER

Sir, your daughter said your wife has had a drinking problem for quite some time now. I lead a support group meeting every Saturday night at the library downtown, I could come pick her up on my way to the meeting tomorrow.

REGINALD

Well, it's obvious she needs help with her alcoholism. So yes, stop by tomorrow on your way there and pick her up.

OFFICER

Will do sir.

REGINALD

Wilson help Lilly take Harriet upstairs.

WILSON

Yes sir.

(LILLY and WILSON help HARRIET upstairs, REGINALD and FRED sit back down)

HARRIET

(On the way up the stairs) My goodness, you sure are a handsome lady Wilson.

OFFICER

Y'all have a good night.

HANK

Hey wait a minute haven't I seen you somewhere?

OFFICER

I don't know sir, I'm all over the place.

HANK

I know where I've seen you, you're that comedian that performs at that bar on Howard Street on Tuesdays. You're pretty funny.

OFFICER

Well thank you sir.

HANK

What's your name again?

OFFICER

Officer Briggs.

HANK

(Lets out a laugh) hey that's a pretty good name pun.

OFFICER

It's not a joke, my name seriously is Officer Briggs.

HANK

Oh sorry. Hey, you think you could tell us a joke?

OFFICER

I suppose I could.

HANK

Alright let's hear it.

OFFICER

So a guy walks into a bar and the bartender welcomes the man to the bar and asks him what he wanted to drink, and the man says I'll have a beer, and then the two start talking with each other, eventually he asks the bartender "Did you ever want to be anything besides a bartender" so the bartender says "yeah, I always dreamed of being a psychic but when I told my wife I wanted to do that she didn't support me at all, didn't see that coming"

HANK

Little word of advice, this Police Officer gig you got going on, I would stick to that instead on comedy.

OFFICER

Everybody's a critic. *(OFFICER leaves, Hank closes door and goes back to table and sits down)*

FRED

I still can't believe you have the son of Charlie Wilson working for you.

HANK

\Yeah, and what a nice young man, he's doing it for free just to pay off his father's debt.

REGINALD

Well actually he's not.

HANK

What do you mean?

REGINALD

There is no debt.

FRED

What? Charlie had to pay you off for all the loans you gave him when he was building his car garage, he owed you hundreds of thousands of dollars.

REGINALD

And he paid every penny of it.

FRED

I don't understand.

REGINALD

Alright I'll tell you, but it does not leave the three people at this table and Wilson can never know. Charlie had gotten a second job so that he could pay off the debt, and slowly he got enough money to pay it off. So when he finally got it all, he came to my house to drop off the money, we shook hands, and he got in his car and went home. But on the way home, he got in a car wreck. The accident gave him a concussion, and he forgot all about paying off the debt, but he did remember he had a debt to pay. So I went to the family and told them they still had to pay the debt, but Charlie was so damaged from the wreck he couldn't work to pay the debt off, plus they had the car and medical expenses to pay from the crash. So Wilson volunteered to work for me for life for free if I forgave the debt and paid the medical expenses.

HANK

Does Harriet know this?

REGINALD

The only people that know about this are the three men sitting at this table, and that's the way it's going to stay.

FRED

Why would you do this?

REGINALD

Why would I do what?

FRED

Why did you lie and practically take away years of the boy's life?

REGINALD

I'm a businessman, and rule number one of business is take whatever comes free to you. Back then my company was going through a rough stretch, I couldn't afford a housekeeper and Lord knows Harriet wouldn't do any housework. I saw an opportunity to get a free butler for life, and I took it. See the bull, grab the horns. Besides it's not all bad I've made the boy's life better.

HANK

How have you made his life better?

REGINALD

I've given him a place to stay, food in his mouth, clothes on his back, and something to do for the rest of his life. Boredom is the worst torture a person can ever experience.

WILSON

Mr. Forester! *(yelled from upstairs)*

REGINALD

Not a word of this to the boy, from either of you or so help me God I will wring both of your necks.

WILSON

(WILSON comes down from upstairs) Mr. Forester, Mrs. Forester passed out when we got up to her room, and Lilly went to bed.

REGINALD

Alright, now gentlemen how's about we continue our little game?

HANK

Alright, I'll be dealer. *(Collects card and begins shuffling them)* Say Reggie, that daughter of yours is starting to look awful pretty. Pretty soon she's going to be having guys asking her out left and right.

REGINALD

Well, I've been trying to set her up with some of my business partners sons. All those families are rich and successful, but she doesn't seem to be interested in anyone I try to set her up with.

FRED

Well maybe you shouldn't be forcing these guys on her. A woman has to choose that man she wants for herself.

REGINALD

Fred, shut up. You're starting to sound like my wife, and majority of the reason we have these poker nights is so I can escape the constant nagging my wife does. I'm just trying to set Lilly up with a guy that I know can guarantee her a good life, and guys with money can do that.

HANK

Yeah Fred, he's doing what any father would do, he's trying to get her with a guy that can support her financially. I did the same thing with my daughter when she started dating. Unfortunately, she got interested in some deadbeat guy she married in Vegas, now they're living in his mother's basement in the middle of Kentucky.

REGINALD

I just don't want my daughter dating some deadbeat guy with no money, who's living in some basement. Isn't that right Wilson?

WILSON

Huh?

REGINALD

If you had a daughter, would you allow her to be dating some deadbeat guy who lived in some basement somewhere?

WILSON

Well I mean, not all guys living in basements are deadbeats, I mean if the boy's a nice guy I would be fine with it.

REGINALD

Well, that's the exact opposite of me, I don't care if he's the nicest guy in the world, he needs money to support my daughter. If I found out my daughter was dating some deadbeat living in a basement somewhere, I would hunt that boy down and beat the living daylights out of him until he promised me he would never see my daughter again. (*WILSON begins to hold his stomach*)

HANK

What's wrong Wilson? You look ill.

WILSON

I think I'm going to be sick. (*Lights down*)

