

# THE ARRANGED MARRIAGE

By Gary Arms

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Here's an outrageous comedy about love, romance, and marrying the perfect person. Ronald Schmidt, wearing a tuxedo, has left his bride at the altar to attend an urgent meeting at Dr. Shaw's office. Diana Henderson, in an elaborate wedding gown, has left her bridegroom at the altar to attend the same meeting. But instead of a meeting, all that the two strangers find are his ashes in an urn and the good doctor's assistant ready with a pair of handcuffs!

Both Ronald and Diana had been tested by Dr. Shaw since childhood and imagine they are favorites of the late eccentric billionaire. Both now hope to inherit his enormous fortune.

But to qualify for their legacy, they must agree to be handcuffed for twenty-four hours. They don't know each other, take an instant dislike to one another, yet find the other strangely attractive. They reluctantly agree to the peculiar stipulation.

Once alone, they argue, then find one another irresistible and kiss. They argue again, yanking violently on the handcuffs until they break. The assistant returns with the jilted bride and bridegroom, the ones left at the respective altars. Laughs abound as the couples confront each other. Ronald and Diana beg for understanding, and make outrageous excuses, and pretend to be handcuffed -- all the while the jilted partners are beginning to feel an unexpected attraction to each other. Who ends up marrying whom? And who inherits the Shaw fortune? The answers are hilariously revealed in *The Arranged Marriage*.

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(2 m, 2 w, 1 flexible)*

**RONALD SCHMIDT:** A handsome young man.

**DIANA HENDERSON:** A beautiful young woman.

**EDMUND GRIMES:** A middle-aged business man. (Role can be played by a female.)

**DEDE TRUEMEIER:** Attractive young woman engaged to marry Ronald.

**DANNY GRUVER:** Young man engaged to marry Diana.

***Performance Time:*** *About an hour.*

**SETTING**

The spacious office of Dr. Shaw with several chairs and a large desk in the center of the room. A handbell and a cardboard box containing a plastic bag full of “ashes” sit on top of the desk while typical office supplies are in the drawers.

There are two doors, one to the waiting room through which people from outside enter, and one to another room where Grimes waits to attend Ronald and Diana.

**PROPS**

RONALD: Watch.

GRIMES: Handcuffs, watch, copy of will.

DEDE: Handgun (starter pistol) and note.

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*(AT RISE: RONALD SCHMIDT, wearing a powder-blue tuxedo, runs onstage through the open waiting room door, looks about, frowns with irritation when he sees no one else in the room.)*

RONALD: Mr. Grimes? *(Looks at HIS watch.)* My God, you'd think someone would be here. *(HE snoops around office, begins to look at the desk, notices the box, seems somewhat surprised and disgusted. DIANA HENDERSON enters wearing an elaborate wedding gown. She is rather regal in her bearing as if she imagines herself a princess.)*

DIANA: Mr. Grimes? Are you Mr. Grimes? I am Diana Henderson.

RONALD: *(Straightens, turns, is astonished to see a young woman in a wedding gown.)* My God!

DIANA: Really, Mr. Grimes, do not gawk at me. We have never met. Ordinarily, I do not denounce someone before being introduced, but really — to interrupt my wedding!

*(THEY stand at opposite ends of the stage.)*

RONALD: Your wedding!

DIANA: Dr. Shaw was practically my godfather.

RONALD: I'm not Grimes.

DIANA: Aren't you awfully young to be the executor of the Shaw estate? You are a child. *(Stares at HIM.)* Why are you wearing a powder-blue tuxedo?

RONALD: Are you deaf? I assume you must be. I just told you I was not Grimes. Who are you? And why are you wearing that wedding gown? Is this some sort of joke?

DIANA: Are you Mr. Grimes or not?

RONALD: Are you supposed to be funny?

DIANA: You are not Mr. Grimes! You are some sort of impostor. What have you done with Mr. Grimes?!

RONALD: You interrupted your wedding? Is that what you said?

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DIANA: It's none of your business. If you are not Mr. Grimes, I no longer wish to speak to you.

RONALD: I just interrupted my wedding. I called it off, I mean. That's why I'm wearing this tux. Dede loves the color.

DIANA: What are you babbling about?

RONALD: I was to be married -- *(Looks at HIS watch.)* - about now. I had to call it off and come here.

DIANA: You must be insane.

RONALD: You knew Doc Shaw? You interrupted your wedding? This is like a bad dream! Who are you anyway?

DIANA: Of course, I knew Dr. Shaw.

RONALD: One moment before my wedding was to begin, I get an urgent message from this guy, Grimes. He said I was to come here to Doc Shaw's office, or else...well, never mind. So, where's Grimes?

DIANA: You made that up!

RONALD: And instead, I find you here, in that dress, claiming you knew Doc!

DIANA: If you are lying to me...! Look here, whoever you are, I may be capable of murder. Practical jokes are loathsome. Who put you up to this?

RONALD: Quit talking like a dope. Did you get the same message?

DIANA: I don't think I should be talking to you.

RONALD: I've never met him...this Grimes guy. Have you?

DIANA: You never knew Dr. Shaw. A person wearing a tuxedo as ugly and cheap as that one couldn't possibly have known Dr. Shaw.

RONALD: Not know him?!

DIANA: It's a rental, isn't it? *(Beat.)* Dr. Shaw was practically my godfather. So, please, do not imagine you can fool me by pretending you knew him.

RONALD: I knew Doc Shaw my entire life. I knew him too well.

DIANA: Really? How nice for you.

RONALD: Look here, I was inspected by Doc Shaw twice a year since I was born. If it's any of your business.

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DIANA: Inspected! Do not lie to me. Did you say twice a year? Inspected?

RONALD: I did.

DIANA: Me, too.

RONALD: What?

DIANA: February first and --

RONALD: August first!

*(BOTH are thunderstruck.)*

DIANA: Weighed.

RONALD: Measured.

DIANA: A complete physical.

RONALD: Doc Shaw never in attendance.

DIANA: No, a horrid nurse did them.

DIANA and RONALD: Nurse Margaret!

RONALD: She had a pink wart on her nose!

DIANA: A black hair grew out of the pink wart!

RONALD: A battery of tests. Psychological profiles, IQ tests.

DIANA: Don't forget those hand-eye coordination tests.

*(THEY gaze at each other, almost embrace, then break apart, turn their backs to one another.)*

DIANA: Let me see if I grasp what you're saying. Each year, you were examined by Dr. Shaw?

RONALD: Twice a year. Until last year. At that time, I broke off with Doc completely.

DIANA: Me, too.

RONALD: You did not.

DIANA: Last year, I wrote him a note on violet stationery, informing him that our relationship was at an end. I did so in the spring.

RONALD: I did it in February. I faxed him a note that said he was a domineering tyrant who interfered with other people's lives.

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