

MC:

So honey, what's your name? (*Silence. To the audience*) Folks, our bride's name is Hannah, she was on the ballot under the category of neurotic, and has been chosen (*to Bride*) for the VERY IMPORTANT job of saving all of our skins by sucking it up and marrying that bum.

BRIDE: (*Shakily*)

I don't think I'm neurotic. I think I'm pragmatic.

MC:

Oh, are you ready to talk now? What's your name, age, and hometown? For our viewers.

JESTER:

It's okay. They want to know you.

BRIDE:

Hannah, twenty, Florence.

MC:

Anybody tuning in from Florence tonight?

*Heart reacts.*

MC:

Great. What do you do, Hannah?

BRIDE:

I press flowers that I find in the graveyard. I make them into amulets. I need to be protected. I'm afraid of death and I'm afraid of life. Sometimes I feel too big for my body, like all of my bones are growing, swelling through my skin. And sometimes I feel very small, like my skull is a huge, white room and I'm crouched in the very middle of it and every move I make echoes. That's how I feel right now.

MC:

And Hannah, what do you think of your groom, Silas.

BRIDE:

He's repulsive.

*Silas's face falls. Angry reacts.*

MC:

Put on a brave face Hannah. Consider it a matter of public health. The fate of the tri-county area rests on your shoulders. Let's get this show on the road. Jester, your turn.

JESTER:

Musicians!

*Jester adjusts his hat, which was knocked askew in the shuffle. He gently sets the bride down on a milk crate, and stands on one himself. The musicians creep on and dip in and out of the Jester's chanted melody. He starts off real rough, but he gets into it.*

JESTER: *(Improvisational, chanted in a minor key)*

To receive all of the blessings on the day of your wedding, My dear holy bride...  
I, the wedding Jester, must fulfill the ancient and very important obligation of making you cry...  
Because if you don't cry on your wedding day,  
There will be no communal emotional catharsis and without that the ritual will be incomplete.  
Plague bride, oh you beautiful plague bride, no-bobobody will ever see the woman you are inside...

*With every tug at her heartstrings, he searches her face for a sign of a tear. Nothing.*

JESTER:

A woman is never so alone as she is on her wedding day,  
And you, without even a father to give you away.... *(Nothing)*  
Alone with a husband you barely know,  
Where will you go? Where will you go?

*This affects Silas, but Hannah stays impassive. As the routine continues, the split screen goes between the "wedding guests" as they are spotlighted -- cry cam. The guests are shown muted, and each new guest's weeping grows in intensity. The bride is stone faced.*

JESTER:

When you think of the uncertain days ahead  
Your eyes fill already with tears that you'll shed,  
Your lips tremble and your --

BRIDE:

No they're not.

JESTER:

Pardon?

BRIDE:

My lips are not trembling. And my eyes are not full of tears.

JESTER:

Yes they are.

BRIDE:

No they're not.

JESTER:

Yes they are. (*Continuing, gravely. Something's coming over him.*)

Your lips will tremble and your soul will contort,  
In earth and in heaven there's blood in the court,  
Already awaiting the headstone and spade,  
Before you were born all your choices were made,  
Your lot is to struggle, your fate is to fail,  
So put on your ring and lower your veil.

The world you were born in no longer exists  
What truth can be found is thinner than mist.  
And every disaster rehearses the last  
The angels of mercy are all in the past  
How bitter the honey that sweetens the sting;  
Lower your veil and put on your ring.

MC:

You've strayed a little from the theme --

JESTER:

A jester has his own grand scheme. (*Continuing*)  
Hannah, if there is a chance to forestall  
All of the sorrow that gathers withal  
If judgement and verdict and death can be stayed,  
Then now is the time and this is the day,  
And you are the one who's tears are the source,  
The water of life and the almighty force,  
A bride has to cry on her wedding day, must,  
To settle with God should she crumble to dust.  
So put on your ring and lower your veil,  
Because birth is a trial and death is a jail,  
Lower your veil and put on your ring,  
Because you are a princess and God is a king,

And God loves a wedding, and God hates a lie,  
And God loves watching a pretty girl cry.

BRIDE:

I have cried enough.

MC:

Oh, you'll cry.

SILAS:

He appealed to logos, ethos, and pathos. I think there's little more that can be done.

JESTER:

Tough crowd.

MC:

Oh, you'll cry alright--

*He starts toward her, then remembers the cameras.*

MC:

Because -- Because you folks have never SEEN a wedding jester like Joe, right! Isn't that right?  
Absolutely unmatched. It's unbelievable. Give it up for Joe!

*Heart reacts. Jester blanches. The bride smiles, like she got him beat.*

JESTER:

Um -- Holy bride, you will find,  
That old age shall not be kind,  
As your beauty melts away,  
So does mind and eye decay,  
And - Um - Er... Hell, it's just, she won't even blink, it freaks me out.

MC:

Come on, then, try something else.

JESTER:

I have nothing left to mimic. Just the one postmodern gimmick.

MC:

Idiot! Simulacrum! Badkhn of banality!

*He can't decide who he wants to throttle -- the Jester or the bride. He starts toward the bride, then settles on the jester, lunging at him only to trip over Silas and fall right into the jester. The bride giggles.*

JESTER:

Well, that's something at least. Do it again.

MC:

What?

JESTER:

Something funny.

MC:

I what, no, I don't know what you're talking about.

JESTER: *(Pointing at MC's collar)*

You got something on your --

*MC looks down, Jester flicks him in the nose. The bride howls.*

JESTER:

Um, now pull my finger.

MC:

What are you playing at?

*The jester pulls out all the stops in a last-ditch physical comedy routine, but the bride is no longer laughing at anything said or done in front of her. She laughs at the Jester, the MC, Silas, the Camerapeople. She closes her eyes and laughs at herself, at everything. As she laughs, a single tear drips from the corner of her eye. The Jester catches it in a vial.*

SILAS:

Was that your angle, all this time?

JESTER:

A Jester has his own designs. *(Displaying the tear in a vial for the camera)* Thank you all. My venmo is in the chat.