

I CAN FEEL IT COMING ON

By Carl L. Williams

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SYNOPSIS: Vernon thinks he's coming down with every disease known to mankind, which has completely exasperated his wife. She enlists a psychologist to treat Vernon's hypochondria. The female psychologist turns out to be far more encouraging, and definitely more attractive, than Millie anticipated. Vernon starts feeling much better, but suddenly Millie's not feeling all that great.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 1 male)

VERNON MORRISON (m) 40's-50's, a hypochondriac who really doesn't know what's ailing him. *(104 lines)*

MILLIE MORRISON (f) 40's-50's, his long-suffering wife, who knows what's ailing her. *(95 lines)*

HORTENSE WISENKOFF (f) 30's, a sexy psychologist with her own unique approach to therapy. *(68 lines)*

DURATION: 20 minutes.

SETTING: The Morrison living room.

TIME: Evening.

PROPS

- ☐ Newspaper
- ☐ Several thermometers

AWARDS

First Place Winner – Dubuque Fine Arts Players Festival

First Place Winner (Audience Choice Award) – Canton One Acts Festival

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Theatre Southwest Festival of Originals, Houston, TX (2012)

Dubuque Fine Arts Players, Dubuque, IA (2012)

Canton One Acts Festival, TLC Productions, Canton, MI (2013)

DO NOT COPY

AT RISE: *VERNON sits reading a newspaper, becoming more and more distressed as MILLIE enters.*

VERNON: Oh, no. Oh, no. I'm gonna die.

MILLIE: Not again.

VERNON: Millie! I've got every symptom listed in this article.

MILLIE: You've had every symptom you ever read about, or heard about, or imagined.

VERNON: *(Referencing the article.)* Recurring headaches, discomfort in the abdomen, a quickening pulse...I can feel it coming on. I'm gonna die.

MILLIE: You're not gonna die, Vernon.

VERNON: I think I have a fever. Do I look like I have a fever?

MILLIE: No.

VERNON: Come feel my forehead.

MILLIE: If you want to take your temperature, use one of your seven thermometers.

VERNON: They don't work. They always say the same thing.

MILLIE: With you, 98.6 always means broken.

VERNON: One of these days you'll be a widow. I guess you'll be happy then.

MILLIE: If you keep this up, I'll be a divorcee before I'm a widow.

VERNON: Oh, great. I'll not only be dead, I'll be divorced.

MILLIE: I married you for better or for worse, but you haven't gotten any better! You've only gotten worse.

VERNON: I can't help the condition of my health.

MILLIE: It used to be you complained about getting sniffles. Now you've always got pneumonia. Face it, Vernon—you're a hypochondriac.

VERNON: I am not a hypochondriac. I'm—I'm just very susceptible.

MILLIE: Being susceptible is not acceptable. Nearly every week you're off to the doctor. Thanks to you, Dr. Milford can retire early.

VERNON: He doesn't do the right tests.

MILLIE: He's run out of tests! You're the reason your company's insurance rates keep going up. Everybody there pays more just because of you!

VERNON: I'm not making these things up. I'm not crazy.

MILLIE: I wish you were crazy. I wish you were certifiable. Then I could send you to an asylum and we could all get some rest.

VERNON: So when there's something wrong with me, I shouldn't tell you, is that it?

MILLIE: When isn't there something wrong with you? How could so many things in one body keep going wrong?

VERNON: I don't know. They just do.

MILLIE: You don't smoke and you don't drink. You eat sensibly. You take vitamins. What you really need is exercise. Maybe if you exercised more, you'd get stronger and feel better.

VERNON: I can't exercise. I have a weak heart.

MILLIE: Dr. Milford says your heart is fine.

VERNON: It has a murmur.

MILLIE: Yeah, it's murmuring, "I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine."

VERNON: I know my own heart better than you do!

MILLIE: After all the tests you've taken and passed, you could be an organ donor when you die.

VERNON: Wonderful. All my parts will live longer than I will.

MILLIE: So now you've got this heart murmur to go along with your brain tumor, and your liver cancer, and your diabetes, and your tuberculosis, and your incipient Alzheimer's, and whatever else you've read about lately.

VERNON: I could have any one of those things, or all of those things, and it would still be fatal.

MILLIE: All right, you're going to die. You know what? Everybody dies eventually.

VERNON: A lot sooner than eventually for me!

MILLIE: Because I'm gonna kill you! Vernon, I can't take this anymore. You need to get some help.

VERNON: A new doctor.

MILLIE: No. Well, yes, but not the kind you mean. Yesterday at lunch I was discussing your difficulties with Pat and Joanne.

VERNON: You talk about me with your friends?

MILLIE: We always talk about our husbands. I mean, there's only so much you can say about shoes. But a husband... Anyway, Pat made a suggestion.

VERNON: About divorcing me?

MILLIE: No, that was Joanne.

VERNON: I never liked that woman.

MILLIE: It was Pat who suggested a psychologist.

VERNON: So you think it's all in my head?

MILLIE: According to you, it's everywhere. Your head, your neck, your back...

VERNON: You want me to see a shrink.

MILLIE: Not a psychiatrist, a psychologist. Someone Pat recommended.

VERNON: Someone Pat uses? And that's a recommendation?

MILLIE: Pat is very well-adjusted.

VERNON: And you believe I'm maladjusted. Millie, that's insulting.

MILLIE: I might as well hurt your feelings, since everything else you've got seems to hurt.

VERNON: If you think I'm going to see a psychologist, you're the one who's crazy.

MILLIE: Vernon, I didn't want it to come to this, but I'm telling you straight out. Either you let this psychologist treat you, or the marriage is finished.

VERNON: You're giving me an ultimatum?

MILLIE: I am.

VERNON: And you mean it?

MILLIE: I do.

VERNON: You'd really leave me?

MILLIE: For my own mental health, I'd have to.

VERNON: I can tell when you're bluffing. *(Pause.)* You're not bluffing. Oh, all right. I'll make an appointment.

MILLIE: I already did.

VERNON: For when?

MILLIE: For right about now. She agreed to come over tonight.

VERNON: The doctor's a woman? And she makes house calls?

MILLIE: She is, and she does. Pat says she's a very caring person. Her name is Dr. Hortense Wisenkoff.

VERNON: You're kidding. Nobody's named a child Hortense in 50 years. Even then, it would've been a form of child abuse.

MILLIE: I'm guessing she has a motherly touch.

VERNON: Hortense. I wonder what they call her for short.

MILLIE: Vernon.

VERNON: Okay, okay.

The doorbell rings.

MILLIE: There she is. Remember...I want you to cooperate with her.

MILLIE opens the door. HORTENSE enters, very attractive in a sexy outfit.

HORTENSE: Hello, I'm Dr. Wisenkoff.

VERNON: Whoa.

MILLIE: (*Shocked.*) Dr. Hortense Wisenkoff?

HORTENSE: You must be Millie.

MILLIE: Yes, I'm Millie Morrison...come in, come in. This is my husband Vernon.

VERNON: Hello!

HORTENSE: You were expecting me, right?

MILLIE: Actually, you're more than I expected.

VERNON: (*Eager now.*) So doctor, you're here to make me feel better?

HORTENSE: That's the idea.

VERNON: Really my wife's idea.

MILLIE: Yeah...my idea. Please, have a seat.

HORTENSE: You understand, Mr. Morrison, this is only a preliminary session, allowing us to get to know each other...to feel each other out, so to speak.

VERNON: Whatever you say, doctor.

HORTENSE: I can tell already you're going to be a pleasure to help.

VERNON: Millie and I were just saying how surprised we were that you're willing to make house calls.

HORTENSE: I find patients are sometimes more comfortable in a familiar environment.

MILLIE: Then you should treat him in Dr. Milford's office, because that's where he spends most of his time.

VERNON: My wife exaggerates.

MILLIE: I exaggerate? Tell her all the maladies you suffer from, with no discernible symptoms.

HORTENSE: No need for that. Vernon—may I call you Vernon?

VERNON: Please do.

HORTENSE: I realize you honestly believe you have these physical ailments and may truly feel the ill effects associated with them.

VERNON: Thank you. It's wonderful to be taken seriously.

HORTENSE: But you also must know that if your regular doctor can't find anything wrong with you, we have to consider the possibility your symptoms are psychosomatic.

VERNON: Psychosomatic?

MILLIE: Imaginary.

HORTENSE: Not exactly. Often there's a subconscious psychological need, unrealized, that can only express itself in ways the conscious mind recognizes. What you perceive as a physical manifestation is really a substitute for the underlying problem. That's the problem we need to diagnose and treat.

VERNON: (*Fascinated with her.*) I see.

MILLIE: You do?

VERNON: Even so, I tell you my heart races and I feel feverish most of the time.

HORTENSE: Are you feeling that way now?

VERNON: Oh, yes.

HORTENSE: Let me see. (*Feels his forehead, smiles warmly.*) I'd have to say you feel just about right. I'll check your pulse. (*Takes his hand, checks his pulse.*) It does seem to be going a little fast.

MILLIE: (*Displeased, jealous.*) I wonder why.

VERNON: Do you think you can help me?

HORTENSE: I'm pretty sure I can.

MILLIE: How? He's determined to get sick and die.

VERNON: It's not that I want to.

HORTENSE: Of course you don't.

MILLIE: I hope you can do something, doctor. I can't put up with all his complaints anymore.

HORTENSE: I'll tell you what. Why don't you leave us alone for a little while so I can talk to Vernon one-on-one?

MILLIE: One-on-one.

HORTENSE: Patient confidentiality, you know. Besides, with you in the room, he may feel inhibited.

MILLIE: And if I leave, he'll be uninhibited.

HORTENSE: It often works that way.

MILLIE: I bet it does.

VERNON: You want to give this a chance, don't you?

MILLIE: Okay... sure. I'll be in the other room. Right through here.
Not far away. (*Exits reluctantly.*)

HORTENSE: Now, Vernon... I want you to tell me when you felt the best, and how long ago it was.

VERNON: The last time I felt really good? All day long?

HORTENSE: Day in and day out.

VERNON: Years.

HORTENSE: You poor thing. Why do you suppose that is?

VERNON: I get sick.

HORTENSE: No.

VERNON: No?

HORTENSE: You feel like you should be sick because something else is wrong. Something doesn't feel right, but it's nothing physical.

VERNON: What is it, then?

HORTENSE: More often than not I find it's an issue of self-esteem. Without self-esteem, nothing feels right. Tell me about your job. Are you productive there?

VERNON: Very productive.

HORTENSE: Do people tell you that? Your coworkers and your bosses?

VERNON: They do. I've even gotten a few plaques.

HORTENSE: So it's not job-related. How about the home front?

VERNON: You mean, here?

HORTENSE: How is your relationship with Millie?

VERNON: We're married.

HORTENSE: But Vernon, does she appreciate you?

VERNON: I guess she does. You'd have to ask her.

HORTENSE: That's significant, that you'd have to ask. She never tells you?

VERNON: Not that I recall.

HORTENSE: In other words, she never gives you any plaques. And in the bedroom?

VERNON: No plaques

HORTENSE: That's just awful, because I know—I just know, Vernon—that you deserve one.

VERNON: Well...maybe a small one, for years of service.

HORTENSE: Do you know what the key to vitality is?

VERNON: No, what?

HORTENSE: Feeling fulfilled in your love life. If your love life is strong, then you are strong. All is right with the world!

VERNON: Now I feel a little guilty.

HORTENSE: Why is that?

VERNON: I never gave Millie a plaque, either.

HORTENSE: For the emotional well-being of you both, your bedroom should be filled with plaques.

VERNON: I wouldn't know how to get started with something like that.

HORTENSE: (*Suggestive.*) I can help you get started. Believe me, Vernon, I know how.

VERNON: You've probably gotten a plaque or two yourself.

HORTENSE: (*Very forward.*) You'll have to come to my office and see.

VERNON: (*Beginning to back down.*) Uh...maybe that's not such a good idea.

HORTENSE: Believe me, you'll like my ideas.

VERNON: Maybe we could do our sessions online.

HORTENSE: There is no substitute for the personal touch.

VERNON: Yes, touching is always personal.

HORTENSE: We'll need to set up regular sessions for you. I prefer evenings myself, when things are more relaxed.

VERNON: Oh, I'm not much of a night person.

HORTENSE: Mornings, then, when everything's fresh.

VERNON: I'm not much of a morning person, either. Actually, I'm not much of any kind of person.

HORTENSE: There's that low self-esteem again. We'll have to pump that right up. And if evenings are out, and mornings are out...well, I could always take you in the afternoon.

VERNON: But I've used up my sick time, and I don't think I could get off in the afternoon. To come see you.

HORTENSE: (*Pressing him.*) But you need help, Vernon. You know you do.

VERNON: Yes...help. HELP is what I need. HELP would be very good. We're all in need of HELP!

MILLIE: (*Enters quickly.*) What's going on in here? What are you yelling about?

VERNON: Yelling? Was I yelling? No, no, I was merely emphasizing.

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