MR. AND MRS. SMITH

By Simon Kinberg

TREATMENT JANUARY 2001

Converted to PDF by mypdfscripts.com

OVERVIEW:

"**MR AND MRS. SMITH**" is a sexy, stylized action-comedy that's a duel-to-the-death between the world's top two assassins... who happen to be husband and wife, hired to kill each other. In hunting each other, their dying marriage turns into a passionate love affair, as they go toe-to-toe, playing cat and mouse... and slowly falling back in love in the process -- seeing, understanding, appreciating each other for the very first time -- in the midst of battle.

Their process is really like the process of marriage therapy, which is intended to help a couple: initiate, interact, communicate, compromise, adapt, and ultimately fall in love. Through their hunt, they have to do these same things -- because these are also the primary skills an assassin uses with a mark: initiating, interacting, compromising, and adapting to the target.

Tonally, the film should be a collision of different genres -- action, romance, comedy, even social (suburban) satire. The world of the Smiths is slightly hyperreal, mischievous, and always dangerous.

CHARACTER SET-UP:

We meet our main characters JOHN and JANE SMITH in marriage therapy. They say they don't want to be here. But we see they need to be here -- little conflicts roiling under the surface. Their therapist asks them how they met, and we see a spark in their eyes, as we cut back to --

BOGOTA, COLUMBIA. Five years ago. John and Jane meet in the midst of upheaval and chaos. A drug baron was killed in town, and police are rounding up single tourists as suspects. Rather than spend a night in a Colombian jail, John and Jane pretend to be together. That pretense turns real, as a spark catches. They fall in lust fast, flirting, dancing, sleeping together. As they return to their lives in New York, their lust quickly turns into love. In montage, we see them falling fast. The perfect couple. Despite misgivings from their friends, John and Jane get married. And they settle into...

The cozy, comfortable suburbs of Westchester County, New York. We pick them up years later. And the spark is gone. They're essentially sleepwalking through their marriage, totally devoid of any intimacy or intensity. They are bland, boring suburbanites. But they are living a massive lie, because in their real lives...

They are the top assassins on the East Coast. Neither of them knows their spouse's real identity. Their marriage is

cold, functional, passionless. It has become a cover life. But this cover is starting to fray at the seams -- little conflicts are building, playing out quietly in the battlegrounds of the dinner table, bedroom, bathroom. Now, after five years of secrets and lies and tension, their "real lives" are about to collide...

STORY:

The plot starts with a bang. Literally. An assassin, JIMMY JACKSON, raids an FBI witness hideout. He blasts in, taking out Feds, wending his way straight to the target. Jimmy kills him, and heads out, but more Agents flood in -- they chase and catch Jimmy red-handed, surrounded by bodies. And we cut from this fairly grisly scene to:

The totally clean, pristine kitchen in a suburban dream -- the house in the glass bubble (the one god shakes to watch it snow). It's the Smith house. They're sitting down to dinner together, and it's clear this is a marriage without any life. They sit silent -- don't even look at each other. You can hear the forks scrape the plates. A lot of tension. Then the phone rings. They go to separate rooms to take their calls. It's their offices -- they both have to go into the city for emergencies at work. John says he needs to check inventory (at the plant), and Jane says she needs to fix a downed mainframe (at the office).

We see: John's office is actually a meat-packing plant in little Italy. And he's more alive here -- in his element. His partner/contractor/best friend SAL tells him Jimmy Jackson was snatched by Feds. And now the boss wants Jimmy killed.

Meanwhile, way uptown, Jane's office is a sleek, high-tech corporate deluxe on the Upper East Side. She commandeers a team of associates (all female), who run this office with the latest software. Jane's friend JASMINE is second-in-command. She also got word on Jimmy -- a highline contract on his head. So... John and Jane draw this same target.

John and Jane meet back in the suburbs that night, at a party for their neighbors SUZY and MARTIN COLEMAN. At the party, we see John and Jane circulating in this world, becoming what this world expects -- totally bland suburbanites. They watch each other -- secretly annoyed, bored senseless by one another.

Back home, they climb into bed -- opposite sides (no kiss goodnight, nothing between them), and go to sleep. The next morning, with birds chirping, John wakes up early and goes out to his toolshed in the yard. He peels back the floor, and climbs down into a secret compartment -- filled with

weapons. Jane wakes up, sees he's gone, and heads down to the kitchen, where there's a trick-wall in the oven -- where she keeps her own arsenal. She pockets what she needs. Jane drives away in her station-wagon, with a bumper sticker for the Neighborhood Watch. "Keeping our Streets Safe!" John and Jane both head off to their respective "business trips."

John and Jane's bosses want the same thing -- they want Jimmy Jackson killed in a clean hit (no witnesses). Guarded by the FBI, he's no easy mark. As John and Jane prepare for the hit, it's clear they work with diametrically opposite styles:

Armed with an arsenal of hardware, John works moment-to-moment, on pure instinct and adrenaline, spontaneous, always on his toes, barrelling into hits head-on and gun-first.

On the other hand, Jane is a clean assassin, killing with meticulous stealth and strategy, relying on her support network of associates. Where John uses hardware, she uses digital software, drawing victims into traps, laying explosives. She maps every inch of her missions with flawless schematics -- perfect precision, top-of-the-line surveillance, leaving absolutely nothing to chance. Her victims never even see her coming.

So, John and Jane separately track the target. In an intricate set-piece, they hit the target from opposite angles. But John and Jane get in each other's way. They attack one another, trying to get rid of the competition. With their faces covered, they don't recognize each other. They just barely manage to take out the target, and escape. As they disappear into the night, the FBI floods in.

John and Jane report their completed missions to their bosses...but they both know there's a problem: they left a witness at the hit -- a witness that needs to be eliminated in order to "clean" the scene. So John and Jane must find and kill this witness (they must find and kill each other).

They try to figure out who the other assassin is. As with everything, they use totally opposite styles. John hits the streets -- using street contacts like an old-school assassin. And Jane goes high-tech: using satellite and surveillance cameras (eyes in the sky), piecing together footage from the hit. They both quickly begin to suspect the other killer is...their spouse. And they're both equally shocked, confused, reeling. They're not one-hundred-percent sure. But they're definitely going to find out...

John returns home, to find Jane waiting there. They're both on point -- not knowing how much the other one knows. She brings out wine and food -- a feast. As they make small talk, they don't take their eyes off each other, scrutinizing every little move (where before they wouldn't even look at

each other). Everything is charged, loaded now. Jane hesitates before eating her dinner, and John suspects (in that beat) -- it's poisoned. Their eyes lock, he senses the truth. And he excuses himself for a second. He grabs weapons from his den, but when he comes back in, Jane is...gone. He creeps through the house...where everything's suddenly menacing -- all the little creaks and shadows of a sweet suburban home are not so sweet and safe anymore. He can't find Jane anywhere. Then he hears her station-wagon start in the garage. He jumps in his car to give chase, and trails her onto the highway.

She speeds up, weaving thru traffic, and he speeds up, keeping pace. He wants to talk to her. He calls her cell. They're both shocked, reeling, feeling betrayed. All these years. All lies. John needs Jane to talk to him, to tell him the truth. But she swerves away, leaving a trap for him. He goes flying off the freeway, crashing into the river. John slowly claws his way to the surface. His eyes narrow, knowing the hunt is on.

What follows through the second act is basically a heightened, charged game of "cat and mouse," with John and Jane hunting each other through the maze of Manhattan. In terms of marriage therapy, they've initiated. And now they're interacting and communicating. As they hunt, they have to pay attention to each other for the first time -- and in doing so, they slowly come to understand and appreciate each other, rediscovering the passion they once had. They're like two master artists excited by each other's work, pushing each other to be better, faster, stronger -- and learning each other's moves in the process -- really learning about each other.

To compile background on their targets, they use their own resources: years worth of photos, videos, letters, and postcards, all of which force them to recall moments from their marriage, to re-evaluate their lives together. Jane goes home, ransacking her own house for clues. John does the same. In putting their life under the microscope, John and Jane start to think about their past, their present. Jane watches their old wedding video. John goes through a drawer of Jane's lingerie. Old feelings are sparking ever-so-slightly for both of them...

John and Jane's associates, Sal and Jasmine, see them changing, sparking. And these associates are <u>worried</u>. The clock is ticking. John and Jane need to finish the job. So the hunt continues:

John raids Jane's office, ambushing her. He slides through security, blasts through walls, pushing her physically and emotionally. He needs to know if it was all a lie, if she ever felt anything. Jane holds strong, standing her ground,

giving up nothing. She leaves John high and dry.

The hunt continues. John trails Jane to her new offices. But this time, she knew he was coming. She laid bait for him. This office is a trap. John rises in the elevator, and suddenly...stops. The elevator car dangles sixty floors up. John realizes... Jane's in control. He gives the smallest smile, almost impressed. He wants her to come out and face him, like a man. But that's not her style. She's ready to hit the button and send him to his death. But for the first time...Jane...pauses. She can't pull the trigger right away. A hint of emotion. And...BOOOOM! She shakes it off. Hits the button. The elevator drops sixty floors at warp speed. John struggles to escape, plummeting fast. The elevator smashes into the lobby with a giant boom. We don't see whether or not he made it out. Jane's down there, in the lobby, and she carefully checks the wreckage... finding scraps of John's clothes in a pile of smoldering rubble. She (and maybe we) figure he's buried under there. She's won. But we see a flicker in her eyes: ambivalence. She nods softly. She was just starting to feel something...

She goes to Le Cirque (or some fancy restaurant) for dinner. They know her here -- it's where she goes when she closes contracts. But in the middle of dinner, another chair draws up. John sits down across from her. A few cuts and bruises, but very much alive. This scene should play like the "time out" in "Out of Sight" -- sharp and sexy with lots of tension (they even have guns in their laps, aimed under the table -- but they can't do anything because they're in a crowded restaurant). There's an energy now -- something electric, sexual, between them. But they both know the hard truth: they can't go back to their lives; only one can survive. No happy endings. Back to business. John blocks the exits, but Jane calls in a bomb threat. She takes cover in the surging crowd, escaping into the night.

John and Jane's bosses turn up the heat. The clock is ticking down. They need to stop playing games, and finish the job. The action continues, the hunt getting deadlier, cat and mouse swirling through the city, until...

They both speed to the same destination: home. For the final fight. It's a race to see who can get back first. On route, John calls Jane for one last talk. He needs to know what she thought the first time they met. Was it all business from the start? She fights herself, struggling with her emotions. She finally wills herself into saying that John was just a mark to her -- "cold hard math." John hangs up, resolved, ready to do the deed.

They screech into the driveway together... both moving fast -- John to the toolshed, Jane to the kitchen. And their hunt culminates here in their beautiful, upscale, suburban home...

which they blow to absolute bits, chasing each other through the house, strafing the floors and walls, leaving the place in total shambles. They blast each other's favorite objects: Jane's china, John's lazy-boy. Finally, with clouds of ash and debris drifting through the air, they face-off in their living room. Like two gunfighters in the Old West, they clutch their guns and cock the hammers, ready for the moment of truth... but... their eyes dart around the room, glimpsing bits and pieces of a life together (photos, knick-knacks that have taken on greater meaning over the span of the film)... and their trigger-fingers start to relax. It's almost like they've been in this incredibly high-speed dance together, and now the music's suddenly stopped and they're left breathless, a little dizzy, staring at their partner for the first time. Eye-to-eye, John can't pull the trigger. He slowly drops his gun. He tells Jane if she wants it, it's hers. But she's got to tell him it's "cold hard math." She struggles, her emotions finally overwhelming her, and she...drops her gun and slams into John for a kiss of pure intimacy and intensity. All of the tension, all of the thrills of the chase, come pouring out. It's pure catharsis. And pure passion.

After a blissful night, John and Jane wake up together. And they immediately realize that their (figurative) clocks have stopped ticking -- meaning, they didn't finish their jobs. So they've got a whole new problem: their bosses will send armies to kill John and Jane, to clean the scene once and for all.

So, John and Jane must work together to take down their bosses. For the first time, John and Jane must become real partners (in every sense of the word). And it's not easy. They have different styles, and they're both used to being boss.

First order of business: they need to find some leverage on their bosses. They both think the same thought: the target, where this all started. Who was he? What did he have on the bosses? Whatever it was, it was worth killing for. So John and Jane must figure it out.

They break into an FBI stronghold, and steal the evidence (tapes, documents). John and Jane struggle in this set-piece, their skills colliding. John is out of control, Jane is controlling. They just barely escape. They have their evidence, and they use it to lure their bosses to the same spot at the same time. They know these men will bring their entire armies.

It is here, in the finale, that John and Jane finally work together, using all their skills, fighting against two armies. They lure them to home turf, somewhere John and Jane know better than the opposition.

The Smiths struggle at first, still not working as a team. Jane is nearly killed, rocking them both to reality. John helps her survive. They have a final “Butch and Sundance” moment, with armies massing on all sides. Jane makes a little gesture of her love -- just a line, a look, a move. Their eyes lock. United. And they rise as one, taking out the enemy in a death-dance, firing back-to-back, spinning in unison, targeting the whole battlefield. John and Jane leave a trail of bodies in their wake, and leave their bosses for the FBI to clean up. The Smiths limp off, bruised and bloodied, but...together, leaning on each other for support.

They end where they began: marriage therapy. But now there is a whole new energy between them. They are a very different couple. Where before they sat on opposite ends of the couch, now they sit close, beaming, happy. The doctor asks questions, which should be laced with the metaphor of the movie: John and Jane are battle-tested, ready to handle any fight that comes their way. Together. United...