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# INCREDIBLE SEX

a trio of one-act comedies  
by Rich Orloff

## ACT I

*Women in Heat*..... 5

KIM, a woman in her twenties

MARGE, a woman in her twenties, more shy than Kim

CHARLENE, a woman in her twenties, less shy than Kim

MATTHEW, a man in his twenties

*Place:* The backyard patio of a beachfront condominium in Key West, Florida

*Time:* Morning.

*I Didn't Know You Could Cook*..... 25

JEROME, mid-20s, paraplegic, uses a wheelchair

MARK, his older brother

*Place:* The kitchen of a modest urban apartment.

*Time:* Dinner time.

## ACT II

*Mars Needs Women, But Not As Much As Arnold Schecter*..... 47

ARNOLD, a guy in his twenties

SALLY, his girlfriend

J.D., his best friend

LAURIE, a waitress

BALTHAZAR, from the planet Mars, single

VELICHANTRA, from Mars, his female cousin

*Place:* A coffee shop in Passaic, New Jersey.

*Time:* The present.

# **WOMEN IN HEAT**

**Cast of Characters**

KIM, a woman in her twenties

MARGE, a woman in her twenties, more shy than Kim

CHARLENE, a woman in her twenties, less shy than Kim

MATTHEW, a man in his twenties

**Place**

The backyard patio of a beachfront condominium in Key West, Florida.

**Time**

Morning.

**Acknowledgements**

*Women in Heat* was first performed on April 9, 2003 at Emerging Artists Theatre (Paul Adams, Artistic Director) in New York City. The cast was as follows:

KIM ..... Wendy Allyn

MATTHEW ..... Daniel Kaufman

MARGE ..... Callie Mauldin

CHARLENE..... Kathy McCafferty

Directed by Laurissa James

# WOMEN IN HEAT

by Rich Orloff

*(The backyard patio of a beachfront condominium in Key West, Florida. A few lounge chairs, tables and such. The sounds of a beach.)*

*(KIM enters from inside the apartment. She wears a light robe and carries a cup of coffee. Not fully awake, she looks like she's sorting something out, something which makes her confused, happy, concerned, a bit nervous, and in a word, overwhelmed.)*

*(MARGE enters. She's in a jogging outfit and is completely exhausted. No person has ever been covered with more sweat than MARGE is.)*

**MARGE.** It's so hot.

**KIM.** Your uncle told you Key West was hot in July.

**MARGE.** He didn't tell me it'd be *this* hot. And humid. Nobody could've told me it'd be *this* humid.

**KIM.** How was your jog, Marge?

**MARGE.** Three miles. Three sweaty miles.

**KIM.** Congratulations.

**MARGE.** I think I've gone down a dress size from water loss.

**KIM.** I made some coffee.

**MARGE.** I just want to rest a bit, grab a book, and go into the refrigerator.

*(CHARLENE enters. She wears sunglasses and the kind of short, sexy outfit a woman would wear for a hot night of dancing.)*

**CHARLENE.** It's so hot; I love it!

**KIM.** Good morning.

**MARGE.** Are you just getting in?

**CHARLENE.** Mm-hmmmm.

**KIM.** Fun night?

**CHARLENE.** Mm-hmmmm.

**KIM.** Congratulations.

**CHARLENE.** Isn't this place great? I think Key West is God's way of balancing Dayton, Ohio.

**MARGE.** I don't think the Lord works like that.

**CHARLENE.** Too bad.

**MARGE.** The Lord doesn't do things so we'll be happy.

**CHARLENE.** I know... He created parents.

**KIM.** Where were you all night?

**CHARLENE.** You remember that guy I was dancing with?

**KIM.** Uh-huh.

**CHARLENE.** Well, we both got so sweaty dancing that we decided the only way to cool off was with a moonlight swim.

**MARGE.** There was no moon out last night.

**CHARLENE.** There was when he took his shorts off.

**KIM.** You two went skinny-dipping?

**CHARLENE.** Uh-huh. And I tell you, between the surf and the waves and the stars and the breeze and the rum and his body—

**KIM.** Did you—

**CHARLENE.** Mm-hmmmm.

**MARGE.** In the water?

**CHARLENE.** Mm-hmmmm.

**MARGE.** Wasn't it salty?

**CHARLENE.** So's a margarita, and I never turn those down, either.

**KIM.** Couldn't wait till you got back on land, huh?

**CHARLENE.** *I* could, but time, and tide, wait for no man.

**MARGE.** Charlene, do you ever think about what you do?

**CHARLENE.** Of course. That's why I drink.

**MARGE.** Do you ever wonder if you can *afford* to lose more brain cells?

**CHARLENE.** No, I've already lost the brain cells that worry about such things.

**MARGE.** I thought so.

**KIM.** Now girls—

**CHARLENE.** And how was *your* evening, Marge?

**MARGE.** I finished WUTHERING HEIGHTS.

**KIM.** How was it?

**MARGE.** It was very insightful and moving.

**CHARLENE.** And how you plan to use this moving insight?

**KIM.** *Charlene.*

**CHARLENE.** Well, she's the first person who's ever come to Key West so she can catch up on her reading.

**MARGE.** I'm improving my mind. What are you improving?

**CHARLENE.** My stamina.

**MARGE.** Have you ever considered jogging?

**CHARLENE.** Have you ever considered loosening up?

**KIM.** Girls—

**MARGE.** You know, when Kim asked if you could come, I said fine, as long as she doesn't start getting on my case—

**CHARLENE.** I think you started getting on my case first—

**KIM.** Ladies—

**MARGE.** I'm just asking questions—

**CHARLENE.** No, you're judging—

**MARGE.** Well so are you—

**KIM.** Will you keep it down? I, I, I... I have company that's still asleep.

**CHARLENE.** There's someone in your bedroom?

**KIM.** Mmmmore or less.

**CHARLENE.** Is he cute?

**KIM.** More or less.

**CHARLENE.** Is he decent looking?

**KIM.** More or less.

**MARGE.** Is he human?

**KIM.** More or less.

**MARGE.** A woman?

**KIM.** No.

**CHARLENE.** An anatomically correct blow-up doll?

**KIM.** No.

**CHARLENE.** Soooooo?

**KIM.** "He" has four legs.

**CHARLENE.** Don't tell me you had a goat; it's been done.

**KIM.** I.... I had a threesome last night.

**MARGE.** You what?!                   **CHARLENE.** Right on!

**MARGE.** And they're still here?!

**KIM.** Yep.

**MARGE.** You brought two strangers into my uncle's condo?

**KIM.** Sorry.

**CHARLENE.** You agreed we could entertain men.

**MARGE.** I meant one at a time.

**CHARLENE.** I give Kim my proxy.

**MARGE.** You know, I'm responsi—

**KIM.** I'm sorry, Marge, I just—it just made the most sense at the time.

**MARGE.** But—

**KIM.** I knew I'd feel safer here.

**MARGE.** You really had sex with two guys?

**KIM.** Uh-huh.

**MARGE.** But that's not like you.

**KIM.** I know.

**MARGE.** You had two guys at the same time?

**KIM.** Well, some of it was at the same time, some of it was taking turns.

**MARGE.** I can't imagine doing such a thing.

**CHARLENE.** That's what's great about drugs. They stretch the imagination.

**KIM.** I wasn't drunk. Or stoned.

**MARGE.** What were you?

**KIM.** Curious, I guess.

**MARGE.** You know what they said about curiosity.

**CHARLENE.** It's good for the pussy?

**MARGE.** Look, just because you don't care about safety—

**CHARLENE.** I care.

**MARGE.** Oh, yeah? With your sex life, you could give a yeast infection to the Pillsbury dough boy.

**CHARLENE.** Look, you little—

**KIM.** Will you two cool it?! Do you want to wake one or more of them up?

**CHARLENE.** Okay, details, I want details. What happened? Tell me everything. Spare nothing. Feel free to use drawings if necessary.

**KIM.** Well, I was dancing with these two guys, this totally cute white guy and this totally awesome black guy, and at one point I said, “I can’t choose between you” and the white guy said, “You don’t have to.” And I laughed—and they didn’t. They were *smiling*. Biiiiig smiles. And I thought, *this* will make a good vacation story.

**CHARLENE.** And then?

**MARGE.** Charlene, don’t you have enough lurid stories from your own sex life?

**CHARLENE.** I have a vacancy in this category. So how was it?

**KIM.** Well, *they* liked it.

**MARGE.** Of course *they’d*—

**KIM.** Before they fell asleep, they suggested we get together again tonight.

**MARGE.** They what?!                      **CHARLENE.** You rock!

**MARGE.** You’re not going to, are you?

**KIM.** I, I don’t know. It’s not like last night was a *romantic* evening. I didn’t think, “Gee, I hope I get both of their phone numbers.” But it *was* a, a—

**CHARLENE.** Turn on.

**KIM.** (*Correcting:*) An adventure. There was something about being massaged by four hands, being kissed by four lips, grabbing both their—

**MARGE.** I think I’ve heard enough.

**CHARLENE.** I haven’t.

**KIM.** Just once, I wanted to go too far. All my life I’ve been so—Ohio. I think Ohio. I dress Ohio. Just once I wanted—

**CHARLENE.** An out-of-state experience.

**KIM.** Yeah. That’s what I wanted. Yeah. I think.

**MARGE.** Are you okay?

**KIM.** I think so.

**CHARLENE.** You don't regret it?

**KIM.** No.

**MARGE.** And you're *really* thinking of doing it again?

**KIM.** I have no idea. No, no let me correct that. I have too many ideas. And they're shouting at me all at once: "It was a mistake" "It was fun" "It's bad" "It's good." Ever since I woke up, it's like there's a debate squad in my brain.

**CHARLENE.** Hey, if you had a good time, why not go for it?

**KIM.** Because, well, lots of people do things *once*. Once is experimentation. Twice is—lifestyle.

**CHARLENE.** Your problem is that you think too much.

**KIM.** Maybe you're right.

**MARGE.** No, no, keep thinking, keep thinking.

**KIM.** You think I did the wrong thing, don't you, Marge?

**MARGE.** It's— I just, I just think we live in a time when everybody's looking in the wrong direction for happiness. If you're not happy, pierce your navel and tattoo your back. And when the happiness fades, pierce your eyebrow and tattoo your butt. And when that happiness fades, pierce your tongue and tattoo your arm. Pierce this, tattoo that; pierce this, tattoo that. And one morning you wake up and you're still not happy, but your body looks like Swiss cheese with decals.

**KIM.** I don't know. I just don't know.

**CHARLENE.** I say, stop thinking and go for it.

**KIM.** I can't stop thinking.

**MARGE.** You sound scared.

**KIM.** I am scared.

**CHARLENE.** What's there to be scared of?

**KIM.** I...*I liked it.*

**CHARLENE.** So?

**KIM.** I was just planning to do it, I wasn't planning to *like* it.

**CHARLENE.** So what's wrong with liking it?

**MARGE.** I like ice cream, but I think one scoop at a time is plenty.

**CHARLENE.** Tell me, when you're offered M & M's, do you eat one "M"?

**MARGE.** I allow myself one of each color.

**CHARLENE.** That's exactly what Kim did last night.

**MARGE.** Well, in my experience—

**CHARLENE.** *What* experience?

**MARGE.** I'll have you know more than one guy has told me I'm great in the sack!

**CHARLENE.** Which one of you was wearing the sack?

**KIM.** Hey.

**MARGE.** (*To CHARLENE:*) You know, you used to be a nice person.

**CHARLENE.** And I used to wear braids, big deal.

**MARGE.** Really, Charlene—

**CHARLENE.** I got sick of being limited by my own fears.

**MARGE.** I didn't know you *had* fears.

**CHARLENE.** Of course I do. Big ones. But I hate it when the fear wins. Fear is bossy; fear's obnoxious. Fear is like the worst older brother you can imagine. So I refuse to be stopped by it.

**MARGE.** What about the night you ended up in the E.R. with alcohol poisoning?

**CHARLENE.** The EMT guy was really cute.

**MARGE.** They had to pump your stomach.

**CHARLENE.** And it cured me of any desire to become a bulimic.

**MARGE.** You know, Charlene, sometimes I wonder if you even like sex, or if you just like rebelling.

**CHARLENE.** At least I have adventures.

**MARGE.** I've had adventures. But unlike *some* people, I don't send out group e-mails about them afterwards.

**CHARLENE.** When did you have adventures?

**MARGE.** When I was with Barry.

**KIM.** Really?

**CHARLENE.** Details, I want details.

**MARGE.** I'd rather not reduce it to the level of gossip.

**CHARLENE.** Gossip is not a level reduced; it's a level achieved.

**MARGE.** It's none of your business.

**CHARLENE.** I can't believe you and Barry did *anything* worth gossiping about.

**MARGE.** *Okay.* I don't want to go into all the gory details, but at least once it involved ice cream. And one scoop was enough.

**KIM.** What flavor?

**MARGE.** My point is, I've tried things. Lots of things. But when we broke up, I didn't think, well, "At least I've had adventures." I thought, "I'm no closer to happiness than I've ever been." (*Moving towards tears:*) And, and then I looked at the chocolate sauce on my linens, and the scratch marks on the bed post, and I thought about all the money we spent on rope and licorice, and, and I wondered, what's the point? And then I watched the videotapes and...

**KIM.** Marge...

**MARGE.** (*Breaking down:*) I hate this generation. I hate the pressures, the expectations. I'm so sick of having to be part of "The Young and the Horny."

**CHARLENE.** (*Warmly:*) Hey... You want me to fix you a drink?

**MARGE.** A good Christian never drinks this early.

**CHARLENE.** How about if I turn some water into a piña colada?

**KIM.** We should've gone to the Poconos like last year. I never question anything in the Poconos.

**CHARLENE.** I never get horny in the Poconos.

**MARGE.** Charlene, does the sacredness of sex mean *nothing* to you?

**CHARLENE.** Au contraire. I think sex is God's way of saying, "You can only tan during daylight, so here's something to do at night."

**MARGE.** You're shameless, aren't you?

**CHARLENE.** No, but I'm willing to fake it till I get there.

**MARGE.** Well, regardless of what we pretend, I think sex without love is—

**CHARLENE.** Quicker.

**MARGE.** Kim, honestly, what if you're in a serious relationship someday and the guy finds out what you did?

**KIM.** I've asked myself that.

**MARGE.** And?

**KIM.** It's on my very, very long list of "I don't know."

**CHARLENE.** Well, I think he'd be turned on.

**MARGE.** I think he'd be pissed off.

**CHARLENE.** He'd get excited.

**MARGE.** He might get excited, but he won't stick around long enough to help you remove the strawberry jelly off the bathmat.

**CHARLENE.** Look, she's not hurting anyone, and she's not being hurt.

**MARGE.** (*Pointing to her heart:*) And how do you know how this is affecting her *in here*?

**CHARLENE.** She can handle it. She's strong.

**MARGE.** She's sensitive.

**CHARLENE.** She's adventurous.

**KIM.** (*Overlapping with the others:*) —Hey come on—

**MARGE.** She's mature.

**CHARLENE.** She's young.

**KIM.** —I'm right here—

**MARGE.** She's got a good head.

**CHARLENE.** And a great body.

**KIM.** Will you two stop it?!! You two act like you know exactly who I am. Well, *I* don't. I thought I did, and, and... Damn it, why is it that every time my body has fun, my brain calls the police?

*(MATTHEW enters.)*

**MATTHEW.** Am I interrupting something?

**KIM.** Yes, please do.

**MATTHEW.** Good morning.

**KIM.** Good morning.

*(MATTHEW kisses KIM lightly. Then an awkward silence.)*

**CHARLENE.** I'm Kim's friend Char—

**KIM.** Oh, right. Seth—

**MATTHEW.** I'm Matthew. Seth's still sleeping.

**KIM.** Right. Matthew, I'd like you to meet my friends Charlene and Marge.

**MATTHEW.** Pleased to meet you.

**CHARLENE.** Pleased to meet you.

**MARGE.** Pleased to meet you.

*(A bit of silence.)*

**MATTHEW.** Everyone seems very pleased this morning.

**CHARLENE.** I bet *you* are.

**KIM.** Um, there's coffee in the kitchen if you'd like some.

**MATTHEW.** Sounds good to me... Ladies.

(MATTHEW *exits*. CHARLENE *gives* KIM a “thumbs up.”)

MARGE. He seems nice.

CHARLENE. You were expecting horns and a tail?

MARGE. No.

CHARLENE. Just a horn?

MARGE. Kim, do you want us to leave you and Matthew al—

KIM. No, no, that’s okay.

CHARLENE. We’ll be glad to—

KIM. No, no, you don’t have to—

MARGE. What a world in which just being alone with someone is scarier than sex.

(MATTHEW *returns, with coffee.*)

MATTHEW. Good coffee.

KIM. Thank you.

(*Another awkward silence.*)

MATTHEW. So is this your first time in Key West?

CHARLENE. Yep.

MARGE. Yes.

MATTHEW. Having a good time?

MARGE. Yes.

CHARLENE. Yep.

MATTHEW. Okay, and now on to the short essay questions.

KIM. I told them about last night.

MATTHEW. Ah, that does tend to turn some women monosyllabic.

MARGE. Oh, you’ve done this a lot?

MATTHEW. Not that often.

CHARLENE. Not that adventurous?

**MATTHEW.** Not that lucky.

**MARGE.** That must be so disappointing.

**MATTHEW.** Ah, you're one of those types.

**MARGE.** What type?

**MATTHEW.** The "If I don't do it, it must be wrong" type.

**MARGE.** I've done things that are wrong.

**CHARLENE.** She's been banned from Haagen-Dazs.

**MATTHEW.** I'm not sure I—

**KIM.** You had to be there.

**MATTHEW.** Well, if it was during the last twelve hours, I like where I was.

**KIM.** Thank you.

*(A long silence. Nobody knows what to say next.)*

**MATTHEW.** *(Whispering to KIM:)* If you'd like me to say something innocuous just to fill space, just let me know.

**KIM.** Thank you.

**MATTHEW.** You say "Thank you" way too often.

**KIM.** My parents believed politeness was one of the greatest of virtues.

**MATTHEW.** What else did they believe in?

**KIM.** They were too polite to tell me.

**MATTHEW.** You weren't polite last night.

**KIM.** I know.

**MATTHEW.** You were courteous, but not polite.

**KIM.** Thank you. *(Off his look:)* I'm sorry; it's my inner "Ohio."

**MATTHEW.** Did you think about our offer for tonight?

**KIM.** Oh, yeah. Think, think, think.

**PAGES HAVE BEEN CUT FROM THIS SCENE.  
THE PLAY CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

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**I DIDN'T KNOW  
YOU COULD COOK**

## **Cast of Characters**

JEROME, mid-20s, paraplegic, uses a wheelchair

MARK, his older brother

## **Place**

The kitchen of a modest urban apartment.

## **Time**

Dinner time.

## **Production Notes**

In a kitchen used by someone confined to a wheelchair, although the layout would be the same, the higher shelves would be empty, and all appliances would be in easy reach.

## **Acknowledgements**

*I Didn't Know You Could Cook* was first performed on January 12, 1994 at the Carousel Theatre Company (William-Kevin Young, Producer) in New York City. The cast was as follows:

JEROME.....William-Kevin Young

MARK ..... Kirk Allen

Directed by Vicki Meisner

*I Didn't Know You Could Cook* was developed at the National Theatre Workshop of the Handicapped (Rick Curry, S.J., Artistic Director).

# I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD COOK

by Rich Orloff

*(As the play begins, JEROME and MARK are at the kitchen table finishing dinner. JEROME has gone to some effort to make the meal setting look classy.)*

**MARK.** Anyway, so he pulls up to the stoplight, and he begins revving up his little Corvette engine, and I think, give me a break.

**JEROME.** Uh-huh.

**MARK.** I didn't get my Porsche to be macho or anything. I just like how it feels.

**JEROME.** Uh-huh.

**MARK.** But he keeps revving his engine, rhhm, rhhm, rhhmmmm, so, so right before the light changes, I roll down my window—

**JEROME.** Yeah.

**MARK.** And I say, "I think you've done a wonderful job of compensating for a small penis."

**JEROME.** You didn't.

**MARK.** Light changed; I took off; left him in the dust.

**JEROME.** Wow, it's so cool they gave you a Porsche as a bonus.

**MARK.** Hey, if you ever want to get into sales...

**JEROME.** I think I'll stick with teaching.

**MARK.** Well, if you ever want me to help. After all, what's a brother for?

**JEROME.** Thanks. Not that I could drive one, anyway.

**MARK.** I'm sure they could adjust it.

**JEROME.** Bucket seats? Low to the ground? I think I'll stick with my Ford.

**MARK.** I'm sure they could adjust anything, if you pay them enough.

**JEROME.** I'll stick with my Ford. We've developed a very intimate and trusting relationship.

**MARK.** You know, in a just world, they'd give teachers cars as bonuses.

**JEROME.** That'll be the day.

**MARK.** Well, you work hard enough for it.

**JEROME.** I'm just glad they finally put all the ramps up.

**MARK.** I thought they had to do that years ago.

**JEROME.** They did.

**MARK.** Then why didn't they?

**JEROME.** They hadn't run out of excuses yet.

**MARK.** (*Finishing eating:*) This was delicious, Jerome. Absolutely delicious.

**JEROME.** I'm glad you liked it.

**MARK.** I'm really impressed. I didn't know you could cook.

**JEROME.** Millions of people can cook, Mark. Maybe billions.

**MARK.** Not me. I tried making pasta once; a couple of pieces are still stuck to my wall.

**JEROME.** Would you like some dessert?

**MARK.** Oh, no, I'm stuffed.

**JEROME.** It's chocolate mousse pie. Made it from scratch.

**MARK.** Sorry. No room.

**JEROME.** You don't need room for chocolate mousse pie. It just fills the crevices around the food you've already eaten.

**MARK.** Can't do it. I've already met my caloric maximum for the day.

**JEROME.** I forgot how disciplined you are.

**MARK.** Even a small paunch can negatively impact a woman's first response to you.

**JEROME.** I'll remember that.

**MARK.** Besides, I, I probably should be heading back to the hotel.

**JEROME.** It's early.

**MARK.** I know, but I have another meeting first thing—

**JEROME.** *(Overlapping with the above:)* But we've hardly—

**MARK.** *(Overlapping with the above:)* They didn't fly me this far so I could—

**JEROME.** *(Overlapping with the above:)* I just hoped we could—

**MARK.** *(Overlapping with the above:)* Next time I'm in town—

**JEROME.** Right. Sure.

**MARK.** Hey.

**JEROME.** You know—you know how long it's been since we've spent any real time together?

**MARK.** Six months?

**JEROME.** Five years.

**MARK.** What do you mean? I saw you at Mom's birthday thing, and Uncle Ted and Aunt Lisa's fiftieth anniversary, and at Daniel's wedding.

**JEROME.** Those are family things. Nobody really talks at them.

**MARK.** Sure, they do.

**JEROME.** Mark, the reason they're called family *functions* is because that's about all you can do at them.

**MARK.** Well, we've talked the last hour, haven't we?

**JEROME.** Yeah. I guess.

*(JEROME starts taking the dishes to the kitchen sink.)*

**MARK.** Can I help with the—

**JEROME.** I got it.

**MARK.** I'd be glad to—

**JEROME.** I got it... Would you like some coffee?

**MARK.** Caffeine after seven? Never.

**JEROME.** I have decaf.

**MARK.** I really can't stay—

**JEROME.** Right.

**MARK.** Hey, Mom sent me that article about you in the paper.

**JEROME.** About the disabled schoolteacher all the third graders adore?

**MARK.** It was a good article.

**JEROME.** It was your generic "Let's admire the handicapped" piece. They just filled in the blanks with my name.

**MARK.** Nobody writes about me.

**JEROME.** Look, it was a fine article; I, I just don't like being written up because I can do what people *assume* I can't do. If they were honest, the piece would have been titled, "Local Crip Transcends Expectations."

**MARK.** Well, I liked the piece.

**JEROME.** I'm glad.

**MARK.** And even if this isn't...correct, I'm really impressed by how well you've learned to manage on your own.

**JEROME.** And I'm impressed by how well you've learned to manage on your own, too, Mark.

**MARK.** All I mean is, well, I never thought you'd move out and live on your own. I mean, I knew you could. I knew you could do anything you put your mind to.

**JEROME.** I think professional ski jumping is out.

**MARK.** Well, anything practical.

**JEROME.** The jumping I could finesse; it's the lifts that frighten me.

**MARK.** I'm still proud of what you've done. I'm sorry if that bugs you, but it's true.

**JEROME.** I haven't done anything special.

**MARK.** I'm not sure I could have done what you've done.

**JEROME.** You just haven't been tested.

**MARK.** Still, to live alone when you're, well, you know—I think it's quite an accomplishment.

**JEROME.** Well, it's not like I'm completely alone.

**MARK.** Why? Is someone hiding in the bedroom or something?

**JEROME.** No, no, it's just, well, to quote Ringo, or was it George, anyway, to quote one of them, I get by with a little help from my friends.

**MARK.** Oh, does some social agency help—

**JEROME.** No, I mean friends. You know, *friends*.

**MARK.** I know, *friends*. The people you put in your Palm Pilot who aren't business connections.

**JEROME.** I also, um, well, I...there's, there's also one special friend.

**MARK.** No, really?

**JEROME.** Really.

**MARK.** Who?

**JEROME.** Oh, just...just someone special.

**MARK.** Who?

**JEROME.** Well—

**MARK.** What's her name?

**JEROME.** Louie.

**MARK.** Louie?

**JEROME.** Louie.

**MARK.** Well, if there can be an actress named Glenn Close, I guess there can be a woman named Louie.

**JEROME.** Louie's a man.

**MARK.** Oh, so he's just a friend.

**JEROME.** We're more than friends.

**MARK.** He's a good friend.

**JEROME.** We're more than good friends.

**MARK.** He's a good, good friend.

**JEROME.** We're lovers.

**MARK.** He's a *very* good friend.

**JEROME.** Mark, I'm gay.

**MARK.** You can't be gay.

**JEROME.** Why not?

**MARK.** Because our father isn't henpecked and our mother isn't castrating.

**JEROME.** I'm still gay.

**MARK.** What makes you think you're gay?

**JEROME.** Well, for one thing, I'm extremely enamored with the male form.

**MARK.** So you have a heightened sense of aesthetics.

**JEROME.** I also have a lover named Louie.

**MARK.** Are you sure you're not doing this to be trendy?

**JEROME.** Mark, I'm a homosexual.

**MARK.** Well, I'm stunned. I'm really stunned.

**JEROME.** I—

**MARK.** I never even knew you were sexual.

**JEROME.** Of course, I'm sexual.

**MARK.** Well, I thought, since the accident...

**JEROME.** Only my legs went limp; nothing in-between... I'm one of the lucky ones.

**MARK.** You mean, you really can, uh—

**JEROME.** Uh-huh.

**MARK.** Really?

**JEROME.** Yes.

**MARK.** Really?

**JEROME.** Well, it does take me longer to climax, but I've never gotten any complaints about that.

**MARK.** Well...what do you know.

**JEROME.** To be honest, after the accident, I wasn't sure what I'd be able to do. At the rehab center, they didn't deal with our sexuality at all. At all. Then about six months later, I—I was watching this Mel Gibson movie, and he started getting real sweaty, and inside I started getting real excited, and outside I got real excited, too.

**MARK.** Mel Gibson?

**JEROME.** I know you're shocked that I'm turned on by Mel Gibson. *(Lightly:)* But then, I'm shocked when I meet someone who isn't.

**MARK.** You're just doing this to be different, aren't you?

**JEROME.** No.

**MARK.** Isn't it enough that—

**JEROME.** Stop it! Look, I, I...I know you have trouble accepting things sometimes.

**MARK.** Like what?

**JEROME.** Like after the accident, when you visited from college and you offered me a hundred bucks if I took five steps.

**MARK.** I thought you needed encouragement.

**JEROME.** My spinal cord had been severed, Mark.

**MARK.** I know.

**JEROME.** It was physically impossible.

**MARK.** Miracles do happen, Jerome!

**JEROME.** That's exactly what I thought during the Mel Gibson movie.

**MARK.** Look, I just thought you needed a little push to get better.

**JEROME.** I *was* getting better.

**MARK.** Well, you know, the way the whole family was coddling you; Mom and Grandma were so glad you were alive, they weren't going to ask anything of you.

**JEROME.** Well, you know, c'mon, they were devastated.

**MARK.** I didn't want you to get too...comfortable.

**JEROME.** That wasn't likely.

**MARK.** I didn't see anybody pushing you to get better.

**JEROME.** You almost made me think—

**MARK.** Everyone always coddled you.

**JEROME.** Dad never coddled me.

**MARK.** Dad never knew either of us existed.

*(This stops the conversation for a moment.)*

**JEROME.** You're right.

**MARK.** Look, about this, this deciding to be gay thing, I...well, I just can't say I approve.

**JEROME.** Well then, I guess I'll just have to stop. Next time my pecker rises during a Mel Gibson movie, I'll have to say, "Stop that. Wait till Halle Berry comes on the screen."

**MARK.** This doesn't sit right with me, that's all. It just doesn't.

**JEROME.** Do you want to pretend I never said it?

**MARK.** This doesn't sit right, that's all. Maybe by your friends it does, but, but not by me.

**JEROME.** Oh.

**MARK.** You always get these ideas in your head and, and everyone coddles you...

**JEROME.** Look...

**MARK.** It's not healthy.

**JEROME.** Mark—

**MARK.** So I'm giving you a choice.

**JEROME.** What?!

**MARK.** I'm giving you a choice.

**JEROME.** What?

**MARK.** You can be gay or disabled, but not both.

**JEROME.** But I *am* both!

**MARK.** Why can't you be satisfied just being disabled?

**JEROME.** I don't know. Maybe I'm just selfish.

**MARK.** Have you considered seeing a shrink about this?

**JEROME.** I've seen a shrink.

**MARK.** And what did he say?

**JEROME.** He said I should accept myself for who I am and stop worrying about whether or not I can please my older brother.

**MARK.** That sounds like something a shrink would say. Does the school know about this?

**JEROME.** I'm sure some people suspect, but no.

**MARK.** 'Cause I'm sure a lot of parents would get pretty upset.

**JEROME.** I know. Some of them are already nervous about me. I think they're afraid that with me as a role model, some of their kids will want to grow up to be disabled.

**MARK.** You never used to have this edge.

**JEROME.** I never used to live in the real world.

**MARK.** Look, Jerome, about this uh—you sure this isn't just another phase you're going through, you know, like when you were eight and you were positive you wanted to become an astronaut?

**JEROME.** I don't think—

**MARK.** You were very serious about it. You had pictures of constellations up on your walls and everything.

**JEROME.** It's not the same.

**MARK.** Maybe you think women won't be attracted to you because...you know.

**JEROME.** Mark, I've been with women. I wasn't attracted to them the way I am with men.

**MARK.** What do you mean, "been with"?

**JEROME.** I mean everything you think I could mean.

**MARK.** Even, uh...

**JEROME.** Uh-huh.

**MARK.** Were these women...you know?

**JEROME.** Hookers?

**MARK.** No!...You know.

**JEROME.** Virgins?

**MARK.** No.

**JEROME.** Disabled?

**MARK.** Yeah.

**JEROME.** Some were, and some weren't.

**MARK.** Where'd you meet 'em?

**JEROME.** Oh, I don't know. School, bars, the post office.

**MARK.** You picked up girls at the post office?

**JEROME.** Oh, sure. (*To an imaginary woman:*) "Here, let me hold your package in my lap... No, it's no effort at all."

*(JEROME gives the imaginary woman a big smile.)*

**MARK.** So then women find you attractive.

**JEROME.** Well, not an uncontrollable number...

**MARK.** And you've had sex with them.

**JEROME.** Some of them.

**MARK.** Well, that proves it. You're attracted to women.

**JEROME.** No! I, uh, the women were, oh, I don't know. I guess, I guess they were an experiment. I mean, I thought I might be gay even before the accident; actually, I was pretty sure of it. Still, I kept thinking, "Maybe if I meet the right woman..." Hell, most of the time the only way I could get it up with them was if I fantasized I was with—

**MARK.** I know. Mel Gibson.

**JEROME.** Or Brad Pitt.

**MARK.** You know, both of those men are straight.

**JEROME.** I don't hold it against them.

**MARK.** Why do you have this obsession about seducing straight men?

**JEROME.** I don't have an obsession about seducing straight men. Louie does, but I don't.

**MARK.** Then he must think you're straight.

**JEROME.** He doesn't think I'm—

**MARK.** Well, you said—

**JEROME.** I just meant—

**MARK.** If you're not sure—

**JEROME.** I'm sure—

**MARK.** You don't sound sure.

**JEROME.** Mark!

**MARK.** Why can't you just be disabled?!

**JEROME.** Look, damn it, I'm disabled and I'm gay, and that's the way it is, whether you like it or not or I like it or not or anybody in the world likes it or not. I didn't ask to be either. I always figured I'd get married someday and I'd walk down the aisle, and surprise, I'm not going to do either. I know I should be proud that I'm gay, and accepting that I'm disabled, and I suppose I am, but damn it, I've sure had to give up a lot of fantasies, a whole truckload of fantasies.

**MARK.** Look, if you've decided to be gay, that's your decision. I—

**JEROME.** Oh, yes. That's what it was, a decision. One morning I woke up and thought, "I wonder what I'll do today. See a movie? Go shopping? Turn homo? That sounds interesting."

**MARK.** Look, I'm sorry, I know this must be hard for you, but I just can't approve.

**JEROME.** I'm not asking you to approve; I'm asking you to, to accept.

**MARK.** Well, I'm not sure I can.

**JEROME.** Why, because I can't be who *you* want me to be?

**MARK.** What?

**JEROME.** It's like when you offered me that money to walk again. I think about that a lot. Was that for me or for you?

**MARK.** What do you mean?

**JEROME.** If I could walk again, then *you* wouldn't have to face the fact that I couldn't.

**MARK.** I was just trying to help.

**JEROME.** You or me?

**MARK.** Damn it, it wasn't my fault you hurt yourself. Just because I had a motorcycle, you didn't have to borrow the neighbor's.

**JEROME.** That's not why I—

**MARK.** I didn't do anything wrong.

**JEROME.** I'm not saying you did.

**MARK.** I was trying to help.

**JEROME.** (*A surrender, not an agreement.*) I know.

**MARK.** Look, Jerome, it's, you know, I'm sure you don't approve of everything I do—

**JEROME.** I don't want your approval, Mark.

**MARK.** I mean, I'm sure all your friends think this is perfectly—

**JEROME.** I don't need your approval.

**MARK.** Then why did you tell me?!

**JEROME.** Because you're, you're my brother.

**MARK.** I know, but—

**JEROME.** Because you let me tag along with you when you went to get ice cream. Because you explained long division to me better than my teacher. Because you taught me how to play catch.

**MARK.** You threw like a girl.

**JEROME.** I don't think it was a sign.

**MARK.** You know, you could've given me a little hint along the way or something.

**JEROME.** Like what?

**MARK.** I don't know. You could've had copies of PLAYGIRL lying around.

**JEROME.** I prefer GENTLEMAN'S QUARTERLY. I enjoy mentally disrobing them.

**MARK.** (*Uncomfortable.*) Really?

**JEROME.** What?

**MARK.** Well, I pick up GQ at the newsstand sometimes, and it never occurred to me that people might think—

**JEROME.** Don't worry, Mark. I'm sure lots of heterosexuals read GQ. Hundreds maybe.

**MARK.** You don't act very gay.

**JEROME.** I'm sorry. Would you like me to wax eloquent about Barbra Streisand?

**MARK.** I love Streisand.

**JEROME.** Uh-oh, be careful. First GQ; now this.

**MARK.** I'm not worried about me.

**JEROME.** Do you ever refer to another guy as "that bitch"?

**MARK.** It's just, it's a scary time.

**JEROME.** I'm careful. We're careful.

**MARK.** Still—

**JEROME.** You sure you wouldn't like *one* piece of—

*(One of JEROME's legs starts to spasm.)*

Uhp, there goes Old Faithful.

**MARK.** I thought you were taking medication—

**JEROME.** I stopped years ago. I'm used to them; they don't bother me.

**MARK.** *(Overlapping a bit:)* Do you ever get spasms at school?

**JEROME.** Oh, sure. Not often.

**MARK.** How did the kids react?

**JEROME.** Oh, the first time, they were freaked out. Then I told them that whoever got the highest mark on the division quiz would get to ride me next time it happened. They got used to it after that.

**MARK.** You have a lot of guts, Jerome.

**JEROME.** I just do what I have to do, that's all.

**MARK.** So why do you think you turned out gay?

**JEROME.** I don't know. Why do you think you turned out straight?

**MARK.** I don't know. Rick Curry, remember him?

**JEROME.** Yeah.

**MARK.** Rick and I used to sneak looks at his dad's PLAYBOYS when we were in junior high. Maybe if you had had some experiences like that...

**JEROME.** Will you stop being so damn superficial?!

**MARK.** Hey, if I have to accept you're gay, you're going to have to accept I'm superficial. I don't examine things like you do.

**JEROME.** Do you know what Socrates said about the unexamined life?

**MARK.** It's easier on the nerves?

**JEROME.** Mark...

**MARK.** Look, Jerome, the only magazine I read regularly is PEOPLE, and that's only because I fly a lot. My main source of news is the car radio, and half the time I'll switch stations. I work hard, and I don't bother anyone. I may not be a great role model, but nobody's asked me to be.

**JEROME.** Well, I'm sorry if I'm bothering you with my news.

**MARK.** You don't have any more surprises for me tonight, do you? You haven't joined a religious cult or anything. You're not a gay disabled Moonie, are you?

**JEROME.** And if I were?!

**MARK.** I don't know!

**JEROME.** Look, I, I...I know this must be hard on you...

**MARK.** Well, you know, it's like one moment you think the universe is one way; the next moment, it's another way.

**JEROME.** No, the universe is always the same. The only thing that changes is what you know about it.

**MARK.** This Louie guy, is he, you know...

**JEROME.** An Episcopalian?

**MARK.** No. Is he, you know...

**JEROME.** Handicapped? Crippled? Physically challenged? Lame? Euphemism of the month?

**MARK.** I don't know why you're so angry.

**JEROME.** It's because I'm afraid that if I ever turn into one of those "nice" cripples, I'll end up on a Jerry Lewis telethon.

**MARK.** Hey.

**JEROME.** No, Louie's not disabled.

**MARK.** How'd you meet?

**JEROME.** At a gay bake sale. He bought one of my cookies, and then he came back and bought another, and then he came back and bought five more. You know, what they say about the quickest way to man's heart is absolutely true.

**MARK.** Is that why you took up cooking?

**JEROME.** No. I took it up because I like to eat.

**MARK.** Look, I, I'm sorry, I really gotta go.

**JEROME.** Right.

**MARK.** If you want, we can discuss it again—

**JEROME.** Yeah.

**MARK.** Look, you're going to do whatever you want anyway. You always did.

**JEROME.** I'm not your little brother anymore, Mark. There's nothing you have to protect me from.

**MARK.** From what I've read—

**JEROME.** Let's just drop it, okay?

*(MARK gets ready to go.)*

**MARK.** Look, dinner was delicious. I won't tell Mom; she'll feel threatened.

**JEROME.** Goodbye.

**MARK.** You know, this is a real burden you're laying on me. A real burden.

*(JEROME just looks at MARK.)*

You're asking me for more than I can give. You've always done that. You want me to make everything okay.

**JEROME.** I don't—

**MARK.** You *wanted* the bribe to work. You wanted me to be right. When you were laying in that bed, and everyone else was crying and going nuts, you looked at me, and maybe you don't remember, but God, you really wanted *someone* to believe you could walk. I didn't think you could either, but if you wanted me to think you could, I was willing to play that role.

**JEROME.** You didn't think—

**MARK.** Hell, no.

**JEROME.** I didn't know.

**MARK.** Older brothers don't give out all their secrets.

**JEROME.** Any other secrets you kept from me?

**MARK.** Yeah. I hated it when you tagged along with me to get ice cream.

**JEROME.** I'm sorry.

**MARK.** It's okay. It's just that you always insisted on getting a double cone, and halfway through the first scoop there'd be this lava flow coming down your arm.

**JEROME.** Thanks for cleaning it up.

**MARK.** Hey, what are older brothers for?

**JEROME.** Good question.

**MARK.** Does anyone else in the family know you're—

**JEROME.** No, I thought I'd try it out on you first.

**MARK.** So how'd I do?

**JEROME.** You were—... *(Starts to cry)* I... Shit.

**MARK.** Jerome...

**JEROME.** I'm sorry, I...

**PAGES HAVE BEEN CUT FROM THIS SCENE.  
THE PLAY CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

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**MARS NEEDS WOMEN,  
BUT NOT AS MUCH AS  
ARNOLD SCHECTER**

**Cast of Characters**

ARNOLD, a guy in his twenties

SALLY, his girlfriend

J.D., his best friend

LAURIE, a waitress

BALTHAZAR, from the planet Mars, single

VELICHANTRA, from Mars, his female cousin

**Place**

A coffee shop in Passaic, New Jersey.

**Time**

The present.

## Acknowledgements

*Mars Needs Women, But Not As Much As Arnold Schecter* was first performed on January 12, 1994 at the Carousel Theatre Company (William-Kevin Young, Producer) in New York City. The cast was as follows:

ARNOLD.....Carter Inskeep  
LAURIE .....Pamela Dean Kenny  
SALLY..... Emma Palzere  
J.D. ....Mike Murray  
BALTHAZAR ..... David Sitler  
VELICHANTRA.....Danna Call

Directed by Deb Guston

The current version of *Mars Needs Women, But Not As Much As Arnold Schecter* was first performed on March 18, 2003 at the Kaleidoscope Theatre Company (Marshall Mays, Artistic Director) in New York City. The cast was as follows:

ARNOLD..... Matty D. Stuart  
LAURIE ..... Sarah Saltzberg  
SALLY..... Ilene Bergelson  
J.D. .... Marshall York  
BALTHAZAR .....Gavin Hoffman  
VELICHANTRA.....Cynthia Posillico

Directed by Nolan Haims

# MARS NEEDS WOMEN, BUT NOT AS MUCH AS ARNOLD SCHECTER

by Rich Orloff

## Scene 1

*(Before the play begins, we hear the following:)*

**ANNOUNCER.** The following story takes place in a land of intrigue, adventure, romance and mystery...Passaic, New Jersey. The author admits he's never actually been to Passaic. Consider this location "the Passaic, New Jersey" of the mind.

*(Lights up on a coffee shop in Passaic, New Jersey. It's empty, except for LAURIE, a waitress who's seen it all, or at least as much as you can see in Passaic. She reads the newspaper. ARNOLD enters. Arnold's rather insecure and nebbishy; he's more comfortable in his photo lab than with people. He's also a decent guy, currently in love, or something like it.)*

**LAURIE.** Hi, Arnold.

**ARNOLD.** Hi, Laurie. Is Sally here yet?

**LAURIE.** Not yet.

**ARNOLD.** Anything in the newspaper?

**LAURIE.** Apparently, in towns other than Passaic... things happen.

**ARNOLD.** To each their own, I guess.

**LAURIE.** *(Noticing ARNOLD's cologne:)* What are you wearing?

**ARNOLD.** It's my own blend of Obsession for Men and Egoist. What do you think?

**LAURIE.** It's very...distinctive.

**ARNOLD.** Thanks.

**LAURIE.** Is this a special occasion?

**ARNOLD.** I hope so. I'm—I'm going to ask Sally to marry me.

**LAURIE.** You're kidding.

**ARNOLD.** No. When I'm kidding, I always end my sentences with a raised inflection.

**LAURIE.** Does Sally know this is coming?

**ARNOLD.** I don't know. I have been dropping hints.

**LAURIE.** Like what?

**ARNOLD.** Saturday night I told her I couldn't live without her and that she made my life worth living.

**LAURIE.** Those aren't good hints.

**ARNOLD.** They're not?

**LAURIE.** In my experience, lines like that mean either (a) "I'd like to have sex with you" or (b) "I'd like to have sex with you again."

**ARNOLD.** Well, that's not what I meant. Not at all. Would you like to see the ring I bought?

**LAURIE.** Sure.

*(ARNOLD takes a ring box out of his pocket and opens it.)*

It's very...distinctive.

**ARNOLD.** Did you know that the cubic zirconium is the state stone of New Jersey?

**LAURIE.** Would you like a drink?

**ARNOLD.** Not yet.

**LAURIE.** I think I'll have one.

**ARNOLD.** Isn't this a beautiful day? Isn't this one of the most beautiful days of your life?

**LAURIE.** Arnold, I, I, I don't want to dampen your spirits, but, well, I think of us as friends—

**ARNOLD.** So do I.

**LAURIE.** You were one of the few customers who stuck by this place after that new coffee shop opened down the block offering better food at cheaper prices.

**ARNOLD.** I just see that as a sign they're desperate for business.

**LAURIE.** And, well, as your friend, well, are you sure you're not rushing into things?

**ARNOLD.** I'm positive.

**LAURIE.** You two have only been going out a few months.

**ARNOLD.** I love her, Laurie.

**LAURIE.** How do you know it's love?

**ARNOLD.** Why, why, Sally's everything I ever wanted in a woman. She returns my phone calls. She never laughs in my face. When I'm with her, a deep inner voice says, "Hold onto this one for dear life."

**LAURIE.** I'm not sure that's love.

**ARNOLD.** Of course, it's love. It's not fear, anger, sadness or thirst. What else could it be?

**LAURIE.** Do you think she loves you?

**ARNOLD.** Oh, yes.

**LAURIE.** Has she said so?

**ARNOLD.** Not in so many words. But I can tell, when I hold her close in my arms—when she lets me—she's feeling love.

**LAURIE.** Oh, Arnold, you're so—distinctive.

*(SALLY enters. Although Sally is from Passaic, just like Arnold, she aspires to larger towns and larger dreams. She seems a bit nervous tonight. Perhaps she has news, too.)*

**SALLY.** Sorry I'm late.

**ARNOLD.** Hi, darling.

*(They kiss. ARNOLD wants more than SALLY is comfortable with.)*

**SALLY.** Arnold, please. We're in a commercial establishment. Hi, Laurie.

**LAURIE.** Hi, Sally. I'll get you some menus.

**SALLY.** Actually, I can't stay long.

**ARNOLD.** But I invited you out for dinner.

**SALLY.** I know, but...

**ARNOLD.** It's Monday night. Tonight's the night I get to impress you because I'd rather be with you than watch sports on television.

**SALLY.** Arnold... Let's sit down.

*(SALLY and ARNOLD sit at a table.)*

**LAURIE.** Can I get either of you a drink?

**SALLY.** I'll have a vodka cranberry. *(On second thought:)* Hold the cranberry.

**LAURIE.** Arnold?

**ARNOLD.** I'll have a caffeine-free Diet Cherry Coke.

**SALLY.** Arnold...

**ARNOLD.** Okay, okay. *(To LAURIE:)* I promised Sally I'd start living it up more... I'll have a Diet Cherry Coke *with* caffeine.

**LAURIE.** Coming up.

*(LAURIE gets the drinks.)*

**ARNOLD.** You look lovely tonight.

**SALLY.** No, I don't.

**ARNOLD.** I could look at you forever and never avert my gaze.

**SALLY.** We need to talk.

**ARNOLD.** Oh my God!! What have I done wrong?! Tell me. I can change. I want to change. I need to change.

**SALLY.** Arnold, I enjoyed us a lot more when we agreed to keep things light.

**ARNOLD.** I agreed with my brain, but my heart has a mind of its own.

**SALLY.** Arnold...

**ARNOLD.** I can't tell you how much it means to me that every time we go out, you remember my name.

**SALLY.** Arnold...

**ARNOLD.** There you go again.

**SALLY.** Arnold, you're not making this easy.

**ARNOLD.** I'm not making what easy?

*(ARNOLD looks at SALLY, as LAURIE enters with the drinks. ARNOLD finally understands what's going on and SCREAMS.)*

**LAURIE.** Would you like me to put something in your Diet Cherry Coke?

**ARNOLD.** *(In shock, to SALLY:)* No...no...

**SALLY.** You're a nice guy, Arnold—

**ARNOLD.** It's just a phase I'm going through.

**SALLY.** You don't—we're just very different people.

**ARNOLD.** But that's what I like best about you. You're not me. You're beautiful; you're confident; you have social skills.

**SALLY.** Your social skills are completely adequate, Arnold. And I'm sure with some other woman—

**ARNOLD.** No, never.

**SALLY.** Why are you so pessimistic?

**ARNOLD.** Because...I can't tell you.

**SALLY.** Why not?

**ARNOLD.** It's too embarrassing.

**SALLY.** What's too embarrassing?

**ARNOLD.** You're not going to stop until you drag it out of me, are you?

**SALLY.** Ar—

**ARNOLD.** Okay, here goes. Here's me at my most open and honest and vulnerable... Am I going to get extra points doing this?

**SALLY.** I don't know.

**ARNOLD.** I'll give it a shot. The reason I'm so pessimistic, and I've never told this to anyone, Sally Zimmerman, but before I went out with you, I had already asked out every other single woman in the Passaic phone book, alphabetically.

**SALLY.** Is that the reason you go out with me?

**ARNOLD.** Oh, no. If I had known how wonderful you were, I would've gone in reverse alphabetical order.

**SALLY.** Thanks, but, well, it only proves what I've always suspected about you.

**ARNOLD.** That I have a big phone bill?

**SALLY.** No. That you never think bigger than this town.

**ARNOLD.** And why should I?

**SALLY.** It's a big world out there, Arnold.

**ARNOLD.** It's too big. It frightens me.

**SALLY.** Oh, Arnold, you're so...Passaic.

**ARNOLD.** Passaic's a nice town, with nice people who wear nice shoes and drive nice cars.

**SALLY.** That's not very exciting.

**ARNOLD.** I suppose you'd rather live in Trenton.

**SALLY.** Don't you have any sense of adventure?

**ARNOLD.** I once filled out my income tax forms barefoot.

**SALLY.** I was right. You're completely Passaic.

**ARNOLD.** I *like* Passaic. This town supports me and my studio very nicely. Just today I was named official photographer for Passaic's Holstein of the Month Contest.

**SALLY.** Well, I'm glad that's enough to make you happy.

**ARNOLD.** I didn't know you scoffed at bovine photography.

**SALLY.** I'm not—

**ARNOLD.** Did you know that the average Holstein produces 17,788 pounds of milk, 647 pounds of butterfat, and 564 pounds of protein per year? How many Trentonians can you say that about?

**SALLY.** Arnold, I— Look, I don't want to end this with a fight.

**ARNOLD.** I don't want this to end, period. You're too precious to me.

**SALLY.** Well, you're not too precious to me.

**ARNOLD.** I'm numb.

**SALLY.** I'm sorry.

**ARNOLD.** I can't taste the cherry in my Diet Cherry Coke.

**SALLY.** Arnold, we never really—

**ARNOLD.** You told me I made you happy.

**SALLY.** I said that *once*.

**ARNOLD.** You said I made you smile.

**SALLY.** I was going through a very depressed phase in my life.

**ARNOLD.** Still, you said it.

**SALLY.** Arnold—

**ARNOLD.** I taped all our conversations. I can show you the transcripts.

**SALLY.** Okay, Arnold. I didn't want to have to say this, but you've forced me. There's someone else.

**ARNOLD.** I can no longer taste the Coke in my Diet Cherry Coke.

**SALLY.** I'm sorry. But you forced me.

**ARNOLD.** So, so who is this guy?

**SALLY.** It's not important.

**ARNOLD.** Is he someone you met at work?

**SALLY.** No.

**ARNOLD.** Is he someone you met at a recreational facility?

**SALLY.** No.

**ARNOLD.** Is he someone you met at a recycling plant?

**SALLY.** No.

**ARNOLD.** So he's not from around here.

**SALLY.** I don't think this is a useful con—

**ARNOLD.** I think, after all we've been to each other, I'm entitled to know.

**SALLY.** No, he's not from around here.

**ARNOLD.** What's his name?

**SALLY.** Balthazar the Magnificent, Prince of Mars.

**ARNOLD.** So how'd you meet?

**SALLY.** He materialized one night in my bedroom.

**ARNOLD.** I would've been willing to do that.

**SALLY.** Arnold, whenever you visit, my cat never stops hissing.

**ARNOLD.** No hisses for this Balthazar guy, huh?

**SALLY.** Not a one.

**ARNOLD.** Have the two of you, uh—

**SALLY.** Don't ask.

**ARNOLD.** I must know.

**SALLY.** Okay, if you must know, yes, we have.

**ARNOLD.** I was wrong. I didn't need to know... How was it?

**SALLY.** Don't ask.

**ARNOLD.** I've gone this far. I might as well know everything.

**SALLY.** It was marvelous.

**ARNOLD.** Wrong again. No wonder you want to dump me; I'm incapable of learning from my mistakes.

**SALLY.** Arnold, I— Oh, forget it. Just forget it. I do like you, Arnold, or at least I did, before you became so—

**ARNOLD.** Sally...

**SALLY.** In fact, when Balthazar first materialized, I was very tempted to tell him to leave. But then he said he had traveled the universe searching for me, and that he needed me to help create a race of Supermartians to replenish their planet and possibly conquer the universe.

**ARNOLD.** Do the two of you love each other?

**SALLY.** You know, I've been giving that a lot of thought. Love is so ephemeral...but the opportunity to create a race of Supermartians...

**ARNOLD.** So you don't love him.

**SALLY.** I'm sure I'll grow to love him. And more importantly, he loves me. And as any insecure woman will tell you, it's more important to be loved than to love.

**ARNOLD.** I love you, Sally.

**SALLY.** You just think you do.

**ARNOLD.** I'd cut off an ear for you, but I don't know how to paint!

**SALLY.** I have to go.

**ARNOLD.** Don't go! Please!

**SALLY.** Arnold, stop it.

**ARNOLD.** Don't go, Sally!

**SALLY.** I have to. The journey to Mars is over 48 million miles, and before I go, I've got a lot of shopping to do.

**ARNOLD.** Stay with me, Sally. Stay with me, and together we will create a race of, of Super—Passaicites.

**SALLY.** It's just not the same, Arnold.

*(SALLY exits. ARNOLD finishes his drink. LAURIE enters, with a box of Kleenex on her drink plate. She removes Sally's drink and places the Kleenex box down.)*

**ARNOLD.** I wish I were dead.

**LAURIE.** Please, we've gotten in enough trouble with the health department lately.

**ARNOLD.** Laurie, do you believe in love?

**LAURIE.** Of course, I do. Without love, life is nothing but a grueling ordeal with small tips.

**ARNOLD.** What do you think I should do?

**LAURIE.** A new phone book comes out in two weeks.

**ARNOLD.** But I want Sally.

**LAURIE.** You'll think of something.

**ARNOLD.** Do you really think so?

**LAURIE.** Arnold, please, don't put me on the spot.

*(LAURIE exits. ARNOLD sighs.)*

*(The lights fade.)*

## Scene 2

*(The next day. ARNOLD is confessing his woes to his best friend J.D., a man filled with either charming self-assurance or smug arrogance, depending on whether you ask J.D. or any woman who's ever dated him.)*

**ARNOLD.** ...And I pleaded with her on the phone, but she said opportunity to create a race of Supermartians tapped into a deep biological drive.

**J.D.** Women, they're so surface. They say *we're* surface, but they're the ones who are surface. We may fantasize about making love to tantalizing women whose firm, delicious bodies make our glands charge into overdrive, but when push comes to shove, we'll screw anyone. We don't have the arrogance women have.

**ARNOLD.** I guess you're right.

**J.D.** Last night, I went out with this chick. Now it's not like it's the first date or nothing that I'm putting the moves on her. It's already the second date; third, if you count the time I drove her to her foot doctor.

**ARNOLD.** I hear you.

**J.D.** So I take her out to a fancy restaurant, you know, with tablecloths, and when we're done eating, and I let her finish, I pick up the tab, leave a nice tip, 11.6%, and then we go to a first-run movie, and I buy this expensive tub of popcorn, and I don't even care how much she's having—roughly two-fifths, and then after the movie we go out and I buy her a couple of drinks, the fancy kind, with those cherries that give you cancer, and then I take her back to her place, and I tell her she's beautiful, beautiful, *beautiful*, and then she says, get this, she says she's still not ready to have sex with me. And I'm so stunned, I just blurt out, "What do women want?" And she says, "I like my popcorn *battered*."

**ARNOLD.** I don't understand women.

**J.D.** Me, neither. And I tell you something. I watch OPRAH, and it doesn't help.

*(LAURIE enters with drinks for the men. She places them on their table.)*

**LAURIE.** One caffeine-free Diet Cherry Coke, and one beer.

**J.D.** Hey, Laurie, remember that night we spent together last November?\*

*(\*Or February, if the play is performed November-January.)*

**LAURIE.** *(Not a happy thought:)* I can't forget it.

*(LAURIE exits.)*

**ARNOLD.** So what do you think I should do?

**J.D.** About what?

**ARNOLD.** About Sally.

**J.D.** Buy a six-pack, rent some dirty movies, and forget about her.

**ARNOLD.** I can't do that, J.D.

**J.D.** VCR broken?

**ARNOLD.** I love her, J.D. Her very presence brings me joy. The thought of seeing her gets me through the toughest day.

**J.D.** Boy, you're really mired in it, aren't you?

**ARNOLD.** You bet. So what do you suggest?

**J.D.** Any way you can get in touch with this guy?

**ARNOLD.** I don't know.

**J.D.** How does Sally get in touch with him?

**ARNOLD.** He materializes in her bedroom.

**J.D.** Very smooth.

**ARNOLD.** Yeah.

**J.D.** Maybe you could get him to materialize in your life.

**ARNOLD.** Why would I want that?

**J.D.** So you can talk to the guy. Feel him out. If his only interest in Sally is to create a race of Supermartians, maybe he'd be willing to

find someone else for his purposes. I'm sure there are plenty of women who could do that.

**ARNOLD.** Not as well as Sally.

**J.D.** Look...

**ARNOLD.** You don't think Sally's good enough to create a race of Supermartians?

**J.D.** Yes. Yes. Mars would definitely be better off if she were there. The whole universe would be better off if she were there.

**ARNOLD.** Maybe I'm being too selfish in wanting her for my own.

**J.D.** It's a selfish world.

**ARNOLD.** It's a selfish solar system.

*(LAURIE enters the room and does waitress stuff.)*

**J.D.** The main thing is, if you want her, you have to be willing to fight for her.

**ARNOLD.** Yes, but...but why would she want a guy like me if she could have a guy like him?

**J.D.** Never think like that.

**ARNOLD.** But—

**J.D.** Remember, Arnold, to make it in this world, you've got to have confidence in yourself, even if you're you... Hey, Laurie—

**LAURIE.** Forget it.

**J.D.** *(To ARNOLD:)* Lesbo.

*(J.D. exits.)*

**LAURIE.** He could be the poster boy for vasectomies.

**ARNOLD.** J.D. thinks I should try to contact Balthazar.

**LAURIE.** Sounds like a good idea.

**ARNOLD.** But what if Sally finds out?

**LAURIE.** Look, who knows what Sally's really feeling? Women are often infatuated by interplanetary royalty who sweep them off their

feet and offer them the chance to start a race of superbeings. It may not last.

**ARNOLD.** I wonder how I could reach him.

**LAURIE.** I guess you have to make him want to materialize in your life.

**ARNOLD.** What could I offer a Martian that would make him want to materialize in *my* life?

**LAURIE.** I don't know. Think like a Martian.

**ARNOLD.** If I could think like a Martian—... If I could think like a Martian, I'd probably still have Sally. *(Sighs)* Think like a Martian... Think like a Martian... What a challenge.

*(ARNOLD begins to think.)*

*(The lights fade.)*

### Scene 3

*(A few days later. LAURIE cleans as ARNOLD enters, carrying a briefcase.)*

**ARNOLD.** Hi, Laurie.

**LAURIE.** Hi, Arnold.

**ARNOLD.** Any extraterrestrial beings show up yet?

**LAURIE.** Not yet.

**ARNOLD.** I keep thinking, what if he doesn't show up? Then I think, what if he *does* show up?

**LAURIE.** Don't be nervous. Remember, you have the home planet advantage.

**ARNOLD.** Thanks.

*(BALTHAZAR THE MAGNIFICENT materializes out of thin air. He's tall, strong and handsome, everything you don't want in your ex-girlfriend's new boyfriend. He dresses like a Martian prince, and*

*he has a formidable ray gun in his holster. BALTHAZAR and ARNOLD look at each other.)*

**BALTHAZAR.** I am Balthazar the Magnificent, Prince of Mars.

**ARNOLD.** Arnold Schecter, Passaic, New Jersey.

*(They shake hands.)*

Have a seat.

**BALTHAZAR.** Thank you.

*(BALTHAZAR sits down.)*

So you really have photos of the President doing it with Britney Spears?

**ARNOLD.** Yes.

**BALTHAZAR.** So the rumor there's a plot to start a race of Superearthlings is true.

**ARNOLD.** I'm afraid so.

**BALTHAZAR.** Let me see the pictures.

**ARNOLD.** Not so fast.

**BALTHAZAR.** I demand to see the pictures.

**ARNOLD.** First, prove to me that you are indeed Balthazar the Magnificent, Prince of Mars.

*(BALTHAZAR takes out his wallet, opens it, and shows it to ARNOLD.)*

*(Reads:)* "Balthazar the Magnificent, Prince of Mars." Nice holograph.

**BALTHAZAR.** I hate it.

*(BALTHAZAR puts his wallet away.)*

**ARNOLD.** So how are you enjoying your visit to Earth, Balthazar?

**BALTHAZAR.** The air is unfit to breathe, the water is unfit to drink, and ever since I spent fifty bucks on that phone psychic, I no longer trust infomercials.

**ARNOLD.** So tell me, what brings you to our planet?

**BALTHAZAR.** Let me see the pictures.

**ARNOLD.** Is it true that you came to find an Earth woman to help you start a race of Supermartians?

**BALTHAZAR.** Enough questions! Show me the pictures!

*(ARNOLD opens his briefcase, takes out an envelope, and slides it across the table to BALTHAZAR. BALTHAZAR opens it and removes some photographs.)*

Wow... Hmm... You'll get quite a reward for— Wait a second. These photographs have been doctored.

**ARNOLD.** Oh, no. They're genuine.

**BALTHAZAR.** I've seen photos of Britney Spears barefoot before. Her feet aren't this big.

**ARNOLD.** It's the lighting.

**BALTHAZAR.** The President doesn't have a tattoo on his butt.

**ARNOLD.** I was surprised, too.

**BALTHAZAR.** You're not playing with me, are you earthling? If I wanted, I could obliterate you with my dissolvo ray. With my bare hands, stronger than the claws of ten Earth lions, I could crush you at will.

*(BALTHAZAR takes out his glasses and examines the photos.)*

These are definitely doctored.

*(BALTHAZAR points his ray gun at ARNOLD.)*

Get ready for a slow, painful death.

**ARNOLD.** Okay, I admit it. They're doctored. I stuck the heads of the President and Britney Spears on the bodies of—

**BALTHAZAR.** Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones?

**ARNOLD.** No.

**BALTHAZAR.** Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston?

**ARNOLD.** No.

**BALTHAZAR.** What's-his-name and Madonna?

**ARNOLD.** No.

**BALTHAZAR.** Ellen DeGeneres and K.D. Lang?!

**ARNOLD.** No! They're just, they're just pictures from a magazine I bought.

*(Note: The celebrity couples and the Britney Spears reference can be contemporized if dated. Likewise for the magazines below.)*

**BALTHAZAR.** PLAYBOY?

**ARNOLD.** No.

*(With increasing speed:)*

**BALTHAZAR.** PENTHOUSE?

**ARNOLD.** No.

**BALTHAZAR.** SWANK?

**ARNOLD.** No.

**BALTHAZAR.** LEG ACTION?

**ARNOLD.** No.

**BALTHAZAR.** D-CUP?

**ARNOLD.** No.

**BALTHAZAR.** GIRLS OVER FORTY?

**ARNOLD.** I don't remember!

**BALTHAZAR.** You dare toy with Balthazar the Magnificent, Prince of Mars?! Give me one good reason why I shouldn't destroy you this second!

*(LAURIE, who's been watching this, comes by.)*

**LAURIE.** Excuse me, but there's a five-dollar minimum at this table. Would either of you like something to drink?

**BALTHAZAR.** I'll have a caffeine-free Diet Cherry Coke.

**ARNOLD.** (*His confidence growing:*) Make that two.

**LAURIE.** Coming right up.

(*LAURIE exits.*)

**ARNOLD.** So, Balthazar, let's talk.

**BALTHAZAR.** I have no need to talk to a lying, disreputable earthling.

**ARNOLD.** I know about you and Sally Zimmerman. I know you want to take her to Mars to create a race of Supermartians.

**BALTHAZAR.** How'd you find out?

**ARNOLD.** I have my ways.

**BALTHAZAR.** Are you from SIXTY MINUTES?

**ARNOLD.** No.

**BALTHAZAR.** TWENTY-TWENTY?

**ARNOLD.** No.

**BALTHAZAR.** DATELINE NBC?

**ARNOLD.** No.

**BALTHAZAR.** That CNN newsmagazine nobody watches?

**ARNOLD.** No! To be honest, I'm just... I'm Sally's brother.

**BALTHAZAR.** How come you have different last names?

**ARNOLD.** I'm her half-brother.

**BALTHAZAR.** She's never mentioned you.

**ARNOLD.** She's mentioned you. And I thought, as her closest living relative—

**BALTHAZAR.** What about her parents?

**ARNOLD.** (*After a thought:*) They're dead.

**BALTHAZAR.** I've heard her talk to them on the telephone.

**ARNOLD.** She lives in a great deal of denial.

**BALTHAZAR.** No wonder she wouldn't put me on the phone when I asked to talk to them.

**ARNOLD.** So I do feel I have a right to ask you some questions.

**BALTHAZAR.** And what exactly do you want to know?

**ARNOLD.** Well, for starters, are you gainfully employed?

**BALTHAZAR.** I am Prince of Mars!

**ARNOLD.** Is that a full-time position?

**BALTHAZAR.** Are you trying to insult me? With these two fingers, I could—

**ARNOLD.** I'm just showing brotherly concern.

**BALTHAZAR.** Your sister will have her every need met. She shall live as royalty, with many servants.

**ARNOLD.** A hundred?

**BALTHAZAR.** She won't need a hundred servants.

**ARNOLD.** Fifty?

**BALTHAZAR.** Not that many.

**ARNOLD.** Twenty-five?

**BALTHAZAR.** Be reasonable.

**ARNOLD.** Ten?

**BALTHAZAR.** Eight.

**ARNOLD.** I don't think that's many.

**BALTHAZAR.** It's more than several! She shall be a princess. Has anyone made her a better offer?

**ARNOLD.** I guess not.

**BALTHAZAR.** (*Preparing to go:*) Then unless there are further questions...

**ARNOLD.** I have one more question.

**BALTHAZAR.** It will be your last question, earthling, so make it count.

**ARNOLD.** Do you love her?

**BALTHAZAR.** What is this earthly obsession with love? Whenever I hear earth music, it is always about love. Whenever I read earth stories, they are always about love. Whenever I see earth movies, at least they're about great special effects. But the coming attractions are always about love.

**ARNOLD.** Then you don't love her.

*(LAURIE brings the drinks and sets them on the table.)*

**BALTHAZAR.** I shall treat Sally with respect and dignity, and her life will be full and rewarding.

**LAURIE.** I'd settle for that.

*(SALLY enters.)*

**SALLY.** Arnold! Balthazar! What are you—

**BALTHAZAR.** Sally, my beloved. You never told me you had a brother.

**SALLY.** I don't.

**ARNOLD.** I'm a close personal friend.

*(BALTHAZAR takes out his ray gun.)*

**BALTHAZAR.** Say your prayers, Earth man!

**SALLY.** Balthazar, don't!

**BALTHAZAR.** Why not?

**SALLY.** Dissolving people isn't socially acceptable on this planet.

*(BALTHAZAR puts his gun back in its holster.)*

**BALTHAZAR.** I will spare him, this time.

**ARNOLD.** Thank you for saving my life, Sally.

**SALLY.** Well, don't expect me to make a habit of it. What are you two doing here?

**BALTHAZAR.** This maggot—

**ARNOLD.** I lured Balthazar here, because, well, I was hoping to convince him not to take you away.

**SALLY.** Of all the underhanded, sneaky—

**ARNOLD.** I know.

**SALLY.** You have no right to interfere in my life.

**ARNOLD.** I know, I know.

**BALTHAZAR.** This worm is your boyfriend?

**SALLY.** We went out a few times.

**ARNOLD.** We went out *many* times. More than several.

**SALLY.** Arnold, just, just leave me alone.

**ARNOLD.** I need to talk to you, Sally.

**SALLY.** Just go, okay?

**ARNOLD.** Can't we discuss this like two rational human beings?

**BALTHAZAR.** "Rational human beings." Now there's an oxymoron.

**SALLY.** Hey, I'm a human being.

**BALTHAZAR.** Sorry, honey.

**ARNOLD.** Sally—

**SALLY.** Arnold—

**ARNOLD.** He doesn't love you. I do.

**BALTHAZAR.** (*To SALLY:*) Of course, I love you. (*To ARNOLD:*) Lying mealybug.

**LAURIE.** (*To SALLY:*) He doesn't love you. I heard him.

**BALTHAZAR.** Of all the women on Earth, I've chosen you to be my princess. If you come with me, your every need will be met and your every wish will be granted.

**ARNOLD.** Yeah, but...

*(All eyes turn to ARNOLD.)*

I have a regular job and a good dental plan.

**BALTHAZAR.** I will shower you with jewels and riches.

**ARNOLD.** I have an aunt with a condo in Florida we can stay at two weeks a year.

**BALTHAZAR.** You will be a princess.

**ARNOLD.** Ditto. Maybe not in title, but certainly in my attitude.

**BALTHAZAR.** I shall impregnate you with sperm a million years more evolved than his.

**ARNOLD.** I did really well on my S.A.T.'s.

**SALLY.** Look, Arnold, I've made my decision.

**ARNOLD.** Okay, okay, just hear me out.

**SALLY.** Arnold—

**ARNOLD.** Look, I know I can't compete with him. If I were a woman, *I'd* choose him over me. I can't compete with most men. I'm just a nice Passaic guy whose only dream is to lead a nice Passaic life. It's just that, well, there's this emptiness I have that when I'm with you disappears. I always thought it was part of me, but when I'm with you, I think maybe it isn't. You're the first woman I ever met I wanted to fight for. You're the first woman I ever met I *had* to fight for.

**SALLY.** That's a very nice speech, Arnold.

**ARNOLD.** Thanks.

**SALLY.** Unfortunately, even a speech that good can't make me love you.

**ARNOLD.** I know.

**SALLY.** If it makes you feel better, it does make me like you like a brother.

**ARNOLD.** I knew it was a high-risk speech.

*(VELICHANTRA, Balthazar's female second cousin, materializes out of thin air. She's a tall, strong, attractive woman, the type often seen on covers of science-fiction novels written by lonely, horny science-fiction writers.)*

**VELICHANTRA.** Balthazar the Magnificent, I have spanned the entire universe looking for you. I have searched through the twin moons of Quantax. I've trekked through the galaxies of the darkest stars. Finally, on this misbegotten planet, I have found you. You turkey, you couldn't leave a note?

**BALTHAZAR.** Velichantra the Annoying, you have come at a most inopportune time. Please go.

**VELICHANTRA.** No.

*(BALTHAZAR puts a hand on his ray gun.)*

**BALTHAZAR.** Velichantra, I am warning you.

**VELICHANTRA.** Oh, big Martian with a dissolvo ray's trying to scare me. You couldn't pierce my energy shield in a million years... And trust me, he's tried.

**BALTHAZAR.** You insolent vixen.

**ARNOLD.** Excuse me, um, Velichantra the Annoying—

**VELICHANTRA.** Velichantra the Alluring—

**ARNOLD.** Velichantra the Alluring, hi, Arnold Schecter. I know this is none of my business, but what brings you here?

**VELICHANTRA.** I was at a feast at the palace of my great aunt, his grandmother, and someone teased him about not being able to hold onto a wife—

**SALLY.** What?

**VELICHANTRA.** And as he always does when someone teases him about this, he went off to get a new wife.

**SALLY.** Balthazar!

**BALTHAZAR.** My beloved, I can—

**SALLY.** You've been married before?

**BALTHAZAR.** A few times.

**VELICHANTRA.** Many times.

**BALTHAZAR.** Several! But none of them could compare to the wonder and the elegance that is you.

**VELICHANTRA.** Laying it on a little thick, don't you think?

**BALTHAZAR.** Velichantra, just shut up.

**SALLY.** Balthazar, I'm so confused. Is there anything else you've been hiding from me?

**BALTHAZAR.** Nothing, my dearest. I promise.

**VELICHANTRA.** Ha!

**SALLY.** You are Prince of Mars, aren't you?

**BALTHAZAR.** Of course, I am.

**VELICHANTRA.** The royal family's been out of power for 14,000 years.

**SALLY.** They do call you Balthazar the Magnificent, don't they?

**BALTHAZAR.** Definitely.

**VELICHANTRA.** On Mars, "magnificent" is one of the lowest titles you can get.

**BALTHAZAR.** That's not true.

**VELICHANTRA.** Our plumber is Glemfab the Amazing.

**BALTHAZAR.** Don't listen to a—

**SALLY.** Balthazar, what about your promise that we would create a race of Supermartians?

*(VELICHANTRA busts out laughing, then:)*

**VELICHANTRA.** No comment.

**BALTHAZAR.** *(To SALLY:)* Pay no attention to her. Behind her back, most Martians call her Velichantra the Sexually-Frustrated.

**VELICHANTRA.** *(To SALLY:)* Listen, dearie, before you hook up with this guy, you should know that the only reason he searches

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