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Cast of Characters

JAMES: Molly's ex-boyfriend. Has just begun dating again.

MOLLY: James' ex-girlfriend. Has just begun dating again.

LISA: A no-nonsense businesswoman.

ROB: A man with a very strong connection to his mother.

HOLLY: An obnoxious cast member on "Keepin' It Real."
Cameras follow her around.

TERRY: He is trying to purify the evil energies in the world.

JESSI: A woman without many concrete opinions.

ADAM: A man who fantasizes about dying tragically.

ELIZABETH: James' sister and friend to Molly as well.

CHRIS: A ladies' man with all the lines.

WAITER: He/she waits on the customers at La Russo's.

ODDS ARE

by Keith J. Powell

Scene 1

(Fade up on two tables in La Russo's restaurant at opposite ends of the stage. The action of this show takes place primarily at two different tables at La Russo's restaurant, over the course of several weeks. JAMES' scenes take place at one table while MOLLY's scenes take place at the other. Lights should only be up on the table where the action is occurring; the other table should remain in the dark. Enter JAMES and MOLLY at the same time; each takes a seat at their respective tables. Lights down on MOLLY's side as JAMES' first date LISA enters.)

JAMES. Lisa.

(LISA sees him and approaches the table. She is very much a businesswoman and carries three cellular phones, though none of them are visible from the get-go.)

LISA. Hello.

JAMES. Where are my manners? *(He pulls out her chair for her.)* You look great.

LISA. Thank you. You look nice, too. That's a nice...belt.

JAMES. Thanks. It does a great job of holding up my pants.

(There is a moment of awkward silence before both parties start looking at their menus.)

JAMES. So, Elizabeth tells me that you're in advertising?

LISA. *(Trying to be polite:)* Well, it's a bit more complicated than that.

JAMES. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to—

LISA. James, relax. It's okay, you didn't know any better. I'm actually the regional VP in charge of marketing and distribution for Child Chokers, the nation's fourth largest manufacturer of leashes for toddlers.

JAMES. Wow that's quite a title. Very impressive. So what is it you do for Child Chokers?

LISA. I'm mainly in charge of advertising for the company.

JAMES. I see.

(Another awkward pause.)

LISA. So, what is it you do exactly, Elizabeth never really said.

JAMES. Elizabeth didn't tell you?

LISA. No, she never said.

JAMES. *(Thinking something up:)* Oh, I work for the circus.

LISA. *(Feigning enthusiasm:)* Really? The circus. Well that's just super. You're in charge of booking them performances?

JAMES. No, I'm a sword swallower.

LISA. *(Still feigning:)* Well that's just great.

JAMES. Actually I'm getting a little ahead of myself. I'm a sword swallower in training. Right now I'm more of a knife swallower. But Mr. Billingsworth, he's the ringmaster, Mr. Billingsworth says that pretty soon I'll be ready for the real thing. That's where you make the big bucks.

LISA. The big bucks?

JAMES. Oh yeah.

LISA. And what exactly do you consider the big bucks?

JAMES. Let's just say it's a four-digit figure that starts with a two and ends with a whole bunch of zeroes. It's not a whole lot but at least I'm doing what I love to do.

LISA. *(Half-laughing:)* You're kidding right?

JAMES. Yes, I'm kidding Lisa. I work for the University. I teach Pop Culture.

LISA. *(Lighting up:)* Oh a doctor?

JAMES. No, I'm not a doctor yet. Working on it though.

LISA. I see.

JAMES. I'm sorry, I was just joking about the circus thing. You didn't think that was funny though, did you?

LISA. I didn't think it was "ha ha funny," more like "that's so sad," funny.

JAMES. More like you're laughing at me than with me.

LISA. I wouldn't put it exactly like that but—

JAMES. Listen, I'm really sorry. I'm trying to be charming and I'm getting the distinct impression that it's not going over well. It's just that I haven't been out on a date in such a while I've forgotten what exactly is safe to joke about anymore and—

(One of LISA's phones rings.)

You're ringing.

LISA. Oh I'm sorry. It must be the office. This should only take a minute. *(Answering it:)* Hello? Yes, no Tom that is not acceptable. No. I don't care what they said. Those aren't the specs we agreed to. No. No.

(The WAITER approaches their table.)

WAITER. Could I get you two something to—

LISA. Do you mind?! This happens to be a very important conversation.

JAMES. I'm sorry. Could you give us a minute?

(The WAITER storms off.)

LISA. Well you call them back up and you tell them. No! No!

(Another phone rings.)

Tom, just a minute. Hello? Yes I'm on the other line with him right now. That's what I said. Of course not! Yes. No. We have a reputation to maintain here. People can buy leashes for toddlers from anywhere, they come to us for a reason! Well that's what I said. Hold on a second. Tom, that's Dick on the other line and he's not happy. That's right. He says he never got those figures. I'll check.

Dick, Tom wants to know what the last date you have down is? The second? Dick? Tom has the second. Yes I know. Hold on a second.

(The third phone rings. She hands JAMES the first phone.)

Hello? Harry? Yes I'm talking to them now. Yes, I'm aware of the problem.

JAMES. Hello? No this is James, Tom. She's on the other lines with Dick and Harry. Actually it's a date. No, I don't think it's going very well.

(Fade to black.)

Scene 2

(Fade up on MOLLY's table. Her first date ROB is sitting down and looks very uptight. Note the name "Female" should be pronounced "Fa Molly.")

ROB. So, Female, that's an interesting name.

MOLLY. Actually I just go by Molly. My parents are the only ones who call me that anymore.

ROB. If you don't mind my asking, how did your parents settle on that.

MOLLY. It's actually sort of a quaint little story. When I was born my parents still hadn't settled on a name. So they were in the hospital room trying to come up with something when the nurse came in and handed the birth certificate, sans name, to my father. My brother, who couldn't have been more than five at the time, takes the certificate from my father, and he says "look Daddy they already named her Fa Molly. F-E-M-A-L-E, Fa Molly." My Mom being the somewhat eccentric lady that she was thought it was adorable and thus, my name.

ROB. Ah mothers, can't live with them, wouldn't be alive without them.

MOLLY. Tell me about it.

ROB. I actually get along really well with my mom. She's a remarkable woman.

MOLLY. I'm sure she is. She always speaks very highly of you when she would come into the shop. Molly you just have to meet my son Rob. He's such a wonderful boy. He's going to make some lucky girl very happy she said. I finally had to see what all the fuss was about.

(The WAITER arrives and drops off two drinks. ROB's drink is a big fruity concoction.)

ROB. Thank you. What can I say? My mother is my biggest fan. So, Female—

MOLLY. Rob, its just Molly.

ROB. Right, Molly, so you own a bookstore?

MOLLY. Yes.

ROB. And how do you like that?

MOLLY. I love it. I don't make a fortune but at least I'm happy, and at the end of the day that's what's important right?

ROB. I couldn't agree more. You know it's like I've always said the most important thing in life isn't money. I wouldn't mind being poor for the rest of my life as long as I was poor and happy.

MOLLY. I can't tell you how wonderful it is to hear someone else say that. People are so materialistic these days.

ROB. I know what you mean. You turn on the television and 500 channels of things priced to own smack you in the face.

MOLLY. It's overwhelming!

(The two fall into a sort of relaxed manner and a moment passes.)

ROB. Molly, if you don't mind me asking what finally made you give into Mother?

MOLLY. Honestly? I just got out of a long relationship, your mother walked in and started in again and I just said oh what the heck? He sounds like a nice guy, what have I got to lose? So here I am.

ROB. And let me just tell you how grateful I am that you did. It's so hard for me to meet girls these days. When Mother told me that you had agreed to a date I just said when and where.

MOLLY. Yeah, I meant to ask you about that. It was sort of odd your mom setting this whole thing up. I mean I feel like I'm in high school again.

ROB. I generally let Mother handle most of my affairs. She's really great.

MOLLY. I'm sure she is.

ROB. I really don't know what I'd do without her.

(Awkward pause.)

MOLLY. You don't live with your mom do you?

ROB. No, of course not.

MOLLY. Oh good.

ROB. Live with my Mother? Of course not I'm a grown man for heaven's sake. *(Pause.)* No, she lives with me.

MOLLY. But I thought you said—

ROB. I moved out about a year ago, but she moved in with me when I got sick.

MOLLY. I'm sorry. I didn't know you'd been sick. What was the matter?

ROB. I lost my vision. It was only temporary, obviously.

MOLLY. Oh my! What caused it if you don't mind my asking?

ROB. Well I'll tell you it was stress plain and simple. I just couldn't handle being on my own. I just wasn't ready yet.

MOLLY. So let me get this straight. You lived with your mom up until a year ago, at which time you moved out. As soon as you moved out you went blind from stress and your mom moved in to take care of you?

ROB. Look, when you say it like that anything would sound bad. It's not that big of a deal. Let's talk about something else.

MOLLY. Maybe that'd be a good idea. So what is it you do exactly?

(The WAITER approaches the table with a cordless phone.)

WAITER. I'm terribly sorry to interrupt, but is your name Rob Korth?

ROB. Yes.

WAITER. Phone call Mr. Korth.

ROB. Hello? Yes. No. It was going very well until you called. I will tell you all about it when you get home Mother. Goodbye!

(Hands the phone back to the WAITER.)

Sorry, it was...

MOLLY. Yes, your mom. I gathered.

ROB. She worries about me a little too much, but she really is wonderful.

MOLLY. I'm sure she is.

(Fade to black.)

Scene 3

(Lights up on JAMES and HOLLY. HOLLY is a cast member on "Keepin' It Real" a reality television program where they follow the cast around recording their lives. She would be obnoxious even if she weren't on TV. She pops her gum. JAMES and HOLLY eat from a basket of bread at the table.)

HOLLY. So Elizabeth says you're a professor?

JAMES. Oh yeah. I teach Pop Culture at the University.

HOLLY. That's so cool. I have like, this totally enormous respect for teachers.

JAMES. Me too. That's sort of what made me get into it in the first place.

HOLLY. So Pop Culture, that's like the study of new things right? Music and movies, stuff like that? I love movies, I bet I'd be way good at Pop Culture.

JAMES. Something like that, but it's a little more complicated. It's really the study of contemporary culture. Like—

(As JAMES begins to talk HOLLY turns to face the audience and the cameras swing around to record what she has to say, as she will do periodically throughout the scene.)

HOLLY. First impression of James. He's cute, but I don't know how much is going on upstairs. I mean he's a professor of Pop Culture, what did he write his thesis on, which boy band is the coolest?

(She turns back to face JAMES, who had stopped to listen to her talk. He is very confused.)

JAMES. Who are you talking to?

HOLLY. What?

JAMES. Who are you talking to?

HOLLY. No one.

JAMES. No one? You just said you didn't know how much I had going on upstairs!

HOLLY. I did not.

JAMES. You did too.

HOLLY. James look I'm sorry but you must have misunderstood. Just go on, what were you telling me about Pop Culture?

JAMES. Okay. Like I was saying Pop Culture is a great deal more complex than most people give it credit for. It's such a broad topic—

(HOLLY begins another speech.)

HOLLY. I made the mistake of asking about his job, and I just couldn't get him to shut up. I found myself offering him bread just to get a word in edgewise!

(She turns back to the conversation with JAMES.)

Bread?

JAMES. Okay that's it. You did it again! What's going on here?

HOLLY. Okay, look, I wasn't going to tell you until after dinner but—

(A crew of cameramen and other technicians surrounds them. A technician holds a boom mike in the middle of the table. The dates from the other scenes can easily be used as the tech people. JAMES is painfully aware of the cameras.)

HOLLY. I'm on "Keepin' it Real."

JAMES. You mean that show where they take 5 strangers, put them in a house, and tape everything 24 hours a day?

HOLLY. That would be the one. It's not that big of a deal though, James. Just relax and after a while you'll forget they're here.

JAMES. I don't know—

HOLLY. James, come on. Why don't you tell me some more about Pop Culture?

JAMES. Listen, I really don't want to talk about work. Why don't you tell me a little about yourself?

HOLLY. Well, I graduated from State about a year ago. And ever since then I've just sort of been, you know like, hanging out.

JAMES. Hanging out?

HOLLY. Yeah, you know. Just deciding what I want to do with the rest of my life?

JAMES. What did you get your degree in?

HOLLY. Applied thermo-nuclear physics.

JAMES. Really? Wow! Do you like it?

HOLLY. James, I'm kidding. Like I would really major in something that useless. I actually majored in Recreational Leadership.

JAMES. Okay, now I know you're kidding.

HOLLY. Uh, no!

JAMES. Seriously? Recreational Leadership? That's certainly interesting.

HOLLY. So then I tell him what I majored in and he acts like I'm totally stupid. Like Pop Culture is such a scholarly topic. Excuse me Einstein!

JAMES. No, I really respect your decision. I think it takes a lot of courage to major in something like that. Something, so specialized. I wasn't putting it down.

HOLLY. So then he sees I'm upset and comes up with this lame apology. I knew what he was thinking though, oh no she's angry, looks like I'm not going to get any tonight.

JAMES. That wasn't what I was thinking at all! I was being completely genuine!

HOLLY. Look James, why don't you just take a pill? You seem a little stressed out.

JAMES. I'm sorry, you're right.

HOLLY. You don't date much do you?

JAMES. No, not really.

HOLLY. 'Cause it's like way obvious.

JAMES. I'll be honest with you, I'm just getting out of a very long relationship. Molly, my ex-girlfriend, she and I had been seeing each for almost five years.

(As he tells this story, the cameras close in on him.)

I guess I'm having a little more trouble adjusting to the single life than I thought I would. It's really hard you know? You're with someone for so long and then one day they're just not there anymore, and you don't quite know what to do anymore.

(He looks at the cameras that are almost on top of him, pauses and then pretends to sneeze on them. They jump back and he continues.)

But you learn.

HOLLY. I totally know what you mean. Like, I had this hairdresser who I went to all my life, and then one day she ups and moves because her husband lost his job. I had serious trust issues after that.

JAMES. I guess I could see how that might be sort of similar.

HOLLY. So then he looks at me like I'm the flake! Hello, who is the loser still obsessed with his ex-girlfriend?

JAMES. I'm not obsessed with my ex-girlfriend!

HOLLY. And so of course by this time I'm screaming to myself, let me out of here!

JAMES. I'm not obsessed with Molly!

(The camera crew swings around and the boom mike hits JAMES in the head knocking him out of the chair.)

(Fade to black.)

Scene 4

(Fade up on MOLLY and her new date TERRY. He is very careful to say everything in a non-offensive supportive tone. The scene starts in mid-conversation.)

MOLLY. So I told him, James I just don't think I can do this anymore, you're never going to be ready. And that was that.

TERRY. Yeah. Uh huh. And so you're doing okay?

MOLLY. Well, yeah. I mean it was tough at first but hey, here I am right?

TERRY. I know what you mean. I just got out of a long-term relationship myself.

MOLLY. Terry, don't take this the wrong way but, this long-term relationship that you've just gotten out of wouldn't be with your mother would it?

TERRY. What? My mother? No, of course not.

MOLLY. Okay, just checking.

TERRY. It's rough out there but I don't think I'm quite ready to start dating family members. Not close family members anyway.

(The two laugh.)

MOLLY. I'm sorry. It's a long story. Now that I've sufficiently made a fool of myself, why don't you tell me something about yourself? Elizabeth tells me you're a psychologist?

TERRY. Yes and no.

MOLLY. What do you mean yes and no?

TERRY. Well I am a psychologist, but I am not now nor have I ever had an official license.

MOLLY. Terry, I really don't know all that much about psychology but isn't that sort of illegal.

TERRY. Yes and no.

MOLLY. I'm pretty sure it's just yes.

TERRY. You see Molly, it's like this. I have studied psychology, but I never attained an actual degree in psychology. I never call myself a psychologist, but I do the same basic job a psychologist would do. I listen and I do my best to help.

MOLLY. You just listen and help people with their mental problems, but you don't have a degree?

TERRY. Well anything would sound bad if you said it like that. Look, it's not as bad as all that. I'm up front with all my patients and I've had no complaints thus far.

MOLLY. Point taken.

(The WAITER arrives with salads.)

TERRY. Thank you.

(As MOLLY prepares to eat she notices TERRY dissecting his salad. Taking all the pieces and separating them. He then removes the crystal from his pocket and waves it over his food, slowly chanting. He then takes out a small vial of water and sprinkles it over his food. MOLLY notices what he is doing and looks on with awe. After a bit TERRY notices MOLLY's look.)

Oh I'm sorry. Where's my head.

(He waves the crystal, pours the water on to her salad and chants.)

MOLLY. What are you doing!

TERRY. What?

MOLLY. What did you just do?

TERRY. What do you mean?

MOLLY. You just poured something onto my salad!

TERRY. Uh huh.

MOLLY. Terry, what did you just pour on my food.

TERRY. I was purifying it for you.

MOLLY. Of what?

TERRY. Evil energies.

MOLLY. Evil energies?

TERRY. That's why there is so much unhappiness in the world. There are evil energies all around us, and they infiltrate our bodies, destroying our inner happiness. They pollute your Chi energy—

MOLLY. Chi energy?

TERRY. Yes, your Chi energy, your center, your soul? The evil energies attack your Chi and prevent you from utilizing it to the fullest extent possible.

MOLLY. Uh huh.

TERRY. *(Taking a water glass:)* You can do amazing things with Chi energy you know? For example, I could knock the water out this glass by concentrating long enough. Allow me to demonstrate.

(He bows his head concentrating.)

MOLLY. Um, Terry?

TERRY. Shh. I need to focus.

(He keeps his head down and then begins to make wild hand motions as if to force the water out and continues to try through the rest of the scene.)

MOLLY. So, these evil energies are in my lettuce?

TERRY. More so in the dressing than in the actual vegetables.

MOLLY. Uh huh. Where did you say you went to school again?

TERRY. Oh, I never went to school.

(Fade to black.)

Scene 5

(Lights up on JAMES and his latest date JESSI. She's very quiet and looks like she's trying to fade into the walls. As the scene opens the two stare across the table at each other. A few moments pass. When JAMES finally begins to talk, JESSI practically leaps into the air.)

JAMES. So. Elizabeth tells me that you're a nurse.

JESSI. Yes.

JAMES. And how do you like that?

JESSI. It's nice.

JAMES. You work in a nursing home right?

JESSI. *(Very nervous:)* Well, I mean, yeah. You could say— Yes.

JAMES. You know my Mom was a nurse too. Yeah, she worked in this nursing home for a long time herself, before she went to work for this ears, nose, and throat specialist. She couldn't stand it any longer. She said it was just too depressing to see all these people who had worked their whole lives, just be forgotten by their families and dismissed by society. Do you ever feel like that?

JESSI. Sure.

(The WAITER arrives with their dinners.)

WAITER. Here we are, one eggplant Parmesan for the gentleman, and the same for the lady.

JAMES. Thank you.

WAITER. Can I get you anything else?

JAMES. Nothing for me. Jessi?

(She very nervously shakes her head and looks towards the ground.)

No. I guess we're fine.

(Exit the WAITER.)

Well this looks good. Mine's pretty good, how's yours?

JESSI. Pretty good.

JAMES. I love eggplant Parmesan. It's one of those dishes that either people love or they hate, know what I mean?

JESSI. Sure.

(JAMES notices she is making a face when she eats.)

JAMES. You don't like eggplant Parmesan do you?

JESSI. No.

JAMES. Why did you order it then?

JESSI. I don't know.

JAMES. Did you order it just because I did?

JESSI. I don't know.

JAMES. Look, Jessi, you seem really nice but it's sort of hard to get to know you if you don't say anything.

JESSI. I'm sorry.

JAMES. Don't be sorry. Just tell me about yourself. I mean that's the point of a date right? To get to know each other.

JESSI. You're right.

JAMES. Tell you what. You seem a little shy, so I'll tell you about myself first. Then you can tell me about yourself, deal?

JESSI. Okay.

JAMES. I'm a professor of Pop Culture, but I've also written a story or two for "Richer Than Me" comics. Nothing big, but still fun to tell people about. I've got a sister, Elizabeth whom you know. I just recently got out of a long relationship. Molly, my ex, she and I parted on something less than agreeable terms. And to be honest, I'm having a tougher time getting used to dating again than I thought I would. There, now you tell me something about yourself.

JESSI. You've written for "Richer Than Me" comics? I love those books.

JAMES. Jessi, are you just saying that because I said I wrote for it?

JESSI. No, really. I mean it. I like "The Fallen Men," and "Lazarus Boy."

JAMES. You like "Lazarus Boy"? That's the book I wrote for! I wrote the "Big Bag of Marbles" storyline!

JESSI. You're kidding me? I loved that story!

JAMES. No, that was me. So, you really liked it?

JESSI. James, it was hysterical. Seriously, I loved it.

JAMES. Well how about that? It's so cool that you read comic books. What else do you like to do?

JESSI. *(Thinking for a bit:)* Sometimes when no one else is around, I like to start fires.

(Fade to black.)

Scene 6

(Lights up on MOLLY and ADAM. ADAM is dressed in black, and smokes like a chimney. The two are eating eggplant Parmesan.)

MOLLY. Look, I know it's sort of strange but it's a hobby. What can I say?

ADAM. It's not that strange as far as hobbies go. So you collect the fortunes from fortune cookies.

MOLLY. You probably think I'm strange now.

ADAM. No, not at all. I think it's sort of endearing.

MOLLY. Well, thanks. What about you, any hobbies?

ADAM. No, not really.

MOLLY. You don't have any hobbies?

ADAM. None that spring to mind.

MOLLY. Well, do you have any interests?

ADAM. I have a long-standing interest in death and dying.

MOLLY. You don't say. And what exactly do you mean by a long-standing interest in death and dying?

ADAM. I like to think about my funeral. What people might say, or how they might react.

MOLLY. Uh huh.

ADAM. Sometimes I like to fantasize about dying tragically. You know, how people would react. See I've got this theory. Anyone who led a reasonably good life is immortalized if they die tragically. I suppose it's only natural. Death is everywhere you look these days.

MOLLY. I suppose. But, that's sort of pessimistic isn't it?

ADAM. Why would you say that?

MOLLY. Well listen to how it sounds. Death is everywhere, I have a long-standing interest in dying, I fantasize about dying tragically?

ADAM. Well anything would sound bad if you said it like that.

MOLLY. Why does everyone say that?

ADAM. Think about it like this, do you know why birthdays are so important? Do you know what it is that is really being celebrated?

MOLLY. A year in a person's life?

ADAM. No, you're celebrating the fact that they managed for one year, not to die. Think of all the things that could go wrong any single day. Cancer, car accidents, broken necks, heat exhaustion, elec-

trocution, drive-by shootings, strokes, meteor to the head, why you could choke on a piece of eggplant right now.

MOLLY. I suppose I never thought about it like that.

ADAM. And here's another thought that should keep you up at night. A few years back there was a case study done and the results indicated that in the United States alone, twenty-five percent of the people with access to nuclear weapons were psychologically unstable. I'm telling you, at any moment you could just kick off. That's why I'm constantly on guard for the Grim Reaper.

MOLLY. But Adam, if you spend all your time thinking about death, don't you sort of miss out on life?

ADAM. That's sort of taking the narrow view isn't it?

MOLLY. All I'm saying is that maybe it's not exactly healthy to be so preoccupied with death.

ADAM. And all I'm saying is that we could die at any minute and it's best to be prepared. This world is just one big deathtrap just waiting for you to step on the wrong wire and set it off, catching you in its icy jaws.

MOLLY. What was it you said you did for a living?

ADAM. I teach kindergarten.

(Fade to black.)

Scene 7

(Lights up on JAMES and his sister ELIZABETH. JAMES appears to be at the end of his rope. As the scene opens the WAITER brings out some sort of dessert for the two of them.)

JAMES. I just can't do it anymore Elizabeth. I just don't have it in me anymore.

ELIZABETH. What's the problem? You seemed to be doing so well? You were out there.

JAMES. Yeah and the people out there are scary. It's hopeless. I appreciate everything you've been doing for me, but it's hopeless.

ELIZABETH. James, try not to sound so pathetic. You've just got to go out there and find someone who you connect with. How hard could it be?

JAMES. How hard can it be? It's impossible that's how hard it is. I've been out there looking and no matter how much I want to, I can't find anyone that I connect with. There's just nothing there with the women I've met. There's something just a little bit off with all of them, and that's being generous, most of them are a lot bit off.

ELIZABETH. Face it big brother, you know what the real problem is.

JAMES. Don't even say it.

ELIZABETH. It's the truth.

JAMES. I don't want to hear it.

ELIZABETH. It's the truth. You don't like any of these women because none of them are Molly.

JAMES. I don't like these women because they're all nuts.

ELIZABETH. Do you miss her?

JAMES. Of course I miss her.

ELIZABETH. So go talk to her.

JAMES. It's not as simple as that.

ELIZABETH. See that's where you are wrong, it's as simple as that.

JAMES. She ended it, not me. If it was up to me we would still be together.

ELIZABETH. Well why did she end it?

JAMES. I told you why.

ELIZABETH. No, you called me up and said you two broke up and that I was to alert the ladies that you were open for business again. Then you hung up and cried for two weeks.

JAMES. Oh it wasn't that bad.

ELIZABETH. I had to spoon feed you.

JAMES. Fine! She wanted to get married okay? Are you happy, she wanted to get married, and I said I didn't think I was ready, she said she didn't think I would ever be ready, then she said maybe we should see other people. I'm just not sure if I want to spend the rest of my life with her.

(As ELIZABETH speaks JAMES nods in agreement.)

ELIZABETH. So let me get this straight. You've been seeing Molly for five years? You love her, right? But, you don't know if you want to spend the rest of your life with her? Now that she's gone, however, you can't find anyone else who makes you nearly as happy as you were with her? And you have no idea how to remedy this unhappiness?

JAMES. Well anything would sound bad if you said it like that.

(ELIZABETH smacks him in the back of the head.)

Oh! What did you do that for?

ELIZABETH. Tell me, what does it feel like to come from the shallow end of our gene pool?

JAMES. What is your problem?

ELIZABETH. What is your problem?

JAMES. Aside from my little sister accosting me?

ELIZABETH. What do you suppose the chances are that you will ever find someone who makes you half as happy as you were with Molly?

JAMES. Not good.

ELIZABETH. So what would seem the obvious thing for you to do now?

JAMES. You're right. I'll call her tonight.

ELIZABETH. Call her now.

(JAMES gets up from the table as if to go use the phone. He thinks of something and stops.)

JAMES. What if she's met someone though. I mean just because I didn't have much luck doesn't mean she didn't, she could be out with someone wonderful right now!

(Fade to black.)

Scene 8

(Lights up on MOLLY and CHRIS. The smooth-talking ladies' man. MOLLY is at her lowest point. She's absolutely had it.)

CHRIS. You look hot!

MOLLY. Thanks.

CHRIS. No I mean it. That shirt looks great. *(Pause.)* It would look even better on my bedroom floor.

(MOLLY slaps him. Hard.)

(Fade to black.)

Scene 9

(JAMES and MOLLY are seated at MOLLY's table. They are both somewhat nervous but their overall demeanor is much better. As the scene opens the WAITER is taking JAMES' credit card and clearing the table. MOLLY and JAMES sip coffee. Two glasses of water are on the table.)

JAMES. And she looks at me and says, when I'm all alone I like to start fires.

MOLLY. You're kidding!

JAMES. I couldn't make something as awful as that date up. The sad part is that was the high part of the evening. It was downhill from there.

MOLLY. It sounds like your dates were only slightly better than mine were. Your sister is a great girl, but some of the men she set me up with—

JAMES. Wait a minute, Liz set you up?

MOLLY. Once or twice. Why, you're not angry with her are you?

JAMES. (*Smugly:*) No, I just need to remember to give her a big hug next time I see her.

(There is a pause.)

MOLLY. I'm really glad you called, James.

JAMES. Me too.

MOLLY. I have to ask though, why? I haven't changed, James. I'm ready for something more in my life, especially after seeing what else is out there, but unless you can make that kind of commitment I don't see the point in this. It's just going to hurt and to be honest I don't think I have it in me anymore. So unless—

JAMES. Molly, will you marry me? I've had a lot of time to think about it and I know I said I wasn't ready, but I was wrong. You mean more to me than I could ever put into words and I want to spend the rest of my life with you. I miss you so much, the way you laugh, the way you put your pinky out when you drink coffee, I even miss those stupid fortune cookies. I can't imagine anyone else in my life. I want to wake up next to you 60 years from now when I'm wrinkled and gray. You make me happy and I'm just, well I'm lost without you. So what do you say Molly?

MOLLY. Oh James.

(The two lean across the table and kiss.)

MOLLY. No.

JAMES. No?! No what?

MOLLY. No, I can't marry you.

JAMES. Why not?

MOLLY. I don't want to get married, James.

JAMES. What? After that speech you're going to just say no?

MOLLY. Yes.

JAMES. That was a great speech.

MOLLY. I know, I know, it was a beautiful speech. Any girl would be lucky to hear it.

JAMES. I am so lost.

MOLLY. Why?

JAMES. What do you mean, why? If you didn't want to get married why did you break up with me?

MOLLY. First of all, you broke up with me. Second of all, I just wanted to know that you were committed to this relationship, I didn't want you to propose!

JAMES. What do you mean committed to this relationship? How was I not committed to this relationship?

MOLLY. You weren't always there for my emotionally.

JAMES. What does that even mean?

MOLLY. That is so like you to ask me that.

JAMES. Let's pretend for a minute that your argument holds water, which I don't think it does, but even if it did, what do you mean I broke up with you? You broke up with me!

MOLLY. I did not!

JAMES. You did so. You said that either you needed a bigger commitment from me or you didn't see the point in this anymore.

MOLLY. Right and you said you didn't think you were ready. Thus, you were the reason we broke up.

JAMES. Oh my god! I can't believe you. You are so vague!

MOLLY. Vague?

JAMES. Yes, vague. You never say what you mean, you disguise everything.

MOLLY. That's not what vague means.

JAMES. That's not really the point is it?

MOLLY. You're the one who brought it up!

JAMES. Why is it always my fault?

MOLLY. I don't know? Why do you do so many stupid things?

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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