

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Copyright Protection. This Play is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America; of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union, including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth; of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, and the Berne Convention; and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations.

Reservation of Rights. All rights to this Play are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights; motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video, and sound recording rights; rights to all other forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, photocopying, and information storage and retrieval systems; and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

Performance Licensing and Royalty Payments. All amateur and stock performance rights to this Play are controlled exclusively by Playscripts.com. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this Play without obtaining advance written permission from Playscripts.com. Required royalty fees are specified online at the Playscripts.com website, and are subject to change without notice. Although this book may have been obtained for a licensed performance, these performance rights are not transferable. Required royalties must be paid every time the Play is performed before any audience, whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. All licensing requests and inquiries concerning amateur and stock performance rights should be addressed to Playscripts.com (see opposite page).

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to Playscripts.com, as well; such inquiries will be communicated to the Author and the Author's Agent, as applicable.

Restriction of Alterations. There shall be no deletions, alterations, or changes of any kind made to the Play, including the changing of character gender, the cutting of dialogue, or the alteration of objectionable language, unless directly authorized by Playscripts.com or otherwise allowed in the Play's "Production Notes." The title of the Play shall not be altered.

Author Credit. Any individual or group receiving permission to produce this Play is required to give credit to the Author as the sole and exclusive author of the Play. This obligation applies to the title page of every program distributed in connection with performances of the Play, and in any instance that the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing, or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and of a font size at least 50% as large as the largest letter used in the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author. The name of the Author may not be abbreviated or otherwise altered from the form in which it appears in this Play.

Publisher Attribution. All programs, advertisements, and other printed material distributed or published in connection with the production of the Play shall include the following notice:

Produced by special arrangement with Playscripts.com
(www.playscripts.com)

Prohibition of Unauthorized Copying. Any unauthorized copying of this book or excerpts from this book is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Playscripts.com.

Statement of Non-affiliation. This Play may include references to brand names and trademarks owned by third parties, and may include references to public figures. Playscripts.com is not affiliated with these public figures, or with the owners of such trademarks and brand names. Such references are included solely for parody, political comment, aesthetic purposes, or other protected purposes.

Permissions for Sound Recordings and Musical Works. This Play may contain directions calling for the performance of a portion, or all, of a musical work, or performance of a sound recording of a musical work. Playscripts.com has not obtained permissions to perform such works. The Producer of this Play is advised to obtain such permissions, if required in the context of the production. The Producer is directed to the websites of the U.S. Copyright Office (<http://lcweb.loc.gov/copyright>), ASCAP (<http://www.ascap.com>), and BMI (<http://www.bmi.com>) for further information on the need to obtain permissions, and on procedures for obtaining such permissions.

The Fine Print Explained

This play is protected by United States and international copyright law. According to these laws, individuals and production groups must obtain permission for any performance of this Play, and must pay any required royalty.*

Playscripts.com handles this licensing process for all stock and amateur performances of this Play worldwide. Permission must be obtained for any such performance, whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not an admission fee is charged. Playscripts.com collects these required royalty payments on behalf of the Author, and the Author receives the majority of these royalty payments.

It is thus necessary to abide by the following rules, not only out of respect for international law and personal ethics, but to ensure that playwrights are rewarded for creating new and vital dramatic work.

- Do not perform this Play without obtaining prior permission from Playscripts.com, and without paying the required royalty.
- Do not photocopy, scan, or otherwise duplicate any part of this book.
- Do not alter the text of the play, change a character's gender, delete any dialogue, or alter any objectionable language, unless explicitly allowed by the playwright in the "Production Notes" or otherwise authorized by Playscripts.com.
- Provide appropriate credit to the Author and appropriate attribution to Playscripts.com in all programs and promotional literature associated with any performance of this Play.

(These and other rules are presented in greater detail on the opposite page.)

Please contact Playscripts.com with any questions or production requests:

Email: info@playscripts.com

Website: <http://www.playscripts.com>

Playscripts.com

P.O. Box 237060

New York, NY 10023

USA

*Disregarding a performance license will expose you to infringement liability under U.S. Copyright law, which carries civil sanctions that include a possible award of up to \$150,000 per protected work for willful infringement. U.S. Copyright law also provides criminal sanctions.

For Kathleen McGrogan.

Congratulations on your wedding day, October 13, 2001.

Cast of Characters

KELLY MAGINOT, 32

BRIGITTE MAGINOT, 52

LILI VANCE, 24

ZOE DESCARTES, 34

LORRAINE DAVIS, 35

MIKE MAGINOT, 29

ENRIQUE MANUEL DE GUZMÁN, 32

Setting

The living room/dining alcove of Kelly Maginot's one-bedroom bungalow apartment in Santa Monica, California.

Time

The present.

THE MAGINOT LINE

by Emmett Loverde

ACT I

(The living room/dining alcove of KELLY MAGINOT's apartment at about a quarter to eight on a Friday evening in mid-November. Off to one side is a dining table graced by five place settings and a spray of fresh flowers in a tasteful vase. Clearly visible is the front door, outside of which can be seen a tiny porch surrounded by thick bushes. The windows in the apartment look out across a quiet courtyard toward more windows on the other side. An entryway leads into a small hallway which leads to a bedroom, bathroom, and a closet. Freshly-pressed blouses hang on hangers from the bent neck of an old, sturdy floor lamp next to the sofa. A wrapped gift sits on the coffee table in the living room area.)

KELLY MAGINOT, an attractive woman of 32, is frantically tossing a salad. She stops suddenly, remembering something, pours water into a pot and sets it on the stove to boil. She sets an egg timer, then returns to tossing the salad. She periodically casts worried glances at the clock on the wall throughout the following.

Just how tightly wound up KELLY truly is becomes apparent when the telephone rings and she lets out a blood-curdling scream.)

KELLY. *(Shouting into phone:)* Hello! *(Listens; relaxes a bit.)* Hi, Mikey. What? I wasn't yelling... Well, it's just that it's quarter to eight and everyone was supposed to be here at seven-thirty. How was yoga? *(Listens.)* Yeah, she's been *demanding* to help—she even offered to shuck peas—that's how desperate she is! No, I won't let her touch anything. *(Sly grin:)* Well, I like to see her squirm. *(Listens.)* Not tonight, okay, hun? There won't even be enough food for all of us. *(Pause.)* Five girls, three of whom are on diets. With food enough for two and a half normal people, we'll just make it. *(Listens.)* I'm dying to hear your surprise, but we need to girl-talk. Right. *(Impatiently:)* Mike, I've got to clear the line in case one of my guests is trying to get through... I can't *afford* call waiting—I'm a grad student—I can't afford *anything!* Right. Love you. *(Hangs up.)*

(BRIGITTE MAGINOT, a stylish matron of about 52, enters from the bedroom.)

BRIGITTE. (Sweetly:) May I come out now, Kelly?

KELLY. (Points at chair. Sternly, as if to a dog:) Sit! Sit!

(Somewhat taken aback, BRIGITTE sits.)

Stay. Stay.

(BRIGITTE starts to open her mouth...)

Don't speak!

BRIGITTE. But Kelly—

KELLY. Mother, you promised to stay off my back!

BRIGITTE. But you can't expect me to—

KELLY. It's *my* apartment.

(BRIGITTE sits quietly for a moment. KELLY dumps dressing into the salad and vigorously mixes it in—which forces BRIGITTE to speak up.)

BRIGITTE. Kelly dear—

KELLY. Ma—

BRIGITTE. Not everyone is going to want dressing!

KELLY. You know what, Ma? Everyone will. I called Lorrie, I called Zoe, I called Lili, and I asked each one: “Do you want dressing on your salad?” And each said yes!

(She begins to serve salad into individual bowls.)

BRIGITTE. That kind of dressing?

KELLY. Yes! This *brand*, even!

BRIGITTE. That much?

KELLY. Yes—this much! This exact amount has been established as the dressing minimum for the evening!

BRIGITTE. I don't want any.

KELLY. What?

BRIGITTE. I don't want any dressing. Not that kind.

KELLY. What kind do you want?

BRIGITTE. A special kind. You don't have it.

KELLY. Try me.

BRIGITTE. You can only get it at a special store.

KELLY. Where, Brody's Deli?

BRIGITTE. Not any more, not at Brody's. Ever since the son took over, their food has been repulsive.

KELLY. Where may one encounter this mythical dressing, O Purveyor of Sacred Maternal Instinct?

BRIGITTE. Good heavens, you don't have to use such lofty language. I hope you're not writing your thesis that way.

KELLY. Are you going to tell me what kind of dressing?

BRIGITTE. Anne-Marie's Ginger-Mustard. You can only get it at—

KELLY. (*Overlapping:*)—at Levine's, right? (*Pulls bottle of Anne-Marie's Ginger-Mustard dressing from refrigerator.*) That's where I went. How much do you want?

BRIGITTE. Now I don't want any—you got me all riled up. You know my stomach.

KELLY. Sure—I remember being inside it. That's why I was born two months premature.

(The doorbell rings.)

BRIGITTE. (*Strolling toward door:*) That must be one of your little friends...

KELLY. (*Dashing to door:*) I'll get it!

(KELLY opens the door to reveal LILI VANCE, 24, a sweet, naive girl bearing a little wrapped gift. Upon seeing KELLY, LILI shrieks and envelops the former in a bone-crushing hug.)

BRIGITTE. Kelly! What are you doing to that tiny wisp of a girl??

KELLY. *She started it!*

LILI. Oh—is this a bad time? I could come back. *(Turns to leave.)*

KELLY. Don't be silly, Lollipop! Come on in!

LILI. *(Sotto voce:)* I know how things get between you and—

KELLY. *(Loudly:)* Between you and me, I think it's going to be a fabulous evening too.

(KELLY and LILI both turn to BRIGITTE and apply cover-up grins.)

Lili, my mother, Brigitte Maginot. Mother, Lili Vance.

LILI. Hello, Mrs. Maginot.

BRIGITTE. Hello, dear. *(To KELLY:)* Kelly, I am not fooled at all by either of you. Have you been telling your friends that you and I fight?

KELLY. *(Considers.)* Yes.

BRIGITTE. *(Crestfallen:)* Kelly!

LILI. *(Quickly:)* But it's okay, Mrs. Maginot, we know she doesn't mean it—Maginot that's such a pretty name is that French it sounds French what does it mean?

KELLY. It means “impenetrable wall.”

BRIGITTE. *(Proudly:)* The Maginot Line was a gigantic barrier put up by the French in the late thirties to keep out the Nazis. Maginot is an area in France—and *that's* what our family was named after—the area, not the wall.

LILI. That's lovely, Mrs. Wall—I mean Mrs. France. I mean Mrs. Maginot!

BRIGITTE. What a pretty gift!

LILI. Wait till you see what it is! Lorraine's going to *freak!*

BRIGITTE. Is that a good thing?

KELLY. Maybe not. What are you giving her?

LILI. This cute baby-doll nightie with little pink rosebuds in all the right places.

KELLY. Oh god—Lili! Don't you know Lorrie wears opaque flannel pajamas to bed? She's so ashamed of her body that one year at tax time she mailed a "receipt for charitable contributions" to her *boyfriend*.

LILI. Well...can I buy-in on yours?

BRIGITTE. I'm sure your friend will love any gift you give her.

LILI. You think so?

KELLY. Absolutely not. Buy-in on mine—it's glow-in-the-dark bubblebath.

LILI. Lorrie takes a bath in the dark?

KELLY. (*Nods.*) It's that shame thing...

BRIGITTE. I tried to steer Kelly toward something more romantic...

LILI. (*Indicates her own gift:*) I think Nathan will love her in this!

KELLY. Lil, Lorraine carries exquisite shame that was lovingly crafted for thirty-five years by her dear mother.

BRIGITTE. Kelly Marie Maginot! What an awful thing to say!

(The doorbell rings.)

KELLY. (*Sings:*) Co-ming!

(KELLY opens the door and in storms ZOE DESCARTES, a strikingly pretty and well-dressed woman of 34. She wears an Angora sweater and lugs a gigantic designer tote bag. Once inside the room she drops the tote bag and growls.)

(To OTHERS:) Buckle up, girls, it's going to be a bumpy night.

ZOE. (*Sighs dramatically.*) I don't have a job.

BRIGITTE. Did you get yourself fired, dear?

KELLY. Oh, uh, Zoe, Ma. Ma, Zoe. (*To ZOE:*) What happened?

ZOE. I quit. I quit! I hate all humans.

LILI. But Zoe...five years with the airline...you were almost vested.

KELLY. Spill it. All of it.

ZOE. Well, you know how during these fare wars every slimebag somehow finds enough money for a ticket? We're in the middle of one right now—New York to L.A., two hundred dollars—

LILI. Really? I should visit my cousin...

KELLY. Save it, Lil. *(To ZOE:)* So...slimebags...

BRIGITTE. Did somebody get fresh?

ZOE. No, nothing like that. One of the other flight attendants comes over to me just before takeoff and she's like, "Zo, you're not going to believe this," and I'm all, "Can't you handle it 'cause I barely got any sleep," and she's all, "No, you've got to see for yourself—"

KELLY. What was it?

ZOE. This passenger had stuck her baby in the overhead bin.

(General outcry of shock and disgust, except for BRIGITTE.)

BRIGITTE. Maybe she thought it would be quiet up there—those planes get so noisy...

(More outcry.)

What?

ZOE. That's what *she* said—*(Southern accent:)*—"It's so dark and quiet up there, and you know how the rhythm of the plane's like a rocking chair?"

LILI. What about the shifting of contents during flight?

ZOE. I wanted to shift *her*.

BRIGITTE. What did you do?

ZOE. I turned in my resignation as soon as we landed.

LILI. But where did you put the baby?

ZOE. We made her hold it in her arms. Humans are despicable. I'm going to marry a chimpanzee.

KELLY. Bad choice. I read somewhere that chimps stray more than human males.

ZOE. Maybe, but it's legal to keep a chimp in a cage.

LILI. I heard it was the female chimps who fool around.

KELLY. You really quit, Zo?

ZOE. Absolutely.

LILI. That's so decisive.

ZOE. I'm sorry, you guys—I'm forgetting my manners. (*Shakes hands with BRIGITTE.*) How do you do, Mrs. Maginot? (*Hugs LILI affectionately.*) How are ya, Lilliput?

BRIGITTE. Call me Brigitte, dear—please. (*To LILI:*) Both of you. "Mrs. Maginot" sounds so stuffy.

KELLY. (*To ZOE:*) I'll just get this... (*Tries to lift ZOE's bag, which is terribly heavy.*) ...anvil. Zoe, what *didn't* you bring? (*Lugs bag inside bedroom.*)

ZOE. I had to clean out my locker...

BRIGITTE. (*To KELLY:*) Now, is this the one who hates her body?

ZOE. What??

BRIGITTE. (*To ZOE:*) Don't hate your body, dear.

KELLY. Ma—that's *Lorrie!* This is *Zoe!*

BRIGITTE. "Zoe," "Zorrie," "Zili"—how do you girls tell each other apart?

KELLY. I put your bag next to the bed, sweetie.

BRIGITTE. (*To ZOE:*) What will you do for money?

ZOE. I've chosen not to think about that yet.

BRIGITTE. Can you answer phones, type letters, things like that? I bet the airline taught you how to make great coffee.

KELLY. Coffee? The airline taught her how to save lives. Haven't you seen any of those movies?

BRIGITTE. Save lives? How wonderful! How many lives have you saved?

ZOE. Well...none. (*Hopefully:*) I once caught a pickpocket!

KELLY. Beautiful sweater, Zoe.

ZOE. Thanks—it's Angora. Marked down to 48 dollars from *120!*

BRIGITTE. Angora? Those darling little kitties? How could you wear cat fur?

KELLY. It's from bunnies. It's just their hair—they don't kill them.

BRIGITTE. They dress you stewardesses like chorus girls. No wonder you never saved anybody—you show up to rescue someone in an outfit like that, they'll think it's one of those naughty telegrams.

ZOE. This isn't my uniform...

KELLY. Hey Ma, how about cutting her some slack?

BRIGITTE. I meant it as a compliment! Most women would give anything to look like a chorus girl. They'd die for a body like Zorrie's.

ZOE. Thank you.

BRIGITTE. I hope you're having a lot of sex.

(ZOE draws a shocked breath.)

KELLY. Nice, Ma. Nice.

BRIGITTE. Men must be beating down her door.

ZOE. I, uh, enjoy myself to the extent that my morals will allow.

BRIGITTE. A girl has just so many good years, you know.

KELLY. Gee, when are mine going to happen, Ma?

BRIGITTE. You're too choosy, Kelly Marie.

KELLY. I have standards.

LILI. Ooh, Kel—what about that Latino guy—uh, "Rico"?

KELLY. (*With gusto:*) Enrrrrrique! (*Nods.*) Enrique, Enrique, Enrique.

LILI. What about *him*?

KELLY. Ah, ENRIQUE. Very smooth. Very sensuous. (*Sighs.*) Very capable hands. (*Shakes head.*) Very bad news.

LILI. Capable hands? That doesn't sound bad at all.

BRIGITTE. Kelly, all men are bad—what difference does it make which one you pick?

KELLY. (*To OTHERS, gesturing at BRIGITTE:*) Ladies, I give you Exhibit A.

(The egg timer goes off with a ding.)

Ooh—my chicken.

(KELLY exits to the kitchen, where she begins removing chicken from the oven and putting it onto a serving tray.)

ZOE. (*Troubled:*) So...Mrs. Maginot, you're saying that—

BRIGITTE. "Brigitte," dear.

ZOE. Do you think a woman's looks are her sole means for getting a man?

BRIGITTE. Ninety percent.

ZOE. So...once her looks go—if she isn't married—then a woman might as well give up?

BRIGITTE. Not necessarily. Some men have very strange tastes.

KELLY. (*Returning:*) This is like watching a car accident in slow motion.

ZOE. (*To BRIGITTE:*) Don't you think personality enters into it?

BRIGITTE. "Personality" is a myth. Do you think the cavemen worried about personality? They wanted their mate to have big hips so she could bear lots of children.

KELLY. I've read that.

ZOE. Really?

KELLY. Yeah—this article said prehistoric men used to pay a lot of attention to a woman’s looks because that was the only way to tell whether she could resist disease.

LILI. Oh—I heard that on the radio! This psychologist said all men basically want is to perpetuate the species.

BRIGITTE. They’re really very simple creatures.

ZOE. *(To KELLY:)* Do you agree with your mom?

KELLY. It’s what she’s been telling me all my life...

ZOE. But do you agree with her—that men only care about looks, not personality?

KELLY. *(Sadly:)* I wish I could say that I disagree, but I just know so many wonderful women—

LILI. Including yourself.

KELLY. *(Smiles:)* You’re sweet. *(To ZOE:)* I know so many bright, wonderful women with these amazing personalities and it’s like men don’t even see them. Us.

ZOE. *(Nods.)* That’s exactly my problem.

KELLY. No it’s not—your problem is the opposite. A guy takes one look at you and thinks “Sex!!”

ZOE. *(Carefully:)* I think there are men out there looking for more than a roll in the hay.

BRIGITTE. *(Comfortingly:)* Don’t you worry about a thing, dear. You will have your pick of men as long as... How old are you?

ZOE. Thirty-three.

KELLY. Didn’t you just turn thirty-four?

ZOE. Who’s counting?

BRIGITTE. So you have at least five or six more good years.

ZOE. It sounds so *bleak*.

KELLY. You’ll find your little prince, honey.

ZOE. Actually...I am seeing someone.

LILI. You were serious about the chimp?

ZOE. He's not a chimp. He's very nice. He seems to really appreciate me. I mean, my intellect. (*Worried:*) As far as I can tell.

LILI. Honey, that's wonderful!

KELLY. (*Disgusted:*) You're seeing somebody?

LILI. Where'd you meet him?

ZOE. At yoga.

BRIGITTE. What's his name?

ZOE. (*Doing the "quotation marks" thing in the air with her fingers:*) We'll call him "Mike."

LILI. How long have you been seeing "Mike"?

ZOE. (*Loving all this:*) About...five weeks and three days...

KELLY. How many hours?

ZOE. Four. And eighteen minutes.

KELLY. How many seconds?

ZOE. Oh, who's keeping track?

BRIGITTE. What's his real name?

ZOE. MIKE. That's not the point.

LILI. Kelly's brother Mike takes yoga...

ZOE. (*Lightly:*) How interesting.

LILI. He's *so* cute, Kel—he'll make some girl very happy.

KELLY. (*Sing-song:*) Lili's got a cru-ush! Lili's got a cru-ush!

LILI. I do not!

KELLY. (*To ZOE:*) So you've been dating someone for five weeks and haven't told us?

ZOE. I was going to tonight, but I wanted to wait till after Lorraine opened her presents.

BRIGITTE. Kelly, your neurotic friend found a man—why can't you?

ZOE. “Neurotic”?

KELLY. That's because she's built like a brick house, Ma. I'm built like a bricklayer. *(To ZOE:)* I never called you “neurotic”...

BRIGITTE. Yes you did—you said she can't pass a phone booth without calling to check her messages.

KELLY. That isn't Zoe, Ma!

LILI. It's me.

KELLY. I did tell her about checking your messages, Lil—but she's the one who labeled it “neurotic.”

LILI. I am neurotic. But I'm doing something about it.

ZOE. Are you seeing a therapist?

LILI. *(Brightly:)* Yes! About two weeks now. I was planning to tell you guys tonight...after Lorrie's thing died down.

BRIGITTE. What does your therapist think is wrong with you, dear?

LILI. Oh, we haven't gotten to *that*—we're still just getting comfortable.

ZOE. Careful—getting comfortable with your therapist can be expensive. *(Quickly:)* So I've heard.

LILI. Warren pays for everything.

KELLY. Who's “Warren”?

LILI. The therapist.

KELLY. Your therapist pays you to see him? That's a little weird.

LILI. No—he pays when we *go out*.

ZOE. *(Appalled:)* You date your therapist??

LILI. He's not *my* therapist!

KELLY. Lili, dating a therapist won't cure you of anything except all your illusions about therapists.

ZOE. How'd you meet him?

LILI. At my cousin's baby shower.

KELLY. (*Disgusted:*) Baby showers. *That's where the good men hang out.*

BRIGITTE. Leave Lolly alone! Poor girl. It's obvious she's crazy about this boy—and no doubt he's crazy about her. (*To KELLY:*) Even the crazy one can get a man.

(The doorbell rings.)

KELLY. (*To BRIGITTE, sotto voce:*) Ma, this is the girl who's getting married. She is very happy about it. Ecstatic. As are we all. You will say nothing to sabotage this ecstasy—is that clear?

BRIGITTE. You needn't address me in that patronizing tone, Kelly Marie. I'm still your mother.

(KELLY glares.)

I'll be nice to your friend.

(KELLY, ZOE, LILI, and BRIGITTE gather around the door. KELLY opens it...)

LORRAINE DAVIS, a 35-year-old premarital basket case, stands in the doorway. LORRAINE carries a purse and is dressed casually—and wears a frightened look on her face.)

KELLY. (*Tentatively:*) Hi, Lor...

(Thus prompted, LORRAINE bursts into tears. Immediately the three younger women swoop down to take turns embracing LORRAINE comfortingly as they lead her inside the apartment. BRIGITTE fluffs up a seat in the center of the couch.)

Only when ALL are seated—amid much supportive cooing—do LORRAINE's tears begin to abate.)

LORRAINE. I'm sorry, you guys—I don't mean to be this way—

KELLY. It's fine—don't worry about it—

LILI. (*Overlapping:*) That's what we're here for, honey—

ZOE. (*Overlapping:*) You're just nervous, that's all—

LORRAINE. ...I guess I'm just really nervous.

LILI. That must be it.

ZOE. (*Nods, overlapping:*) It's gotta be.

(BRIGITTE *hands* LORRAINE a Kleenex, which is gratefully accepted.)

KELLY. *I'd* be wetting my pants.

(BRIGITTE *offers* KELLY a Kleenex. KELLY *glares* without accepting it.)

LORRAINE. (*To* BRIGITTE:) Thanks for the hankie. (*Dries her eyes.*) Are you Kelly's sister?

KELLY. (*Affectionately:*) Ah, that old silk tongue!

BRIGITTE. No, dear—I'm her mother. You may call me Brigitte.

LORRAINE. How do you do, Brigitte? (*Shakes* BRIGITTE's *hand.*) I'm Lorraine.

BRIGITTE. Kelly's sister is only one year older than Kelly and she and her husband—he's a podiatrist—live in Vermont with their two children.

KELLY. In case you were wondering.

LILI. (*Brightly:*) Shall we eat?

(*The* WOMEN *all head to the dining alcove.*)

KELLY. Zoe—you want to give me a hand with the salads?

ZOE. Sure.

(*ZOE and KELLY begin serving the salads.*)

KELLY. No salad for my ma—she doesn't want any.

(*The salads are soon distributed to everyone except BRIGITTE.*)

BRIGITTE. Did you forget me?

ZOE. (*In horror:*) But...Kelly said—

KELLY. Ma, you said you didn't want any salad.

BRIGITTE. I *always* eat salad.

KELLY. Okay—here we are... (*Serves up a bowl of salad and begins to douse it with dressing.*) ...with some nice Anne-Marie's Ginger-Mustard, just how you like it...

BRIGITTE. I don't want that strange dressing!

KELLY. But you said—

BRIGITTE. Don't give me special treatment to impress your friends, Kelly. I want the same dressing as the other girls.

KELLY. (*Beyond annoyed:*) Okay Ma whatever you say.

(*KELLY heads to kitchen and begins to wash BRIGITTE's lettuce at sink.*)

BRIGITTE. Are you rinsing off my salad?

KELLY. (*From kitchen:*) You want me to use soap?

BRIGITTE. Bring it over the way it is. You're holding up dinner, for God's sake.

KELLY. (*Hands bowl of salad to BRIGITTE and sits.*) Sorry, Ma. Sorry, girls. (*Looks up:*) Sorry, God.

(*ALL begin eating their salads.*)

BRIGITTE. You aren't very practical, Kelly.

ZOE. Oh I know—remember last summer, Kel, when there was that great sale on Christmas cards and you wouldn't go in on them with me?

KELLY. I refuse to buy Christmas cards in July.

ZOE. But they were eighty percent off!

BRIGITTE. (*To ZOE:*) I hope *you* did the smart thing and stocked up.

ZOE. Six boxes!

LILI. Those ought to last you six years.

ZOE. Only I still have four other boxes left over from a sale two years ago...

BRIGITTE. Heavens—don't you have any friends?

ZOE. I...of course I do—

BRIGITTE. I send out a hundred cards a year to all my friends.

ZOE. I have friends...I just get backed up. Last year I waited so long, I ended up sending out Easter cards instead.

KELLY. Were they on sale?

ZOE. (*Annoyed:*) No—I had to pay full price!

LILI. I remember those Easter cards—they were so perky!

LORRAINE. I didn't get one.

KELLY. Who's ready for some chicken? (*Exits to kitchen.*)

ZOE. (*To LORRAINE:*) I'm sorry—there must have been a million people I forgot—

LORRAINE. It's okay, honey—I'm Jewish.

KELLY. (*From kitchen:*) Chicken, coming up!

ZOE. I found a couple of cards for agnostics. They had pretty flowers on them and said something vague like "Happy Springtime."

LORRAINE. I'm not an agnostic.

LILI. I'd *love* some chicken. I'll give you a hand.

(LILI can't get to the kitchen fast enough. While the OTHERS wait, staring at each other in uncomfortable silence, LILI and KELLY cram chicken, rice, and steamed vegetables onto plates and whisk the food back out to the table.)

BRIGITTE. (*To LORRAINE:*) I didn't know Kelly had Jewish friends.

LORRAINE. It looks delicious, Kelly!

ZOE. It certainly does.

(ALL begin eating.)

BRIGITTE. (To LORRAINE:) That might not be Kosher, dear...

ZOE. Oh—did you help cook, Mrs. Maginot?

BRIGITTE. Every time I got near the kitchen, my daughter growled at me. (To KELLY:) Did you mean for the vegetables to be this hard, Kelly?

KELLY. I like them hard. We like them hard. Everybody who's anybody likes them hard!

BRIGITTE. I thought steaming is supposed to make them soft—are you sure you did it correctly?

ZOE. Lots of health food restaurants steam their veggies this way. It's the style.

KELLY. See, Ma?

LILI. Kel, this chicken is amazing. It's so tender, it's like fresh bread!

KELLY. (Beaming:) You think so?

BRIGITTE. Maybe stale bread. I wish it weren't so drippy. Is there any real bread? I could use some to mop up my plate.

ZOE. The rice is enough starch for me, Kel.

BRIGITTE. So Lollie, you must tell us about your wedding.

LORRAINE. (Somber:) Oh...now?

KELLY. (To the rescue:) Would later be better? Maybe later would be better...

BRIGITTE. Why wait? We're all here. Weddings are such fun. I'm so happy for you. Is it going to be in a temple or a synagogue or someplace Jewish?

LORRAINE. Can we talk about it a little later?

KELLY. Of course we can.

LILI. Whenever.

ZOE. How's little Robbie doing, Lili?

LILI. I left him off alone at school today for the first time. I'm still recovering from the experience.

KELLY. Today's the first time? I thought school started two months ago.

LILI. It's the first time I left him there by himself. It was so hard!

KELLY. Hasn't he been going to school all this time?

LILI. Of course. But I stayed there with him. They taught us some really neat games.

BRIGITTE. You have a child, dear? *(To KELLY:)* Kelly, you never said this one had a child—how tragic when she's so unstable...

LILI. It's not my child, Mrs. Maginot. I'm a nanny. I take care of a little boy named Robert.

BRIGITTE. How wonderful—it's like training for when you have your own... *(But wait—she's crazy:)* ...someday.

LILI. I can't have children.

BRIGITTE. Nonsense, dear—you're just afraid.

KELLY. Ma, she really *can't* have children.

BRIGITTE. What do you mean?

LILI. I...um...my plumbing's a little messed-up. *(With false cheer:)* So, no babies!

ZOE. You're much better off!

LILI. No being awakened in the middle of the night by some screaming little squirt!

KELLY. Sure, Lil. Who needs the hassle?

LILI. No dragging some brat to a movie and having to leave at the best part because he starts crying!

ZOE. It's just a job—you can quit any time you want.

LORRAINE. *(Nods.)* Sure. You can walk out any time. Sure.

BRIGITTE. What are you all talking about? Motherhood is wonderful!

ZOE. You could always adopt, Lil...

BRIGITTE. Oh—you can't give birth? How terrible!

LILI. I try not to think about it.

BRIGITTE. It's just awful. It must make you feel like less of a woman.

LILI. Well, I—

KELLY. What do you mean by that, Ma?

LILI. No, please don't explain—

BRIGITTE. A woman gives birth. It's what she's made to do. It's what sets her above men.

ZOE. "Above"?

LILI. Maybe we shouldn't get into this—

KELLY. Women aren't above men—it's a partnership.

BRIGITTE. You need more life experience, Kelly.

KELLY. There is absolutely nothing—no physical, emotional, or intellectual characteristic—that sets woman above man.

BRIGITTE. You read too much.

KELLY. Exactly—I go to school for this stuff.

BRIGITTE. Oh—is all this what your little thesis is about?

KELLY. In a way.

LILI. What's the title again, Kel?

KELLY. "The Myths of Childhood in European-American Households and the Victims' Resistance to the Dispelling Thereof."

ZOE. "Victims"? That sounds a little biased.

BRIGITTE. Pure psychobabble.

KELLY. If Dad had given birth to me, would that make him your equal?

BRIGITTE. Show me *one* man—any man—who could handle labor pains...

LORRAINE. Peter Jennings—he *never* gets upset.

ZOE. I think most men would give it a try if it meant creating a life...

BRIGITTE. Oh that's ridiculous. After the first hour, they'd be heading out for a beer!

LILL. Could we *please* talk about something else???

BRIGITTE. Don't be upset, dear. You're still a woman in other ways.

LILL. I would rather not discuss children at all. Please. If we could avoid the subject.

LORRAINE. But what happened when you dropped off Robbie? He's so cute I could scream...

LILL. We couldn't look at each other the whole drive there. He was sitting in his little child seat—I could see him in the rear-view mirror—and he kept blinking back tears. Me, too.

ZOE. I'm getting a little teary myself.

(KELLY and LORRAINE *nod.*)

LILL. So we pull into the driveway of the school, and we're making small talk, you know, like I go, "Where do you think we should park, Robbie?" and he says, "That looks like a good place." "What, here?" "Uh-huh." "Okay." Then I park, and we just sit there watching all the mommies drop off their kids and we can't look at each other so we keep looking everywhere else so I say, "Do you want to come up and sit on my lap?" And he goes, "Okay," and I unstrap him from his little seat and he climbs up front and puts his arms around my neck and he's not saying anything but he's squeezing me so hard I can barely breathe and I'm squeezing back so tight I think I'm suffocating him but neither of us says anything. Finally I say, "Do you want to go inside?" And his head is buried in my neck and he shakes it back and forth so it tickles my ear which makes me start to

giggle and suddenly I burst out crying and then he starts crying so I carry him inside that way, both of us just bawling our eyes out...

BRIGITTE. But he'd been going to that school for two months...

LILI. (*Nods:*) Since September.

BRIGITTE. Isn't he over it by now? A child can't expect you to sit around all day while he goes to school! You could be damaging him.

KELLY. He's only three. (*To LILI:*) Right? Three?

LILI. (*Nods:*) As of August Sixth.

BRIGITTE. If you spoil the child by always giving in, later on he'll give you nothing but grief!

LILI. I know—I should have let go a long time ago. I just couldn't. I adore that boy.

LORRAINE. I don't blame you. He's priceless.

LILI. Finally I told him last Wednesday that Friday I was going to leave him at school all by himself and pick him up afterward.

ZOE. Good—that gave him time to get used to the idea.

LILI. *I needed the time.*

KELLY. How did you finally get out of there?

LILI. I brought him inside and we just sat down on the rug hugging and wailing, and one of the teachers came over and said, "Here—let me take him," and she started to pull him out of my arms and I practically bit her head off!

BRIGITTE. (*Nods:*) I did the same thing to Kelly's sister's fiancé.

ZOE. When he was three?

BRIGITTE. At their wedding.

KELLY. At *my* wedding she'll probably give the groom a completion bonus.

LORRAINE. You were saying, Lili?

LILI. Well, we sat there on the rug for a few minutes and I finally handed him to the teacher and kissed him on the cheek and then turned around and staggered out the door.

BRIGITTE. You didn't look back, did you?

LILI. Just once...

(ALL BUT ZOE *groan.*)

LORRAINE. The *worst* thing you can do!

ZOE. I don't know—I think it lets the child know you care.

LORRAINE. Not the worst for *him*—the worst thing for *you*! You look back and it's ten times harder to leave...because you see how sad he is. Besides, look at Lot's wife.

KELLY. (*Nods.*) Exactly. She really got nailed.

LILI. It was *twenty* times harder after I looked back! A *hundred* times!

KELLY. Also, if you're looking backward, you might run into somebody in front of you.

LILI. That, too.

BRIGITTE. I think you're all getting carried away. Kelly, I had no trouble leaving you at school.

KELLY. Picking me up was the problem.

BRIGITTE. There's no need to make jokes at my expense just to impress your friends.

KELLY. (*Considers.*) You're right, Ma. I'm sorry.

ZOE. We know you don't mean it, Kel.

KELLY. Let's just stop at "I'm sorry."

LORRAINE. Is there more chicken?

KELLY. Sure—plenty. I'll get you some. (*Rises, takes LORRAINE's plate.*) Anyone else?

LILI. I'm fine, thanks.

ZOE. None for me.

(KELLY enters the kitchen and begins putting more chicken onto LORRAINE's plate.)

BRIGITTE. (To LORRAINE:) More chicken? Tsk, tsk. How are you going to fit into your wedding gown?

KELLY. (From kitchen:) Ignore her, Lorrie. Remember what we talked about.

LORRAINE. That's okay, Kelly. I'm fine. (To BRIGITTE:) I'm not worrying about that right now.

BRIGITTE. But the wedding's in January, isn't it?

ZOE. You don't need to lose any more weight, Lorrie—you look wonderful. Really. Really.

LORRAINE. Thanks. (To KELLY:) How's that chicken coming?

KELLY. (Dashing back to table:) It's coming, it's coming! (Gives LORRAINE plate.)

BRIGITTE. (To LORRAINE:) These days, men seem to prefer stick figures to real women. It was different when I was your age. What color is your dress, dear?

ZOE. Off-white. Don't they call it "cream," Lor?

BRIGITTE. (Nods.) Off-white. Good. It's a shame that so many brides these days wear virgin white—it's so dishonest. (Smiles at LORRAINE.) I'm glad you chose the high road.

LILI. (Wistfully:) Some things you just can't take back.

(ZOE nods.)

BRIGITTE. Especially since everyone knows that Jews are so loose about sex.

KELLY. Mother...I begged you to behave...

LORRAINE. (Shrugs.) Traditionally, Jews tend to be a bit less inhibited about sex. I'm certainly not still a virgin...

KELLY. Not that that's anyone's business, Mother...

LORRAINE. ...nor am I going to be a bride anytime soon.

(Shocked, ALL ad-lib “What?”, “What happened?”, etc.)

Nathan’s out of remission. They found some spots on his liver. We postponed the wedding indefinitely.

KELLY. Why didn’t you say something?

LORRAINE. I just found out today.

LILI. You’re not going through with the wedding?

LORRAINE. Not any time soon. *(Sympathetically:)* Sorry, honey.

LILI. No—I’m sorry!

ZOE. Is there anything we can do?

(Blinking back tears, LORRAINE looks around the table at the expectant faces and shakes her head. KELLY reaches out and clutches her hand in sympathy; LILI follows suit. LORRAINE smiles in appreciation. A nice moment.)

BRIGITTE. You think that’s bad, you should hear what happened at my wedding.

(Shielding her hand from BRIGITTE’s view, LILI flips BRIGITTE the birdie.)

KELLY. We don’t really want to, Ma.

BRIGITTE. The morning of, I was down on my hands and knees scrubbing the church floor *in my slip!*

KELLY. Save it, Ma? Please?

BRIGITTE. The night before they held first communion for a bunch of second graders and a madman broke in waving a gun.

LILI. Oh my god—did he hurt anyone?

BRIGITTE. No, thank heaven, but he scared the children so much that several wet themselves.

ZOE. Nobody cleaned it up?

BRIGITTE. They were so busy calming the children down that it slipped through the cracks. So to speak. If I hadn’t gone over to the

church to check on the flower arrangements—be careful, Lollie, those florists can be *so* unreliable—I never would have seen the little puddles everywhere—and the *smell*—

KELLY. Ma! Shut up!!

(Awkward pause.)

BRIGITTE. *(Coolly:)* I'm sorry, what?

KELLY. Shut up. Be quiet. Nobody wants to hear what happened at your wedding a hundred years ago.

ZOE. Maybe we should all have some coffee—

BRIGITTE. Kelly Marie, I was merely trying to let your friend know that what she's going through isn't that different from—

KELLY. It is different, Ma—much different! You have absolutely no concept of what Lorrie's going through!

BRIGITTE. All weddings have rocky roads—

KELLY. Hers may not happen *at all!*

LORRAINE. Kel, there's no need for this—

KELLY. I think there's every need, Lor. *(To BRIGITTE:)* Lorraine's fiancé is dying of cancer! It's a far cry from a couple of kids pissing on the floor! *(Picks up dirty dishes and takes them into kitchen.)*

LILI. *(Rising:)* I...I should go, you guys.

ZOE. *(Jumping to her feet:)* Sounds like a plan! *(To LORRAINE:)* Lorrie, you feel like getting a drink?

LORRAINE. I don't know how I feel.

BRIGITTE. There's no need to leave, girls. Kelly's tantrums never last long.

KELLY. Tantrum? I'm throwing a tantrum???

BRIGITTE. Kelly, dear, at some point you need to learn that your little outbursts just annoy everybody. *(To OTHERS:)* Please stay. We were having such fun.

LORRAINE. *(Insulted:)* That's it, I'm out of here. *(To ZOE:)* Where are we starting out?

ZOE. How about The Rusty Nail?

LORRAINE. We're there.

KELLY. *(Hugging LORRAINE:)* Sorry about this, sweetie. Sorry about the whole evening.

LORRAINE. Call me when the storm blows over.

KELLY. It's been blowing for thirty-two years.

LORRAINE. When it gets back down to a drizzle.

BRIGITTE. Why are you all leaving?

ZOE. It was nice meeting you, Mrs. Maginot.

BRIGITTE. "Brigitte," please.

(LILI, LORRAINE, and ZOE exit with friendly waves. KELLY stares sadly at her MOTHER.)

Do all your parties end so early?

(KELLY can only growl in frustration. She exits to her bedroom.)

(Calling out:) Should I start the dishes? Kelly?

(There is a knock at the door.)

I'll get it!

(KELLY comes flying back into the room.)

KELLY. Don't you dare! You'll scare them away again. Go sit on the toilet or something.

BRIGITTE. *(Shocked and insulted:)* Kelly!

(KELLY opens the front door to reveal ENRIQUE MANUEL DE GUZMÁN, 32. He is sexy, virile, even primal. Maybe to excess.)

KELLY. *(Very surprised:)* Enrique!

ENRIQUE. ¡Ah! ¡Mi gallinita! *(Kisses KELLY on both cheeks.)* ¡Pitufa! ¿Cómo estás, querida?

KELLY. (*Shrugs.*) As well as can be expected. (*Hugs him again—she can't help herself.*) God, it's good to see you!

BRIGITTE. Kelly Marie, what language is that man speaking?

KELLY. (*Continuing to gaze hungrily at ENRIQUE:*) Spanish, Ma.

ENRIQUE. (*Bows to BRIGITTE, who is charmed immediately.*) *Encantado, Señora.* I am Enrique Manuel de Guzmán, a sus ordenes.

(*Dropping to one knee, ENRIQUE kisses BRIGITTE's hand, which renders her a bit fluttery.*)

I espeak Espanish. I try with the English, but is not so good. I get better—Kelly *me ayuda*—she help me. (*To KELLY, indicating BRIGITTE:*) *¿Ésta es tu hermana?* Is your sister?

KELLY. Oh, give me a break—that line is so *tired*—

BRIGITTE. (*To ENRIQUE; flattered:*) No, no—I'm Kelly's *mother*.

ENRIQUE. Ah—*usted tiene la belleza de la Madre de Diós, Señora.*

BRIGITTE. Thank you so much! (*To KELLY, sotto voce:*) Kelly, what did he say?

KELLY. (*S.v.:*) I don't know, Mother—I don't espeak Espanish.

ENRIQUE. (*To BRIGITTE:*) I say, “You have the beauty like the Mother of God”—the Virgin Mary.

BRIGITTE. Thank you, how sweet! (*To KELLY:*) He's very sweet.

KELLY. Enrique, this is not such a good time—

ENRIQUE. With Enrique, always is good time! (*He takes KELLY smoothly into his arms. He dances with her throughout the following in a rather intimate fashion. He whispers into her ear:*) I have memory still of the dancing with you the night of we meet...

KELLY. (*Smiles knowingly:*) So do I. So do I...

ENRIQUE. I cannot get you out of *mi mente*—my mind is full of you!

KELLY. (*Doubtful:*) Great.

ENRIQUE. I mean to say, my thoughts are full of my mind. With you!

KELLY. (*Amused:*) I know what you're trying to say, Enrique. You're very kind. But now is not the right time—not in front of the Mother of God—

ENRIQUE. Always is right time for love, *¡mi pequeña gallina súcia!*

KELLY. (*Ceases dancing and takes a step away from him.*) What are you talking about?

BRIGITTE. Kelly—never ask a man to explain his feelings—

KELLY. Did you say “love”? What are you talking about—“love”?

ENRIQUE. Love. The love I have in my heart for you.

BRIGITTE. What was that cute little name you just called her—“Peckegna Guy, Guyeega Susie”?

ENRIQUE. *¿Mi pequeña gallina súcia?*

BRIGITTE. Yes—what does that mean? It sounds very grand and old-world...

ENRIQUE. It means, “My filthy little hen.” I think is more pretty in Spanish.

KELLY. What about those other things you always call me—“carreeda”? “Peetoofa”?

ENRIQUE. *Querida* mean “my loved one.”

KELLY. It sounds like I'm dead.

ENRIQUE. If you are dead, how come you make me feel so alive?

BRIGITTE. Oh—what a charmer!

KELLY. And “Peetoofa”? What does that mean?

ENRIQUE. It mean “Smurfette.” Like the show on the TV. “The Esmurfs.” I watch the Esmurfs when I was *joven*.

KELLY. (*Touched:*) I'm a smurfette?

ENRIQUE. (*Again begins dancing with KELLY slowly.*) “Pitufos.” I love them. I love the *esound*. “Peetooooofos...” (*Suggestively:*) The worrrrd rrrrrroll offffff the tonnnnngue...

(KELLY stares at him a moment, then turns decisively to BRIGITTE.)

KELLY. Okay, Mom, you need to go.

BRIGITTE. Would you two like some music?

KELLY. I didn't notice there wasn't any.

ENRIQUE. For me, the voice of Kelly *es la música!*

KELLY. (To ENRIQUE:) I could really get used to being treated like this...

BRIGITTE. So how did you two meet?

ENRIQUE. En la iglesia. **KELLY.** At a club.

KELLY. (To ENRIQUE:) "Iglesia"? Doesn't that mean "church"?

BRIGITTE. You met at a church club. How wonderful! I thought only boring people went to those things.

KELLY. We met at a dance club.

ENRIQUE. For me, the dance club is place of worship.

KELLY. Whom do you worship?

ENRIQUE. Goddesses like you, *querida!*

BRIGITTE. What do you two do when you go out?

ENRIQUE. We dance! **KELLY.** Dance.

BRIGITTE. That doesn't surprise me. What other things do you like to do?

(KELLY and ENRIQUE look at each other a moment.)

ENRIQUE. Dance. **KELLY.** Dance.

BRIGITTE. But aren't there things you like doing besides dancing?

ENRIQUE. (Shakes head:) No. **KELLY.** (Shakes head:) Not really.

ENRIQUE. Wait—I have treat for you both!

(He pulls a cassette out of his pocket and slips it into KELLY's portable cassette player. Sexy Latin American music begins to play.)

¡Música!

(He turns off some room lights so it's much dimmer.)

Atmosphere! *(Bows to BRIGITTE.)* And now, the love...

(Much to KELLY's annoyance and BRIGITTE's delight, ENRIQUE begins to dance with BRIGITTE in a suave but rather formal manner.)

Señora Maginot, you move like the very oily machine.

BRIGITTE. Oh, thank you!

(As KELLY watches the dancing couple, there is a knock at the door.)

KELLY opens the door to reveal MIKE MAGINOT, 29, her brother. He is nice-looking, tastefully dressed, and bears a small wrapped gift.

ENRIQUE grows a tad sweaty and begins unbuttoning his cuffs and collar—an act which could be easily misinterpreted.)

KELLY. *(Surprised:)* Michael!

MIKE. *(Embracing her:)* Hi, Kel.

(MICHAEL glances at the dancing couple without recognizing BRIGITTE, then quickly turns away out of embarrassment.)

So *this* is what you mean by “Girls’ Night.”

KELLY. Not exactly—

MIKE. *(Indicates ENRIQUE:)* Does Ma know you hired him?

BRIGITTE. Michael! What a wonderful surprise!

(ENRIQUE immediately puts substantial distance between himself and the two women.)

KELLY. We didn't hire—

MIKE. Oh my God—Ma—

KELLY. No—Michael—this is Enrique—he's our friend—

MIKE. Looks like he's about to get friendlier. (*Hugs BRIGITTE.*) How are you, Ma?

ENRIQUE. (*To KELLY, re MIKE:*) Ah—¿es tu hermano? Is your brother?

KELLY. Yes... (*Affectionately tousles MIKE's hair.*) Mike is my little baby brother.

MIKE. I'd rather you not call me that. (*Looks around.*) Where is everybody?

KELLY. Party broke up. Michael, this is Enrique. (*To ENRIQUE, mispronouncing:*) Enrique, this is my *hairmano*, Michael.

ENRIQUE. (*Bows.*) *Con mucho gusto, señor.* It is pleasure for me.

MIKE. (*Shakes ENRIQUE's hand.*) How are you? That's a great outfit.

ENRIQUE. (*Pleased:*) *Gracias.* I buy it myself. I look hard, in all the *estores*.

MIKE. It's so...Flamenco.

(*ENRIQUE delivers a little Flamenco-esque tap-foot-stomp in response, accompanied by a snap of the fingers.*)

(*To KELLY:*) He's great. Where'd you get him?

KELLY. He's a *friend*, Michael.

ENRIQUE. I can see now it is family time. *Entonces, ahorita me voy.* I go.

BRIGITTE. Oh, no...

ENRIQUE. (*Bows to BRIGITTE.*) Señora Maginot, it has been a pleasure. (*To MIKE:*) Señor Miguél, I am proud to know you. Perhaps the day will come when I can call you *hermano*. My brother.

KELLY. Oh my god.

MIKE. (*To KELLY:*) What's he talking about?

KELLY. He's delusional.

MIKE. (*To ENRIQUE:*) How can we reach you? Did they get you through an agency or something?

ENRIQUE. Kelly she has *mi número de teléfono*.

MIKE. Great, 'cause I know of some bachelorette parties coming up—

KELLY. *(To ENRIQUE as she hustles him toward the front door:)* Enrique, sweetie, thanks for coming by—

BRIGITTE. What about his music?

KELLY. *(To ENRIQUE:)* Did you get your tape back?

ENRIQUE. *La música* is for you. Is gift.

KELLY. Really? I can keep it?

ENRIQUE. *(As he wraps his arm gallantly around her waist:)* When you listen to *esa música, piense en tu Enriquito precioso...* Think about your precious Enrique...

KELLY. Michael, why don't you take Ma into the kitchen?

BRIGITTE. I don't need to go to the kitchen—

MIKE. *(As he leads BRIGITTE into the kitchen—and out of sight of KELLY:)* Ma let's have a look at that old kitchen.

KELLY. *(To ENRIQUE:)* You know, half the time I can't even understand what you're saying... *(Smiles.)* ...and I don't see that as a problem...

(ENRIQUE wraps his other hand around KELLY's waist and draws her closer.)

...which is a problem.

ENRIQUE. I don't see no problem.

KELLY. That's another problem...

(He kisses her delicately...sensually...whooh! When they finally part, KELLY is melting fast.)

(Re the kiss:) And *that...* is yet another problem.

ENRIQUE. I am your Solver of the Problems, chica.

(ENRIQUE is about to kiss her again, but KELLY draws back out of the reach of his outstretched lips.)

No? ¿No nos vamos a besar? No kissy-kissy?

KELLY. (Breaking gently away:) No.

ENRIQUE. Mmmm...*la memoria de tus labios...de tus ojos tan cercos de los míos...de tu voz tan sensual y suave...*

KELLY. Are you calling me a filthy little hen?

ENRIQUE. *No, no, estoy hablando de tu belleza extraordinaria...de los deseos poderosos que creas en mi alma...en mi corazón—*

KELLY. (Getting swept away:) No...no more Spanish...

ENRIQUE. *¡Tengo que poseerte! ¡Tengo que estar seguro, sin deuda, que nunca salgas de mi lado—nunca! ¡Nunca! ¡Te necesito—te amo—te ADORO—*

KELLY. You had me with “*mi pitufa.*”

(Again they kiss. This one ENRIQUE breaks out of, perhaps with a dash of triumphant arrogance.)

ENRIQUE. I go.

(Turning on his heels, ENRIQUE breezes out the door. If he were wearing a cape, we'd hear it whipping in the wind.)

KELLY. (Calling after him:) Call me?

(But he does not answer. KELLY stands still for a moment, allowing her raging hormones to settle.)

BRIGITTE. (From kitchen:) Never beg a man to call you.

KELLY. You were listening?

(BRIGITTE and MIKE emerge from the kitchen. BOTH are eating saltine crackers; MIKE carries an open bagful.)

BRIGITTE. It doesn't matter—most of it we couldn't even understand.

MIKE. Who is that guy?

KELLY. A *friend*, Michael. We didn't hire him. I met him about a month ago at The Watering Hole.

MIKE. The Watering Hole? That place is a meat market!

KELLY. And I found a choice little cutlet, didn't I?

BRIGITTE. Those Spanish men are very loyal to their women.

KELLY. He's not Spanish. He's Latin American. And I'm not his women.

MIKE. Where in Latin America?

KELLY. Um...I'm not sure. I never asked. (*Giggles.*) Isn't that terrible?

MIKE. Yeah.

KELLY. Anyway, it's all over. It wasn't going anywhere.

MIKE. But you asked him to call you.

KELLY. I weakened. Now I'm strong.

MIKE. You like him, don't you?

KELLY. (*Re his gift:*) Who's this for?

MIKE. (*Nods.*) You like him.

KELLY. Is this for Lorraine?

MIKE. It's just a little nothing I picked up. Why'd everybody leave?

KELLY. Let's not get into it...

BRIGITTE. We were eating dinner, having a very nice conversation, when Kelly started being unpleasant.

MIKE. (*To KELLY:*) Is this true?

(KELLY can only roll her eyes in disgust.)

I didn't think so.

BRIGITTE. Would you like something to eat, Michael?

KELLY. Yeah—there's plenty of chicken, lots of salad...

MIKE. Thanks, I already ate.

BRIGITTE. You should have called. You both are so impractical.

MIKE. I just got out of yoga and was really hoping to see all the gals...

KELLY. Wait a minute—you take yoga, Zoe takes yoga...

MIKE. (*Shrugs.*) It's good for you.

KELLY. Mike! Are you and Zoe *dating*?

MIKE. In what sense?

KELLY. I'll "what sense" *you*, Baby Brother!

MIKE. Kind of. I guess.

BRIGITTE. You're dating someone, Michael?

KELLY. He's with Zoe, Ma.

BRIGITTE. "Joey"? (*Gasps.*) Michael, are you..?

KELLY. *ZOE.* The girl who was here tonight.

BRIGITTE. The one with no friends? Or the Jew?

KELLY. The one with... The first one. (*To MIKE:*) So you guys met at yoga?

MIKE. Yeah. I just thought she was really cute so I asked her out. It wasn't till we were having dinner together that I found out she was your friend.

KELLY. God... you and Zoe are dating... this is just so... so... incredibly awkward.

MIKE. How's that?

KELLY. She's my friend.

MIKE. Can't *I* date someone, Kelly?

KELLY. Enrique and I are not dating. We're not.

MIKE. Zoe and I have only been seeing each other for a month.

KELLY. She said five weeks. She even knew how many days.

MIKE. (*Pleased:*) She did?

KELLY. I guess she really likes you.

MIKE. But it's not like we're engaged or anything...

KELLY. You're engaged?

MIKE. No!

KELLY. But you're *almost* engaged?

MIKE. No!

KELLY. When are you *getting* engaged?

MIKE. Not any time soon!

KELLY. But you admit it's a possibility?

MIKE. Why the interrogation?

KELLY. You don't know Zoe like I do.

BRIGITTE. I think what your sister's saying, Michael, is Zorrie isn't very sensible. For goodness sake, she sent out *Easter* cards. Who does *that*?

MIKE. (*Smiles.*) She's so cute.

KELLY. Mike, Zoe wants a ring. She wants the little house, picket fence, everything.

MIKE. That's a thought.

KELLY. Omigod—you're hooked!

MIKE. Kel, ease up.

KELLY. She wants those things soon. Real soon.

MIKE. I hope she gets them.

BRIGITTE. Oh, Kelly, it sounds like it's just for fun.

KELLY. (*To MIKE:*) Do you guys have sex?

BRIGITTE. What a thing to ask!

KELLY. (*To BRIGITTE:*) Ma, you thought nothing of asking Zoe that!

BRIGITTE. Michael's a nice boy.

KELLY. *(To MIKE:)* Well?

MIKE. Kel...

KELLY. *(Shrugs:)* Of course you have sex. Of course you do.

MIKE. Hasn't she said anything?

KELLY. We didn't even know she was seeing anybody until tonight.

MIKE. She probably feels weird about it.

KELLY. She should—it's weird.

BRIGITTE. Oh, Kelly, stop it!

KELLY. For my little brother to be going out with my best friend—

MIKE. I thought Lorraine was your best friend.

KELLY. You know what I mean!

MIKE. Kel, nobody's out to hurt you.

KELLY. Zoe is *thirty-four* years old!

(Expectant pause.)

MIKE. And...?

KELLY. That's five years older than you!!

MIKE. *And...?*

BRIGITTE. I think it's wonderful he's dating an older woman. She can teach him things.

KELLY. I'm sure Mike knows bushels more about sex than Zoe!

MIKE. Why do you assume that?

KELLY. You and all your stories! Back in college and stuff.

MIKE. Zoe's no cloistered nun, believe me...

KELLY. You *have* had sex!

BRIGITTE. How sweet—are you two in love?

KELLY. Mother! You told me anyone who has sex out of wedlock is a whore!

BRIGITTE. That's just women. Anyway, things are different nowadays.

KELLY. You said it two months ago!

MIKE. I'll just leave this here for Lorrie... (*Spots other gifts.*) Why didn't she open her presents?

KELLY. We never got around to it.

BRIGITTE. Lorrie thinks her boyfriend is going to die or something.

KELLY. There's a good chance he will.

BRIGITTE. Well you tell her I know some very good doctors.

MIKE. Nathan had a relapse?

KELLY. It looks that way. She only found out this afternoon.

BRIGITTE. She's just nervous. All brides are. It's so romantic.

KELLY. (*The merest, most helpless peep:*) Mike!

MIKE. Ma, why don't you go find something to do in the kitchen, hmm?

BRIGITTE. Back to the kitchen again? Well, there *is* lots to do in there—Lord knows your sister never cleans. (*Enters kitchen.*)

MIKE. (*To KELLY:*) Where's Lorrie now?

KELLY. Out drowning her sorrows with Lili and Zo. I'd give anything to join them.

BRIGITTE. (*From kitchen:*) I found the wine, Kelly! I'll pour us all some.

KELLY. Wonderful, Ma!

MIKE. Go join your friends. I'll keep her busy.

KELLY. Really? That would—you have no idea how much that would mean to me.

MIKE. Hell, you hog her every time she comes into town anyway.

KELLY. Michael—she insists on staying with me!

(There is a loud pop from the kitchen as BRIGITTE succeeds in uncorking a bottle of wine. She pours herself a glass and begins drinking it.)

MIKE. Look, just go. Grab your jacket and get out. Did they tell you where they were going?

KELLY. The Rusty Nail.

MIKE. Bring her the presents—like the wedding's still on. I'll handle the Maternal Unit.

KELLY. *(Glancing at kitchen:)* I don't want to hurt her feelings... Maybe you should say I had an emergency or something...

BRIGITTE. *(From kitchen:)* God, the mess in here! Kelly, you don't need a husband—you need a wife!

KELLY. That's it. I'm gone. *(Gathers presents and kisses his cheek.)* Tell her I...uh...

MIKE. Go.

KELLY. *(As she exits:)* Love you!

(MIKE closes the door behind KELLY just as BRIGITTE re-enters from the kitchen with three glasses and the open bottle of wine.)

BRIGITTE. Well, it looks like my daughter has a little taste after all.

MIKE. Is that good stuff?

BRIGITTE. Not bad. Could be better. Where is she?

MIKE. I didn't know you knew wine.

BRIGITTE. Oh well...in my salad days, you know...a little something to go with the salad. Where's your sister?

MIKE. You never kept wine around the house.

BRIGITTE. That was for your father's sake—now where can she be?
(Calling out:) Kel-ly! Oh Kel-ly!

MIKE. She had to go, Ma. Have a seat—let's catch up.

BRIGITTE. Go? Go where?

MIKE. She wanted to be with her friends.

BRIGITTE. Her friends? I flew five hundred miles just to see her!

MIKE. And me.

BRIGITTE. Right, you, well of course you.

MIKE. Why don't you pour me a little of that?

BRIGITTE. (*As she pours:*) So who do you think gave her this wine?

MIKE. Maybe she bought it?

BRIGITTE. Nonsense—Kelly has no taste! Remember that god-awful thing she almost wore to her prom?

MIKE. I remember her date waited an hour while you made her change.

BRIGITTE. No daughter of mine was going out in that pink nightmare! Those ruffles...she looked like a shrimp cocktail. People would have thought *I* dressed her like that.

MIKE. Kelly sewed that gown all by herself, Ma.

BRIGITTE. If she'd shown me the pattern first, we could have avoided a lot of screaming and crying...

MIKE. She so thoroughly detested what you made her wear that she refused to take off her coat the whole night—she almost had heatstroke.

BRIGITTE. What a goose.

MIKE. (*Growls.*) Ugh! I hate this! Can we discuss something besides what's wrong with Kelly?

BRIGITTE. So you agree there's something wrong with her?

MIKE. When you two are alone, do you discuss what's wrong with *me*?

BRIGITTE. Almost never. (*Pours herself more wine.*)

MIKE. What did you think of her?

BRIGITTE. Who, your girlfriend? She seemed sweet.

MIKE. She is. I don't see why Kelly's so ticked-off.

BRIGITTE. She's jealous, honey.

MIKE. Of Zoe? That's a little weird.

BRIGITTE. Of you *and* her. After all, you are her *little* brother.

MIKE. (*Catches on:*) I'm not about to marry Zoe! Not any time soon.

BRIGITTE. You're a lot closer to marriage than Kelly is.

MIKE. What about that Flamenco guy?

BRIGITTE. He's adorable, isn't he?

MIKE. He adores *her*. The guy wants to become my brother-in-law.

BRIGITTE. She could never be serious about that boy.

MIKE. Why, because he has trouble with the language? Because he's not a Ph.D.?

BRIGITTE. He's just a lark. A diversion. You don't marry a diversion...

MIKE. Did you see her? She could barely keep her hands off him.

BRIGITTE. (*Wistfully:*) Michael, I know what I'm talking about. (*Shrugs.*) And your sister is very insecure.

MIKE. Why does she take it out on me?

BRIGITTE. She's always been that way. Remember when she hid your report card?

MIKE. She told me she lost it.

BRIGITTE. Later I found it under her bed when I was vacuuming. You got better grades than she did.

MIKE. How do you know she hid it? Maybe it really was just lost. (*Annoyed:*) You know what? I don't even care. I don't want to dwell on this. How was your trip?

BRIGITTE. It was wonderful, but Kelly made me wait two hours at the airport—

MIKE. I don't want to talk about Kelly! How's Dad?

BRIGITTE. Your father's fine.

MIKE. Have you been out to see him?

BRIGITTE. What's to see? Dirt, grass, flowers. He's still dead. Your father was a good man, Michael. I don't need to look at a chunk of cement to be reminded of that. *(Smiles.)* You like this girl, don't you?

MIKE. *(Embarrassed:)* Why do you think that?

BRIGITTE. Because the last two times I called, you couldn't come to the phone because you were washing your car.

MIKE. Clean cars get better gas mileage.

BRIGITTE. You only wash your car before a big date.

MIKE. *(Touched:)* You figured that out?

BRIGITTE. It was obvious. Why doesn't your sister like me?

MIKE. Maybe you should ask her, Ma.

BRIGITTE. Then I'm right—she *doesn't* like me.

MIKE. Don't be silly. She's your daughter.

BRIGITTE. That's difficult to remember when she treats me like an imbecile.

MIKE. Kids are supposed to be annoyed at their parents. I think it's a law.

BRIGITTE. She makes me feel awful. I don't even want to come here anymore.

MIKE. When Kel gets back I'm sure she'll be overflowing with warmth and good cheer...

(The front door bursts open and in stomps KELLY.)

KELLY. Come on, you two. Let's go.

BRIGITTE. What? Go where?

KELLY. The Rusty Nail. Down on the corner. The girls are waiting.

MIKE. They want us there?

KELLY. All three felt really bad for leaving. Then they started talking about their own mothers and the problems they have with them and by the time I got there they were crying hysterically. They begged me to bring you down.

BRIGITTE. *Me?*

KELLY. Yes, you. Can we go?

BRIGITTE. Can't they come here?

KELLY. No.

BRIGITTE. But we haven't had dessert...

KELLY. Look, I left half a glass of fancy imported beer and I don't want it to go flat. It cost me a day's pay.

BRIGITTE. I refuse to go anywhere until you apologize.

KELLY. Apologize? For what?

BRIGITTE. For treating me like an imbecile all evening.

KELLY. Lorrie's ready to slash her wrists. Lili thinks she's a child abuser. And Zoe's a basket case because you said she looks like a chorus girl—she never wants to have sex again!

MIKE. What do you mean?

KELLY. Don't worry, Mike—it'll pass.

BRIGITTE. I don't know what you're talking about.

KELLY. Are you coming or not?

BRIGITTE. It doesn't sound like you want me.

KELLY. *They* want you. They want to make up for all the fights they ever had with their own mothers.

BRIGITTE. What—do they expect me to call all their mothers?

KELLY. Of course not...

BRIGITTE. I'm not going to call people I've never even met!

KELLY. Mike, any suggestions?

MIKE. Ma, I'll go down there with you. I really want you to see Zoe and me together. I want to hear your opinion of her.

BRIGITTE. (*Softens:*) She seemed sweet...

MIKE. You just seem to know about people—you size them up.

BRIGITTE. Well, I've always had that talent—it's really not something you can learn...

(*KELLY is watching this carefully.*)

MIKE. Will you come down to the bar with us?

BRIGITTE. (*Girlishly:*) Me at a bar! How silly I'd look!

KELLY. A lot of nice men hang out there—older men—

BRIGITTE. (*Sharply:*) I'm not some floozy looking to get "picked up," Kelly Marie.

(*KELLY quickly retreats.*)

MIKE. (*Gets BRIGITTE's coat.*) Come on, Ma—I'll buy you a White Russian...

BRIGITTE. (*Putting on coat:*) Oh I do love those!

KELLY. I'll start the car. (*Exits.*)

BRIGITTE. Do you really think those other girls are upset at me, Mikey?

MIKE. Probably. But they just don't know you.

BRIGITTE. I suppose I don't always think before I open my mouth...

MIKE. Who does?

BRIGITTE. (*As they exit:*) I meant the "chorus girl" thing as a compliment...

MIKE. I know, Ma...

BRIGITTE. *(As the door shuts:)* I mean, I hope she doesn't actually hold out on you...

(Lights down.)

ACT II

(One year later...about 7pm on a Friday evening in early November. The room is much the same as in the previous scene—KELLY tends to resist change. The room features a new poster or two, maybe a new throw rug and a nice Afghan on the couch. A beautiful blue maid-of-honor's dress hangs off the neck of the floor lamp.

KELLY is tossing a salad. She wears a sexy cocktail dress [something suitable for dancing] and is made-up rather beautifully. She tosses, and tosses, and tosses...those leaves are really flying. Two small salad bowls sit waiting to be filled, surrounded by silverware.

She stops suddenly, remembering, grunts in exasperation, and cracks open a fresh bottle of dressing and pours it over the salad. Then back to the tossing.

The doorbell rings. KELLY is so startled that she tosses a bunch of salad out of the bowl and all over the table. She hurriedly wipes off her hands with a towel, then primps momentarily. She opens the front door to reveal a very distraught ZOE.)

ZOE. You're right, I know, I know. We got engaged way too quick—you don't have to say a word. I just...I *thought* it was right with every ounce of my heart...do you believe me?

KELLY. Of course I do. What are you doing here?

ZOE. We met on my Aunt Cassie's birthday! All the signs were there!

KELLY. What's so significant about Aunt Cassie?

ZOE. She was always bugging me to get married.

KELLY. Okay, sweetie, okay...what are you doing here?

ZOE. It doesn't make any sense. We're always fighting! What kind of couple would we have made?

KELLY. Oh no—did you and Mike break up?

ZOE. *(Sadly:)* Uh-huh. *(Looks at her.)* You look pretty.

KELLY. I have a hot date.

ZOE. *(Smiles.)* Oh—*Enrrrrrique?*

KELLY. (*Fanning herself:*) Please—you'll get me all worked up.

ZOE. I thought that was over.

KELLY. Me too. But he keeps ringing my doorbell, and I keep letting him in.

ZOE. You guys going dancing, like usual?

KELLY. No...I thought I'd make him dinner.

ZOE. Then you're going dancing.

KELLY. I thought a stroll would be nice. It's a full moon.

ZOE. *Then* you're going dancing.

KELLY. (*Sighs.*) Then we'll probably go dancing.

ZOE. All you Maginots know how to dance. Michael moves like Fred Astaire. I wish we didn't fight so much.

KELLY. Michael is the last in a long line of fighters.

ZOE. I didn't think he would be like you—I thought he'd be nice!

KELLY. (*Through gritted teeth:*) So! How soon can I get rid of you?

ZOE. I'm sorry, I'm a bozo for saying that—

KELLY. It's okay, honestly—but Enrique will be here any second—

ZOE. Isn't he always late? (*Sighs.*) I should know better than to split up with my fiancé, then turn to his sister for comfort.

KELLY. You're not splitting up.

ZOE. I gave him back the ring.

KELLY. You gave it back?

(ZOE nods sadly.)

That's my baby brother's heart you're breaking!

ZOE. What about *my* heart? (*Turns away.*) You're on his side.

KELLY. Zoe, think of how long you've wanted this. You were *born* to be married. At least *you* think so.

ZOE. *You don't?*

KELLY. I'm no expert on marriage.

ZOE. I don't think Mike and I are going to patch this up. Do you feel like getting drunk?

KELLY. Can't you guys get counseling?

ZOE. I don't think it'll work. You know, I'm a really careful drunk—I won't spill a drop.

KELLY. Maybe you two should just take a break from each other...

ZOE. And I'm such a lightweight, by the time Rico gets here, I'll be passed out on your bed.

KELLY. *(Shakes head.)* I may need my bed. Don't give up, honey.

ZOE. But how do you change somebody who is absolutely completely set in their ways?

KELLY. I *know* you can change, Zo—you quit the airline, remember?

ZOE. I was talking about Michael.

KELLY. Don't try to change Michael.

ZOE. I'm not. I want him exactly the way he is—only better.

KELLY. This is crazy.

ZOE. Kel, I need sympathy, not a lecture.

KELLY. How about salad?

ZOE. Good idea.

(Both women sit at the table.)

What happened? Did it explode?

KELLY. *(Hands her a bowl of salad.)* Just dig in. My date will have to go hungry.

(ZOE starts eating while KELLY cleans up the stray bits of salad.)

ZOE. Mm—excellent dressing. Your recipe?

KELLY. My mother's.

(ZOE halts in mid-bite.)

It's not poisonous.

ZOE. No monkey brains? Dried batwings?

KELLY. It's fine. *(Sits and begins to eat.)* See? I'm eating it myself.

ZOE. You must be immune.

KELLY. Just a little callused.

ZOE. Now I see where Michael gets it.

KELLY. He's nothing like my mom!

ZOE. Sometimes he says things that...cut. Deep.

KELLY. Like what?

ZOE. You do it, too.

KELLY. What is this, an assault on the entire Maginot line?

ZOE. Sorry—that was uncalled for. *(Puts down fork.)* I shouldn't even be here—

KELLY. Zoe, you are exactly where you should be—with your best friend.

ZOE. Yeah, but what if Mike just, like, walks in?

KELLY. That would never happen.

(The front door opens and in walks MIKE.)

MIKE. Kel, we got to talk.

ZOE. *(Jumping up and shrieking at KELLY:)* I thought you said—

KELLY. *(Cutting her off:)* Sit! *(To MIKE:)* What are you doing here?

MIKE. I came over to see my sister... *(Glares at ZOE.)* ...is that allowed, Your Highness?

(ZOE turns her back on him.)

(To KELLY:) What the hell is *she* doing here?

KELLY. It's Friday night. I have a date. What the hell are *either of you* doing here??

MIKE. I don't know what the Ice Queen wants, but I—

ZOE. *(To MIKE:)* "Ice Queen"?? You told her about—

MIKE. I didn't say a word—

KELLY. Told me about what?

ZOE. Never mind.

MIKE. *(To KELLY, about to spill:)* Zoe and I haven't even—

ZOE. *Never mind!*

KELLY. Mike, get in the bedroom.

ZOE. No—kick him out!

KELLY. I'm not going to kick him out—he's my brother!

ZOE. He goes or I go.

KELLY. *(Bellows:)* MICHAEL GET IN THE BEDROOM!!!

(MIKE dashes into the hallway. The sound of the bedroom door closing can be heard.)

ZOE. What if he's listening through the door?

KELLY. *(Yells to MIKE:)* Mike, turn on the TV!

MIKE. *(Offstage:)* There's nothing on!

KELLY. TURN ON THE TV!!!

(The faint sound of a game show leaks out of the bedroom.)

(To ZOE:) Better?

(The doorbell rings repeatedly.)

Okay, my date's here. This is going to be *so* awkward...

(KELLY opens the door and LILI charges in. The door is never completely closed behind her.)

LILI. Batten down the hatches.

KELLY. What now?

ZOE. (*Hugs LILI.*) Lili!

LILI. We don't have much time.

KELLY. Time for what?

LILI. She'll be here any second!

KELLY. Who? Why?

LILI. Lorraine!

KELLY. (*Petulantly.*) You guys, this is my first date in *two months*...

LILI. Nathan's back in the hospital.

(Shocked silence.)

KELLY. When...? Why...?

LILI. This afternoon.

ZOE. I thought he was totally clear!

LILI. He made it to his check-up appointment, then collapsed right outside the doctor's office.

KELLY. Is the cancer back?

LILI. (*Shakes head.*) Total exhaustion.

ZOE. How's Lorrie?

LILI. She called and asked me to meet her over here.

KELLY. Gee, she neglected to call *me*. Total exhaustion?

LILI. Lorrie wants us to put our bridesmaids' dresses in mothballs—at least until he gets better.

(With great sadness, KELLY trudges over to the floor lamp from which hangs the bridesmaid's dress.)

KELLY. They're so pretty...

LILI. (*To ZOE.*) Have you and Michael picked your color scheme yet?

(ZOE does not answer. LILI steals a glance over at KELLY, who shakes her head in warning: "Now is not the time.")

What should we do, you guys?

KELLY. More salad.

ZOE. Good idea.

(ZOE and KELLY spring into action, getting out bowls, utensils, salad, dressing.)

LILI. How can I help?

KELLY. I've got some White Zinfandel in the fridge—get out a couple of glasses. Also see if Mikey wants any.

LILI. Your brother's here? *(Dawning awareness:)* Oh—so you two aren't—oh...so he's in there because— *(Nods.)* Okay. And now Kelly's trying—but she can't... *(Amazed:)* God, how awkward!

KELLY. He could use a little wine.

LILI. You two really broke up?

ZOE. Yes!

KELLY. No.

ZOE. Okay, no. But really yes.

KELLY. Just bring the poor guy some wine!

(As LILI opens the door to the bedroom, the sound of the television swells momentarily, then dies as she closes the door behind her.)

ZOE. You think we should try to get back together?

KELLY. I think you should cut up some carrots...

ZOE. What about Michael and me?

KELLY. Think about him as you're cutting carrots. You'll feel better.

ZOE. *(Suddenly horror-struck:)* What if something awful happens to Michael—like what happened to Nathan?

KELLY. Lighten up. Lorraine will be here any second...not to mention my date...

ZOE. Kelly!! I love Michael!!

KELLY. Then why break up?

ZOE. He doesn't love me back.

KELLY. Are you kidding??? I have never seen that boy so devoted to a woman! And he's been with some real lookers. (*Glances toward bedroom.*) What's taking Lili so long?

ZOE. "Lookers"? Is that all he cares about—"lookers"??

KELLY. Oh, you're more petty than my mother!

ZOE. (*Hurt:*) That's a blow.

KELLY. Can we get beyond this? Lorrie's going to really need our support...

(Suddenly alarmed, ZOE pauses dramatically, freezing in mid-gesture.)

What?

ZOE. I have to use your bathroom.

KELLY. You know where it is.

ZOE. *Your* bathroom.

KELLY. What's wrong with the one in the hall?

ZOE. It doesn't have what I need.

KELLY. (*Catching on:*) Well sure, I'm not going to buy a box of tampons for each bathroom...

ZOE. Come in with me.

KELLY. I'll just go get them...

ZOE. No! Make him come out here. I'll hide in the other bathroom.

KELLY. What's the big deal?

ZOE. I can't let Michael see you walking through carrying a box of tampons! I'll die!

KELLY. I'll say they're for me.

ZOE. He'll know.

KELLY. He does have two sisters.

ZOE. I don't want him to...*find out* yet!

KELLY. You don't want him to find out you're female?

ZOE. Not till after the wedding!

KELLY. He doesn't know already?

(ZOE gives her an imploring look.)

I thought the wedding was off.

ZOE. Kel-*lee*! Hur-*ree*!

KELLY. This is ridiculous.

(ZOE gives her one more pleading look. KELLY goes to bedroom door and opens it.)

Mikey, could you come out here for a minute?

(Panicked, ZOE darts into the hallway and enters the hall bathroom. The sound of the television cuts off. ZOE manages to close the bathroom door just as KELLY leads MIKE and LILI out of the bedroom.)

MIKE. Where's Zo?

KELLY. She's busy setting feminism back about twenty years.
(Toward ZOE:) The coast is clear!

(The hall bathroom door opens and ZOE dashes past the hall entrance into KELLY's bedroom. KELLY follows her in.)

(As she closes the door:) I think you just set a speed record...

(MIKE and LILI glance nervously back at the closed doors as if to reassure themselves of the others' departure. Then they turn toward each other...and suddenly, impulsively kiss as though their lives depended on it!)

KELLY. *(Offstage:)* Find everything you need in there, Zo?

ZOE. *(Farther offstage; dismayed:)* Kel-lee!!

MIKE. *(Breaks away momentarily.)* This is bad. This is so bad...

LILI. I know—what are we doing?

(They resume their passionate kissing.)

KELLY. *(Offstage:)* Zo! I need to check on my lasagna!

(MIKE and LILI break apart.)

ZOE. *(Farther offstage:)* Don't you dare!

(MIKE and LILI resume. Suddenly, the already ajar front door is pushed open and in bursts BRIGITTE, carrying a small suitcase and a plane ticket. MIKE and LILI freeze in mid-grope.)

BRIGITTE. Michael—already you've moved on! *(Shakes head.)* A complete waste of a plane ticket!

LILI. No—you mustn't think—

(KELLY enters, practically dragging ZOE out of the bedroom.)

KELLY. You two have to talk sooner or later— *(Freezes upon seeing MIKE and LILI with their arms still around each other.)*

ZOE. Now's not a good time—

(ZOE sees MIKE and LILI.)

BRIGITTE. “Now” looks like a good time for somebody!

(ZOE stares in shock. Just stares. She staggers to a chair and lowers herself into it, staring still. Self-consciously, LILI and MIKE disentangle themselves from each other.)

KELLY. Ma? Lil? Why don't you two come with me into my room? Let Mike clean this up.

(LILI scampers into the bedroom.)

BRIGITTE. But I just got here—

KELLY. Perfect—you haven't had a chance to do any damage. (*Pulls BRIGITTE gently toward bedroom.*) Please come, Ma?

BRIGITTE. I don't see why we should go in there when all the action's out here—

KELLY. (*To MIKE and ZOE, as she pulls BRIGITTE out of the room:*) If my date shows up, tell him to meet me in the other bathroom. (*Shuts door.*)

(MIKE looks at ZOE, who stares back in glass-eyed shock. He opens his mouth to speak...then thinks better of it. ZOE sits, arms folded expectantly across her chest. Again MIKE gears up to speak...then waves away the thought.)

MIKE. (*Turning away:*) What's the use?

ZOE. (*Dismayed:*) Michael!

MIKE. (*Looks at her:*) What the hell can I say, Zo? I'm not going to pretend you didn't see what you just saw.

ZOE. Well...I hope you're going to say *something*.

MIKE. How about I tell you what I was going to tell you today before you dumped me?

ZOE. (*Gasps:*) Were *you* going to dump *me* first?

MIKE. No. I was just going to tell you about this dream I had last night.

ZOE. A dream? What dream? Why would I want to hear about a dream?

MIKE. I dreamed I saw my son. The son I'm going to have someday.

ZOE. (*Softens:*) Your son?

MIKE. Yeah—he was great. He looked about three years old, three or four—but he was talking like a grown-up.

ZOE. (*Trying to understand:*) What did he say?

MIKE. I don't remember—but it was just amazing. I *know* he's going to be great. Do you follow me?

ZOE. Sure. Last night I dreamed I got a new car.

MIKE. My son looked a little like you. Do you get what I'm saying?

ZOE. Perfectly.

MIKE. Good. I was hoping you would. (*Skeptical:*) Do you *really* get it?

ZOE. Not in the slightest.

MIKE. I want *you* to be my son's mother.

ZOE. That's the best you could come up with?

MIKE. What do you mean? I've been planning my whole life around you! Then you just drop this bomb on me...

ZOE. Me?? I just had a few questions about our relationship. Perfectly normal.

MIKE. The wedding's in *four weeks*. This kind of shock makes guys jump off bridges.

ZOE. You wouldn't do that...not for me...would you?

MIKE. No. I'm not an idiot.

ZOE. How long has that little thing been going on between you and Lili?

MIKE. (*Checks watch:*) Five minutes?

ZOE. How stupid do you think I am?

MIKE. I'm serious, Zo—it just now happened!

ZOE. Oh—was it an accident? Interpersonal collision?

MIKE. Look, she came in with the wine and we started talking and she told me about what was going on with Lorrie and Nathan and—

ZOE. See?? *Damn it!!!*

MIKE. What's the matter?

ZOE. I knew this whole evening was going to end up being all about Nathan! Nathan's in remission, Nathan's relapsing, Nathan's got heartburn...

MIKE. I like Nathan!

ZOE. You like Nathan; that's transplendent. (*Gasps sarcastically.*) Lili likes Nathan, *too!* Was that what you two were doing—bonding over Nathan?

MIKE. She told me about Nathan, then she said that you were really upset about you and me and she asked me what you had done—

ZOE. What *I* had done? (*Snorts in disgust.*) Of course she'd stick up for *you*— (*Suggestively:*) —look how much you *stick up* for her!

MIKE. I didn't tell her about our sex life...

ZOE. Michael, how did your arms find their way around her body?

MIKE. I was just feeling so bad, and we were talking—

ZOE. You always wanted to do this, didn't you?

MIKE. I always knew she had a crush on me, but—

ZOE. And you were just waiting for any excuse to—

MIKE. It was *not* premeditated.

ZOE. I've seen you gaze at her.

MIKE. She's pretty. You're pretty, too.

ZOE. She's prettier. I know—you don't have to tell me.

MIKE. Zo, I thought we were finished.

ZOE. We are! Now.

MIKE. I felt awful. And that damn TV—there was nothing on but game-shows...

ZOE. The *TV* made you do it? My god—to what unspeakable acts will you be driven by the *toaster*? I shudder to think about the vacuum...

MIKE. That didn't come out right.

ZOE. Do you admit that you two were mashing?

MIKE. Yes.

ZOE. Tickling tonsils?

MIKE. Y-yes.

ZOE. Brushing braces? Entangling tongues?

(MICHAEL nods at the appropriate points throughout the following.)

Commingling mandibles? Linking lips? Snuggling snouts? Boinking beaks?

MIKE. *(Impressed:)* God—you should write greeting cards.

ZOE. So, continue. The game shows were boring, Lili walked in, you talked, and—oops!—your zipper came down—

MIKE. That's not what happened.

ZOE. Pathetic, animalistic, Neanderthal...

MIKE. At least she doesn't recoil at my touch!

ZOE. What do you want me to do, worship you?

MIKE. You could touch me once in a while.

ZOE. *(Uneasily:)* I touch you. I suppose Lili eats you alive!

MIKE. She gave me a hug to make me feel better. That was all.

(ZOE grunts in disgust.)

And there was something there—something I haven't felt from a woman in a long time.

ZOE. Okay, so she's got bigger boobs.

MIKE. That's not what it was.

ZOE. What did you feel?

MIKE. Desire.

ZOE. You feel desire when you flip through the Sears Catalogue...

MIKE. I felt *her* desire for me. I responded. I'd forgotten what it felt like.

ZOE. You make it sound like a 911 rescue.

MIKE. Then you two made us come out here, and we just kissed. It was nothing.

ZOE. How could you take advantage of her like that? Do you know she just broke up with her therapist?

(The bedroom door opens and BRIGITTE slips out quietly. KELLY's voice can be heard urgently whispering after her.)

KELLY. *(Offstage:)* No—Ma—they'll let us know when they want us—

BRIGITTE. *(To KELLY, re LILI:)* Keep an eye on the hussy. *(Shuts the door. To ZOE:)* Four hours ago, my son called me up crying to say that his fiancée dumped him. Now he has to heal. It's time for you to go.

ZOE. *(To MIKE:)* You were crying?

BRIGITTE. Of course he was crying! Do you think he has no heart?

ZOE. I've never seen him cry.

BRIGITTE. Sweetheart, certain things no woman should ever see a man do.

MIKE. I think I'm going to go.

BRIGITTE. Mikey, the last time I heard you cry, it was because you were too short to go on the roller coaster. With you, crying means something. With Kelly, crying could mean anything... *(Looks at maid-of-honor's dress.)* This color is not good on my daughter.

MIKE. Is that what she's wearing for Lorrie's wedding?

(KELLY emerges from the bedroom, followed by LILI.)

BRIGITTE. Lorrie? *(To MIKE:)* That little chippie you were just romping with—she's about to get *married???*

MIKE. No—I romped with *Lili*.

BRIGITTE. (*Nods.*) Right—the neurotic one. Be careful of those psycho girls, Mikey—you saw “Basic Instinct.”

KELLY. Ma, this is between Mike and Zoe, so what say you, me, and Lili go out for a stroll, hmm?

BRIGITTE. I will not leave my son to be battered by the fickleness of—

LILI. (*Bellowing:*) Wait a minute!!!

(*ALL stare at LILI in surprise.*)

I just want to say sorry, Michael. (*To ZOE:*) And sorry, Zoe. You’re a dear friend, and I hope I never do anything to hurt you again. What just happened...I can’t explain it, except that it was more about comfort than lust. (*Pause.*) Okay, a little lust, but...you know what I mean—don’t you?

(*No one knows what to say.*)

Both of you—please try to work it out. If you break up, I’ll feel awful! I guess I just wanted a little taste of the happiness you were feeling, Zoe... (*Starts to exit.*) I’ll be at my current number till...well, my lease has another six months, in case anyone ever wants to talk to me again.

BRIGITTE. (*To KELLY:*) Stop that one or she’ll throw herself in front of a bus.

ZOE. (*Follows LILI:*) Lil, don’t go. Please. At least stay until we talk this out.

BRIGITTE. (*To MIKE and ZOE:*) Are you two *going* to talk this out?

(*ZOE and MIKE shrug. The doorbell rings.*)

Hold that thought. (*Goes to door.*) Who is it?

KELLY. Ma, it’s my date—let him in!

LILI. It might be Lorrie!

LORRAINE. (*Offstage:*) Um, it’s Lorrie!

BRIGITTE. (*To KELLY:*) It’s a salesperson! (*To LORRAINE:*) Go away!

KELLY. Ma!! She just said “It’s *Lorrie!*” —let her in!!!

BRIGITTE. (*To KELLY:*) No—she heard *her* say the name! That’s how they get inside the house—I read it in *People* magazine.

KELLY. (*Snorts:*) *People*. For a moment I was beginning to think you were wise.

(*KELLY opens the door to reveal LORRAINE.*)

Come in, sweetie! (*Hugs her.*)

BRIGITTE. But in the article that was how they got in...

(*KELLY is still hugging LORRAINE...still hugging...*)

LORRAINE. Honey, it’s okay. Nathan’s out of the woods.

KELLY. Really?? I’m so glad! (*Hugs her again.*)

LORRAINE. Okay, okay!

(*But the OTHERS have lined up to hug LORRAINE, except BRIGITTE.*)

ZOE. (*Hugging her.*) Thank God, Lorrie—I’m so happy for you!

MIKE. (*Hugging her.*) That’s great, Lor—really great.

LILI. (*Hugging her. Cheerfully:*) I was praying for him!

LORRAINE. Thanks, honey. (*Looks around.*) Why all the long faces?

KELLY. There’s a bit of a crisis... (*Gestures toward ZOE and MIKE.*)

MIKE. Zoe and I might be breaking up.

(*ZOE nods sadly.*)

LORRAINE. Oh, that’s terrible! Well, shouldn’t we all leave? I mean, shouldn’t they handle this by themselves?

BRIGITTE. They were about to exchange automatic weapons fire. If this is going to proceed civilly and peacefully, they will need a calm, mature mediator.

KELLY. Uh-oh...Ma, what are you up to?

BRIGITTE. *(To ZOE:)* Why haven't you slept with my son for a whole year?

KELLY. Oh, no...

ZOE. *(Horried, to MIKE:)* You told her about that???

MIKE. She's my mother!

LORRAINE. You mean you two haven't... What *have* you been doing?

MIKE. Nothing.

ZOE. Not "nothing." Does everyone need to hear this?

LILI. Zoe, you said you two used to...like, all the time!

KELLY. *(Disgusted:)* Eiew—just the thought of my baby brother having sex—

ZOE. Not "all the time." This is nobody's business...

BRIGITTE. *(To ZOE:)* Were you punishing him?

ZOE. Of course not!

BRIGITTE. Were you jealous? Did he ever cheat on you before?

KELLY. Ma—butt out.

ZOE. He never cheated, but—

MIKE. Is there somebody else?

ZOE. Of course not...

(Uncomfortable pause as ALL wait to hear more.)

You want to know what it is? You want to know??

KELLY. Maybe the rest of us should leave...

LORRAINE. *(To LILI:)* Come on, Lil—I think "The X-Files" are starting.

(LILI, KELLY, and LORRAINE start to exit.)

ZOE. *(Points at BRIGITTE.)* It's what *she* said a year ago!

(ALL freeze, listening.)

BRIGITTE. What are you talking about?

ZOE. She said I look like a chorus girl.

MIKE. I think so, too.

ZOE. Exactly!

BRIGITTE. Would you rather be compared to a dancing bear?

ZOE. She said that men only care about looks—and Kelly agreed with her!

KELLY. I didn't agree...I just didn't *disagree*.

BRIGITTE. You assume that's what my son thinks, too?

ZOE. Well...it would make sense...

BRIGITTE. Mikey thinks his own way. (To OTHERS:) Ladies, it's time to join "The Exiles."

(BRIGITTE leads KELLY, LILI, and LORRAINE into the bedroom.

(Finally alone, MIKE looks at ZOE, who squirms. He takes a step toward her; she automatically takes a step backward. He halts.)

ZOE. Michael...every time you get near me I hear your mother going "All men are so bad—what difference does it make which one you pick?"

(MIKE shakes his head in disappointment.)

I'm sorry.

MIKE. You're sorry? No, I'm the one who just screwed up. I'm the sorry one.

ZOE. I pushed you away.

MIKE. I just made out with your friend!

ZOE. I made you feel unwanted...

MIKE. I cheated on you right under your nose!

ZOE. (Hopefully:) Yeah...but you didn't mean to.

MIKE. Yes I did! This is the weirdest conversation.

ZOE. I thought you didn't care about me...

MIKE. Care about you? Zoe, I think you're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. The very act of dialing your number turns me on.

ZOE. (*Touched:*) Really? (*Hardens:*) But what about my mind? Do you like it, too?

(MIKE circles her, scrutinizing her head.)

MIKE. Hmm...it looks okay from out here...but I'd really need to get in there and poke around...

(ZOE laughs in spite of herself.)

If I didn't absolutely love talking to you, hearing what you have to say, then it wouldn't matter whether you looked like...Marilyn Monroe—I'd still want nothing to do with you.

ZOE. (*Gasps in alarm.*) Omigod—you're obsessed with Marilyn Monroe??

MIKE. What are you doing paying attention to what my mother says? I never do.

ZOE. She's...she's your mother. Some of her attitudes must have rubbed off...

MIKE. My ma says all men are bad, so you expect me to be—

ZOE. I don't think *you're* bad... I'm really confused!!

MIKE. Look...I'm going home. If I don't hear from you by tomorrow night, I'll start making calls and cancel the wedding.

ZOE. Mike, don't leave...

(MIKE reaches out and tries to kiss her. She pulls away.)

MIKE. Tomorrow night. (*Exits, slamming front door decisively.*)

(BRIGITTE enters from the bedroom.)

BRIGITTE. Good heavens, what was that?

(KELLY, LILI, and LORRAINE emerge from the bedroom.)

ZOE. Mike slammed the door.

BRIGITTE. Did he say “tomorrow *night*” or “tomorrow at eight”?

ZOE. Why are you Maginots all so stubborn?

KELLY. Mother, were you *listening* through the door?

BRIGITTE. Of course not. (To ZOE:) We’re not stubborn. You’re the one who’s stubborn. A whole year!

KELLY. Where did he go?

ZOE. Home, I guess.

(Long pause.)

KELLY. (To LORRAINE, brightly:) Well, at least Nathan’s okay.

(LORRAINE offers KELLY a sad smile.)

LILI. Yeah. Thank God.

(LORRAINE offers LILI a sad smile.)

BRIGITTE. The wedding’s off.

(General outcry.)

KELLY. Ma—that’s not funny.

BRIGITTE. I’m not joking— (Points at LORRAINE:) —look at her face.

(All look at LORRAINE.)

KELLY. Lorrie, did something happen?

LORRAINE. We called off the wedding.

KELLY. “Off”? Not “postponed”?

LORRAINE. Off.

LILI. Did you have a fight, too?

LORRAINE. No.

KELLY. Did you guys break up?

LORRAINE. No.

BRIGITTE. Is he dead?

(Shocked outcry.)

What? What?

LORRAINE. He's not dead. I just can't deal with the pressure anymore.

KELLY. *What pressure??* You're in love—that's wonderful! That's the ultimate goal of humankind! *What pressure?*

BRIGITTE. There's more to it than that, Kelly.

KELLY. It's a simple progression. You meet, love, sex, marriage, babies. Sometimes it's you meet, sex, love, marriage, babies.

ZOE. Sometimes there's no marriage.

LILI. *(Glancing pointedly at ZOE:)* Sometimes there's no love.

KELLY. And sometimes it's only about dancing. *(To LORRAINE:)* But not this time. That man would do anything for you!

BRIGITTE. He's sick, Kelly.

KELLY. So? *He* can't help that! She doesn't have to dump him.

LORRAINE. I'm not dumping him. I love him.

KELLY. Lor, you're closer to it than any of us—you found someone... *(Glances at ZOE:)* ...and you held onto him! *(Checks watch.)* And he even shows up on time!

LORRAINE. *(Quietly:)* I don't want to spend every waking hour wondering whether I'll come home to a warm hug or a cold corpse.

KELLY. That man is probably still alive because you stuck with him so long.

LORRAINE. He's got a strong spirit...

KELLY. He needs a *woman's* spirit. A woman gives life! It's what sets her above m... *(Catches herself.)* I didn't know you were so weak, Lor.

LORRAINE. You want Nathan? He's yours. (*Exits to bathroom.*)

KELLY. Where is she going?

LILI. Kel, maybe we should all ease up—

KELLY. "Ease up"? Listen to Miss Can't-Leave-The-Kid-For-A-Second!

LILI. What's that supposed to mean?

ZOE. How about some more salad?

KELLY. (*To LILI:*) You would kill to become a mother. You're so desperate to find a man, you even raped my baby brother!

LILI. I'm not desperate!

ZOE. He's not a baby!

BRIGITTE. (*To LILI:*) You raped my son?

LILI. I didn't rape anybody! It was consensual! It didn't even get that far—

BRIGITTE. You must be very strong. Do you work out?

KELLY. Why haven't you made a play for Nathan yet?

LILI. I'm not making plays for anybody—

KELLY. No wonder you steal men—God know the guys you pick for yourself are all either shrinks or outpatients.

(LILI is too hurt to do anything other than stare.)

ZOE. How about some dessert?

KELLY. Can't you stop talking about eating?

ZOE. Maybe ice cream will calm everyone down—

KELLY. Ice cream? Who can eat ice cream?? I walk into Baskin-Robbins and I gain five pounds.

ZOE. Okay—more salad! Something! I don't care!

KELLY. I suppose it's easy to use food to calm down when you've got the figure of a chorus girl!

ZOE. It's not easy—I have to watch every bite!

KELLY. Then you admit to having a good figure!

ZOE. Some things I'd change—

KELLY. Lord knows your outfits reveal more than *The National Enquirer*.

ZOE. Okay, so I'm a little thinner than you are—

KELLY. It's not that you're thinner—it's that you constantly *remind me* you're thinner. You're not happy unless you're being stared at by every man in the current area code!

LILI. How unfair!

BRIGITTE. Kelly! Stop it this instant!

KELLY. It's about time they heard what was really on my mind!

BRIGITTE. They *always* hear what's on your mind, daughter. Anybody who knows you knows what's on your mind the moment it gets on your mind.

KELLY. You don't know what I'm like with my friends—you haven't lived with me for fifteen years—

BRIGITTE. I know what you're like because you're like me. (*Knocks on the bathroom door.*) Lollie! Lanie! Lanisha! All of you please come out!

LORRAINE. (*Offstage:*) Is Kelly done?

KELLY. “Done” with what? What is she talking about? I haven't—

BRIGITTE. (*To LORRAINE:*) She's done. (*To KELLY:*) You're done. No more.

(LORRAINE *emerges from the bathroom. It is clear that she has been crying.*)

BRIGITTE *gently but firmly* arranges LORRAINE, ZOE, and LILI *into a line facing KELLY. The three look quite defeated.*)

Look at them. Refugees. War victims.

KELLY. They look fine—

(The three YOUNGER WOMEN silence KELLY with pained stares.)

BRIGITTE. Only one person I know can verbally pulverize people so efficiently.

KELLY. Are you referring to *me*? I *know* you can't be talking about me. Ma, you don't know these women—they pop like soap bubbles in the breeze—

BRIGITTE. I am referring to *me*. I have always had that talent. It's clear you have it, too.

KELLY. I don't know what you're talking about.

BRIGITTE. Kelly Marie, what has made you so angry this evening?

KELLY. Nothing. I'm not angry. I'm fine!

BRIGITTE. Your tongue—it's like one of those chefs at the Japanese restaurant who slices up the food right at your table.

KELLY. Nothing's wrong.

BRIGITTE. Is it me? Did I do something?

KELLY. No! It's not about you all the time, Ma!

BRIGITTE. What happened? I and all your victims would like to know.

KELLY. Don't any of you get it?? I've been *stood up*!!

LILI. Oh, that's right...

ZOE. What time was he supposed to be here?

KELLY. Right when you arrived. I made salad, I had pasta on the stove, good wine...

ZOE. Maybe he's just late.

KELLY. I was counting on him.

BRIGITTE. That one is bad news, like I have been saying forever.

KELLY. Yes, in spite of everything you have been telling me all my life, Ma, I counted on a man.

LORRAINE. There's no shame in that.

BRIGITTE. The only person I've ever counted on was myself... *(To KELLY:)* ...and I thought I taught my daughter to do that as well.

KELLY. You did...and I do, Ma...but the way he makes me feel—

BRIGITTE. *(Nods.)* You don't need to tell me. I know all about it.

KELLY. *(Sadly:)* I don't think you do, Ma. I can't believe you would ever let yourself get stood up.

BRIGITTE. Once, a man owned my heart so fully, he could do no wrong. Or so I thought.

KELLY. Dad?

BRIGITTE. Heavens, no. Your father was as reliable as a block of cement, and about as much fun.

KELLY. Then...who—

BRIGITTE. His name was Antonio Pastore. As Sicilian as they come. He sang to me... He danced like Nureyev... He knew wine better than any Frenchman...

KELLY. I never heard of this guy.

BRIGITTE. Of course you didn't. He was very bad news. All wrong.

LILL. He sounds dreamy!

BRIGITTE. He was dreamy. Too good to be true. *Always late.*

KELLY. *(Gasps.)* This Pastore guy—he's not my real father or something gross like that, is he?

BRIGITTE. Of course not.

KELLY. Thank God.

BRIGITTE. One time I waited for him for six hours. I sat in a little chair and stared at the doorbell, hoping it would ring. I was afraid to move because I'd just gotten my hair done and my dress cleaned. I sat that way, stiff as a board, waiting.

LORRAINE. Those must have been some pretty special plans.

BRIGITTE. They were. The minister finally called to say he couldn't wait any longer.

KELLY. You were going to *marry* this clown???

BRIGITTE. Elope. When my mother found me, I was so sick from crying they had to take me to the emergency room.

LILI. Mrs. Maginot, that's the saddest story I ever heard!

BRIGITTE. (*Smiles at LILI:*) You are a very loving young woman.

LILI. I try to be.

BRIGITTE. You cannot have babies, but I suspect you are ready to be a mother.

LILI. Thank you.

BRIGITTE. As far as potential fathers go...you have good taste, but you should keep looking— (*Glances at ZOE.*) —Mikey's mind is somewhere else. Let's see... Are you still dating your therapist?

LILI. We stopped. He asked too many questions.

BRIGITTE. Well, that little boy keeps you busy, no doubt. Do you leave him alone at school now?

LILI. Finally! In fact, out of all the times I've dropped him off in the last three months, I only cried twice!

BRIGITTE. Don't worry. He'll soon find other ways to break your heart.

ZOE. Not all men are out to break your heart...

BRIGITTE. True, Gypsy Rose Lee. My late husband did not know how to break a woman's heart, thank heaven. But Mikey does.

(ZOE looks stricken.)

Don't worry. He loves you.

(ZOE smiles with relief.)

I mean that. Take care of my son. Mikey...I've never seen him like this. (*Indicates LILI:*) The escapade with the hussy...it was only an escapade.

(ZOE nods solemnly.)

You have till eight o'clock tomorrow—that's the right time, isn't it? Eight o'clock?

KELLY. No, he just said "tomorrow night"—he didn't specify a time.

(ALL glare at KELLY—she must have been eavesdropping, too.)

What?

BRIGITTE. *(To ZOE:)* Tomorrow night. You go over there, you take him into your arms and you show him you love him—no more holding out.

KELLY. What happened to "all men are so bad"?

BRIGITTE. When did I say that? *(To ZOE:)* When you both fall asleep you can be assured that the man next to you will be there in the morning—and that he will love you just as deeply then.

(Pause.)

ZOE. Are you going to say something mean now?

BRIGITTE. Why do you ask that?

ZOE. I've just...I've never heard you say so many nice things all in a row.

KELLY. Nor have I—especially not to *me*.

BRIGITTE. What do you want me to say, Kelly?

(KELLY has no answer.)

Do I owe you some sort of apology?

KELLY. Well...yes.

LORRAINE. I don't think I need to be present for this...

KELLY. No. Stay. If she does actually apologize, I'll need someone to catch me when I faint.

BRIGITTE. Would you like a general apology, or for something specific?

KELLY. Oh, God, this is like Christmas morning!

BRIGITTE. I'll save you the hassle of making up your mind. I refuse to apologize.

KELLY. *(To OTHERS:)* False alarm, girls. Won't need you.

BRIGITTE. I refuse to apologize for doing my best.

(This catches KELLY off-guard.)

My own mother raised seven children, and she certainly missed a few opportunities to nurture. No doubt the same happened with you and your siblings. The truth is, Kelly, I didn't know peace in my heart toward my own mother until you were born. The doctor gave you that little love tap and you started to cry... *(Considers.)* ...wail. You really had a set of lungs. The doctor threatened to stuff you back in. And I was so ashamed—I thought you were crying because *I'd* done something wrong! I apologized to the doctors, the nurses, your father—everyone I could think of—

KELLY. To me?

BRIGITTE. I left you out.

KELLY. *That's* when it started!

BRIGITTE. Your sister didn't cry. She came out smiling and never stopped. I assumed that giving birth simply didn't hurt much. Then I had you. That giant noise belting out of your tiny mouth was the first time I realized that flesh of my flesh might have a mind of her own. I knew it was only the first of many differences of opinion.

KELLY. “A difference of opinion”? That's what you call it when your baby cries??

BRIGITTE. You were screaming bloody murder, and I wished I could calm you down, but if you had been silent, it would have meant you were dead.

KELLY. What kind of mother would see the crying of her own baby as the start of an argument?

(BRIGITTE feels this one—in her gut.)

So what did you say to him, Ma? What frightful thing did you say to Mr. Dreamio Pastore to make him decide not to show up on your wedding day, huh?

(Shocked outcry from the OTHER WOMEN.)

BRIGITTE. *(Softly:)* You drew blood, Kelly. You didn't have to go in for the kill.

LORRAINE. Okay, now I'm out of here! *(Starts to exit.)*

BRIGITTE. *(To LORRAINE:)* I have something to say to you.

LORRAINE. That's what I'm afraid of. Good night! *(Opens front door.)*

BRIGITTE. Lorraine!

LORRAINE. *(Halts.)* That's the first time you got my name right.

BRIGITTE. And it may be the last, so don't dwell on it. You are making a wise decision.

LORRAINE. To leave here? I'll say...

BRIGITTE. To not marry that man.

(LORRAINE slowly turns to listen.)

It sounds like he wants to give you the world. But with his failing health...I think he'll let you down.

LORRAINE. He would die trying.

BRIGITTE. If you want love for now, marry him. If you want love for always...keep looking.

LORRAINE. It's only until he gets better—

BRIGITTE. Gets better?

(She shakes her head slowly—he's never going to get better.)

But at least you'll have been loved.

LILL. Mrs. Maginot—I've got to know—did you ever hear from Antonio again?

BRIGITTE. No.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

In order to protect our associated authors against copyright infringement, we cannot at present offer full scripts online.

To apply for performance rights and/or purchase books, please click ORDER or go back to *www.playscripts.com*.