

BEYOND THERAPY

ACT 1

Scene 1

A restaurant. BRUCE is seated, looking at his watch. He is fairly pleasant looking, probably wearing a blazer with an open shirt. Enter PRUDENCE, attractive, semi-dressed up in a dress or nice skirt and blouse. After hesitating a moment, SHE crosses to BRUCE

PRUDENCE: Hello.

BRUCE: Hello.

PRUDENCE (*perhaps referring to a newspaper in her hand- The New York Review of Books?*) Are you the white male, 30-35, 6'2", blue eyes, who's into rock music, movies, jogging and quiet evenings at home?

BRUCE: Yes, I am (*stands*)

PRUDENCE: Hi, I'm Prudence.

BRUCE: I'm Bruce.

PRUDENCE: Nice to meet you.

BRUCE: Won't you sit down?

PRUDENCE: Thank you. (*sits*) As I said in my letter, I've never answered one of these ads before.

BRUCE: Me neither. I mean, I haven't put one in before.

PRUDENCE: But this time I figured, why not?

BRUCE: Right. Me too (*pause*) I hope I'm not too macho for you.

PRUDENCE: No. So far you seem wonderful.

BRUCE: You have lovely breasts. That's the first thing I notice in a woman.

PRUDENCE: Thank you.

BRUCE: You have beautiful contact lenses.

PRUDENCE: Thank you. I like the timbre of your voice. Soft but firm.

BRUCE: Thanks. I like *your* voice.

PRUDENCE: Thank you. I love the smell of Brut you're wearing.

BRUCE: Thank you. My male lover Bob gave it to me.

PRUDENCE: What?

BRUCE: You remind me of him in a certain light.

PRUDENCE: What?

BRUCE: I swing both ways actually. Do you?

PRUDENCE (*rattled, serious*) I don't know. I always insist on the lights being out.

(*pause*)

BRUCE: I'm afraid I've upset you now.

PRUDENCE: No, it's nothing really. It's just that I hate gay people.

BRUCE: I'm not gay. I'm bisexual. There's a difference.

PRUDENCE: I don't really know any bisexuals.

BRUCE: Children are all innately bisexual, you know. If you took a child to Plato's Retreat, he'd be attracted to both sexes.

PRUDENCE: I should imagine he'd be terrified.

BRUCE: Well, he might be, of course. I've never taken a child to Plato's retreat.

PRUDENCE: I don't think they let you.

BRUCE: I don't really know any children (*pause*) You have wonderful eyes. They're so deep.

PRUDENCE: Thank you.

BRUCE: I feel like I want to take care of you.

PRUDENCE (*liking this tact better*) I would like that. My favourite song is "Someone to Watch Over Me".

BRUCE (*sings softly*) "There a somebody I'm longing duh duh..."

PRUDENCE: Yes. Thank you.

BRUCE: I some way's you're like a little girl. And in some ways you're like a woman.

PRUDENCE: How am I like a woman?

BRUCE (*searching, romantically*) you...dress like a woman. You wear eye shadow like a woman.

PRUDENCE: You're like a man. You're tall, you have to shave. I feel you could protect me.

BRUCE: I'm deeply emotional, I like to cry.

PRUDENCE: Oh, I wouldn't like that.

BRUCE: But I *like* to cry.

PRUDENCE: I don't think men should cry unless something falls on them.

BRUCE: That's a kind of sexism. Men have been programmed not to show feeling.

PRUDENCE: Don't talk to me about sexism. You're the one who talked about my breasts the minute I sat down.

BRUCE: I feel like I'm going to cry now.

PRUDENCE: Why do you want to cry?

BRUCE: I feel you don't like me enough. I think you're making eyes at the waiter.

PRUDENCE: I haven't even seen the waiter.

(*BRUCE cries*)

PRUDENCE (*continued*) Please, don't cry, please.

BRUCE (*stops crying after a bit*) I feel better after that. You have a lovely mouth.

PRUDENCE: Thank you.

BRUCE: I can tell you're very sensitive. I want you to have my children.

PRUDENCE: Thank you.

BRUCE: Do you feel ready to make a commitment?

PRUDENCE: I feel I need to get to know you better.

BRUCE: I feel we agree on all issues. I feel that you like rock music, movies, jogging and quiet evenings at home. I think you hate shallowness. I bet you never read "People" magazine.

PRUDENCE: I do read it. I write for it.

BRUCE: I write for it too. Free-lance actually. I send in letters. They printed one of them.

PRUDENCE: Oh, what was it about?

BRUCE: I wanted to see Gary Gilmore executed on television.

PRUDENCE: Oh, yes, I remember that one.

BRUCE: Did you identify with Jill Clayburgh in "An Unmarried Woman"?

PRUDENCE: Uh, yes, I did.

BRUCE: Me too! We agree on everything. I want to cry again.

PRUDENCE: I don't like men to cry. I want them to be strong.

BRUCE: You'd quite like Bob then.

PRUDENCE: Who?

BRUCE: You know.

PRUDENCE: Oh.

BRUCE: I feel like I'm irritating you.

PRUDENCE: No. It's just that it's hard to get to know someone. And the waiter never comes, and I'd like to order.

BRUCE: Let's start all over again. Hello. My name is Bruce.

PRUDENCE: Hello.

BRUCE: Prudence. That's a lovely name.

PRUDENCE: Thank you.

BRUCE: That's a lovely dress.

PRUDENCE: Thank you. I like your necklace. It goes nicely with your chest hair.

BRUCE: Thank you. I like your nail polish.

PRUDENCE: I have it on my toes too.

BRUCE: Let me see.

(SHE takes shoe off, puts her foot on the table)

BRUCE *(continued)* I think it's wonderful you feel free enough with me to put your feet on the table.

PRUDENCE: I didn't put my feet on the table. I put one foot. I was hoping it might get the waiter's attention.

BRUCE: We agree on everything. It's amazing. I'm going to cry again. *(weeps)*

PRUDENCE: *Please*, you're annoying me.

(HE continues to cry)

PRUDENCE *(continued)* What is the matter?

BRUCE: I feel you're too dependent. I feel you want me to put up the storm windows. I feel you should do that.

PRUDENCE: I didn't say anything about storm windows.

BRUCE: You're right. I'm wrong. We agree.

PRUDENCE: What kind of childhood did you have?

BRUCE: Nuns. I was taught by nuns. They really ruined me. I don't believe in God anymore. I believe in bran cereal. It helps prevent rectal cancer.

PRUDENCE: Yes, I like bran cereal.

BRUCE: I want to marry you. I feel ready in my life to make a long term commitment. We'll live in Connecticut. We'll have two cars. Bob will live over the garage. Everything will be wonderful.

PRUDENCE: I don't feel ready to make a long term commitment to you. I think you're insane. I'm going to go now *(stands)*

BRUCE: Please don't go.

PRUDENCE: I don't think I should stay.

BRUCE: Don't go. They have a salad bar here.

PRUDENCE: Well, maybe for a little longer. *(SHE sits down again)*

BRUCE: You're afraid of life, aren't you?

PRUDENCE: Well...

BRUCE: Your instinct is to run away. You're afraid of feeling of emotion. That's wrong, Prudence, because then you have no passion. Did you see "Equus"? That doctor felt that it was better to blind eight horses in a stable with a metal spike than to have no passion. *(Holds his fork)* In my life I'm going to be afraid to blind the horses, Prudence.

PRUDENCE: You ought to become a veterinarian.

BRUCE *(very offended)* You've missed the metaphor.

PRUDENCE: I haven't missed the metaphor. I could never love someone who missed the metaphor.

PRUDENCE: Someone should have you committed.

BRUCE: I'm not the one afraid of commitment. You are.

PRUDENCE: Oh, dry up.

BRUCE: I was going to give you a fine dinner and then take you to see "The Tree of Wooden Clogs" and then home to my place for sexual intercourse, but now I think you should leave.

PRUDENCE: You're not rejecting me, buddy. I'm rejecting you. You're a real first-class idiot.

BRUCE: And you're a castrating, frigid-bitch!

(SHE throws a glass of water in his face; HE throws water back in her face. THEY sit for a moment, spent of anger, wet)

PRUDENCE: Absolutely nothing seem to get that waiter's attention, does it?

(BRUCE shakes his head "no". THEY sit there sadly).

LIGHTS FADE

ACT 1

Scene 2

Psychologist's office. DR. STUART FRAMINGHAM. Very masculine, a bit of a bully, wears boots, jeans, a tweed sports jacks, open sports shirt. Maybe has a beard.

STUART *(Speaking into intercom)* You can send the next patient in now, Betty.

(Enter PRUDENCE. She sits).

STUART *(continued. After a moment)* So, what's on your mind this week?

PRUDENCE: Oh I don't know. I have that Catherine the Great dream again.

STUART: Yeah?

PRUDENCE: Oh I don't know. Maybe it isn't Catherine the Great. It's really more like National Velvet.

STUART: What do you associate with National Velvet?

PRUDENCE: Oh I don't know. Childhood.

STUART: Yes?

PRUDENCE: I guess I miss childhood where one could look to a horse for emotional satisfaction rather than a person. I mean, a horse never disappointed me.

STUART: You feel disappointed in people?

PRUDENCE: Well, every man I try to have a relationship with turns out to be crazy. And the ones that aren't crazy are dull. But maybe it's me. Maybe I'm really looking for faults just so I won't ever have a successful relationship. Like Michael last year. Maybe he was just fine, and I made up faults that he didn't have. Maybe I do it to myself. What do you think?

STUART: What I think doesn't matter. What do you think?

PRUDENCE: But what do *you* think?

STUART: It's not my place to say.

PRUDENCE *(irritated)* Oh never mind. I don't want to talk about it.

STUART: I see *(makes a note)*

PRUDENCE *(noticing HE's making notes; to make up)* I did answer one of those ads.

STUART: Oh?

PRUDENCE: Yes.

STUART: How did it work out?

PRUDENCE: Very badly. The guy was a jerk. He talked about my breasts, he has a male lover, and he wept at the table. It was really ridiculous. I should have known better.

STUART: Well, you can always come back to me, babe. I'll light your fire for you anytime.

PRUDENCE: Stuart, I've told you, you can't talk to me that way if I'm to stay in therapy with you.

STUART: You're mighty attractive when you're angry.

PRUDENCE: Stuart...Dr. Framingham, many women who have been seduced by their psychiatrists take them to court...

STUART: Yeah, but you wanted it, baby...

PRUDENCE: How could I have "wanted" it? One of our topics has been that I don't know what I want.

STUART: Yeah, but you wanted that, baby.

PRUDENCE: Stop calling me baby. Really, I must be out of my mind to keep seeing you (*pause*) Obviously you can't be my therapist after we've had an affair.

STUART: Two lousy nights aren't an affair.

PRUDENCE: You never said they were lousy.

STUART: They were great. You were great. I was great. Wasn't I, baby? I was the fact that it was only two nights that was lousy.

PRUDENCE: Dr. Framingham, it's the common belief that it is wrong for therapists and their patients to have sex together.

STUART: Not in California.

PRUDENCE: We are not in California.

STUART: We could move there. Buy a house, get a Jacuzzi.

PRUDENCE: Stuart... Dr. Framingham, we're not right for one another. I feel you have masculinity problems. I hate your belt buckle. I didn't really even like you in bed.

STUART: I'm great in bed.

PRUDENCE (*with some hesitation*) You have problems with premature ejaculation.

STUART: Listen, honey, there's nothing premature about it. Our society is paced quickly, we all have a lot of things to do. I ejaculate quickly on purpose.

PRUDENCE: I don't believe you.

STUART: Fuck you, cunt.

PRUDENCE (*stands*) Obviously I need to find a new therapist.

STUART: Okay, okay. I lost my temper. I'm sorry. But I'm human. Prudence, that's what you have to learn. People *are* human. You keep looking for perfection, you need to learn to accept imperfection. I can help you with that.

PRUDENCE: Maybe I really should sue you. I mean I don't think you should have a license.

STUART: Prudence, you're avoiding the issue. The issue is you, not me. You're unhappy, you can't find a relationship you like, you don't like your job, you don't get hung up on who

should have a license. The issue is I can help you fit into the world (*Very sincerely, sensitively*) Really I can. Don't run away.

PRUDENCE (*sits*) I don't think I believe you.

STUART: That's okay. We can work on that.

PRUDENCE: I don't know. I really don't think you're a good therapist. But the others are probably worse, I'm afraid.

STUART: They are. They're much worse. Really I'm very nice. I *like* women. Most men don't.

PRUDENCE: I'm getting one of my headaches again. (*holds her forehead*).

STUART: Do you want me to massage your neck?

PRUDENCE: Please don't touch me.

STUART: Okay, okay (*pause*) Any other dreams?

PRUDENCE: No.

STUART: Perhaps we should analyse why you didn't like the man you met through the personal ad.

PRUDENCE: I...I...don't want to talk anymore today. I want to go home.

STUART: You can never go home again.

PRUDENCE: Perhaps not. But I can return to my apartment. You're making my headache worse.

STUART: I think we should finish the session. I think it's important.

PRUDENCE: I just can't talk anymore.

STUART: We don't have to talk. But we have to stay in the room.

PRUDENCE: How much longer?

STUART (*looks at watch*) 30 minutes.

PRUDENCE: Alright. But I'm not going to talk anymore.

STUART: Okay.

(*Pause. THEY stare at one another*)

STUART (*continued*) You're very beautiful when you're upset.

PRUDENCE: Please don't you talk either.

(*THEY stare at each other; lights dim*).

ACT 1

Scene 3

The office of CHARLOTTE WALLACE. Probably reddish hair, bright clothing; a Snoopy dog on her desk. If there are walls in the set around her, they have drawings done by children.

CHARLOTTE (*into intercom*) You may send the next patient in, Marcia. (*SHE arranges herself at her desk, smiles in anticipation*).

(*Enter BRUCE. HE sits*).

CHARLOTTE (*continued*) Hello.

BRUCE: Hello (*pause*) Should I just begin?

CHARLOTTE: Would you like to begin?

BRUCE: I threw a glass of water at someone in a restaurant.

CHARLOTTE: Did you?

BRUCE: Yes.

CHARLOTTE: Did they get all wet?

BRUCE: Yes.

(Silence)

CHARLOTTE *(points to child's drawing)* Did I show you this drawing?

BRUCE: I don't remember. They all look alike.

CHARLOTTE: It was drawn by an emotionally disturbed three year old. His parents beat him every morning after breakfast. Orange juice, Toast, Special K.

BRUCE: Uh, huh.

CHARLOTTE: Do you see the point I'm making?

BRUCE: Yes, I do, sort of. *(pause)* What point are you making?

CHARLOTTE: Well, the point is that when a porpoise first comes to me, it is often immediately clear...Did I say porpoise? What word do I want? Porpoise. Pompous. Pom pom. Papparazzi. Polyester. Pollywog. Olley olley oxen free. Patient. I'm sorry, I mean patient. Now what was I saying?

BRUCE: Something about when a patient comes to you.

CHARLOTTE *(slightly irritated)* Well, give me more of a clue.

BRUCE: Something about the child's drawing and when a patient comes to you?

CHARLOTTE: Yes. No, I need more. Give me more of a hint.

BRUCE: I don't know.

CHARLOTTE: Oh I hate this, when I forget what I'm saying. Oh, damn. Oh, damn damn damn. Well we'll just have to forge on. You say something for a while, and I'll keep trying to remember what I was saying *(she moves her lips)*

BRUCE *(after a bit)* Do you want me to talk?

CHARLOTTE: Would you like to talk?

BRUCE: I had an answer to the ad I put in.

CHARLOTTE: Ad?

BRUCE: Personal ad.

CHARLOTTE *(Remembering, happy)* Oh, yes. Personal ad. I told you that was how the first Mr. Wallace and I met. Oh yes. I love personal ads. They're so basic. Did it work out for you?

BRUCE: Well, I liked her, and I tried to be emotionally open with her. I even let myself cry.

CHARLOTTE: Good for you!

BRUCE: But she didn't like me. And then she threw water in my face.

CHARLOTTE: Oh dear. Oh, I'm sorry. One has to be so brave to be emotionally open and vulnerable. Oh you poor thing. I'm going to give you a hug. (*SHE hugs him and kisses him with her Snoopy doll*) What did you do when she threw the water in your face?

BRUCE: I threw it back in her face.

CHARLOTTE: Oh good for you! Bravo! (*SHE barks for Snoopy and bounces him up and down*) Ruff ruff ruff! Oh, I feel you getting so much more emotionally expressive since you've been in therapy, I'm proud of you.

BRUCE: Maybe it was my fault. I probably came on too strong.

CHARLOTTE: Uh, life is so difficult. I know when I met the second Mr. Wallace... you know, it's so strange, all my husbands have had the same surname of Wallace, this has been a theme in my own analysis...Well, when I met the second Mr. Wallace, I got a filing cabinet. What do I mean? Filing cabinet, frying pan, frogs eggs, faculty wives, frankincense, fornication, follies bergere, falling falling fork, fish fork, fish bone. I got a fish bone caught in my throat (*smiles*).

BRUCE: And did you get it out?

CHARLOTTE: Oh yes. Then we got married, and we had quite a wonderful relationship for a while, but then he started to see this fish wife and we broke up. I don't mean fish wife, I mean waitress. Is that a word, waitress?

BRUCE: Yes. Woman who works in a restaurant.

CHARLOTTE: No, she didn't work in a restaurant, she worked in a department store. Sales...lady. That's what she was.

BRUCE: That's too bad.

CHARLOTTE: He was buying a gift for me, and then he ran off with the saleslady. He never even gave me the gift, he just left me a note. And then I was so very alone for a while (*Cries. After a bit, he gives her a hug and a few kisses from the Snoopy doll. She is suitably grateful*) I'm afraid I'm taking up too much of your session. I'll knock a few dollars off the bill. You talk for a while, I'm getting tired anyway.

BRUCE: Well, so I'm afraid to put another ad in the paper since seeing how this one worked out.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, don't be afraid! Never be afraid to rise, *to risk!* I've told you about "Equus", haven't I? That doctor, Doctor Dysart, with whom I greatly identify, saw that it was better to risk madness and to blind horses with a metal spike, then to be safe and conventional and dull. Ecc, ecc, equus! Naaaaaaaaay! (*For Snoopy*) Ruff ruff ruff!

BRUCE: So you think I should put in another ad?

CHARLOTTE: Yes I do. But this time, we need an ad that will get someone more exceptional, someone who can appreciate your uniqueness.

BRUCE: So you think I should put in another ad?

CHARLOTTE: Yes I do. But this time, we need an ad that will get someone more exceptional, someone who can appreciate your uniqueness.

BRUCE: In what ways am I unique? (*Sort of pleased*)

CHARLOTTE: Oh I don't know, the usual ways. Now let's see (*writing on pad*) White male, 30 to 35, 6'2" no- 6'5", green eyes, Pulitzer Prize-winning author, into Kierkegaard, Mahler, Joan Didion and sex, seeks similar-minded attractive female for unique encounters. Sense of humour a must. Write box whatever whatever. There, that should catch you someone excellent. Why don't you take this out of the office, and my dirigible will type it up for you. I don't mean dirigible, I mean Saskatchewan.

BRUCE: Secretary.

CHARLOTTE: Yes, that's what I mean.

BRUCE: You now we haven't mentioned how my putting these ads in the paper for women is making Bob feel. He's real hostile about it.

CHARLOTTE: Who's Bob?

BRUCE: He's the guy I've been living with for a year.

CHARLOTTE: Bob. Oh dear. I'm sorry. I thought you were someone else for this whole session. You're not Thomas Norton?

BRUCE: No, I'm Bruce Lathrop.

CHARLOTTE: Oh yes. Bruce and Bob. It all comes back now. Well I'm very sorry. But this is a good ad anyway, I think, so just bring it out to my dirigible, and then come on back in and we'll talk about something else for a while. I know, I mean secretary. Sometimes I think I should get my blood sugar checked.

BRUCE: Alright, thank you, Mrs Wallace.

CHARLOTTE: See you next week.

BRUCE: I thought you wanted me to come right back to finish the session.

CHARLOTTE: Oh yes, see you in a few minutes.

(*HE exits*)

CHARLOTTE (*continued. Into intercom*) Marcia, dear, send in the next porpoise please. Wait, I don't mean porpoise, I mean... pony, Pekinese, parka, penis, no not that. I'm sorry, Marcia, I'll buzz back when I think of it. (*SHE moves her lips, trying to remember, Lights dim*).

ACT 1

Scene 4

A restaurant again. BRUCE waiting, looking at his watch. After a bit enter PRUDENCE.

PRUDENCE (*sees BRUCE*) Oh.

BRUCE: Hello again.

PRUDENCE: Hello.

BRUCE: Odd coincidence.

PRUDENCE: Yes.

BRUCE (*stands*) Are you answering an ad again?

PRUDENCE: Well, yes I am.

BRUCE: Me too. I mean I put one in again.

PRUDENCE: Yes, well... I think I'll wait over here. Excuse me.
(*PRUDENCE sits at another table; after a bit he comes over*). Yes?

BRUCE: I'm afraid it's crossed my mind that you answered my ad again.

PRUDENCE: I would not be so stupid to answer the same ad twice.

BRUCE: I changed my ad.

(*SHE stares at him*)

BRUCE: I was hoping to get a different sort of person.

PRUDENCE: Are you then the Pulitzer Prize winner author, 6'5", who liked Kierkegaard, Mahler, and Joan Didion?

BRUCE: Yes I am. Sorry.

PRUDENCE: I see. Well that was a ludicrous list of people to like anyway, it serves me right. I feel very embarrassed.

BRUCE: Don't be embarrassed. We're all human.

PRUDENCE: I see no reason not to be embarrassed at being human.

BRUCE: You should be in therapy.

PRUDENCE: I am in therapy.

BRUCE: It hasn't worked.

PRUDENCE: Thank you very much. Do you think we're the only two people who answer these ads?

BRUCE: I doubt it. Maybe we're fated.

PRUDENCE: Jinxed seems more like it.

BRUCE: You think you're unlucky, don't you? In general, I mean
(*HE sits down*).

PRUDENCE: You're going to sit down, are you?

BRUCE: Well, what else should I do? Go home to Bob?

PRUDENCE: Oh yes. How is Bob?

BRUCE: He's kind of grumpy these days.

PRUDENCE: Perhaps he's getting his period.

BRUCE: I don't know much about menstruation. Tell me about it.

PRUDENCE (*Stares at him*) Yes, I do think I'm unlucky.

BRUCE: What?

PRUDENCE: In answer to your question. I mean, I am attractive, aren't I? I mean, without being conceited, I know I'm *fairly* attractive. I mean, I'm not within the world's 2 per cent mutants...

BRUCE: I don't think you're a mutant at all. I mean, I think you're very attractive.

PRUDENCE: Yes, well I don't know if I can really credit your opinion. You're sort of a crackpot, aren't you?

BRUCE: You really don't like me, do you?

PRUDENCE: I don't know you really. Well, no, I probably don't like you.

BRUCE: Well I don't like you either.

PRUDENCE: Well, fine. It was delightful to see you again. Goodbye.
(Starts to leave. HE starts to cry, but tries to muffle it more than usual) I really hate it when you cry. You're much too large to cry.

BRUCE: I'm sorry, it's not you. Something was just coming up for me. Some childhood something.

PRUDENCE: Yes I miss childhood.

BRUCE: I thought you were leaving.

PRUDENCE *(sits)* Alright, I want to ask you something. Why did you put that ad in the paper? I mean if you're living with this person named Bob, why are you trying to meet a woman?

BRUCE: I want to be open to all experiences.

PRUDENCE: Well that sounds all very well, but surely you can't just turn on and off sexual preference.

BRUCE: I don't have to turn it on or off. I prefer both sexes.

PRUDENCE: I don't know, I just find that so difficult to believe.

BRUCE: But why would I be here with you if I weren't interested in you?

PRUDENCE: You might be trying to murder me. Or punish your mother.

BRUCE: Or I might just be trying to reach out and touch someone.

PRUDENCE: That's the slogan of Coke or Dr. Pepper, I think.

BRUCE: The telephone company actually. But it's a good slogan. I mean, isn't that what we're all trying to do, reach out to another person? I mean, I put an ad in a newspaper, after all, and you answered it.

PRUDENCE: I know. It's very hard to meet people. I mean I do meet people at the magazine. I met Shaun Cassidy last week. Of course, he's too young for me.

BRUCE: Bob really liked Shaun Cassidy.

PRUDENCE: Oh, I'll have to try to set them up.

BRUCE: I don't think your therapist is helping you at all.

PRUDENCE: Well I think yours must be a maniac.

BRUCE: My therapist says you have to be willing to go out on a limb, to risk, to risk!

PRUDENCE: My therapist says...*(at a loss)* I have to settle for imperfection.

BRUCE: I know it's unconventional to be bisexual. My wife Sally didn't real with it at all well.

PRUDENCE: You were married?

BRUCE: For six years. I married this girl Sally I know all through grammar school and everything. She was runner-up for the homecoming queen.

PRUDENCE: I didn't go to the prom. I read "Notes from the Underground" instead.

BRUCE: You should have gone to prom.

PRUDENCE: I don't like proms. Why did you and Sally break up?

BRUCE: Well, I didn't understand about bisexuality then. I thought the fact that I wanted to sleep with the man who came to read the gas metre meant I was queer.

PRUDENCE: I'm never home when they come to read the gas metre.

BRUCE: And so then Sally found out I was sleeping with the gas man, and she got real angry and we got a divorce.

PRUDENCE: Well I guess if you're homecoming queen runner-up you don't expect those sorts of problems.

BRUCE: You haven't been married, have you?

PRUDENCE (*uncomfortable*) No.

BRUCE: Has there been anyone serious?

PRUDENCE: I have two cats. Serious, let's see. Well, about a year and a half ago I lived for six months with this aging preppie named Michael.

BRUCE (*pleased- a connection*) I'm an aging preppie.

PRUDENCE: Yes I know. Michael was a lawyer, and...

BRUCE: I'm a lawyer.

PRUDENCE (*registers this fact, then goes on*) And he was very smart, and very nice; and I should've been happy with him, and I don't know why I wasn't. And he was slightly allergic to my cats, so I broke it off.

BRUCE: And you haven't gone out with anyone since?

PRUDENCE: Well I do go out with people, but it never seems to work out.

BRUCE: Maybe you're too hard on them.

PRUDENCE: Well should I pretend someone is wonderful if I think they're stupid or crazy?

BRUCE: Well no, but maybe you judge everybody too quickly.

PRUDENCE: Well perhaps. But how many nights would you give David Berkowitz?

BRUCE: You went out with David Berkowitz?

PRUDENCE: No. It was a rhetorical question.

BRUCE: You must ask yourself what you want. Do you want to be married?

PRUDENCE: I have no idea. It's so confusing. I know when I was a little girl, Million Dollar Movie showed this film called "Every Girl Should Be Married" every night for seven days. It was this dumb comedy about this infantile girl play by Betsy Drake who wants to be married to this paediatrician played by Cary Grant who she sees in a drug store. She sees him for two minutes, and she wants to move in and have babies with him. And he finds her totally obnoxious, but then at

the end of the movie suddenly say, “You’re right, you’re adorable”, and then they get married. *(Looks baffled by the stupidity of it all)*

BRUCE: Well it was a comedy.

PRUDENCE: And what confused me further was that the actress Betsy Drake did in fact marry Cary Grant in real life. Of course, it didn’t last, and he married several other people, and then later Dyan Cannon said he was insane to be married to him at all. But if it’s no good being married to Cary Grant, who is it good being married to?

BRUCE: I don’t know.

PRUDENCE: Neither do I.

BRUCE: Well you should give things time. First impressions can be wrong. And maybe Dyan Cannon was the problem. Maybe anyone married to her would take LSD. Maybe Cary Grant is still terrific.

PRUDENCE: Well he’s too old for me anyway. Shaun Cassidy’s too you, and Cary Grant’s too old.

BRUCE: I’m the right age.

PRUDENCE: Yes I guess you are.

BRUCE: And you haven’t left. You said you were leaving but then you stayed.

PRUDENCE: Well it’s not particularly meaningful. I was just curious why you put the ad in the paper.

BRUCE: Why did you answer it?

PRUDENCE: I don’t wish to analyse my behaviour on the issue.

BRUCE: You’re so afraid of things. I feel this overwhelming urge to help you. We can look into the abyss together.

PRUDENCE: Please don’t say pretentious things. I get a rash.

BRUCE *(depressed)* You’re right. I guess I am pretentious.

PRUDENCE: Well I really am too hard on people.

BRUCE: No you’re probably right to dislike me. Sally hates me. I mean, sometimes I hear myself and I understand why no one likes me.

PRUDENCE: Please don’t be so hard on yourself on my account. Everyone’s stupid, so you’re just like everyone else.

(HE stares at her)

PRUDENCE *(continued)* I’m sorry, that sounded terrible I’m stupid too. We’re all stupid.

BRUCE: It’s human to be stupid. *(sings romantically)* There’s a somebody I’m longing duh duh, duh duh duh duh duh duh duh duh...*(stops singing)*

PRUDENCE *(sings)* Someone to watch... *(realised SHE’S singing alone)* Oh, I didn’t realise you were stopping.

BRUCE: Sorry. I didn’t realise you were...starting.

PRUDENCE: Yes. Stupid of me to like that song.

BRUCE: It's a pretty song.

PRUDENCE: Well I guess it is.

BRUCE: I want to say something. I like you.

PRUDENCE (*surprised anyone could like her*) You do?

BRUCE: I like women who are independent-minded, who don't look to a man to do all their thinking for them. I like women who are persons.

PRUDENCE: Well you sound like you were coached by Betty Friedan, but otherwise that's a nice sentiment. Of course, a woman who was independent-minded wouldn't like the song "Someone To Watch Over Me".

BRUCE: We have to allow for contradictions in ourselves. Nobody is just one thing.

PRUDENCE (*serious*) That's all very true. That wasn't a crackpot comment at all.

BRUCE: I know it wasn't. And just because I'm a crackpot on some things doesn't mean I'm a total crackpot.

PRUDENCE: Right. You're a partial crackpot.

BRUCE: You could be a crackpot too if you let yourself go.

PRUDENCE: That wasn't what I was attempting to do when I got up this morning.

BRUCE: To risk, to risk! Do you like me?

PRUDENCE: Well, I don't know. I don't really know you yet.

BRUCE: Do you want to get to know me?

PRUDENCE: Well I don't know. Maybe I shouldn't. I mean, we did meet through a personal ad, you don't have a Pulitzer Prize...

BRUCE: I have a membership in the New York Health and Racquet Club.

PRUDENCE: Well similar, but not the same thing.

BRUCE: As a member I can get you a discount.

PRUDENCE: I don't know if I'm ready to exercise yet. I'm thinking about it, but I'm cautious still.

BRUCE: We're getting on, aren't we?

PRUDENCE: Well yes, in a way (*smiles warmly; he smiles back; she then looks around*) Do you think maybe they don't have waiters in this restaurant?

BRUCE: Maybe they're on strike. Why don't we go to another restaurant? I know a good Mexican one.

PRUDENCE: I don't like Mexican food, I'm afraid.

BRUCE: Japanese?

PRUDENCE: Well no.

BRUCE: Chinese?

PRUDENCE: Well more than Japanese, but not really.

BRUCE: Where do you want to go?

PRUDENCE: Well could we go to an American restaurant? I know I'm very dull, but I didn't even like vanilla ice-cream when I was a child. I was afraid of it.

BRUCE: That's a significant statement you've just made.

PRUDENCE: It does sound pathological, doesn't it?

BRUCE: Don't be afraid to sound pathological. That's what I've learned from my therapy so far.

PRUDENCE: I don't think I've learned much from mine yet.

BRUCE: Maybe I can help you. We can look into the abyss together. Oh that's right, you didn't like it when I said that before.

PRUDENCE: That's alright. I'll look into the abyss for one evening.

BRUCE: Oh you're becoming more open. Good for you, ruff ruff!

PRUDENCE *(very taken aback)* I'm sorry?

BRUCE *(very embarrassed)* Oh, my therapist barks. For encouragement.

PRUDENCE: Ah, of course.

BRUCE *(back to getting to know her)* Now tell me about your fear of vanilla ice-cream.

PRUDENCE *(as they walk out)* Well, I had gotten very used to baby food, and I also liked junket, but there was something about the *texture* of vanilla ice-cream...

(THEY exit).

ACT 1

Scene 5

DR. STUART FRAMINGHAM'S office again.

STUART *(on phone)* Hiya, babe, it's me. Whatcha doing: Oh, I'm just waiting for my next patient. Last night was great, wasn't it? It was great. What? So quickly. What is it with you women? You read some goddamned sex manual and then you think sex is supposed to go on for hours or something. I mean, if you're so frigid you can't get excited in a couple of minutes, that not my problem. No it isn't. Well, fuck you too. *(Hangs up)* Jesus God. *(Into intercom)* Betty, you can send the next patient in.

(Enter PRUDENCE)

STUART *(continued)* Hello.

PRUDENCE: Hello.

STUART: What's on your mind this week?

PRUDENCE: Nothing.

STUART *(furious)* Goddam it. I don't feel like dragging the words out of you this week. Talk, damn it.

PRUDENCE: What?

STUART: You pay me to listen, so TALK! *(pause)* I'm sorry, I'm on the edge today. And all my patients are this way. None of them talk. Well this one guy talk, but he talks in Yiddish a lot, and I don't know what the fuck he is saying.

PRUDENCE: Well you should tell him that you don't understand.

STUART: Don't tell me how to run my business! Besides, we're here to talk about you. How was your week? Another series of lonely, loveless evenings? I'm still here, babe.

PRUDENCE: Don't call me babe. No, I've had some pleasant evenings actually.

STUART: You have?

PRUDENCE: Yes I have.

STUART: You been answering ads in the paper again?

PRUDENCE: Well, yes actually.

STUART: That's a slutty thing to do.

PRUDENCE: As a therapist you are utterly ridiculous.

STUART: I'm just kidding you. You shouldn't lose your sense of humour, babe, especially when you're in a promiscuous stage.

PRUDENCE: I am not promiscuous.

STUART: There's nothing wrong with being promiscuous. We're all human.

PRUDENCE: Yes, we are all human.

STUART: So who is this guy? Have you slept with him?

PRUDENCE: Dr. Framingham...

STUART: Really, I gotta know for therapy.

PRUDENCE: Yes, we have slept together. Once. I wasn't really planning to, but...

STUART: Is he better than me?

PRUDENCE: Stuart...

STUART: No really. You liked him better? Tell me.

PRUDENCE: Yes I did. Much better.

STUART: I suppose he took his time. I suppose it lasted just hours. That's sick! Wanting sex to take a long time is sick!

PRUDENCE: Well he was attentive to how I felt, if that's what you mean.

STUART: So this fellow was a read success, huh?

PRUDENCE: Success and failure are not particularly likeable terms to describe sexual outings, but if you must, yes, it was successful. Probably his experiences with men have made him all that better as a lover.

STUART: What?

PRUDENCE: He's bisexual.

STUART (*starting to feel on the winning team again*) Oh yeah?

PRUDENCE: So he tell me. Masters and Johnson say that homosexuals make much more responsive sex partners anyway.

STUART: BULLSHIT! You are talking such bullshit! I understand you now. You're obviously afraid of a real man, and you want to cuddle with some eunuch who isn't a threat to you. I understand all this now!

PRUDENCE: There's no need to call him a eunuch. A eunuch has no testicles.

STUART: I GOT BALLS, BABY!

PRUDENCE: I am so pleased for you.

STUART: You're afraid of men!

PRUDENCE: I am not afraid of men.

STUART: You're a fag hag *(to himself)* I gotta write that down. *(writes that down, makes further notes)*

PRUDENCE: Look, I admit I find this man's supposed bisexuality confusing and I don't quite believe it. But what are my options? A two minute roll I the hay with you, where you make no distinction between sexual intercourse and push-ups; and then a happy evening or admiring you underarm hair and your belt buckles? *(irritated)* What are you writing?

STUART *(reading from his pad)* I'd like to give this patient electro-shock therapy. I'd like to put this patient in a clothes dryer until her hair falls out. I'd like to tie her to the radiator and... *(stops, hears himself, looks stricken)*.

PRUDENCE: I think this is obviously my last session.

STUART: No, no, no. You're not taking me seriously. I'm testing you. It was a test. I was just putting you on.

PRUDENCE: For what purpose?

STUART: I can't tell you. It would interfere with your therapy.

PRUDENCE: You call this therapy?

STUART: We're reaching the richest part of our therapy and already I see results. But I think your entering a very uncharted part of your life just now, and so you must stay with your therapy. You're going out with homosexuals, God knows what you're going to do next. Now I'm very serious. I'm holding out the lifeline. Don't turn away.

PRUDENCE: Well I'll think about it, but I don't know.

STUART: You're a very sick woman, and you mustn't be without a therapist even for a day.

PRUDENCE *(not taken in by this; wanting to leave without a scene)* Is this session over yet?

STUART: We have 30 more minutes.

PRUDENCE: Could I go early?

STUART: I think it's important that we finish out the session.

PRUDENCE: I'd like to go.

STUART: Please, please, please, please.....

PRUDENCE: Alright, alright. For God's sake.

(THEY settle down, back to their chairs)

STUART: When are you seeing this person again? I'm asking as your therapist.

PRUDENCE: Tonight. He's making dinner for us.

STUART: *He's making dinner?*

PRUDENCE: He says he likes to cook.

STUART: I don't think I need say anything more.

PRUDENCE: I don't think you do either.

(THEY stare at one another; lights dim).

ACT 1

Scene 6

BRUCE'S apartment. BRUCE fiddling with pillows, on couch, looking at watch, etc. Doorbell. BRUCE lets in PRUDENCE.

BRUCE: Hi. Come on in.

PRUDENCE: Hello *(THEY kiss)* I brought some wine.

BRUCE: Oh thanks.

PRUDENCE: You have a nice apartment.

BRUCE: Thanks.

PRUDENCE: It looks just like my apartment.

BRUCE: Yeah I guess it does.

PRUDENCE: And like my office at the magazine. And like the lobby at the bank. Everything looks alike.

BRUCE: Yes, I guess it does.

PRUDENCE: I'm sorry, I'm just rattling on.

BRUCE: That's alright. Sit down.

(THEY sit)

BRUCE: Can I get you a drink?

PRUDENCE: Ummm, I don't know.

BRUCE: Do you want one?

PRUDENCE: I don't know. Do you want one?

BRUCE: Well I thought I might have some Perrier.

PRUDENCE: Oh that sounds good.

BRUCE: Well, do you have Poland water?

BRUCE: I think I do. Wait here. I'll be right back. *(BRUCE exits. After a moment BOB enters. BOB sees PRUDENCE, is rattled, ill at ease).*

BOB: Oh. You're here already. I... didn't hear the bell ring.

PRUDENCE: Oh. Hello. Are you Bob?

BOB: Yes *(At a loss, making an odd joke)* And you must be Marie of Roumania.

PRUDENCE: I'm Prudence.

BOB: Yes, I know. *(At a loss how to get out of room)* Is Bruce in the kitchen?

PRUDENCE: Yes.

BOB: Oh. *(Starts to go there; stops)* Oh, well, never mind. When he comes out would you tell him I want to see him in the other room?

PRUDENCE: Alright.

BOB: Excuse me. *(EXITS back to bedroom presumably. Enter BRUCE with two glasses of sparkling water)*

BRUCE: Well here we are. One Perrier, and one Poland water.

PRUDENCE: I thought you said Bob was away.

BRUCE: Oh, you met Bob already? Yes, he was going away, but then he changed his mind and I'd already bought the lamb chops.

PRUDENCE: You mean he's going to be here all through dinner?

BRUCE: Oh I don't think so. He said he was going to his mother's for dinner. He has a very funny mother. She's sort of like Auntie Mame.

PRUDENCE: Oh yes?

BRUCE: Now don't let Bob upset you.

PRUDENCE: Well he seemed very uncomfortable. He asked me if I was Marie of Roumania.

BRUCE: Oh, he says that to everyone. Don't take it personally. *(Raising drink)* Well, cheers.

PRUDENCE *(Remembering)* Oh. He said he wanted to see you in the other room.

BRUCE: Oh. Well, alright. I'll just be a minute. Here, why don't you read a magazine?

PRUDENCE: "People", how nice.

BRUCE: Be right back.

(Exits. PRUDENCE reads magazine uncomfortably, and tastes his Perrier water to compare it with her Poland water. We and she start to hear the following offstage argument; initially it's just a buzz of voices but it grows into anger and shouting. PRUDENCE looks very uncomfortable)

BRUCE *(offstage)* This isn't the time to talk about this, Bob.

BOB *(offstage)* Well, when is the time?

BRUCE *(offstage)* We can talk about this later.

BOB *(offstage)* That's obviously very convenient for you.

BRUCE *(offstage)* Bob, this isn't the time to talk about this.

BOB *(offstage)* Well when is the time?

BRUCE *(offstage)* Come on, Bob, calm down *(softer)* Now I told you this doesn't have anything to do with us.

BOB *(offstage. Very angry)* Oh God!

BRUCE *(offstage)* I'm sick of this behaviour, Bob!

BOB *(offstage)* Well I'm sick of it too!

(There is a crash of something breaking. Pause. Then re-enter BRUCE)

BRUCE: Everything's fine now. *(pause)* We broke a vase. Well, Bob broke it.

PRUDENCE: Maybe I should go.

BRUCE: No, everything's fine now. Once Bob vents his anger then everything's fine again.

PRUDENCE: I thought you told me that Bob didn't mind you're seeing me, and that the two of you had broken up anyway.

BRUCE: Well, I lied. Sorry. Some members of Bob's group therapy wrote me a note saying they thought if I wanted to see women, I should just go on and see women, and so I just sort of presumed they'd convince Bob eventually, but I guess they haven't yet.

PRUDENCE: They wrote you a letter?

BRUCE: It's a very intense group Bob is in. They're always visiting each other in the hospital and things.

PRUDENCE: But what shall we do about this evening?

BRUCE: I think you and Bob will really like one another one you get past this initial discomfort. And besides, I'm sure he'll be going to his mother's in a little while.

PRUDENCE: Maybe we should go to a restaurant.

BRUCE: No really I bought the lamb chops. It'll be fine. Oh my God, the rice. I have to go see about the rice. It's wild rice; well, rice-a-roni. I have to go see about browning it. I won't be a minute.

PRUDENCE: No, no, don't leave...

BRUCE: It's alright. *(As HE leaves)* Bob will come talk to you... *(Exits)*

PRUDENCE *(As SHE sees HE'S gone)* I know...Oh dear.

(Enter BOB)

BOB: Hello again.

PRUDENCE: Oh ho.

BOB: I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable about Marie of Roumania. It's just something I say.

PRUDENCE: Oh that's alright.

BOB *(offering it as information)* I just broke a vase.

PRUDENCE *(being pleasant)* Oh yes, I thought I heard something.

BOB: Bruce says that I will like you if I can just get past my initial hostility.

PRUDENCE: Oh. Well I hope so.

BOB: Bruce is really a very conflicted person. I really suffer a lot dealing with him.

PRUDENCE: Oh I'm sorry.

BOB: And now this latest thing of having women traipse through here at all hours.

PRUDENCE: Ah.

BOB: Did you ever see the movie “Sunday Bloody Sunday”?

PRUDENCE: No I didn’t. I meant to.

BOB: Well I sure wish Bruce had never seen it. It had a big effect on him. It’s all about this guy played by Murray Head who’s having an affair with Peter Finch *and* Glenda Jackson.

PRUDENCE: Oh. Good actors.

BOB: Yes, well the point is it’s a very silly movie because I don’t think bisexuality exists, do you?

PRUDENCE: Well it’s hard to know really.

BOB: I mean, I think that Bruce is just trying to prove something with all these ads in the paper for women. That’s what my mother says about Bruce. She tells me I should just be patient and understanding and that it’s just a phase Bruce is going through. I’ve put a lot of work into this relationship. And it’s so difficult meeting new people, it’s just thoroughly intimidating.

PRUDENCE: It is hard to meet people.

BOB: I think everyone is basically gay, don’t you?

PRUDENCE: Well, no, not really.

BOB: You just say that because you haven’t come out yet. I know lots of lesbians who’d like you a lot. I’d be happy to give them your number.

PRUDENCE: Thank you, but no.

(Enter BRUCE)

BRUCE: Well I burned the rice. Sorry. We’ll just have more salad.

PRUDENCE: Oh that’s alright.

BRUCE: So have you two been getting to know one another?

PRUDENCE: Yes.

BOB *(Truly being conversational, not trying to be rude. To BRUCE)*
Don’t you think Prudence would be a big hit in a lesbian bar?

BRUCE: Yes, I guess she would.

BOB: I know Liz Skinner would certainly like her.

BRUCE: Yes, she is Liz’s type.

PRUDENCE: Bruce, could I speak to you for a moment please? *(To BOB)* I’m sorry, excuse me.

(BRUCE and PRUDENCE cross to side of room)

PRUDENCE: Bruce, I’m getting very uncomfortable. Now you told me that Bob wasn’t going to be here and that he wasn’t jealous about you’re seeing women, and I don’t want to be told which lesbians would like me, so I think maybe I should forget the whole thing and go home.

BRUCE: No please, don’t go. Bob needs help to get over his feelings about this, and I’m sure he’ll go to his mother’s in a little while. So please just be nice to him for a little longer. For our sake.

PRUDENCE: I don’t know.

BRUCE: Really, it’ll be fine.

PRUDENCE (*Deciding to try*) All right. All right.

(*THEY return to BOB*)

PRUDENCE (*On returning, to BOB*) Sorry.

BOB: Don't be sorry. I realise I make you uncomfortable.

PRUDENCE: No, no, really it's not that.

BRUCE: Prudence likes you, Bob. She isn't like the other women you know.

PRUDENCE: Yes, I do...I like lots of men. (*Laughs nervously*)

BOB: We have that in common.

PRUDENCE: Yes... (*Laughs, very uncomfortable*)

BRUCE (*Making big transition into "conversation"*) So Prudence, did you finish writing your interview with Joyce De Witt?

PRUDENCE (*Trying to be very friendly*) Oh, she's the brunette actress on the TV show "Three's a Crowd." (*Pause; looks mortified*) I mean, "Three's Company".

(*Long pause. THEY all feel awful*)

BRUCE: So, did you finish the article?

PRUDENCE: Yes, I did. Right on time (*Pause; to BOB*) Bruce tells me your mother is like Auntie Mame.

(*BOB glares at BRUCE*)

PRUDENCE (*continued*) Oh, I'm sorry. Was that a bad thing to say?

BOB: It depends on what you mean by Auntie Mame.

PRUDENCE: I don't know. Bruce said it.

BOB: My mother has a certain flair, if that's what he means.

BRUCE: Your mother acts like a transvestite. I'm sorry, she does.

BOB: Just because my mother has a sense of humour is no reason to accuse her of not being feminine (*To PRUDENCE*) Don't you agree that women *theoretically* can have senses of humour?

PRUDENCE: Yes indeed.

BRUCE: Sense of humour isn't the issue.

PRUDENCE (*Trying to help conversation*) I've always hated transvestites. It's such a repugnant image of women.

(*BOB looks disapproving*)

PRUDENCE (*continued*) I'm sorry, I don't mean to imply anything about your mother. I...I liked Jack Lemmon as a woman in "Some Like It Hot".

BOB: My mother does not resemble Jack Lemmon in "Some Like It Hot".

PRUDENCE: I'm sure she doesn't. I didn't mean to imply...

BRUCE: Change the subject, Prudence. This is getting us nowhere.

PRUDENCE: Oh, alright (*Thinks*) What does Bob do for a living?

BOB: I'm still in the room.

PRUDENCE: Oh I'm sorry, I know you are *(pause)* What do you do for a living, Bob?

BOB: I'm a pharmacist.

PRUDENCE: Oh really?

BOB: Do you need any pills?

PRUDENCE: No thank you. *(pause)* Maybe later.

BRUCE *(To PRUDENCE)* Can I freshen your Poland water?

PRUDENCE: No thank you. I'm fine *(pause)* So you're a pharmacist.

BOB: Yes.

BRUCE: I wish I hadn't burned the rice *(Whispers to PRUDENCE)*
Say something to him, he's starting to sulk.

PRUDENCE: Ummmmm...What exactly is in Tylenol, I wonder.

BOB: That's alright. I realise I'm making everyone uncomfortable. Excuse me *(Exits)*

PRUDENCE: Really, Bruce, this isn't very fair to me. This is a problem the two of you should work out together.

BRUCE: Well you're right actually. You're always right. That's why I like you do much *(Moves closer, puts arm around her)*

PRUDENCE: Maybe I should go.

BRUCE: Oh you're too sensitive. Besides, he'll be leaving soon.

(BOB re-enters)

BOB: My mother's on the phone.

BRUCE: I didn't hear it ring.

BOB: I called her *(To PRUDENCE)* She wants to speak to you.

PRUDENCE: I don't understand. I...

BOB *(Hands her the phone)* Here.

PRUDENCE *(Its happening too fast to stop)* Hello. Who is this? Oh, hello. Yes. *(Laughs uncomfortably)* Yes, thank you. What? No, I don't want to ruin your son's life. What? No, really, I'm not trying to...

BRUCE *(Takes phone away from PRUDENCE; talks into it)* Now, look, Sadie, I've told you not to meddle in my life. It doesn't do anybody any good when you do, including Bob. Don't sing when I'm talking to you, that's not communication tosing when someone is talking to you. Sadie...Sadie! *(Hands phone to BOB)* She's singing "Rose's Turn" from "Gypsy", it's utterly terrifying.

BOB: Hello, mother.

BRUCE *(To PRUDENCE)* She's an insane woman.

BOB: Mother, it's me, you can stop singing now. Okay, well, just finish the phrase *(Listens)*

PRUDENCE: Where's Bob's father?

BRUCE: She killed him.

BOB: That's not funny, Bruce. Okay, mother, wrap the song up now. Yes, I'm alright. Yes, I'll tell them. *(To the TWO of*

them) My mother thinks you're both very immature. (*back to phone*) Yes, I think she's a lesbian too.

PRUDENCE: I'm going to go home now.

BRUCE: No, no, I'll fix this. (*Takes phone away from BOB*) Finish this conversation in the other room, Bob. Then please get out of here, as we agreed you would do earlier, so Prudence and I can have our dinner. I mean, we agreed upon this, Bob.

BOB: You mean you agreed upon it.

BRUCE: I've finished with this conversation, Bob. Go in the other room and talk to your mother. (*Listens to phone*) What's she singing now, I don't recognise it?

(BOB and BRUCE both listen to phone)

BOB: That's "Welcome to Kanagawa! From "Pacific Overtures"

BRUCE: Keep singing, Sadie. Bob is changing phones. It was good hearing from you.

BOB: I just don't understand you behaviour. I just don't (*Exits*).

PRUDENCE: Bruce, I can't tell you how uncomfortable I am. Really I must go home, and then the two of you should go to a marriage councillor or something.

BRUCE: I am sorry. I should have protected you from this (*Listens to phone, hang it up*)

PRUDENCE: I mean we're only seeing one another casually, and you and Bob have been living together and his mother calls up and she sings...

BRUCE: Prudence, I'm not feeling all that casual anymore. Are you?

PRUDENCE: Well, I don't know. I mean, probably yes, it's still casual.

BRUCE: It needn't be.

PRUDENCE: Bruce, I just don't think your life is in order.

BRUCE: Of course it's not. How can life be in order? Life by its very nature is disordered, terrifying. That's why people come together, to face the terrors hand in hand.

PRUDENCE: You're giving me my rash again.

BRUCE: You're so afraid of feeling.

PRUDENCE: Oh, just put the lamb chops on.

BRUCE: I feel very close to you.

(Enter BOB with suitcase. Phone rings)

BOB: Don't answer it. It's just my mother again. I told her I was checking into a hotel and then jumping out the window. There's just no point in continuing. (*To PRUDENCE, sincerely*) I hope you're both very happy...Really.

PRUDENCE (*Startled, confused*) Thank you.

BRUCE: Bob, come back here. (*Answers phone*) Sadie, we'll call you back (*Hangs up*) Bob.

BOB: No, go back to your evening. I don't want to stand in your way.

BRUCE: You're just trying to get attention.

BOB: There's just no point in continuing.

(Phone rings; BRUCE answers it)

BRUCE: It's all right, Sadie. I'll handle this. *(Hangs up)* Bob, people who announce their suicide are just asking for help, isn't that so Prudence?

PRUDENCE: I really don't know. I think I should leave.

BOB: No, please, I don't want to spoil your dinner.

BRUCE: You're just asking for help *(phone rings)* Let's let it ring. Bob, look at me. I want you to get help. Can you hear me? I want you to see my therapist.

BOB: I have my own group therapy.

BRUCE: You need better help than that. Doesn't he, Prudence? *(Answers phone)* It's all right, Sadie, I'm going to call up my therapist right away. *(Hangs up)* Now you just sit down here, Bob, and we're going to call Mrs. Wallace right up *(To PRUDENCE)* Unless you think your therapist is better.

PRUDENCE: No! Yours would have to be better.

BOB: I don't know what you have against my group therapy. It's been very helpful to me.

BRUCE: Bob, you're trying to kill yourself. That proves to me that group therapy is a failure.

BOB: Suicide is an innate human right.

(Phone rings)

BRUCE *(To PRUDENCE); hands her phone)* Will you tell her to stop calling?

PRUDENCE: Hello?

BRUCE: You're not acting logically.

PRUDENCE: No, I don't want to see him dead.

BOB: I simply think I should end my life now. That's logical.

PRUDENCE: Please don't shout at me, Mrs. Lansky.

BRUCE: We have to talk this through.

PRUDENCE: Bruce.

BOB: I don't want to talk it through *(sings)* Frere Jacques, Frere Jacques, dormez-vous? Dormoz-vous? *(Etc., continues on)*

PRUDENCE: Bruce

BRUCE: Don't sing when I'm talking to you.

PRUDENCE: Bruce.

BRUCE: What is it, Prudence?

PRUDENCE: Please, Mrs Lansky is yelling at me.

BRUCE: Well she can't hurt you. Yell back.

BOB (*Takes phone*) Mother, it's alright, I want to die. (*Hands phone back to PRUDENCE, goes back to song*) Ding dong ding ding dong ding. Frere Jacques... (*Continues*)

BRUCE: Bob, you're acting like a baby.

PRUDENCE: No, he's still alive, Mrs. Lansky.

BRUCE (*irritated, starts to sing at BOB*) 76 trombones led the big parade, with 110 cornets close behind...(*continues*)

PRUDENCE: Mrs. Lansky, I'm going to hang up now. Goodbye. Stop yelling (*Hangs up*)

BOB (*stops singing*) Did you hang up on my mother?

(*BRUCE stops too*)

PRUDENCE (*really letting him have it*) Oh why don't you just go kill yourself?

(*BOB sits down, stunned. Phone rings*)

PRUDENCE (*continued; Answers it*) Oh shut up! (*Hangs up*) I am very uninterested in being involved in this nonsense. You're both just making a big overdramatic mess out of everything, and I don't want to watch it anymore.

BRUCE: You're right. Bob, she's right.

BOB (*looks up*) She is?

BRUCE: Yes, she is. We're really acting stupid. (*Phone rings. BRUCE picks it up, and hangs up immediately. Then he dials*) I'm calling Mrs. Wallace now. I think we really need help.

PRUDENCE: You have her home number?

BRUCE: Yes. She's a really wonderful woman. She gave me her home number after our second session.

PRUDENCE: I slept with my therapist after our second session.

BRUCE: Hello? Uh, is Mrs. Wallace there? Thank you. (*To THEM*) I think that was her husband.

BOB (*not defiantly; just for something to do, sings softly*) Frere Jacques, frère Jacques, dormez-vous... (*Etc.*)

BRUCE (*Suddenly hearing it*) What do you mean you slept with your therapist?

PRUDENCE: I don't know, I...

BRUCE (*To BOB suddenly, as Mrs. Wallace is now on the phone*) Ssssssh. (*Into phone*) Hello. Mrs Wallace? Mrs. Wallace, this is Bruce, we have a bit of an emergency, I wonder if you can help... we're in desperate need of some therapy here...

END ACT 1

ACT 2

Scene 1

Act 1. Mrs. Wallace office, twenty minutes after the end of Act 1. Mrs. Wallace present, enter BRUCE and BOB.

BRUCE: Hi, it's us.

CHARLOTTE: Hello.

BRUCE: Really, it's so nice of you to see us right away.

CHARLOTTE: That's alright.

BRUCE: Mrs. Wallace, this is Bob Lansky.

CHARLOTTE: Hello.

BOB: Hello.

BRUCE: Well I'm going to leave you two and go have dinner with Prudence.

BOB: You're not going to stay?

BRUCE: Bob, you're the one who's not handling this situation well. Now I haven't eaten all day, and this hasn't been fair to Prudence. *(To Mrs. Wallace)* Now if he gets totally out of control, we're going to be at the Restaurant. I mean that's the name of the restaurant. I mean I could be paged. Otherwise, I'll just see you back at the apartment.

BOB: I thought you wanted her to talk to us together.

BRUCE: Not for the first session. Now you listen to what Mrs. Wallace has to say, and I'll see you later tonight. *(Gives BOB an affectionate hug, then exits. BOB and MRS. WALLACE stare at one another for a while)*

BOB: Should I sit down?

CHARLOTTE: Would you like to sit down?

(HE sits. SHE sits, holds her Snoopy doll)

BOB: Why are you holding that doll?

CHARLOTTE: Does it bother you that I hold the doll?

BOB: I don't know.

CHARLOTTE: Were you allowed to have dolls as a child?

BOB: Yes I was. It was trucks I wasn't allowed to have.

CHARLOTTE (*confused*) Great big trucks?

BOB: Toy trucks.

(*Silence*)

CHARLOTTE: Now, what seems to be the matter?

BOB: Bruce seems to be trying to end our relationship.

CHARLOTTE: What do you mean?

BOB: He's been putting these ads in the paper for women. And now he seems a little serious about this new one.

CHARLOTTE: Women?

BOB: Women.

CHARLOTTE: And why does this bother you?

BOB: Well, Bruce and I have been living together for a year. A little more.

CHARLOTTE: Living together?

BOB: Yes.

CHARLOTTE: As roommates?

BOB: Well, if that's the euphemism you prefer.

CHARLOTTE: I prefer nothing. I'm here to help you.

BOB: But you can see the problem.

CHARLOTTE: Well if Bruce should move out, surely you can find another roommate. They advertise in the paper. As a matter of fact, my son is looking for a roommate, he doesn't get on with the present Mr. Wallace. Maybe you could room with him

BOB: I don't think you've understood. Bruce and I aren't just roommates, you know. I mean, doesn't he talk to you about me in his own therapy?

CHARLOTTE: Let me get his file (*Looks through her drawers, takes out rope, binoculars, orange juice carton, folders, messy cupboard. Laughs*) No, it's not here. Maybe my dirigible know where it is. (*Pushes button*) Marcia. Oh, that's right, she's not in the office now. (*into intercom*) Never mind. Well, I'll have to rely on memory.

BOB: Dirigible?

CHARLOTTE: I'm sorry, did I say dirigible? Now what word did I want?

BOB: Blimp?

CHARLOTTE (*not understanding*) Blimp?

BOB: Is the word blimp?

CHARLOTTE (*irritated*) No it's nothing like blimp. Now you've made me forget what I was saying. (*Holds her head*) Something about apartments. Oh yes. Did you want to meet my son as a possible roommate?

BOB: I don't understand what you're talking about. Why did you want me to meet your son? Is he gay?

CHARLOTTE (*offended*) No he's not gay. What an awful thing to suggest. He just wants to share an apartment with someone. Isn't that what you want?

BOB: No it isn't. I have not come to you for real estate advice. I've come to you because my lover and I are in danger of breaking up.

CHARLOTTE: Lover?

BOB: Your patent, Bruce! The person who was just here. He and I are lovers, don't you know that?

CHARLOTTE: Good God, no!

BOB: What do you mean, Good God, no!

CHARLOTTE: But he doesn't seem homosexual. He doesn't lisp/

BOB: Are you kidding?

CHARLOTTE: Well, he doesn't lisp, does he? Now what was I thinking of? Be quiet for a moment. (*Holds her head*) Secretary. The word I was looking for was secretary.

BOB: I mean didn't Bruce talk about us? Am I that unimportant to him?

CHARLOTTE: I really can't remember without access to the flies. Let's talk about something else.

BOB: Something else?

CHARLOTTE: Oh, tell me about your childhood. At what age did you masturbate?

BOB: I don't want to talk about my childhood.

CHARLOTTE: Very well. We'll just sit in silence. New patients are difficult aren't they, Snoopy? (*SHE nods Snoopy head, glares at BOB significantly*)

BOB: May I see your accreditation, please?

(*CHARLOTTE starts to empty her drawer of junk again*)

BOB (*continued*) Never mind.

CHARLOTTE: So you and Bruce are an item, eh? Odd that I didn't pick that up.

BOB: Well, we may be an item no longer.

CHARLOTTE: Well the path of true love never both run smoothly.

BOB: I mean, suddenly there are all these women.

CHARLOTTE: Well if you're homosexual, I guess you don't find me attractive then, do you?

BOB: What?

CHARLOTTE: I guess you don't find me attractive, do you?

BOB: I don't see what that has to do with anything.

CHARLOTTE: Very well. We'll drop the subject. (*pause*) Not even a teensy weensy bit? Well, no matter. (*pause*) Tell me. What do you and Bruce do exactly?

BOB: What do you mean?

CHARLOTTE: You know what I mean. Physically.

BOB: I don't care to discuss it.

CHARLOTTE: Tell me.

BOB: Why do you want to know?

CHARLOTTE: Patients act out many of their deepest conflicts through the sexual act. Women who get on top may wish to feel dominant. Men who prefer oral sex with women may wish to return to the womb. Couples who prefer the missionary position may wish to do anthropological work in Ghana. Everything people do is a clue to a trained psychotherapist. *(pause)* Tell me! Tell me!

BOB: I don't care to talk about it.

CHARLOTTE: Very well. We'll move on to something else. *(Sulks)* I'm sure I can guess what does on anyway. *(Sulks)* I wasn't born yesterday. *(Pause; calmly)* Cocksucker.

BOB: What?

CHARLOTTE: Oh, I'm sorry. It was just this terrible urge I had. I'm terribly sorry. *(Gleefully)* COCKSUCKER! *(Screams with laughter, rocks back and forth)* Oh my goodness, I'm sorry. COCKSUCKER! Wait, don't leave, I think I have a cookie in one of the drawers. Oh, I'm going to say it again, oh God! *(Screams the words as she stuffs cookie into her mouth, the word is muffled. Her body shakes with laughter and pleasure.)* Mmmm, cookie, cookie. Oh God. Oh God *(Lies on floor, laughs slightly)* Oh, that was wonderful.

BOB *(stands, takes out a gun)* It's people like you who've been oppressed gay people for centuries. *(Shoots her several times)*

CHARLOTTE *(Startled; then:)* Good for you! Bravo! I like that. You're expressing your feelings, people have got to express their feelings. Am I bleeding? I can't find any blood.

BOB: It's a starting pistol. I bought it a couple of days ago, to threaten Bruce with.

CHARLOTTE: Good for you!

BOB: I don't want to go to prison. That's the only reason it's not a real gun.

CHARLOTTE: Good reason. You know what you want and what you don't want. Oh I like this directness, I feel I'm starting to help you. I mean, don't you see the similarity? Now why don't I have ulcers? Do you know?

(BOB sits on floor next to her)

BOB: I don't know what you're talking about.

CHARLOTTE: I don't have ulcers because I don't repress things. I admit to all my feelings. Now a few minutes ago when I wanted to hurl anti-homosexual epithets at you, I didn't repress myself, I just let 'em rip. And that's why I'm happy. And when you were mad at me, you took out your toy gun and you shot me. And that's the beginning of mental health. I mean, do you understand what I'm saying?

BOB: Well I follow you.

CHARLOTTE: Oh we're making progress. Don't you see? And you said it yourself. You didn't buy the gun to shoot me, you bought it to shoot Bruce and that floozie of his. Right?

BOB: Yes.

CHARLOTTE: So you see what I'm getting at?

BOB: You mean, I should follow through on my impulse and go shoot Bruce and Prudence.

CHARLOTTE (*Stands, staggers to her desk, overwhelmed with how well the session is going*) Oh I've never had such a productive first session.

BOB (*stands*) But should I get a real gun, or just use this one?

CHARLOTTE: That would be up to you. You have to ask yourself what you *really* want.

BOB: Well I don't want to go to jail, I just want to punish them.

CHARLOTTE: Good! Punish them! Act it out!

BOB: I mean, I could go to that restaurant right now.

CHARLOTTE: Oh yes! Oh good!

BOB: Will you come with me? I mean, in case someone tries to stop me you can explain it's part of my therapy.

CHARLOTTE (*Agreeably*) Okay. Let me just get another cookie. Oh, I'm so glad you came to me. Now, should I bring Snoopy with me, or leave him here?

BOB: Well, which do you really *want*?

CHARLOTTE: Oh you're right. That's the issues, good for you. Okay, now...I don't know which I want. Let me sit here for a moment and figure it out. (*SHE sits and thinks, weighing pro-and con-Snoopy ideas in her head; lights dim*)

ACT 2

Scene 2

The restaurant again. BRUCE, PRUDENCE.

PRUDENCE: Why have we come back to this restaurant? We've been here twice before and never got any service.

BRUCE: You're upset about Bob, aren't you?

PRUDENCE: No. I understand. It's all difficult.

BRUCE: Bob will get used to the idea of us, I just tried to make it happen too soon. He's innately very flexible.

PRUDENCE: Then maybe the two of you should stay together.

BRUCE: Will you marry me?

PRUDENCE: Bruce, this is inappropriate.

BRUCE: Prudence, I believe one should just *act* without thought, without reason, act on instinct. Look at the natives in Samoa, look at Margaret Mead. Did they think about what they were doing?

PRUDENCE: Important life decisions can't be made that way.

BRUCE: But they can, they must. Think of people who become heroes during emergencies and terrible disasters- they don't stop to fret and pick things apart, they just *move*, on sheer adrenalin. Why don't we think of our lives as some sort of uncontrollable disaster, like *The Towering Inferno* or *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and then why don't we just *act* on instinct and adrenalin. I mean, put that way, doesn't that make you just want to go out and get married?

PRUDENCE: But shouldn't I marry someone *specific*?

BRUCE: I'm specific.

PRUDENCE: Well, of course. But, what about the gas man? I mean, do I want the children saying I saw Daddy kissing the gas man?

BRUCE: We'd get electric heat.

PRUDENCE: Oh, Bruce!

BRUCE: Besides, I don't want lots and lots of people- I want you, and children, and occasionally Bob. Is that so bad?

PRUDENCE: Well it's not the traditional set-up.

BRUCE: Aren't you afraid of being lonely?

PRUDENCE: Well, I guess I am.

BRUCE: And aren't all your girlfriends from college married by now?

PRUDENCE: Well, many of them.

BRUCE: And you know you should really have children *now*, particularly if you may want more than one. I mean, soon you'll be at the end of your child-bearing years. I don't mean bring that up, but it is a reality.

PRUDENCE: Can we talk about something else?

BRUCE: I mean time is running out for you. And me too. We're not twenty anymore. We're not even twenty-six anymore. Do you remember how old thirty used to seem?

PRUDENCE: Please don't go on, you're making me hysterical.

BRUCE: No, but there are realities, Prudence. I may be your last chance, maybe no one else will want to marry you until you're forty. And it's hard to meet people. You already said that Shaun Cassidy was too young. I mean, we have so little time left to ourselves, we've got to grab it before it's gone.

(STUART enters, sees them, hides behind a table or large plant)

PRUDENCE: Oh stop talking about time please. I mean, I know I'm thirty, it doesn't mean I'm dead.

BRUCE: I didn't say dead. I just said that our time on this earth is limited.

PRUDENCE: Stop talking, stop talking. *(Covers her ears)*

BRUCE: Prudence, I think you and I can make each other happy. *(Sees STUART)* Do you see someone over there? Is that a waiter *hiding*?

PRUDENCE *(looks)* Oh for God's sake.

BRUCE: What is it?

PRUDENCE: It's my therapist.

BRUCE: Here?

PRUDENCE: I thought we were being followed. *(Calling)* Dr. Framingham, we see you.

BRUCE: What's he doing here?

(STUART comes over to them)

STUART: I want you to leave here with me this instant.

PRUDENCE: Why are you following me?

STUART: I'm going to give you a prescription for a sedative, and then I'm going to drive you home.

PRUDENCE: I can't believe that you've been following me.

STUART: I care about my patients! *(To BRUCE)* She's really *very* sick. The work we have to do together will take years.

PRUDENCE: Dr. Framingham, I've been meaning to call you since our last session. I'm discontinuing my therapy with you.

STUART: That would be very self-destructive. You'd be in Bellevue in a week.

PRUDENCE: I really don't want to see you ever again. Please go away now.

STUART: You don't mean what you say.

BRUCE: Do you want me to hit him?

PRUDENCE: No, I just want him to go away.

BRUCE *(stands)* The lady wants you to leave, mister.

STUART *(To PRUDENCE)* So this is the degenerate you told me about?

BRUCE: What did she tell you about me?

PRUDENCE: Bruce, don't talk to him, please. Stuart, leave the restaurant. I'm tired of this.

STUART: Not until we set up our next appointment.

PRUDENCE: But, Stuart, I *told you* I'm discontinuing our therapy.

STUART: You haven't explained why to me.

PRUDENCE: Then I will. BECAUSE YOU ARE A PREMATURE EJECULATOR AND A LOUSY THERAPIST. NOW BEAT IT!

STUART *(Very hurt, very mad)* Okay, Miss Sensuous Woman. But do you know what's going to happen to you without therapy? You're going to become a very pathetic, very lonely old maid. You know what's going to happen to you? You're going to break off with this clown in a few days, and then you're not going to go out with men anymore at all.

Your emotional life is going to be tied up with your cats. *(To BRUCE)*
Do you know what she does in her apartment? She keeps cats!
Some guy she almost married last year wanted to marry her but he was allergic to cats and so *she* chose the cats!

PRUDENCE: That's not why we broke up at all!

STUART: You're gonna end up taking little boat cruises to Bermuda with your *cats* and with spinster librarians when you're fifty unless you decide to kill yourself before then! And all because you were too cowardly and self-destructive and stupid to keep yourself from being an old maid by sticking with your therapy!

PRUDENCE: You are talking utter gibberish. Michael was only *slightly* allergic to cats and we didn't get married because we decided we weren't really in love. And I'm not going to end up an old maid, I'm going to get married. In fact, I may even marry Bruce here. And if I do, Bruce and I will send you a picture of our children every Christmas to the mental institution where you'll be locked up!

STUART *(Hysterical)* You're a terrible, terrible patient!

PRUDENCE: And you're a hideous Doctor! I hate you!

(THEY throw water at each other. Enter BOB and MRS. WALLACE)

CHARLOTTE: Hello, everybody!

STUART: Who are these people?

CHARLOTTE: Go ahead Bob, tell them.

BOB: I want to tell you how you've made me feel. I feel *very* angry *(HE takes out his gun; PRUDENCE, BRUCE and STUART look terrified. HE fires the gun at them six or seven times. THEY are terribly shocked, stunned; are trying to figure out if THEY'VE been hit and are dying. Enter a young WAITER)*

WAITER: I'm sorry. We're going to have to ask you people to leave.

BRUCE: But we haven't even seen menus.

WAITER: I'm sorry. We can't have shooting in here.

STUART: Oh my God. Oh my God. *(Feels himself all over for wounds, just coming out of his fear)*

PRUDENCE *(Taking the gun from BOB)* Give me that. *(Points the gun at the WAITER; WAITER puts hands up)* Now look here, you. I am sick of the service in this restaurant. I am *very* hungry. Now I want you to bring me a steak, medium rare, no potato, two vegetables, a small salad with oil and vinegar and a glass of red wine. *(Angry, grouchy, waves gun toward the others)* Anyone else want to order?

CHARLOTTE *(Raises hand)* I'd like to see a menu.

PRUDENCE *(Waving the gun)* And bring these other people menus. And make it snappy.

WAITER: Yes, ma'am *(Exits in a hurry)*

CHARLOTTE *(To PRUDENCE)* Oh I like your directness. Bravo!

STUART *(Feeling for bullet holes)* I don't understand. Did he miss all of us?

PRUDENCE: Shut up and sit down. I'm going to eat some dinner, and I want everyone to shut up.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, I think she's marvellous.

PRUDENCE (*Aims the gun at her*) Shut up.

CHARLOTTE: Sorry.

(*EVERYONE sits quietly. WAITER brings menus which PEOPLE look at except for PRUDENCE, who glares, and STUART, who's shaken*)

WAITER: Our specials today are chicken marsala cooked in a garlic and white wine sauce; roast Long Island duck with orange sauce...

(*Lights dim to black*)

ACT 2

Scene 3

The restaurant still. THEY'VE finished their dinners; PRUDENCE, BRUCE, BOB, MRS. WALLACE, STUART. The WAITER is clearing the dishes.

CHARLOTTE: Mmmmmm, that chocolate mousse was delicious. I really shouldn't have had two.

WAITER (*To PRUDENCE*) Will there be anything else?

PRUDENCE: Just the check please.

(*WAITER exits*)

STUART (*Who's still in a sort of shock; to BOB*) I thought you'd killed us all. You should be locked up.

BOB: Well, all's well that ends well.

CHARLOTTE: Please, I thought we'd exhausted the whole topic of the shooting. No harm was done.

STUART: What if I'd had a heart condition?

CHARLOTTE: That would have been your responsibility. We must all take responsibility for our own lives.

STUART: I think you're a terrible therapist.

CHARLOTTE: Sounds like professional jealousy to me.

PRUDENCE (*To STUART*) I would not bring up the subject of who's a terrible therapist, if I were you.

CHARLOTTE (*To BRUCE*) Oh, she's so direct, I just find her wonderful. Congratulations, Bruce.

PRUDENCE: What are you congratulating him on?

CHARLOTTE: Aren't you getting married?

BRUCE: Yes
No.

PRUDENCE:

(*Re-enter WAITER*)

Waiter: Here's the check. (*MRS. WALLACE calls for the check*)
The second chocolate mousse was on the house, Mrs. Wallace.

CHARLOTTE: Thank you, honey (*Kisses him on the cheek; WAITER exits*)
He's one of my patients too.

BOB: He's quite attractive.

BRUCE: I thought you were going to kill yourself.

BOB: Mrs. Wallace helped me express my anger and now I don't feel like it anymore.

STUART: I one runs around shooting off guns, blank or otherwise, just because one is angry, then we'll have anarchy.

BOB: No one is interested in your opinion.

BRUCE: I think Prudence and I are a good match. I think we should get married as soon as possible.

PRUDENCE: I never want to get married, ever. I'm going to quit my job, and stay in my apartment until they evict me. Then I'm going to become a bag lady and live in the tunnels under Grand Central Station.

(THEY ALL stare at her)

BRUCE *(To PRUDENCE)* If you marry me, I'll help you want to live again.

BOB: What am I supposed to do?

BRUCE: You seemed too busy with the waiter a minute ago.

BOB: For God's sake, I just looked at him. You're trying to go off and marry this woman. Really, you're just impossible. I thought after I shot at you, you'd get over this silly thing about women.

BRUCE: I need the stability of a woman.

BOB: You think she's stable? She just said she was going to become a bag woman.

BRUCE: She was speaking metaphorically.

BOB: What kind of metaphor is becoming a bag woman?

BRUCE: She meant she was depressed.

BOB: So I'm depressed too. Why don't you marry me? We'll go find some crackpot Episcopal minister somewhere, and then we'll adopt children together.

BRUCE: And that's another thing. I want to have my own children. I want to reproduce. She can give me children.

PRUDENCE: Please stop talking about me that way. I don't want to have your children. I want to be left alone. I want to become a lesbian and move in with Kate Millett.

BOB: Now she's making sense.

BRUCE: Don't make fun of her. She's upset.

BOB: I'm upset. No one worried about me.

BRUCE: Prudence, don't cry. We'll live in Connecticut. Everything will be fine.

STUART: Why doesn't she marry me? I make a good living. Prudence, as your therapist, I think you should marry me.

BRUCE: Prudence would never marry a man who didn't cry.

STUARY: What?

BRUCE: You're too macho. Prudence doesn't want to marry you.

STUART: There's no such thing as macho. There's male and female, and then there's whatever you are.

(BRUCE cries)

STUART *(continued)* Oh, I'm sorry. Was it what I said?

CHARLOTTE: Bruce cries all the time. I encourage him to.

BRUCE *(Having stopped crying; to PRUDENCE)* Why won't you marry me?

STUART: She should marry me!

PRUDENCE: No. I don't want to marry either of you. You're both crazy. I'm going to marry someone sane.

BOB: There's just me left.

PRUDENCE: No. I'll marry the waiter. Waiter!

CHARLOTTE: Oh dear, poor thing. Fear of intimacy leading to faulty reality testing. Prudence, dear, you don't know the waiter.

PRUDENCE: That doesn't matter. Bruce said it's better to know nothing about people when you get married.

BRUCE: But I meant you should marry me.

PRUDENCE: But I know too much about you and I know nothing about the waiter. Waiter!

(Enter WAITER)

WAITER: Is something the matter?

PRUDENCE: Yes. I want you to marry me.

WAITER: I don't understand. Did I add the check wrong?

PRUDENCE: No. I want you to marry me. I only have a few more years in which it's safe to have children.

WAITER: I don't understand.

CHARLOTTE: It's alright, Andrew. She's in therapy with me now.

PRUDENCE *(Takes out the blank gun. Aims it at him)* Marry me! Marry me! *(Starts to giggle)* Marry me!

CHARLOTTE: It's alright, Prudence; you're my patient now. Everything's going to be alright.

PRUDENCE: I don't want any more therapy! I want tennis lessons!

CHARLOTTE: Now, dear, you're not ready for tennis yet. You must let me help you.

STUART: She's my patient.

CHARLOTTE: I think you've already failed her. I think I shall have to take her on.

PRUDENCE *(Screams)* I don't want either of you! I've been to see several therapists and I'm sick of talking about myself!

(CHARLOTTE throws a glass of water at PRUDENCE)

CHARLOTTE: Enough of this self-destructive behaviour, you woman!

(PRUDENCE, furious, picks up another glass of water to throw back at CHARLOTTE, hesitates momentarily, and throws it in STUART's face)

CHARLOTTE: Bravo, good for you!

STUART: Why did she do that?

CHARLOTTE: She's getting in touch with her instincts. Prudence, you're making progress in my care already.

PRUDENCE: I HATE THIS RESTAURANT!

CHARLOTTE: The restaurant isn't the problem. You're looking for perfection. Prudence, you know the song "Someday My Prince Will Come"? Well, it's shit. There is no prince. Everyone in this world is limited; and depending on one's perspective is either horrible or "okay". Don't you agree, Dr. Framingham?

STUART *(Just noticing)* I'm all wet.

CHARLOTTE: Ah, the beginnings of self-awareness, bravo, ruff ruff ruff! Oh that's right, I left Snoopy home. Well that was a wrong decision. Prudence, I'm making a point here. We're all alone, everyone's crazy and you have no choice but to be alone or to be with someone in what will be a highly imperfect and probably eventually unsatisfactory relationship.

PRUDENCE: I don't believe that's true.

CHARLOTTE: But you do. That's exactly why you act the way you do, because you believe that.

PRUDENCE: I believe there's more chance for happiness than that.

CHARLOTTE: You don't! And why should you? Look at Chekov. Masha loves Konstantin, but Konstantin only loves Nina. Nina doesn't love Konstantin, but falls in love with Trigorin. Trigorin doesn't love Nina but sort of loves Madame Arkadina, who doesn't love anyone but herself. And Medviedenko loves Masha, but she only loves Konstantin, which is where we started out. And then at the end of the play, Konstantin kill himself. Don't you see?

PRUDENCE: What's your point?

CHARLOTTE: I've forgotten. Oh damn. Oh yes! My point is that everyone thinks Chekov's plays are tragedies, but he called them comedies! It's all how you look at it. If you take psychological suffering in the right frame of mind, you can find the humour in it. And so that's how you should approach your relationship with Bruce.

BRUCE: This is getting too complicated.

PRUDENCE: My stomach feels queasy.

BRUCE: Never mind that. Prudence, remember what I said about acting on instinct, like you do in a crisis?

CHARLOTTE *(Happily)* Like when I threw the water!

BRUCE: Right.

PRUDENCE: Yes I remember.

BRUCE: Okay. I want you to answer quickly now, on instinct, don't think about it, alright?

PRUDENCE: Alright.

BRUCE: Does your stomach feel queasy?

PRUDENCE: Yes.

BRUCE: Is your name Prudence?

PRUDENCE: Yes.

BRUCE: Is your dress wet?

PRUDENCE: Yes.

BRUCE: Will you marry me?

PRUDENCE: Yes.

(There is a pause)

CHARLOTTE: Well, I'm glad that's settled.

STUART: You're not going to say yes like that, are you?

PRUDENCE: I guess so. All the other answers were yes. I have to go to the ladies room to throw up. Excuse me. *(Exits)*

BRUCE: I'm so happy. Not that she's sick, but that we're getting married.

BOB *(discontent)* Well, everyone's happy then.

STUART: All my patients leave their therapy. It's very upsetting.

CHARLOTTE: Would you like to talk about it?

BOB *(To ANDREW the waiter)* Hi. I don't think we've actually met yet. My name is Bob.

ANDREW: Hi, I'm Andrew.

BOB: You look awfully familiar.

ANDREW: You've probably just seen my type.

BOB: Ah, well...

ANDREW: I get off in 5 minutes.

BOB: Need any help?

(Everyone looks a bit aghast. Especially BRUCE)

ANDREW: Could be *(Exits)*

BRUCE: What are you doing?

BOB: Well if you expect me to live over the garage and let you carry on with that woman whenever you feel like it, then I'm allowed an occasional waiter.

STUART: Good God, he's not really going to live over the garage, is he?

CHARLOTTE: Well it depends on the zoning laws, I guess. *(Holds both sides of her head)* Uh, I'm getting a rush from all that mousse. Anyone feel like going to a disco?

BOB: I'm game. Bruce?

BRUCE: Not particularly. *(Nasty)* Maybe the waiter will want to go.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, Andrew is an excellent dancer! He's been to reform school.

BOB: Oh, he's sulking now.

BRUCE: I feel jealous about you and the waiter.

BOB: That's not very fair. What about you and Prudence?

BRUCE: You're right. But I still feel the emotion. And that's alright, isn't it, Mrs. Wallace?

CHARLOTTE: It's alright with me.

BRUCE: I feel happy about Prudence, and unhappy about the waiter. And I think I may want to cry. *(Tries)* No. False alarm.

(Enter ANDREW in leather jacket)

STUART: He certainly cries a lot.

CHARLOTTE: Don't you every cry, Dr. Framingham?

STUART: Only when things fall on me.

CHARLOTTE: Oh yes! Do you all remember Skylab- that space thing that fell from the sky? That upset my porpoises very much.

STUART: You have porpoises?

CHARLOTTE: I'm sorry. Did I say porpoises? Andrew, what word do I want?

ANDREW: Patients.

CHARLOTTE: Yes, thank you. Patients.

ANDREW: We had this guy in reform school that we didn't like much. So we took this big heavy metal bird bath, and we dropped it on him. *He* didn't cry.

CHARLOTTE: That's interesting, Andrew.

ANDREW: He went into a coma.

CHARLOTTE *(Stern)* Andrew, I've told you, I want you to have empathy for other people.

ANDREW: Oh right. I forgot. We felt real bad for him.

CHARLOTTE: Andrew has a real sensitivity in him; we just haven't seen any of it yet.

BOB: How long were you in reform school?

ANDREW: About three years *(Grins)* Till it burned down.

BOB: Ah. *(Starting to think ANDREW may be a bad idea)* Great.

BRUCE: I hope Prudence isn't ill.

CHARLOTTE: Oh who cares? Let's go dancing!

BOB: Bruce, would you prefer I didn't go?

BRUCE: No, it's okay. I guess you're allowed waiters. We'll talk later. Have a nice time.

BOB: Thanks.

BRUCE: I think I better go check on Prudence. Good night, everybody. *(Gives BOB and CHARLOTTE hugs, exits)*

CHARLOTTE: He's so nice. Well, the music is calling all of us, I think.

ANDREW *(To BOB)* My motorcycle's out this way.

BOB: My mother doesn't like me to ride motorcycles.

ANDREW (*Shrugged off*) Fuck her.

STUART (*To CHARLOTTE*) I don't think I want to go. I don't like discos.

CHARLOTTE: Nonsense. You must learn to like them.

STUART: There'll be too many women. I shouldn't tell you this, but I have troubles relating to women.

CHARLOTTE: Not to me. I think you're delightful.

STUART: You do?

CHARLOTTE: You know what I think? I think I could help you. I think you should come into therapy with me. I don't mean therapy, I mean thermidor.

ANDREW: No you mean therapy.

CHARLOTTE: Do I? It doesn't sound right. Thermidor. Throazene. Thermometer.

BOB: No, he's right, you mean therapy.

CHARLOTTE: Therapy. Therapy? Thackery. Thespian. The second Mrs. Tanqueray. Ftatateeta. Finickulee, finickula. Well let's just go. It'll come to me. (*She starts to go; then*) Ovaltine. Orca, the killer whale. Abba dabba dabba dabba dabba dabba... Oh, now I've really lost it.

(*CHARLOTTE, STUART and ANDREW exit. Enter BRUCE and PRUDENCE*)

PRUDENCE: Please, don't ever come into the ladies room after me again, alright? It is very disconcerting.

BRUCE: I was worried.

PRUDENCE: Where is everybody?

BRUCE: They went to a disco.

PRUDENCE: Why?

BRUCE: Something about the mousse Mrs. Wallace ate.

PRUDENCE: Never mind. I don't want to know.

BRUCE: Okay, now, answer on instinct again. Where is Connecticut do you think we should live? Quick instinct!

PRUDENCE: Bridgeport.

BRUCE: Oh, God, have you ever been to Bridgeport?

PRUDENCE: No, I meant Westport?

BRUCE: No, you said Bridgeport. There may be some psychic reason it's right we live in Bridgeport.

PRUDENCE: No, please, we can't keep making decisions like this.

BRUCE: There are probably some lovely parts of Bridgeport.

PRUDENCE: Please, I don't want to live in Bridgeport. Bruce, why do you want to marry me. Answer on instinct.

BRUCE: I wrote it down earlier. (*He takes out typed piece of paper; reads*) "I want to marry Prudence because all my life I keep fluctuating between being traditional and being insane. For instance, marrying Sally was my trying to be traditional; while sleeping with the gas man or that time I took my clothes off in the dentist's office were my going to the opposite extreme. But I'm hot *happy* at either extreme."

And that's where Prudence fits in. I feel she's very traditional, like Sally, but Sally has no imagination, she's too stable. And I think that even though Prudence is very traditional, she's very *unstable* and because of that I think we could be very happy together". Do you understand what I'm saying?

PRUDENCE: I don't understand what happened at the dentist's office.

BRUCE: Well, I needed root canal...

PRUDENCE (*Getting upset*) And that wasn't on instinct. You'd written that down.

BRUCE: Well, I know. But it was an instinct to *read* it.

PRUDENCE: How can I marry someone who take his clothes off at the dentist's office?

BRUCE: I don't take them off as a general rule. It just happened once.

PRUDENCE (*Very upset*) I must be out of my mind.

BRUCE: Oh God, you're changing your mind, aren't you? Oh my God, oh my God (*Sits down, weeps*)

(*PRUDENCE sits down, calm at first, then she too starts to cry. Then she starts to sob. BRUCE stops crying, looks up*)

BRUCE: Prudence, you're crying. Don't cry (*Holds her*) What's the matter?

PRUDENCE (*Through weeping*) I don't know. I'm upset you took your clothes off at the dentist's office because that means you must be

insane, and I thought maybe you weren't insane but just sort of,, lively. (*Cries some more*)

BRUCE: I'm lively.

PRUDENCE: No, you're too lively. I wouldn't be able to cope.

BRUCE (*Desperate to please her, keep her, comfort her*) Mrs. Wallace could give me lithium, she could give you speed. We might meet in the middle.

PRUDENCE: I don't want speed. I want an AlkaSeltzer. Do you think the waiter could get me one?

BRUCE: That waiter went to the disco with Bob.

PRUDENCE: Well there must be another waiter, don't you think?

BRUCE: Well it is a restaurant. (*Calls*) Oh waiter! Waiter! I don't see anybody.

PRUDENCE: I don't either (*Calls*) Waiter!

BRUCE: I'm really honoured you cried in front of me. Thank you.

PRUDENCE: You're welcome. Waiter!

BRUCE: I bet you don't cry very frequently.

PRUDENCE: No. Not in front of anyone at least.

BRUCE: I'm really honoured.

PRUDENCE: I'll try to cry for you again sometime. Waiter!

BRUCE: Thank you. Waiter.

PRUDENCE: Waiter. Waiter.

BRUCE: Waiter. Waiter. This is a very existential restaurant.

PRUDENCE (*A little woozy, a little sad, a little cheerful*) Yes, that's why I like it here so much.

BRUCE: You like it here?

PRUDENCE: Yes. Sort of. It's very comforting. They leave you alone here. It's conducive to conversation.

BRUCE (*Very friendly, a basis for hope again*) Yes, it's a great place to talk.

PRUDENCE (*Smiles, then futilely calls again*) Waiter. Waiter.

BRUCE (*Makes a joke, sings*) There's a waiter that I'm longing to see, duh duh duh duh...

BRUCE & PRUDENCE (*Sing together dreamily, a little rueful*) Duh duh duh duh, Dum dum dum dum, over me.

BRUCE (*Smiles at her*) Silly song.

PRUDENCE (*Smiles at him*) Very silly.

CURTAIN.

