Characters
(in order of appearance)

Janie Blumberg
Harriet Cornwall
Marty Sterling
Tasha Blumberg
Simon Blumberg
Lillian Cornwall
Paul Stuart
Vladimir

The play takes place in 1983 in New York, New York. The action is set in various locations in Manhattan and the set should reflect the variety of locales.

In Mr. Gutierrez's production at Playwrights Horizons Four men dressed as moving men, waiters, joggers etc., shifted the sets for each scene. Thus the scene changes were incorporated into the production and often concluded during the phone message segments.
Act One
Prologue

(Telephone Machine No. 1: Music and sounds of Manhattan fade into a voice on a phone machine)
Phone machine segments will occur between scenes. There is no action during these prologue messages.

JANIE: Hi, this is Janie Blumberg. I'm not in right now, but if you leave me your name and number, I should be able to get back to you sometime today or tomorrow. (She sings) Isn't it romantic, merely to be young on such a night as this; isn't it romantic, every something something is like a . . . (The machine cuts off)

TASHA AND SIMON: (Beep) (They sing) Is this the little girl I carried. Is this the little boy at play. I don't remember growing older, when did they. (Tasha's voice) This is your darling mother. I wanted to welcome you to your new apartment. Call me, sweetheart, your father wants to talk to you. (Hang up)

HARRIET: (Beep) Hi, Janie, it's Harriet. I can't help you unpack tonight. I have a job interview early tomorrow morning. Can you have breakfast with me afterwards? I'll meet you across the street from Rumpelmeyers at ten. Oh, I ran into Cynthia Peterson on the street. I gave her your number. Please don't hate me. Bye. (Hang up)
Isn't It Romantic

SIMON: (Beep) Uh, Janie, it's your father. Uh, er, uh, call your mother. (Hang up)

CYNTHIA PETERSON: (Beep) Janie, it's Cynthia Peterson. Harriet told me you moved to New York. Why haven't you called me? Everything is awful. I'm getting divorced, I'm looking for a job, there are no men. Call me. Let's have lunch. (Hang up)

TASHA AND SIMON: (They sing) Sunrise, sunset. Sunrise, sunset. Quickly flow the days . . . (Dial tone)

MAN'S VOICE (OPERATOR): Please hang up. There seems to be a receiver off the hook.

ACT ONE, Scene One

(Central Park South. Janie Blumberg, 28, is sitting on a park bench. Her appearance is a little kooky, a little sweet, a little unconfident, all which some might call creative. Or even witty. There is a trash can down stage right. We hear "hi ho, hi ho, it's off to work we go . . ." Harriet Cornwall, 28, enters from stage left singing. Harriet could be the cover girl on the best working women's magazine. She is attractive, very bright, charming and easily put together. Harriet spots Janie.

HARRIET: Hi ho, hi ho, it's off to work we go . . . I think I just got a job. (They hug) Hi, Janie.

JANIE: Hi, Harriet.

HARRIET: Thank God you're here.

JANIE: Of course I'm here. I got your message last night.

HARRIET: The man I interviewed with was very impressed. I took a year off in Italy to look at pictures. I liked him. He was cold, aloof, distant. Very sexy. Can I have a hit of your Tab?

JANIE: Sure.

HARRIET: I can't stay for breakfast. I told him I could come right back to Colgate for a second interview. Janie, I think our move back home to New York is going to be very successful.
Isn't It Romantic

JANIE: It is?

HARRIET: Of course there's absolutely no reason why you should believe me.

JANIE: You have an M.B.A. from Harvard. Of course I believe you.

HARRIET: You sound like your mother.

JANIE: No. Tasha would believe you 'cause you're thin. Look at us. You look like a Vermeer and I look like an extra in Potemkin.

HARRIET: Janie, I think someone's watching us.

JANIE: (Fluffing her hair) Do I look all right? You know what I resent?

HARRIET: What?

JANIE: Just about everything except you. I resent having to pay the phone bill, be nice to the super, find meaningful work, fall in love, get hurt—all of it I resent deeply.

HARRIET: What's the alternative?


HARRIET: He's coming.


MARTY: Hi.

HARRIET: Hello.

ACT ONE, Scene One

MARTY: You're Harriet Cornwall. I sat behind you in Twentieth-Century Problems. I always thought you were a beautiful girl. (He extends his hand) Marty Sterling.

HARRIET: (Shaking it) Hi. And this is Janie Blumberg.

MARTY: Sure. I remember you. I saw you and Harriet together in Cambridge all the time. You always looked more attainable. Frightened to death, but attainable. I'm not attracted to cold people anymore. Who needs that kind of trouble?

HARRIET: I don't know.

MARTY: So what do you do?

JANIE: Oh, I scream here on Central Park South. I'm taking a break now.

HARRIET: Janie and I just moved back to New York together. Well, at the same time. I lived in Italy for a year, and Janie was lingering in Brookline, Mass.

MARTY: Good old Brookline. Ever go to Jack and Marian's restaurant? Unbelievable kasha varnishka.

HARRIET: Excuse me.

MARTY: Kasha. Little noodle bow ties with barley. Uh, my father's in the restaurant business. Are you familiar with Yee Olde Sterling Tavernes?

HARRIET: Sure. That's a national chain.

MARTY: My father's chain.

HARRIET: (Impressed) Well!

JANIE: Well.

MARTY: Well. I'm on call. I'm a doctor. Kidneys.
Isn't It Romantic

HARRIET AND JANIE: (very impressed:) Well.

JANIE: Well, maybe you two should sit for a minute, reminisce about Twentieth-Century Problems.

MARTY: I wish I could. Good-bye.

HARRIET: Good-bye.

(Marty starts to exit, stops, turns)

MARTY: Janie Blumberg. Is your brother Ben Blumberg?

HARRIET: Yup. That's her brother Ben.

MARTY: I went to Camp Kibbutz with Ben Blumberg when I was nine.

JANIE: Yup, that's my brother Ben.

MARTY: Would you tell your brother Murray Schlimovitz says hello.

JANIE: Who's Murray Schlimovitz?

MARTY: Me. Before my father owned the Sterling Tavernes, he owned the Schlimovitz Kosher Dairy restaurants in Brooklyn. But around fifteen years ago all the Schlimovitz restaurants burned down. So for the sake of the family and the business, we changed our names before I entered . . . uh, uh Harvard. Nice to see you. Bye.

(Marty exits)

HARRIET: What were you doing? "Maybe you two should sit and reminisce about Twentieth-Century Problems"?

JANIE: Marty Sterling could make a girl a nice husband.

HARRIET: Now you really sound like your mother.

ACT ONE, Scene One

JANIE: Hattie, do you know who that man's father is?

HARRIET: Uh-huh. He's an arsonist.

JANIE: No. He's a genius. Mr. Sterling, the little man who comes on television in a colonial suit and a pilgrim hat to let you know he's giving away free popovers at Yee Olde Salade and Relish Bar; that guy is Milty Schlimovitz, Doctor Marty Sterling's father.

HARRIET: It's all right. I can make due without Doctor Murray Marty and his father's popovers. I have to get to that interview. My friend Joe Stine, the headhunter, says they only have you back if they're going to hire you.

JANIE: Well, if you don't marry Marty Sterling, I'll marry him. Wait till I tell my parents I ran into him. Tasha Blumberg will have the caterers on the other extension.

HARRIET: I'm afraid marrying him isn't a solution. Will you walk me back to Colgate?

JANIE: Sure. If I can get myself up.

HARRIET: Do I look like a successful professional single woman?

JANIE: Well.

HARRIET: What, well?

JANIE: Hattie, you know the wisdom of Tasha Blumberg?

HARRIET: Which one?

JANIE: Always look nice even when you throw out the garbage, you never know who you might meet. Put on your jacket, sweetheart. Always walk with your head up and your chest out. Think "I am."

HARRIET: I am. (Putting on jacket, lifting her head and chest)
Isn't It Romantic

JANIE: Now I can be seen with you. (Janie slumps.)

(They exit arm in arm)

(End of scene)

(Telephone Machine No. 2)

HARRIET: (Beep) Janie, I got the job. Sorry I got you up so early. I love you. Bye. (She sings) School bells ring and children sing, it's back to Robert Hall again. Bye. (Hang up)

JULIE STERN: (Beep) Miss Bloomberg, this is Julie Stern at Woman's Work magazine. We read your portfolio. Our readers feel you haven't experienced enough women's pain to stimulate our market. Thank you. (Hang up)

CYNTHIA PETERSON: (Beep) Janie, it's Cynthia. There's a Lib Men/Lib Women mixer at the Unitarian Church on Friday. It got a four-star rating in Wisdom's Child. My cousin Felice met an anthropologist there, and she's in much worse shape than either of us. Wanna go? (Hang up)

ACT ONE, Scene Two

very traditional values. Tasha can do cartwheels. And at her age, which will not be revealed here or anywhere, she is in great shape. Tasha looks over the apartment with disdain. She sets case down on unpacked crate and sits next to Janie on the sofa. She sings)

TASHA: (Sings and strokes Janie's hair) Is this the little girl I carried. Is this the little boy at play. (Louder) I don't remember growing older, when did they . . .

(Janie wakes up, turns, and screams)

TASHA: Good morning, sweetheart. (She kisses Janie) Congratulations on your new apartment.

JANIE: What?

TASHA: Your father and I came over to celebrate your new apartment. What kind of place is this? There isn't a doorman. Is this place safe for you?

JANIE: Oh Jesus, what are you doing here?

TASHA: I came to celebrate. You know your mother. I like life-life-life. I came over yesterday and you weren't home so I got worried. I had the super give me the key. I thought maybe something happened with the movers.

JANIE: Nothing happened with the movers. Mother, it's seven o'clock in the morning.

TASHA: Isn't that nice. You can have breakfast with me and your father.

(Tasha opens the attaché case and turns on an aerobics tape. She starts to warm up)

JANIE: What are you doing?

TASHA: I'm warming up for my morning dance class. Why don't you get up and do it with me? If you exercised, you'd have the energy to unpack your crates.
Isn't It Romantic

(Tasha continues to exercise)

JANIE: Mother, I've only been here two nights. I'll unpack them later.

TASHA: Janie, people who wait, watch. I like go-go. Watch, I'll show you how to do it. (She does) The girls at dancing school admire me so much. They tell me they wish their mothers had so much energy.

JANIE: Their mothers probably wear clothes.

TASHA: Why are you so modest?

JANIE: I'm your daughter. I shouldn't be seeing you in tie-dyed underwear.

TASHA: You're making fun of me.

JANIE: I'm not making fun of you.

TASHA: (Still dancing) One, two, three, hip. One, two, three, hip.

JANIE: Where's Daddy?

TASHA: I sent him to pick up some coffee.

JANIE: Do the girls at dancing think it's strange you order up breakfast from a coffee shop every morning?

(Tasha turns off the music)

TASHA: Sweetheart, when you get married, you make breakfast at your house and invite me. Anything you make is fine. You want to make sausages, I'll eat sausages. Do you know what sausages are made of? (Janie lies back on the sofa) Janie, please don't lie there like a body. You have everything to look forward to. When you were in high school, the other mothers would stop me on the street and say, "You must be so proud of Janie. She's such a brilliant child. If only my daughters were like Janie."

ACT ONE, Scene Two

JANIE: What are the names of these mothers? I want names.

(The doorbell rings)

TASHA: There's your father with the coffee.

(Tasha opens front door)

SIMON: (Simon Blumberg, Tasha's partner, a very sweet father, though not chatty, enters with a bag containing three coffees and an egg sandwich) Janie, is this place safe for you? There isn't a doorman. Why don't you put in the lock I bought you in Brookline?

JANIE: I left it there.

SIMON: You left it in Brookline? That lock cost fifty dollars.

JANIE: I have it, Dad. I have it.

SIMON: You want to split this egg sandwich with me?

TASHA: Simon, please, there's a proper way to do this. First we have to toast Janie's new apartment. (Tasha hands out the coffees) I remember my first apartment in New York. Of course, I was much younger than you and I was married to your father. (She toasts) To Janie. Congratulations, welcome home, and I hope next year you live in another apartment and your father and I have to bring up four coffees.

JANIE: You want me to have a roommate?

TASHA: I want you to be happy. Talk to her, Simon, like a father and a daughter. Maybe she wants to tell you her problems.

JANIE: I don't have any problems. How's the business, Dad?

SIMON: Your father always with the business, right? You want to see something, Janie? (He pulls out an envelope) Smell this.

JANIE: (Smelling the envelope) It's nice.
Isn't It Romantic

Simon: I can't make them fast enough. And then those jerks ship me a million envelopes without any perfume. You know what that's going to do to the valentine season? Your father always with the headaches.

Janie: It's all right, Dad. I like the envelope. Smells like the state of Maine.

Simon: You want to come down to the business today and see whether it interests you? Then I'll take you skating after work.

Janie: I can't, Dad. I have to follow up some leads for clients here. Some other time I'd like to. (Janie puts on a multicolored sweatshirt over her nightgown)

Tasha: Is that an outfit! Simon, from a man's point of view, is that what you'd call an appetizing outfit?

Simon: If you were a lawyer like your brother, Ben, then it makes sense to go out on your own. But I don't understand why a girl with your intelligence should be freelance writing when you could take over a business.

Tasha: Christ, is thinking of going to law school when the children get a little older.

Janie: Who?

Tasha: Your sister-in-law, Christ.

Janie: Chris, Mother, it's Chris. I'll come down and see your place next week, Dad. I promise.

Simon: Take your time, honey. Whenever you're ready.

Tasha: My two big doers. If not today, tomorrow. I can't sit like you two. (She dances) One, two, three, hip. One, two, three, hip. (She goes over to Janie)

Janie: I won't dance. Don't ask me.

Tasha: Look at those thighs. I'm dying. (She continues dancing)

Simon: What's-his-name called our house last night looking for you.

Tasha: (Stops dancing) Who? Who?

Simon: The popover boy. He called Ben 'cause they went to summer camp together. And Ben didn't have your new number, so he told him to call us.

Janie: Ben told Marty Sterling to call you?

Tasha: Please, sweetheart, look nice. It's important. Even when you throw out the garbage. I like this Marty Sterling.

Janie: You don't even know him.

Tasha: He comes from nice people.

Janie: His father is an arsonist.

Simon: Believe me. You can have a nice life with him. Sounds like a very nice boy. He said to give you a message to call him at the hospital. He was in the emergency room at Mount Sinai.

Tasha: I told you he was a nice boy.

Janie: Don't get too excited. He probably wants Harriet's number.

Tasha: What does Harriet have to do with the popover boy?

Janie: He's her friend.

Tasha: Why do you belittle yourself all the time? What kind of attitude is that? (Tasha stands) Why don't you walk into a room with your head up and your chest out and think, "I am." (She demonstrates) Am I right, Simon?

Simon: What is it?
Isn't It Romantic

TASHA: Sweetheart, stop thinking about those envelopes and look at your daughter. From a man's point of view, isn't that some beautiful face?

JANIE: I am beautiful. People stop each other on the street to say how beautiful I look when I throw out the garbage. And when Marty Sterling proposes, he'll say, "Janie Jill Blumberg, I want to spend the rest of my life with you because every member of your family calls me the popover boy and I want to be near your mother in her tie-dyed underwear."

TASHA: She's making fun of me again.

JANIE: I'm not making fun of you. It's good to be home. (The three kiss) If I was still in Brookline—what time is it? Seven-fifteen. If I was still in Brookline, I'd be sleeping. Here by seven-fifteen, there's a catered meal and a floor show.

TASHA: The girls at dancing say you can always have a good time with Tasha. Honey, it's wonderful to see you. Thank you for having us, I loved your cooking, and I'm sure you'd like me to stay and chat all day, but your father isn't the only one who has to get to work. I'm demonstrating in class today.

SIMON: Have a nice day, Janie. (He kisses Janie and starts to exit)

TASHA: Where are you going? Give her some money so she'll buy a lock.

SIMON: (Giving Janie some bills) Honey, I'm sorry if I seem preoccupied. Mother walks me to work every morning now. Once I walk a few blocks, my mind gets stimulated. You know, Janie, I used to have the same trouble with my legs as you do. I would have to sit in bed and rest all the time. But you know what makes the difference? Ripple soles. You can get a pair of shoes like these and then you're in business. (He gives Janie more bills)

JANIE: Thanks, Daddy.

TASHA: So you'll call this Marty Sterling?

ACT ONE, Scene Two

JANIE: (Pattling Tasha's head) I will call him. I will call him.

TASHA: Am I getting shorter? I'm getting shorter.

JANIE: You're fine, Mother.

(Janie flops back onto the sofa)

TASHA: Body, please, don't get back into the bed. You have everything ahead of you. You can have a family, you can have a career, and you can learn to tap-dance.

JANIE: Are you taking tap dancing?

TASHA: It's part of life. I'll teach you.

(Tasha taps quite smoothly and with even more style, ending in a "ta-da" pose)

SIMON: (While Tasha dances) I told your mother she could run her own dancing school.

TASHA: (Ending dance) Two lessons.

SIMON: Don't you think your mother looks nice? That's a new portfolio.

TASHA: I'm an executive mother.

JANIE: It looks very nice.

TASHA: You want it?

JANIE: You keep it, Mother.

SIMON: Let's go, dear.

(Tasha starts to go)

SIMON: Remember. Ripple soles.
Isn’t It Romantic

(Simon exits. Janie flops back on the sofa)

JANIE: Oy!

TASHA: Janie, please, only old ladies sigh. Oy! (She exits)

End of scene

ACT ONE, Scene Three

(Lillian Cornwall’s office. Lillian Cornwall, an impressive handsome woman whose demeanor commands respect, is seated behind her desk. She is speaking on the phone)

LILLIAN: Obviously, Dick, our only choice is to go national with this. I don’t care what some kid in your department says about numbers. Hold on a minute, will you. (She pushes a button on the phone) Lillian Cornwall. (She yells off stage) Pauline, no one’s picking up the phone here. (She hits another button) Dick, trust me on this one. I’m not being too harsh. No, I didn’t think so. Thank you. (She hits another button) Lillian Cornwall’s office. (She yells off stage) Pauline! (Back on the phone) I’m sorry, Mrs. Cornwall isn’t in. Can I take a message? Oh Dick, it’s you. Well, tell the kid in your department I appreciate his confidence. What can I say? I’m a beautiful, successful, brilliant woman. Dick, I’m simply not a kid. (Another phone buzzes) Hold a sec, would you? (She pushes another button) Yes, Pauline. (She pushes another button) Dick, my lovely daughter is here. Gotta go. (She hangs up)

(Harriet enters in a stylish business suit. She is carrying a gift box)

HARRIET: Hello, Mother.

LILLIAN: Hello, baby, it’s nice to see you.

(They kiss)

HARRIET: You’re looking well.

LILLIAN: What brings you here? Would you like me to order you a salad or some lunch? I’d call Tom and get us into the Four Seasons, but I have a meeting in a few minutes.

HARRIET: That’s all right. I have to get back to the office. Ummm. (Harriet takes out three noisemakers and blows them, handing Lillian the present) Happy birthday, Mother!

LILLIAN: Hmmm?

HARRIET: Happy birthday. I bought this for you in Italy before I ran out of money.

LILLIAN: Oh God, I bet that meeting is a birthday thing. Thank you, Harriet, it’s very handsome. (She puts the gift back in the box) How are things at Colgate?

HARRIET: Fine.


HARRIET: We’re changing the test market from Sacramento to Syracuse.

LILLIAN: Makes sense. And your personal life?

HARRIET: Mother!
Isn't It Romantic

LILLIAN: I don't have much time to catch up. I have a meeting.

HARRIET: My personal life is O.K.

LILLIAN: Is that better or worse than fine?

HARRIET: It's O.K. Janie's back in New York and that's nice. I see my friend from Harvard, Joe Stine, the headhunter.

LILLIAN: Nice boy.

HARRIET: Nice. A little dull.

LILLIAN: Sweet though. No, you're right. A little dull.

HARRIET: And I'm sort of interested in some guy in my office.

LILLIAN: Is that a good idea?

HARRIET: I'm not seeing him. I'm just attracted to him.

LILLIAN: Sounds like a pleasant arrangement. What does he do?

HARRIET: Mother!

LILLIAN: His job, baby, what does he do?

HARRIET: He does all right. He's my boss's boss.

LILLIAN: How old is he?

HARRIET: Around forty.

LILLIAN: Around forty? He should be further along than your boss's boss.

HARRIET: Happy birthday, Mother.

LILLIAN: Harriet, you can ask me questions about my life right after I'm finished with yours. You're not making this easy, baby.

ACT ONE, Scene Three

HARRIET: Sometimes you're hard to take, Mother.

LILLIAN: So they say. (The intercom buzzes. Lillian answers it) Bill, I'll be there in a minute. My daughter is with me. Can she be present at this meeting? I thought so. Thanks, Bill. (She hangs up) It is a birthday thing. Harriet, why don't you come with me? You can be my date.

HARRIET: Mother, do you remember when you would take me to group sales meetings in Barbados? And I would appear in Mary Janes as your date at candlelit dinners by the ocean.

LILLIAN: You were a wonderful date. Interesting, attractive, bright. Certainly more suitable than what was available.

HARRIET: Mother, you're so crazy. I hope I'm going to be all right.

(Lillian and Harriet take out their compacts at the same time and check their makeup.)

LILLIAN: You'll be fine. Don't dwell on it. Your generation is absolutely fascinated with itself. Why don't you think about science? Technology is going to change our world significantly. So, do you want to come?

HARRIET: Sure.

LILLIAN: God, I dread going to these kinds of things.

HARRIET: Me too.

LILLIAN: I'm not being too harsh?

HARRIET: No, you're not being too harsh.

LILLIAN: Comb your hair, baby. I like your hair off your face.

(End of scene)
ACT ONE, Scene Four

(An Italian restaurant. Marty and Janie are seated)

MARTY: Do you want dessert? Because if you don't like the dessert here, my father is giving away free popovers in the Paramus Mall. So what do you think you're going to do now?

JANIE: (Giggles) With my life? At this restaurant? Tonight?

MARTY: Now that you've come home.

JANIE: I don't know. Retire. I sent away for some brochures from Heritage Village.

MARTY: I think about retirement. Not that I don't like being a doctor, but I don't want to get trapped. You know what I mean? First, you get the Cuisinart, then the bigger apartment, and then the Mercedes, and the next thing you know, you're charging 250 dollars to Mrs. Feldman, with the rash, to tell her, "Mrs. Feldman, you have a rash."

JANIE: (Giggles again) Whenever I get most depressed, I think I should take charge of my life and apply to medical school. Then I remember that I once identified a liver as a heart. Really, I demonstrated the right auricle and the left ventricle on this liver.

MARTY: I left medical school after my first year to do carpentry for a year.

JANIE: Your father must have liked that.

MARTY: He wants me to be happy. I'm very close to my parents.

JANIE: That's nice. (Pause) I'm sorry. I was thinking about my parents.

MARTY: Are you close to them?

JANIE: In a way. She's a dancer and he's very sweet. It's complicated.

MARTY: My father started out in show business. He used to tell jokes at Grossingers. That's why he does the popover commercials himself. Now he's the toastmaster general for the UJA.

JANIE: Have you ever been to Israel?

MARTY: I worked on a kibbutz the second time I dropped out of medical school. Israel's very important to me. In fact, I have to decide next month if I want to open my practice here in New York or Tel Aviv.

JANIE: Oh.

MARTY: Why, are you anti-Israel?

JANIE: No. Of course not. I preferred the people my parents' age there to the younger ones. The people my age intimidated me. I'd be sleeping and they'd go off to turn deserts into forests. The older ones had more humanity. They rested sometimes.

MARTY: I think Jewish families should have at least three children.

JANIE: What?
JANIE: What?

MARTY: Want to go home?

JANIE: No. My interior decorator is there.

MARTY: Want to come to my parents' house? They should be out late tonight. After Paramus, there's a UJA testimonial dinner for my father in Englewood. It means a lot to him 'cause he's been giving away so much shrimp at the salad bar, they almost revoked his job as toastmaster.

JANIE: It's weird going to someone's parents' house. Shouldn't we have mortgages and children?

MARTY: Let's go, Monkey. (Rises) You'll be all right. I'll help you.

JANIE: (Rises) And what'll I do for you?

MARTY: Be sweet. I need attention. A great deal of attention.

(As the lights fade, Janie puts her head on Marty's shoulder)

(End of scene)
ACT ONE, Scene Five

(Harriet’s apartment. Harriet and Paul Stuart enter. Paul is about 40. He is very corporate and appealing looking. Harriet takes both their coats and tosses them on the chair. She exits into the kitchen. Paul moves to the sofa, takes out a Binaca, gives himself a hit and sits. Harriet enters pushing a rolling bar. She crosses down to stage right of sofa, stops, and poses)

PAUL: You remind me a lot of my first wife.

HARRIET: Mr. Stuart, would you like something to drink? I don’t have much. I just moved here.

PAUL: Scotch on the rocks. My first wife hated office Christmas parties.

HARRIET: I’m sorry. Did I make you leave?

PAUL: Definitely not. You’re one of the most amusing people I’ve met at Colgate in a long time. Can I tell you something as a friend? You don’t have to call me Mr. Stuart.

HARRIET: I think it’s funny your name is Paul Stuart. If your name was Brooks Brothers, I’d call you Mr. Brothers. (She hands him a napkin with a cracker and pâté) Pâté?

PAUL: (Taking it) Where are you from originally? (He cracks up) Have you ever noticed when you try a conversation opener like, “Where are you from originally?”, you always sound like a jerk?


PAUL: East Sixty-ninth Street. You were a rich kid.

HARRIET: No. Upper middle class.

PAUL: Only rich kids know what upper middle class is.

HARRIET: Well, I wasn’t spoiled. Definitely not spoiled.

PAUL: Your father was a lawyer?

HARRIET: No. My mother’s an executive.

PAUL: Is your mother Lillian Cornwall?

HARRIET: Yup.

PAUL: Jesus. I interviewed with your mother once. That woman has balls. Do you know what it took for a woman at her time to get as far as she did?

HARRIET: Yup.

PAUL: Poor baby, I bet you do. (He lights her cigarette) Would you like me to spoil you a bit? Relax. For a girl with such a good mind, you get tense too easily. (They both start laughing) Why are you laughing?

HARRIET: You’re amazing. First you tell me how amusing I am, then you want to spoil me, and now you tell me what a good mind I have. (Paul moves away to his drink) I’m sorry. This is making me a little uncomfortable. Office romance and all that. You’re my boss’s boss.
Isn't It Romantic

PAUL: Harriet, do you know that forty percent of the people at McKinsey are having inter-office affairs?

HARRIET: How do you know that?

PAUL: Friend of mine did the study. Look, I live with a woman so no one will know. Is that an incentive?

HARRIET: (Rises) Cathy? Do you live with Cathy?

PAUL: How do you know Cathy?

HARRIET: She calls the office three times a day.

PAUL: (Rising) You've been paying attention.

HARRIET: I'm a smart kid.

PAUL: (Grabbing Harriet) Smart woman.

HARRIET: (Pulling away) Paul, I generally try not to get involved with unavailable men.

PAUL: You've never been with a married man? How old are you? (He chokes)

HARRIET: Are you all right?

PAUL: Jesus, were there any nuts in that pâté? My doctor told me not to eat nuts. I've got this stomach thing. I tell you, when you get older, you gotta watch it. But you'll take good care of me, right, Beauty? (Pause) Are you excited?

HARRIET: Where are you from originally?

PAUL: You're excited. Don't be embarrassed, Beauty. I'll be wonderful for you, Harriet. You'll try to change me, you'll realize you can't, and furthermore I'm not worth it, so you'll marry some nice investment banker and make your mother happy.

ACT ONE, Scene Five

HARRIET: I don't think my mother particularly wants me to get married. I don't particularly want me to get married.

PAUL: You'll change your mind. Career girls, when they hit thirty, all change their minds. Look, whatever is happening here, we better do it quickly because Cathy is expecting me home with the laundry at eleven and the laundry closes at ten. I'm very attracted to you, Harriet.

HARRIET: Forty percent of the people at McKinsey, huh?

PAUL: And those are just the ones crazy enough to fill out the questionnaire.

HARRIET: Get out of here.

PAUL: (Takes her hand) C'mere. Deal from strength, Harriet. Men really like strong women.

(They embrace.)

(End of scene)

ACT ONE, Scene Six

(Annie is in her apartment, typing. The doorbell rings, and Annie opens the door. Harriet enters with a package.)

HARRIET: Congratulations on your new apartment!
Isn't It Romantic

JANIE: Harriet, I've been living here three months.

HARRIET: That's why I came to celebrate. I decided this morning it was time for you to unpack. Did I walk in with my right foot first?

JANIE: I don't know.

HARRIET: Then I have to do it again. (She exits. The doorbell rings: Janie opens the door and Harriet re-enters) Congratulations on your new apartment!

JANIE: What are you doing?

HARRIET: I looked all this up very carefully in the Oxford Companion to Jewish Life.

JANIE: I'm not familiar with this Companion.

HARRIET: You have to walk into a new apartment with your right foot to set you off on the right foot. I also brought you a house-warming gift. But you cannot open it till we get you settled in.

JANIE: Harriet, you know I can't postpone gratification.

HARRIET: Janie, you have to make a home for yourself. Now what are we going to do with these crates?

(Harriet picks up the crates)

JANIE: Harriet, what are you doing? You're flying around the room.

HARRIET: (Exiting with crates) It's Saturday.

JANIE: The day of rest. Didn't they tell you that in the Oxford Companion?

HARRIET: (Enters empty-handed) It's Paul Stuart's day at home with Cathy. You want to put the typewriter in the bedroom? (She picks up typewriter)

JANIE: (Stops her) No, I'm working. Marty's father hired an actor to play a popover at the opening of the new Sterling Tavern in the Green Acres Mall and Marty got me a job writing the popover's opening remarks. Hattie, don't you mind not seeing Paul on the weekend?

HARRIET: No, it's O.K. As I see it, Paul Stuart is fine until I find the right relationship. It's similar to the case method. And he's great in bed. (Harriet sets down the typewriter)

JANIE: Marty claims he slept with over one hundred visiting nurses when he was at Harvard.

HARRIET: (Sits) Really?!

JANIE: No. I just told you that so you'd sit down. (Janie sits)

HARRIET: So, is it something with Marty?

JANIE: He decided to open his practice here next month, and he's invited me to his parents' house for Chanukah. Some days I walk down the street and think if I don't step on any cracks, I'll marry Marty. What ever happened to Janie Blumberg? She did so well, she married Marty the doctor. They're giving away popovers in Paramus. (Pause) Hattie, do you think I should marry Marty?

HARRIET: I've always hated women who sit around talking about how there are no men in New York. Or everyone is gay or married.

JANIE: What does this have to do with my marrying Marty?

HARRIET: These women would tell you, "Marry him. He's straight, he'll make a nice living, he'll be a good father." Janie, what women like Cynthia Peterson don't know is, no matter how lonely you get or how many birth announcements you receive, the trick is not to get frightened. There's nothing wrong with being alone.
Isn't It Romantic

JANIE: Harriet, do you remember when we would listen to “My Guy” and iron our hair before going to a high school dance?

HARRIET: Oh God, I’ve blocked all of that.

JANIE: I remember arriving at the dance, looking over the prospects, and thinking when I’m twenty-eight, I’m going to get married and be very much in love with someone who is poor and fascinating until he’s thirty and then fabulously wealthy and very secure after that. And we’re going to have children who wear overalls and flannel shirts and are kind and independent with curly blond hair. And we’ll have great sex and still hold hands when we travel to China when we’re sixty.

HARRIET: I never thought about any of that. Maybe it’s ’cause I’m Lillian’s daughter, but I never respected women who didn’t learn to live alone and pay their own rent. Imagine spending your life pretending you weren’t a person. To compromise at this point would be antifeminist, well, antihumanist, well, just not impressive. I’m not being too harsh.

JANIE: No. Just rhetorical.

(The doorbell rings)

HARRIET: Who’s that?

JANIE: I don’t know.

JANIE answers the door. Vladimir around 30. A Russian taxi cab driver, very impressed with capitalism is there, holding a bar. The bar has a safari motif.

VLADIMIR: Hello-hi.

JANIE: Do you have the right apartment?

VLADIMIR: I am Vladimir. I am filmmaker from Moscow. I drive taxi now. You are Miss Blumberg?

JANIE: Yes.

VLADIMIR: For you. (He enters with the bar. He sees Harriet) Hello-hi.

SIMON: (Enters with a stool) Janie, do you like this bar? Hello, Harriet. We thought you might need something to entertain at home.

TASHA: (Enters with a stool) Don’t force her, Simon (To Janie). Hello, darling. (Notices Harriet) Harriet, you look terrific. Are you seeing anyone?

HARRIET: Sort of.

SIMON: We met Vladimir on the cab ride down here. He came from Moscow six weeks ago.

JANIE: That’s nice. Do you like it here?

VLADIMIR: Hello-hi.

SIMON: He doesn’t speak very much English.

TASHA: That doesn’t matter. If you like people, you speak every language. I can get along in any country. If you smile, you dance, anyone will understand.

JANIE: My mother identifies with Zorba the Greek.

VLADIMIR: Zorba. Yes. Thank you.

TASHA: Harriet, do you like the bar? I saw another one, but I was afraid Janie would say it’s too old, it’s too new, it’s gold.

HARRIET: I like it very much. It’s primitive.

SIMON: Vladimir, maybe you want to stay and put the bar together, and Mrs. Blumberg and Harriet and I can bring you up some coffee.

VLADIMIR: Coffee. Regular.
Isn't It Romantic

TASHA: Sit. Harriet, join us. Harriet's with Colgate-Palmolive.

SIMON: (Takes Janie aside) He's a nice boy. Don't you think he's a nice boy, Janie? Seems intelligent too. I thought maybe if things didn't work out with you and Marty, I'd take him into the business.

JANIE: You're kidding. This man is here six weeks, and he gets a wife, a business, and a dancing mother-in-law.

SIMON: What's wrong with giving a guy a break?

JANIE: (Making a sign to get Vladimir out) Dad . . .

SIMON: Vladimir, thank you. We'll take the taxi uptown to Rockefeller Center.

TASHA: Every Saturday I take Mr. Bloomberg skating.

SIMON: My partner keeps me in shape. (Puts his arm around his wife.)

TASHA: Harriet, you look terrific. Who is it you're seeing?

JANIE: She's seeing someone who's married.

TASHA: Let's go, dear.

(Tasha and Simon exit)

HARRIET AND JANIE: Good-bye. Nice to see you.

VLADIMIR: (To Harriet) Good-bye. (To Janie) Good-bye. (He exits)

JANIE: Someday I'd like to write a book, My Mother Herself. I'm sorry, Hattie. That was the only way I could get them out of here.

HARRIET: (Looking at the bar) Did Tasha go on safari?

ACT ONE, Scene Six

JANIE: No, she went hunting at K-Mart. Harriet, they brought over a Russian taxi-cab driver for me to marry! Maybe I should move back to Brookline tomorrow.

HARRIET: You can't leave me here with Lillian and Paul Stuart. I brought Lillian a birthday present that I bought with my last lire in Italy. She hardly opened it. She couldn't wait to get back to the intercom to harass Pauline. Janie, sit, it's the day of rest. Now you can open your present.

(Harriet brings her the bag and they sit on the sofa. Janie puts the bow on her head and takes out a loaf of round bread, a box of kosher salt, sugar, matches, and a candle.)

JANIE: What kind of diet are you on?

HARRIET: According to the Oxford Companion, this is what your family brings when you move into a new home. Bread, the staple of life. Sugar, something sweet in your life. Salt, a little spice in your life.

JANIE: I have that.

HARRIET: And a candle to light the way. (She lights the candle) Janie, you know what I remember more than those mixers?

JANIE: What? (She puts her arm on Harriet's shoulder.)

HARRIET: Remember when you and I would meet at Papaya King for dinner 'cause Lil was at a meeting and Tasha only had brewer's yeast in the refrigerator. I always thought, well, I do have a normal family. Janie's my family. In fact, that still helps a lot. I always assumed it was some sort of pact.

JANIE: It is a pact. (Both girls break off a piece of bread from the loaf.) Hattie, thank you for my gift from my family. (She picks up the salt) Cheers.

HARRIET: (Picking up the sugar) Le Chaim.

(They clink the boxes)

(End of scene)
Isn't It Romantic

(Telephone Machine No. 3)

HART FARRELL: (Beep) Janie Blumberg. This is Hart Farrell in the personnel department at “Sesame Street.” A temp in our office recognized your name from a part he played in the Green Acres Mall. I heard your pieces. I’m going to pass them on to Taj lei Kaplan Singleberry. Nice song, Luv. (Phone hangs up)

CYNTHIA PETERSON: (Beep) (Crying) Janie, it’s Cynthia. Thank God you have your machine on. I’m home, I’m broke, my trainer is on retreat, I’ve been rejected by every man on the Upper West Side, and I’m about to get drunk. Janie, do you know a good dry cleaner?

ACT ONE, Scene Seven

(Janie’s apartment, stage left: Sofa and TV on a box. Harriet’s bedroom, stage right: Bed, ottoman, TV. Paul & Harriet in bed. Light up on Janie’s apartment)

JANIE: (Entering) I fucked up Chanukah.

MARTY: (Entering) You were sweet.

JANIE: I’m sorry I spilled horseradish on your sister-in-law. They have a nice baby. Really, Schlomo is very sweet. I’m sorry I spilled horseradish on Schlomo. (She exits into her bedroom)
Isn't It Romantic

people anymore, the Alta Kakas in Brooklyn, the old men with the accents who sit in front of Hymie's Highway Appetizers. I miss them. My father says thank God OTB came along and cleared all the AK's out. My father never goes to Miami now. They go to Saint Bart's or Caracas with their friends from Englewood Cliffs. My father thought my brother was crazy when he named his son Schlomo. He kept asking my brother, "So what's his real name?" And my father will think I'm crazy when we move to Brooklyn.

JANIE: Marty?

MARTY: What is it, Monkey? Are you angry?

JANIE: No. I like the Alta Kakas in Brooklyn too. I always thought Herman Wouk should write a novel, Young Kaka. I don't know.

MARTY: What don't you know? Janie, you're twenty-eight years old. What I'm saying is either you want to be with me, you don't have to, you should just want to, and if you don't want to, then we should just forget it.

JANIE: I want to.

MARTY: So, what's the problem?

JANIE: No problem.

MARTY: Uh-oh. What time is it? I promised my father we'd watch his commercial.

(Marty turns on Janie's TV. In Harriet's apartment Paul turns on their TV at the same time. They watch simultaneously. Marty/Janie with some dismay. Paul/Harriet with some pleasure.)

HARRIET: I know that man.

CAPTAIN MILTY STERLING: (Voiceover) This is Captain Milty Sterling. I'm here at the beautiful Green Acres Mall with the
ACT ONE, Scene Seven

Popover Boy and my grandson, Schlomo. What are we giving away today, Schlomo?

SCHLOMO: (Voiceover) We're giving away shrimp. We're giving away lobster tails. We're giving away cole slaw.

MILTY: (Voiceover) How do you like that shrimp, Schlomo?

SCHLOMO: (Voiceover) It's good, Grandpa. Happy Chanukah everyone and Season's Greetings from the entire Sterling family.

(Janie's telephone rings)

MARTY: Trust me. This is for me. (He answers the phone) Hi, Dad. I loved it. Janie loved it. Schlomo looked great. The shrimp looked great.

(Janie turns off TV.)

(Lights fade on Marty and Janie and come up on Paul and Harriet. Paul turns off TV.)

PAUL: Why are you laughing? The man's a marketing genius. He's giving away shrimp. He's giving away cole slaw. I never heard of such an incentive program. How much do you think he can give away and still make a profit? (Paul hugs Harriet) "It's good, Grandpa." (Paul gets up and begins to get dressed.)

HARRIET: Where are you going?

PAUL: It's late.

HARRIET: You could spend the night.

PAUL: Cathy.

HARRIET: Do you love Cathy?

PAUL: She's devoted to me.

HARRIET: Does Cathy exist?
Isn't It Romantic

PAUL: Of course Cathy exists.

HARRIET: I thought maybe Cathy was an answering service you hired to call you three times a day.

PAUL: (Sitting back on the bed) Did I tell you to deal from strength?

HARRIET: Yes.

PAUL: Sometimes I'm a jackass. You're sweet, Harriet. You know that? You're a sweet woman. A lot of people never get off in their entire life. Do you think you mother's had good sex?

HARRIET: My mother likes to watch "The Rockford File" reruns at eleven. (Harriet gets out of bed) Paul, I don't think people spend as much time thinking about sex as you do.

PAUL: (Following her) Tell me what you like, Beauty.

HARRIET: The other day I was standing in front of your office with my pert charts and you called your secretary "Beauty," you called whoever called you on the phone "Beauty," and I think you called the ninety-year-old messenger boy from Ogilvy and Mather "Beauty."

PAUL: I see what's going on here. It's the old, "I'm afraid of turning thirty alone and I'm beginning to think about having a family."

HARRIET: Wanting two nights a week or a sleep-over date isn't quite a family.

PAUL: Baby, I'm older than you. I've been through this with a lot of women. You want a man who sees you as a potential mother but also is someone who isn't threatened by your success and is deeply interested in it. And this man should be thought of as "intelligent" by your friends, but when you need him, he should drop whatever it is he's doing and be supportive.

HARRIET: I'm not asking for that. Why are you so bitter?
Isn't It Romantic

JANIE: We can order up a salad.

MARTY: Monkey, you don't know how to cook a chicken?

JANIE: I do. I do. I can make Teflon chicken.

MARTY: You shouldn't put yourself down like that.

(Marty gets up to go)

JANIE: Marty, I love you. We can take the place in Brooklyn. I just want to be with you.

(Marty comes back and kisses Janie, crosses to the front door, and exits triumphantly. Janie goes to the phone and dials. The phone rings in Harriet's apartment. Harriet picks it up)

HARRIET: Hello.

JANIE: Hattie, how do you cook a chicken? Marty's coming back here in five minutes with a chicken.

HARRIET: Do you want Florentine or something nice?

JANIE: Hattie, hurry. I can't tell him I don't know how. Marty took an apartment for us in Brooklyn, and I can't tell him we have to order up chicken.

HARRIET: Why Brooklyn?

JANIE: He likes Hymie of Hymie's Highway Appetizers.

HARRIET: Excuse me?

JANIE: He likes the Alta Kakas.

(Harriet's doorbell rings again)

PAUL: What's wrong with this mouthwash?

HARRIET: It's a Colgate product.

(Vladimir answers the door. Simon enters with a coffee table)

SIMON: Oh hello, Vladimir. How are you?

VLADIMIR: Fine. I work in Russian Tea Room now.

SIMON: Janie, I brought over a coffee table.

PAUL: I better go, Beauty. Cathy.

HARRIET: Me too. "The Rockford Files."

(Marty enters with a bag of groceries. Paul and Harriet engage in a long kiss)

MARTY: Monkey, I got the chicken.

JANIE: Marty, this is my father, Simon Blumberg, and Vladimir.

SIMON: Very nice to meet you. Mrs. Blumberg will be so sorry she missed you.
Isn't It Romantic

JANIE: (Into the phone) Harriet!

VLADIMIR: Hello-hi.

SIMON: (To Marty) Vladimir is my friend. Janie doesn’t even know him. He’s a filmmaker from Moscow. Let’s go, Vladimir. (Simon starts pulling Vladimir out the door) Nice to meet you. My best to your family.

PAUL: (At Harriet’s front door) I think we have a pretty good thing going. Think about it.

(Paul exits and Simon and Vladimir exit simultaneously)

HARRIET: (On the phone) Janie!

MARTY: Who’s the filmmaker?

JANIE: Friend of my father’s.

MARTY: I’m hungry. Are you sure you can cook a chicken? (Marty hands Janie a chicken wrapped in butcher paper) I’ll go warm up the oven.

(Marty exits into the kitchen)

JANIE: I’ll get the stapler. (Back on the phone) Hattie!

HARRIET: Janie, you never mentioned an apartment. When did you see it?

JANIE: I haven’t seen it. Marty told me about it tonight after I spilled horseradish on baby Schlomo.

HARRIET: Janie, people named Homo and Schlymie. I feel our move back to New York has been very successful. I’ve met a sadist vice president, and you’ve become involved in a “shtetl.”

MARTY: (Offstage) Monkey!

ACT ONE, Scene Seven

JANIE: Be right there, Marty. (Pleading) Hattie, how do you cook a chicken?

HARRIET: You just put it in the broiler.

JANIE: Who told you this? Thank you, Harriet. Bye. (She hangs up)

HARRIET: Bye, Janie. (She hangs up)

(Janie unwraps the chicken on the coffee table. She lifts it up by the two wings, over her head)

PAUL: (Enters) Beauty, Thursday the laundry’s open till midnight.

MARTY: (Enters) Janie, the oven’s ready.

(Both Janie and Harriet cross up together to Marty and Paul respectively as the lights fade. Janie is cradling the chicken like a baby and Harriet is lifted up by Paul. Both couples kiss as they exit. We hear a strings version of the song Isn’t It Romantic.)

(End of Act One)
Act Two
ACT TWO, Scene One

(Central Park South. Tasha enters wearing earphones connected to a Walkman tape recorder in her attaché case. She is listening to music that makes her dance as she walks. She sits on bench, opens the attaché case, and wipes her face with a towel. Lillian enters, eating a hot dog, and sees Tasha)

LILLIAN: Mrs. Blumberg. (Tasha doesn't hear her) Mrs. Blumberg!

TASHA: (Loudly) Yes.

LILLIAN: Lillian Cornwall.

TASHA: (Removing her earphones) How are you? Please excuse my appearance. I just got out of class. A real workout I had today.

LILLIAN: You look marvelous. How's Ben?

TASHA: Ben is doing very well. He's a lawyer with Korvettes. I mean Cravath.

LILLIAN: And Simon?

TASHA: Simon is with his business. He would love for Janie to take over, but Janie says she's happy freelance writing.
LILLIAN: I always liked Janie. She’s such a bright girl.

TASHA: I tell her people stop me on the street to tell me how bright she is, but she doesn’t believe me. Janie tells me Harriet has a nice job.

LILLIAN: Yes. She’s at Colgate-Palmolive.

TASHA: She’s going to be an executive mother like you. Very nice. Do you see the girls much? My daughter, whenever I call her, I get the machine.

LILLIAN: I reach Harriet’s secretary, or rather my secretary reaches Harriet’s secretary.

TASHA: She’s always been a hard worker, your Harriet.

LILLIAN: Harriet tells me Janie’s been seeing a nice boy.

TASHA: He’s a very nice boy. But so what? Harriet and Janie are very nice girls. They deserve a little “naches.” You know what I mean by “naches”? A little happiness. Well, I don’t want to keep you. I know you’re a busy woman. You probably have appointments.

LILLIAN: Actually, I thought I’d surprise Harriet and take her to a nice lunch, but her secretary told me she was in a meeting. So I thought I’d treat myself to a frankfurter in the park. I haven’t had a frankfurter in the park since I lived in England, thirty years ago.

TASHA: Can I tell you something? I’m sorry, I forgot your first name.

LILLIAN: Lillian.

TASHA: Lillian, maybe it’s none of my business, but you shouldn’t eat frankfurters. You know what frankfurters are made of? Have some string beans. (She takes out a bag of string beans from the attaché case) All the young girls at dancing school carry plastic bags with string beans.

LILLIAN: (Taking a bean) Thank you.

TASHA: (Sits and sighs) Excuse me, I always tell my daughter only old ladies sigh. My husband has an expression, “Everything presses itself out.” Believe me, Harriet will find a nice boy, she’ll get married, she’ll work, she’ll have a nice life. I don’t understand why they’re fighting it so hard.

LILLIAN: I don’t think Harriet thinks about marriage very much.

TASHA: These days they “live together.” That’s the latest. Believe me, it’s the same thing as being married.

LILLIAN: Harriet told me she doesn’t particularly want to live with anyone. I don’t live with anyone.

TASHA: You can’t listen to your children all the time. My daughter tells me I don’t wear clothing. I’m wearing clothing. My daughter, Janie, thinks I call her in the morning to check up on her. Yesterday she answered the phone and said, “Hello Mother. This morning I got married, lost twenty pounds, and became a lawyer.”

LILLIAN: That’s funny.

TASHA: Oh, you can always have a good time with Janie. But you know what’s sad? Not sad like a child is ill or something. But a little sad to me. My daughter never thinks I call because I miss her. The girls at dancing school tell me their problems; they tell me about their parents, their boyfriends, what they ate yesterday, what they’re going to eat tomorrow. But they’re not my children. Sure, I’d like Janie to be married, and if she were a lawyer that’d be nice too, and believe me, if I could take her by the hand and do it for her, I would—I’m that sort of mother. I remember when Janie was in high school and she’d slam the door to her room and say, “Mother, what do you want from me?” Lillian, what do I want from her? I just want to know that she’s well. And to give her a little push too. But just a little one.

LILLIAN: (Reassuring) Sooner or later you can have everything pressed.
TASHA: It's "everything presses itself out." I'll tell you. Life isn't like those Ivory Snow commercials with the mother and daughter comparing hands. Maybe your life is like that, but at seven-thirteen in the morning, my Janie and I don't get up to play golf together.

LILLIAN: Harriet and I don't get up to play golf either. (Pause) Do those string beans really fill you up?

TASHA: You're an intelligent woman, Lillian. How could a bag of string beans really fill you up?

LILLIAN: Do you ever go to Rumpelmeyers across the street?

TASHA: I take my granddaughter when she's in the city.

LILLIAN: Rumpelmeyers always sold the nicest stuffed animals. I never liked the Steiff toys at F. A. O. Schwartz.

TASHA: They're made in Germany.

LILLIAN: How many grandchildren do you have?

TASHA: Just one. But I'm looking forward. I'll tell you what's nice about grandchildren. You don't have to worry about them everyday and they don't hooch you a clinic. That means they don't bang on your tea kettle.

LILLIAN: Would you join me at Rumpelmeyers for a sundae? I have twenty minutes before I have to go to a meeting. I'm sure you can get an iced coffee and some fruit.

TASHA: Why should I have fruit when they have such nice ice cream? I don't care what restaurant you go to, the fresh-fruit cup is never fresh.

LILLIAN: I haven't gone for a sundae in the afternoon since I was at Vassar. This is a big day for me. A frankfurter in the park, a sundae at Rumpelmeyers. I'm having a wonderful time.

TASHA: The girls at dancing school always say you can have a good time with Tasha.

LILLIAN: Do you like James Garner?

TASHA: Who?

LILLIAN: Do you ever watch "The Rockford Files"?

TASHA: I put the television on sometimes when I'm waiting for Simon to come home after my classes, but I don't really watch it. Just educational broadcasting and the Barbara Walters special. Did you see her with Richard Nixon the other week? That man did all right for himself.

LILLIAN: I beg your pardon.

TASHA: Both his daughters married well, he has a nice house, he travels, and what was he before, a Quacker?

LILLIAN: Excuse me.

TASHA: A Quaker. (Pause) Listen, I know you people don't like to get very intimate, but since our daughters are such good friends, I want to tell you I always admired you. You were always on time to all the parent-teacher meetings. Not that you and I both aren't smarter than all those teachers combined. But the other mothers would always come in late with the Louis Vuitton bags, and the manicures, but you, the only one who had something else important to do, you were always on time.

LILLIAN: Thank you.

TASHA: What are you thanking me for? You worked very hard. We both worked very hard. That's why we put out such nice products.

(They walk off arm in arm)
Isn’t It Romantic

TASHA: (As she exits) Do you remember that girl, Cynthia Peterson—well . . . . . . .

(End of scene)

(Telephone Machine No. 4)

TAJIEI KAPLAN SINGLEBERRY: (Ring. Beep) Miss Bloomberg, this is Tajiei Kaplan Singleberry at “Sesame Street.” Could you come in and see us next week? 555-7808, extension 22. Thank you.

HARRIET: (Beep) Janie, it’s Harriet. Can you do me an enormous favor? Would you and Marty come to dinner tomorrow night? Paul Stuart will be there. Don’t ask. (She begins to sing) I love him, I love him, I love him. And where he goes I’ll follow, I’ll follow, I’ll follow . . .

ACT TWO, Scene Two

(Harriet’s apartment. Janie, Marty and Harriet are having drinks)

HARRIET: My mother identifies with Jean Harris.

JANIE: I think Jean’s mistake was stopping with Hy. She should have taken care of all of them. Dr. Atkins, Dr. Pritikin, the nut in Beverly Hills who says it’s good to live on papaya.

MARTY: Monkey, Jean Harris should stay in jail for life. (Marty’s beeper goes off) I hear you, Mrs. Rosen, I hear you. I was up all night with her. She thinks the dialysis machine is connected to my telephone. Do you have a private one I could use?

HARRIET: In the kitchen.

(Marty exits into kitchen. He looks back at Janie)

HARRIET: He’s sweet.

JANIE: He’s very sweet. Sometimes I look at Marty and think he’s such a nice young man, I must be a nice young girl.

HARRIET: You are.

JANIE: I never meant to become one. Last week, when we were driving up from yet another Sterling Tavern opening on the Island, I had my head in his lap and he stroked my hair and called me “Monkey.” And at first I thought, Janie Jill Blumberg, you’ve been accepted, not even on the waiting list. So he calls you Monkey. You’d prefer what? Angel? Sweetheart?

HARRIET: Beauty?

JANIE and HARRIET: (Agreeing) uh-huh.

JANIE: And I thought it’s settled, fine, thank God. And I bet I can convince him that Schlomo is not a name for an American child. We were driving along the L.I.E. I was fantasizing if we’d make the Sunday Times wedding announcements, “Daughter of Pioneer in Interpretive Dance marries Popover Boy.” And it was as we were approaching Syosset that I thought, I can’t breathe in this car and I promised myself that in a month from now I would not be traveling home from the Island in this car with Marty. And as soon as I thought this and honestly almost pushed open the car door, I found myself kissing his hand and saying, “Marty, I love you.” I don’t know.

HARRIET: I don’t know either. Maybe Lillian is right. Life is much easier without relationships.
Isn’t It Romantic

HARRIET: I’m sorry. Are you all right?

PAUL: There’s no way to get around safely in this city. Goddamn taxi driver went over a pot hole.

JANIE: Do you want Marty to have a look at your neck?

PAUL: It’s not my neck. It’s my left arm. Oh, my God. Maybe I’m having a heart attack.

MARTY: Really, I don’t mind having a look at it.

JANIE: Marty’s a resident at Mount Sinai.

PAUL: (To Marty) Nice to meet you. (Shakes his hand)

MARTY: And this is Janie Blumberg.

PAUL: (Sitting) The only other possibility is my doctor says I’ve been taking too many amateur massages.

HARRIET: Paul, how about a drink?

PAUL: I better not with this neck thing.

MARTY: I can recommend a chiropractor.

JANIE: I thought chiropractors were quacks. My mother says chiropractors are quacks. She’s a dancer.

PAUL: Your mother’s a dancer? What company is she with?

JANIE: She’s an independent.

HARRIET: Sweet gherkins? Paul, remember the TV commercial we saw? Well, Marty’s father’s the one who was giving away the shrimp.

PAUL: Oh, I loved it. I loved it. Is that kid’s name really Schlomo?
Isn't It Romantic

MARTY: Yes. The UJA is really pissed at my father for making Schlomo eat shrimp on television.

PAUL: I love it. I love it.

HARRIET: How about some more Brie, Marty? (To Paul) How are you feeling?

PAUL: I don’t know, honey. I have this sensation in my foot. Maybe this is a neurological thing.

JANIE: Well, maybe.

MARTY: Doesn’t seem to be.

PAUL: What’s your speciality?

MARTY: Kidneys.

PAUL: The kid’s name is really Schlomo? I love it.

JANIE: You’re in marketing, aren’t you?

PAUL: Yes, but it’s too boring to talk about.

HARRIET: I don’t think it’s boring. (To Marty) Have some gherkins.

(Pause)

PAUL: Anyone seen anything good recently?

MARTY: God, I haven’t been to a film in ages. If I get any time, I try to read.

JANIE: Did you read the article in the Times about artificial insemination? I can imagine myself at thirty-six, driving cross country to inseminate myself with a turkey baster.

PAUL: Turkey baster?

JANIE: Uh-huh. I’m going to give birth to a little oven-stuffer roaster.

(ARIE, Marty and Harriet crack-up.)

PAUL: (Getting up) Well, I have to be going.

JANIE: Aren’t you going to stay for dinner? There’s chicken meringo.

MARTY: Really, I wouldn’t rush off because of the whiplash.

PAUL: Nice meeting both of you. Cathy ... er, Beauty, I’m just a little tired.

(He kisses Harriet on the cheek, picks up his coat, and starts to leave)

HARRIET: Paul, I don’t think we should see each other anymore.

(Paul stops. Janie and Marty slowly turn to Paul)

PAUL: Excuse me.

HARRIET: I want to stop.

PAUL: (Moves down to Harriet and whispers) We’ve been through this before.

MARTY: Harriet, do you want Janie and I to get dessert?

HARRIET: No.

PAUL: C’mon Harriet. I’ve got this neck thing. Your friends are here. We’ll talk about it tomorrow. We’ll have breakfast. What’s the matter, Beauty, do you have your period?

MARTY: (Standing with Janie) See you later.

HARRIET: Don’t go. (They sit) Paul’s leaving to catch up on his laundry.
PAUL: You know what the parameters were here. You’re a very appealing woman, Harriet. Nice to meet you both. Thanks for helping me with this neck thing. Beauty, calm down. You’re a good kid. *(He snaps his fingers as if to say “See you later” and exits.)*

MARTY: He’s crazy. He didn’t have whiplash. Harriet, he’s the least gracious man I ever met. In fact, he’s a real douche.

JANIE: Hattie, I’m sorry.

HARRIET: What are you sorry for? *(She exits left)*

JANIE: I shouldn’t have told him about artificial insemination.

HARRIET: *(Entering)* I’m going for a walk.

JANIE: When are you coming back?

HARRIET: Janie, you sound like Tasha. I don’t know when I’m coming back. *(She exits out the front door.)*

JANIE: Well, this was a real nice clambake. I’m mighty glad I came.

MARTY: Why is she seeing that guy?

JANIE: The sadist vice president at Colgate-Palmolive? I don’t know.

MARTY: Monkey.

JANIE: What?

MARTY: My father wants to know if we’re coming to dinner tomorrow. It’s my brother’s anniversary. The whole family will be there.

JANIE: I can’t. I got a call from “Sesame Street.” They want to interview me. I have to stay home and put together some sketches.

MARTY: So you’ll do it next week. What?

JANIE: Nothing.

MARTY: What nothing, Monkey?


MARTY: You want to interview at “Sesame Street,” fine. They do nice work. But don’t let it take over your life. And don’t let it take over our life. That’s a real trap.

JANIE: Marty, I haven’t even interviewed there yet.

*He rubs her back intermittently, tapping as if he’s checking her heart*

MARTY: You’re a sweet woman. You don’t want a life like that.

JANIE: Like what?

MARTY: Look, I have plenty of friends who marry women doctors because they think they’ll have something in common. Monkey, they never see each other. Their children are brought up by strangers from the Caribbean.

JANIE: That’s a nice way of putting it.

MARTY: I have nothing against your working. I just want to make sure we have a life.

JANIE: Marty, I like my work. I may have stumbled into something I actually care about. And right now I don’t want to do it part-time and pretend that it’s real when it would actually be a hobby. But I want a life too. Honey, my mother takes my father skating every Saturday. Simon and that dancer have struck up a partnership. I’m their daughter. I want that too.

MARTY: Janie, I made arrangements with the Sterling truck to move us to Brooklyn next Saturday.
Isn't It Romantic

JANIE: We're gonna move with shrimp and lobster tails?

MARTY: What are you trying to do, entertain me like you tried to entertain Paul Stuart?

JANIE: I was just trying . . .

MARTY: You know what, Monkey, you're a little disorganized, I'm a little bit of a nudge. So if I don't make the arrangements, what's going to happen? You'll live alone or maybe you'll meet someone who's even more of a nudge.

JANIE: Marty, if I'm one of the few real people you've met, why do you call me "Monkey"?

MARTY: Jesus, Janie, I'm just trying to move us forward. I gotta go. I'm on call this week. I'll see you on Saturday. Let me know if you want popovers. He's giving them away at Mount Airy Lodge.

(Marty snaps his fingers as if he's imitating Paul. Stuart exits. Janie walks around the sofa, slowly turns, and quickly gasps)

(End of the scene)

(Telephone Machine No. 5)

VLADIMIR: (Ring. Beep) Hello-hi. This is Vladimir. Hello-hi. Uh, I have tickets for Bruce Springsteen. I will return call. (Hang up)

CYNTHIA PETERSON: (Beep) Janie, it's Cynthia Peterson. I met a man on a plane to Houston. Keep your fingers crossed. (Hang up)

ACT TWO, Scene Three

(The Four Seasons Restaurant. Harriet and Lillian seated at a table. They have finished eating their entrees. Harriet is distracted.)

LILLIAN: Everything all right with you?

HARRIET: Fine. I guess. I made a presentation to my boss a week ago. He told me my ideas were too theoretical. Then the next day, at a meeting, my friend Joe Stine said my boss presented my ideas as his own and he got them through.

LILLIAN: Good for you.

HARRIET: Mother, I work very hard. I don't want that man stealing my ideas.

LILLIAN: You think it would be better to be married and have your husband steal your ideas?

HARRIET: What?

LILLIAN: I was just cheering you up with a depressing alternative. Look at Jean Harris. That guy would have manipulated her for the rest of her life. Do me a favor, baby. Go in tomorrow and tell your boss, whoever he is, Ron, Rick, Dick, I am sorry but you stole my idea and I hold you accountable. (Pause) Do you
Isn’t It Romantic

want dessert? Have some chocolate velvet cake and I’ll take a taste.

HARRIET: Mother, you haven’t finished not eating your lunch. You haven’t picked all the salad dressing off your salad or removed all the potatoes from your plate.

LILLIAN: Tom, we’ll have the chocolate velvet cake.

HARRIET: I remember when you took me here as a little girl. I told everyone in my class we were going to the Four Seasons for lunch ’cause you told me it was very special. I always loved coming here and I thought you were very beautiful in your subtle blue suits, calling all those grown men, Tom, Dave. I mean, they never really knew the other women in the room, but they knew my mommy. My mommy was important.

LILLIAN: She is. Harriet, you can’t blame everything on me. I wasn’t home enough for you to blame everything on me.

HARRIET: Clever.

LILLIAN: I thought so. (She waves to someone) Hi, Bill.

HARRIET: Are you proud of me?

LILLIAN: Of course I’m proud of you. Are you proud of me?

HARRIET: Yes. Very.

LILLIAN: I didn’t cheat you too much.

HARRIET: No.

LILLIAN: Have children, Harriet. It’s one of the few things in life that’s worthwhile. (She waves at another man) Hi, Kip.

HARRIET: Mother, when do you stop hoping that there will be some enormous change, some dam breaking, and then you’ll start living your life? You know what I’m tired of? I’m tired of the whole idea that everything takes work. Relationships take

work, personal growth takes work, spiritual development, child rearing, creativity. Well, I would like to do something simply splendidly that took absolutely no real effort at all.

LILLIAN: Harriet, your thinking is all over the place today. What is it? Are you having an affair or something?

HARRIET: My boss’s boss. The one you said should be further along. But it’s nothing.

LILLIAN: Forty percent of the people at McKinsey are having affairs.

HARRIET: I know that.

LILLIAN: See how nice it is to have a daughter in your own field. If you want me to, I’d like to meet this guy.

HARRIET: He once had an interview with you. He said you have balls.

LILLIAN: Don’t be offended, baby. Your father said the same thing. (Both women laugh. She waves again.) Hi, Ken. Where’s our cake? I have a meeting at two-thirty.

HARRIET: Mother . . . ?

LILLIAN: What is this, “Youth wants to know”? Honey, I’m an old lady. I don’t know all the answers to these things.

HARRIET: I have just one more question. Just one.

LILLIAN: To get to the other side.

HARRIET: What?

LILLIAN: I was giving you the answer.

HARRIET: That’s not funny.
Isn’t It Romantic

LILLIAN: I’m not a funny woman. Ask me, baby, I’ve got to go. Where is that man? I can’t sit around here like this.

HARRIET: Calm down.

LILLIAN: What’s your question? Harriet, I’m in a hurry.

HARRIET: Mother, do you think it's possible to be married or living with a man, have a good relationship and children that you share equal responsibility for, and a career, and still read novels, play the piano, have women friends, and swim twice a week?

LILLIAN: You mean what the women’s magazines call “having it all”? Harriet, that’s just your generation’s fantasy.

HARRIET: Mother, you’re being too harsh. Listen to me, what I want to know is if you do have all those things, my generation’s fantasy, then what do you want?

LILLIAN: Needlepoint. You desperately want to needlepoint. (Pause) Life is a negotiation, Harriet. You think the women who go back to work at thirty-six are going to have the same career as a woman who has been there since her twenties? You think someone who has a baby and leaves it after two weeks to go back to work is going to have the same relationship with that child as someone who has been there all along? It’s impossible. And you show me the wonderful man with whom you’re going to have it all. You tell me how he feels when you take as many business trips as he does. You tell me who has to leave the office when the kid bumps his head on a radiator or slips on a milk carton. No, I don’t think what you’re talking about is possible.

HARRIET: All right. When you were twenty-nine, what was possible for you?

LILLIAN: When I was your age, I realized I had to make some choices. I had a promising career, a child, and a husband; and believe me, if you have all three and you’re very conscientious, you still have to choose your priorities. So I gave some serious thought to what was important to me. And what was important to me was a career I could be proud of and successfully bringing up a child. So the first thing that had to go was pleasing my husband ’cause he was a grown-up and could take care of himself. Yes, Baby, everything did take work, but it was worthwhile. I never dreamed I’d be this successful. And I have a perfectly lovely daughter. Baby, I have a full, rich life.


LILLIAN: If a man more appealing than James Garner comes into my life, I’ll make room for him too. O.K., baby?

HARRIET: Well, I’ve made up my mind. I’m going to try and do it. Have it all.

LILLIAN: Good for you. For your sake, I hope you can. (Pause) What’s the matter, Harriet? Did I disillusion you?

HARRIET: No, I’m afraid I’m just like you.

LILLIAN: Don’t be afraid. You’re younger.

HARRIET: Mother, you’re trying my patience.

LILLIAN: You sound just like me, dear.

HARRIET: If you were younger, I’d say something nasty.

LILLIAN: Whisper it late at night. It will give you guilt and anxiety. Your sweet old mom who worked for years to support you.

HARRIET: Fuck off, Mother.

LILLIAN: Don’t tell that to your boss. Pay the bill, will you? Comb your hair, baby. I like it better off your face. Call me Sunday. Pretend it’s Mother’s Day. (To waiter) This young lady will take the check, please. I love you, Harriet. (Lillian kisses her on the cheek)

HARRIET: I love you too.
LILLIAN: Sometimes.

HARRIET: Sometimes.

LILLIAN: (As she exits) Lovely lunch, Tom. Thank you.

(Harriet takes out her American Express Gold Card and lays it on the table)

(End of scene)

(Telephone Machine No. 6)

SIMON: (Beep) Janie, it's Dad. Do you want to meet us at Oscar's for brunch? (Hang up)

MARTY: (Beep) Monkey, sweetheart, are you there? Pick it up. Pick it up. I have to do my father a big favor tomorrow in Central Park. You and I will have dinner in Brooklyn. (Hang up)

ACT TWO, Scene Four

(Central Park. We hear Sousa's "Washington Post." Marty enters to cheers. He picks up a mike. Camera flashes go off)

MARTY: (Into microphone) This is Dr. Murray Schlimovitz. I'm here at beautiful Central Park to inaugurate the first Annual Sterling Marathon. That's right. He's giving away spring water, he's giving away seltzer, he's giving away carob bars.

(Janie enters on the left)

MARTY: And you know what my father always says, "You should only live and be well."

(Marty waves and the crowd cheers. He puts down the mike and moves to Janie)

MARTY: Janie?

JANIE: Hi, Dr. Murray Schlimovitz.

MARTY: I decided to open my practice in Brooklyn under my real name. What are you doing here?

JANIE: I was in the neighborhood. They accepted my sketches for the giant bird. Does Mount Sinai know you're here?

MARTY: I'm here because it's my responsibility to my family. (Pause) Oy, I'm such a schmucky nice doctor.

JANIE: You're not such a schmucky nice doctor. What's the matter?

MARTY: I don't understand you. I call you all last night to coordinate the time for the moving truck to arrive at your house today, you don't return my calls, and then you arrive here ready to crack jokes. Janie, what are you, a home-entertainment unit? Honey, go home. The moving truck will be at your house in an hour.

JANIE: Marty, do you ever get the feeling that everything is changing, and you don't know when you decided to make the change?

MARTY: (Kissing Janie) Nothing's changing. I'm offering you love, I'm offering you affection, I'm offering you attention. All you have to do is put your crates that you never unpacked on
Isn't It Romantic

don't and get on the Belt Parkway. Sweetheart you just
move forward.

JANIE: I can't just move forward.

MARTY: You know what I think? I think you're frightened to try.
You think it's a compromise. You think you're not grown-up
yet. That's bullshit. Maybe you think I'm not special enough.

JANIE: I think you're very special. But I want us to decide to
move when we decide together. Marty, you took an apartment
and you didn't even tell me about it first. None of it had any-
things to do with me. I don't want to sneak around you and
pretend that I'm never angry. I don't want to be afraid of you. I
guess to a man I love I want to feel not just that I can talk, but
that you'll listen.

MARTY: Do you think I don't listen to you?

JANIE: You have all the answers before I ask the questions.

MARTY: You picked a hell of a time to bring this up. You want to
give the answers, fine. You make the decision right now. Either
you move in with me tonight or we stop and I'll make alternate
arrangements.

JANIE: Marty, by you everything is much more simple than it has
to be. You want a wife, you get a wife. You drop out of Harvard
twice, they always take you back. You're just like me. We're too
fucking sweet. I'm so sweet, I never say what I want; and you're
so sweet, you always get what you want.

MARTY: Not necessarily. Why do you think I'm thirty-two and
not married? All I want is a home, a family, something my
father had so easily and I can't seem to get started on. Why? I'm
a nice Jewish doctor. Women want to marry their daughters off
to me all the time. Sure, I want to know where I'll live, who'll
take the children to the nursery, but I wanted something special
too. Just a little. Maybe not as special as you turned out to be,

but just a little. Janie, I do not want to marry anyone like my
sister-in-law.

JANIE: I never liked her. Honey, I wish we could throw a wedding
at the Plaza. And your father could be toastmaster general, and
Harriet would select my pattern, and my mother would dance,
and baby Schlomo could carry the ring in one of my father's
gold-seal envelopes.

MARTY: (Cuts her off suddenly quite angry) Look, you want to
have children with a turkey baster, that's fine. You want to write
sketches for a giant bird at two o'clock in the morning, that's
fine too, you wanna come home to Cynthia Peterson's phone
calls, fine. You want to find out what it's like to take care of
yourself, good luck to you. But it isn't right for me. And I'll tell
you something, Janie, it isn't right for you either.

JANIE: (Softly) Marty, you're not right for me. I can't move in
with you now. If I did that, I'd always be a monkey, a sweet
girl.

MARTY: (After a pause) I have to get back with the starting pistol.

(Marty starts to go. Janie stops him)

JANIE: Honey, it's complicated.

MARTY: No. It's simple. You don't love me enough. (He exits)

JANIE: Marty . . .

(After a pause, we hear Marty on a microphone, offstage)

MARTY: This is Dr. Murray Schlimovitz. At the First Annual

(Janie is left alone on stage as the lights fade)

(End of the scene)

(Telephone Machine No. 7)
Isn't It Romantic

HARRIET: (Beep). Janie, I have good news. No, great news. Can you and Marty come over to dinner Sunday at six? There's chicken marengo. Bye. (Hang up)

HARRIET: (Beep) Harriet, again. Where are you? If you guys don't show up tomorrow, I'll hock your china. I miss you... (Hang up)

OPERATOR: (Dial tone) Please hang up. There seems to be a receiver off the hook.

ACT TWO, Scene Five

(Harriet's apartment. Lillian and Harriet, with a drink)

HARRIET: I thought you'd tell me I was insane.

LILLIAN: You're not insane. Impetuous, but not insane. Does Janie like Joe?

HARRIET: Janie's never even met Joe.

LILLIAN: You should talk to her about him. I read in these women's magazines it's important to discuss your life choices with your friends.

HARRIET: Mother, you're so full of homespun advice today.

LILLIAN: I got my hair done yesterday. I read a lot of those women's magazines. You and Joe will have to come over next week for some Jell-O.

(The doorbell rings. Harriet answers it. Janie is there with a bouquet of flowers)

JANIE: (Offstage) Harriet, it's me, Janie.

HARRIET: (Opening the door) Hi.

JANIE: These are for you. I was afraid you'd say they're too old, they're too new, they're gold.

HARRIET: No, they're perfect.

(Harriet points Janie to her mother)

JANIE: How are you, Mrs. Cornwall?

LILLIAN: Janie, I'll know you the rest of my life, and you'll still call me Mrs. Cornwall. Makes me feel good, baby. The kids in my office call me Lillian and pretend we're colleagues. We're not colleagues. I'm a person of moral and intellectual superiority.

HARRIET: (From off stage, in the kitchen) My mother deals from strength. (She enters with the drink for Janie)

JANIE: Speaking of strength, guess who called me? Paul Stuart. He said to tell you he really likes you and he doesn't understand why you won't return his calls. I'm also awfully glad he has my number.

LILLIAN: Is this your boss's boss? The one who was so impressed with my potency.

HARRIET: Well, he's my boss now. I was promoted.

(Janie and Harriet hug)

HARRIET AND JANIE: Yeah!!!
Isn't It Romantic

JANIE: I knew there was good news here. I got the chicken marengo message and I said something good was happening. I've been trying to call you, but you're never home and then I was busy sending the letter "B" to the Bahamas. "Sesame Street" hired me part time!

HARRIET AND JANIE: Yeah!!!(Janie and Harriet hug again)

LILLIAN: Perhaps I should feel threatened. I'm surrounded by a generation of achieving younger women.

HARRIET: I don't think Janie's threatening to anyone. That's her gift.

LILLIAN: Well, she's impressive. (Pause) Where's your nice young man? Harriet said she invited him to dinner tonight. I was looking forward to meeting him.

JANIE: (Uncomfortable) Uh, Marty's busy tonight. There's a testimonial dinner for his father at Szechuan Taste. One day they'll find out which rabbi he's paying off and close those places down.

LILLIAN: Harriet, maybe Marty's father should cater your wedding? It'll be a first for the Carlisle. And we could keep it in the family.

JANIE: (Not hearing what she said) Excuse me?

HARRIET: Janie, do you remember at my whiplash party two weeks ago, I told you I was driving up to a planning conference with Joe? He's the headhunter who got me my job at Colgate. He was a year ahead of me at Harvard. I've been spending a lot of time with him recently. And yesterday he asked me to marry him.

JANIE: What?

(Harriet stands up and announces with pride.)

HARRIET: I'm going to marry Joe Stine.

(Pause)

LILLIAN: He'll be all right for a first husband. I'm just kidding. You know I'm thrilled, baby.

JANIE: Congratulations!

HARRIET: I would have told you earlier, but I didn't even know it was happening. And my time with Joe has been so intense I wasn't able to call you.

JANIE: That's wonderful!

LILLIAN: Janie, you and I will have to plan the shower. Well, I'm off to the Ming Dynasty.

HARRIET: What?

LILLIAN: I'm taking an art history class. Not for credit. Your mother is broadening herself. I'll leave you girls to your dinner. Harriet, for the sake of your marriage, move beyond chicken marengo. Bye, Bye, girls. (She exits)

JANIE: She's in a good mood.

HARRIET: She's been reading Redbook. So, what do you think?

JANIE: It's wonderful. Mazel tov.

HARRIET: (Exiting to kitchen) I didn't mean to surprise you like this. I wanted to have you and Marty to dinner. Are things O.K. with Marty?

JANIE: Yeah. Fine.

HARRIET: (From kitchen) You O.K.?

JANIE: Harriet, have you thought maybe you should live with Joe first? Better yet, maybe you should have dinner with him first?
Isn't It Romantic

HARRIET: I want to marry him. Janie, he's the only person who's even cared about me in a long time. He listens to me. (Harriet re-enters with flowers in a vase) Tasha's right. You and I deserve a little nachos.

JANIE: Naches.

HARRIET: Joe makes me feel like I have a family. I never had a family. I had you and Lillian, but I never felt I could have what other women just assumed they would get.

JANIE: I want to know one thing. I want to know why when I asked you about my living with Marty, you told me you didn't respect women who didn't learn to live alone and pay their own rent? And then, the first chance you have to change your life, you grasp it.

HARRIET: What? Marrying Joe is just a chance that came along.

JANIE: I see. You've been waiting for some man to come along and change your life. And all the things you told me about learning to live alone and women and friendship, that was so much social nonsense. I feel like an idiot! I made choices based on an idea that doesn't exist anymore.

HARRIET: What choices?

JANIE: Never mind.

HARRIET: Janie, when I told you that, I didn't know what it would be like when Paul Stuart would leave at ten and go home to Cathy and I would have to pretend I wasn't hurt. I didn't know what it would be like to have lunch with Lillian and think I'm on my way to watching 'Rockford File' reruns. Of course you should learn to live alone and pay your own rent, but I didn't realize what it would feel like for me when I became too good at it. Janie, I know how to come home, put on the news, have a glass of wine, read a book, call you. What I don't know is what to do when there's someone who loves me in the house.

(Pause)

JANIE: I could throw this table at you.

HARRIET: Why? Janie, we're too good friends for you to be jealous.

JANIE: I'm not jealous.

HARRIET: Don't blame me for your doubts about Marty.

JANIE: Harriet, I don't blame you for anything. I'm sorry. Right now I just don't like you very much.

HARRIET: Why? Because I'm leaving you? Because I'm getting married?

JANIE: Because our friendship didn't mean very much to you. You bring me the sugar, the bread, and the salt, and then you stand there and tell me you never had a family. Harriet, you never really listened to me and you never really told me about yourself. And that's sad.

HARRIET: Janie, I love you. But you want us to stay girls together. I'm not a girl anymore. I'm almost thirty and I'm alone.

JANIE: You lied to me.

HARRIET: I never lied to you. I lied to myself. It doesn't take any strength to be alone, Janie. It's much harder to be with someone else. I want to have children and get on with my life.

JANIE: What do you do? Fall in with every current the tide pulls in? Women should live alone and find out what they can do, put off marriage, establish a vertical career track, so you do that for a while. Then you almost turn thirty and Time magazine announces, "Guess what, girls, it's time to have it all." Jaclyn Smith is married and pregnant and playing Jacqueline Kennedy. Every other person who was analyzing stocks last year is analyzing layettes this year. So you do that. What are you doing, Harriet? Who the hell are you? Can't you conceive of some plan, some time-management scheme that you made up for yourself? Can't you take a chance?
Isn't It Romantic

HARRIET: I am taking a chance. I hardly know this man.

JANIE: You don’t have to force yourself into a situation—a marriage because it’s time.

HARRIET: You’re just frightened of being with someone, Janie. You’re just frightened of making a choice and taking responsibility for it.

JANIE: That sounds romantic.

HARRIET: That’s life.

JANIE: Harriet, you’re getting married to someone you’ve been dating for two weeks. I am much more scared of being alone than you are. But I’m not going to turn someone into the answer for me.

HARRIET: Then you’ll be alone.

JANIE: Then I’ll be alone. (Pause) I better go. I have to get up early with the letter “B.” If they like this, they’ll hire me full time. In charge of consonants.

HARRIET: Give my love to Marty.

JANIE: I can’t. I told him I won’t move with him to Brooklyn.

HARRIET: So you’ll get an apartment in Manhattan.

JANIE: (She cries) We broke up. I decided not to see him anymore.

HARRIET: Won’t you miss him?

JANIE: I missed him today when I saw someone who looks sweet like him walking down the street, and I’ll miss him late tonight.

HARRIET: Maybe you should call him.

JANIE: No.

ACT TWO, Scene Six

HARRIET: Life is a negotiation.

JANIE: I don’t believe I have to believe that.

HARRIET: Janie, it’s too painful not to grow up.

JANIE: That’s not how I want to grow up. (She kisses Harriet and starts to go.)

HARRIET: You don’t have to separate from me. I’m not leaving you.

JANIE: (Picking up the trash) Want me to throw this out for you?

HARRIET: Sure.

JANIE: Do you really think anyone has ever met someone throwing out the garbage?

(They shake their heads no. Janie exits)

(End of the scene)

ACT TWO, Scene Six

(Janie’s apartment. Janie is alone, sitting in front of her crates, wrapped in her blanket, holding a swizzle stick and crying. We hear
Isn't It Romantic

a romantic singing version of the song "Isn't It Romantic". The
doorbell rings. No answer. The doorbell rings again.

SIMON: (From offstage) Janie, Janie.

JANIE: (Softly) What?

(The doorbell rings)

SIMON: Janie. Janie. It's Dad. Can we come in?

JANIE: Just a second.

TASHA: (Offstage) Janie, the super said he doesn't have the key.

JANIE: (Opening the door) I changed the lock.

TASHA: (Offstage) What?!

JANIE: Mother, you can't come in until you repeat after me. "My
dughter is a grown woman."

TASHA: (Offstage) Simon, she's crazy.

JANIE: "My daughter is a grown woman."

TASHA: (Offstage) "My daughter is a grown woman."

JANIE: "This is her apartment."

TASHA: (Offstage) Of course it's your apartment.

SIMON: (Offstage) For Christ's sake, just tell her . . .

TASHA: (Offstage) "This is her apartment."

JANIE: "I am to call before I arrive here."

TASHA: (Offstage) I always call. I get the machine.

SIMON: (Offstage) Janie, we can leave this with the doorman.

ACT TWO, Scene Six

JANIE: There is no doorman here.

TASHA: (Offstage) Simon, maybe she wants to be alone.

JANIE: (Opening the door) It's all right, Mother. The six truck
drivers just left out the back window.

(Tasha and Simon enter. He carries a box)

SIMON: Sorry to bother you. We tried calling, but you don't return
our calls.

JANIE: I've been busy, Daddy. I'm going on location with the
letter "C" to Canada. They seem to like me.

TASHA: Of course they like you. You're my daughter.

JANIE: I don't think they know you, Mother.

TASHA: Simon, give her the package and let's go. (Simon puts
down the box) Your father said Janie will look like a model in
this.

SIMON: You don't have to keep it unless you like it.

(Janie opens the box. It contains a mink coat)

SIMON: Do you like it?

TASHA: Give your father a little pleasure. Try it on.

(Tasha helps Janie on with it. It is very small on her.)

SIMON: I think it's very nice to your face. The girls are wearing
the sleeves short now.

TASHA: I see girls your age wearing theirs to walk the baby car-
riage.

SIMON: Don't say you like it if you don't like it.
Isn’t It Romantic

JANIE: I like it. I like it. If I was thirty-six and married to a doctor and a size three, this would be perfect for me.

TASHA: So why aren’t you?

JANIE: Do you want to know why I don’t call you? You expect me to dial the phone and say, “Hello Mother, hello Father, here I am in my mink coat. I just came home from wearing it to walk the carriage. Everything is settled. Everything has worked out wonderfully. Here are your naches. Congratulations. I appreciate you.”

TASHA: Why do you speak so much Yiddish? We never spoke so much Yiddish around the house.

JANIE: Look, I’m sorry. Things didn’t work out as you planned. There’s nothing wrong with that life; it just isn’t mine right now.

SIMON: What are you getting so emotional about? Sit. Relax. Look at me. I never get so emotional. Janie, all we did was give you a mink coat. You’ll wear it when it’s cold. And if you like, you’ll wear it when it’s hot like the old ladies in Miami. That’s all. No big deal. Are you taking drugs? Your eyes are glossy. Dear, look at her eyes.

TASHA: I don’t want to look at her eyes. Janie, I’ll never forget as a child when I sent you to Helena Rubinstein Charm School. And you always came late with the hair in the eyes and the hem hanging down. And Mrs. Rubinstein told me you were an ungrateful child.

JANIE: Mrs. Rubinstein never told you I was an ungrateful child.

TASHA: Simon, what did she tell us?

JANIE: The receptionist at Helena Rubinstein told you I was an ungrateful child. Mother, what do you want from me? You give me a mink, I know you think any other daughter would appreciate this. Helena Rubinstein knows any other daughter would appreciate this. Georgette Klinger’s daughter would appreciate this. I am a selfish, spoiled person. Something is the matter with me.

TASHA: (Getting up) Something is the matter with you. Simon, I have to go dance. I have to work her out of my system.

SIMON: Dear, relax.

JANIE: I don’t see how I can help you understand what I’m doing. Neither of you ever lived alone; you never thought maybe I won’t have children. What will I do with my life if I don’t.

TASHA: All right, you’re the smart one. I’m the stupid one. I haven’t taught you anything.

JANIE: (Furious) Mother, think about it. Did you teach me to marry a nice Jewish doctor and make chicken for him? You order up breakfast from a Greek coffee shop every morning. Did you teach me to go to law school and wear gray suits at a job that I sort of like everyday from nine to eight? You run out in leg warmers and tank tops to dancing school. Did you teach me to compromise and lie to the man I live with and say I love you when I wasn’t sure? You live with your partner; you walk Dad to work every morning.

TASHA: Now I understand. Everything is my fault. I should have been like the other mothers, forty chickens in the freezer, and played mah-jongg all afternoon. Janie, I couldn’t live like that. God forbid. You think your father would have been happy with one of those women with the blond hair and the diamonds? And I’ll tell you something else, you and Ben wouldn’t have come out as well as you did. I believe a person should have a little originality—a little, you know. Otherwise you just grow old like everybody else. Let’s go, Simon. Honey, you don’t have to call us. You don’t even have to let us know how you are. You do what you want.

(Tasha starts to go)

JANIE: Wait a minute.
Isn’t It Romantic

TASHA: I’m a modern woman too, you know. I have my dancing, I have your father, and my beautiful grandchild, and Ben. I don’t need you to fill up my life. I’m an independent woman—a person in my own right. Am I right, Simon?

SIMON: Janie, as for me, what I want is some Sunday before I come over here with a coffee table or a mink coat, you’d call me and say, “Dad, let’s get together, I’d like to see you.”

TASHA: She doesn’t want to see us.

(Pause. Looking at her parents)

JANIE: I do want to see you. But you don’t have to call every morning to sing “Sunrise, sunset,” and you don’t have to bring a mink coat or a coffee table, or even a Russian taxi-cab driver for me to marry.

SIMON: What happened to him? He was a nice boy.

JANIE: All you have to do is trust me a little bit. I believe a person should have a little originality, a little you know; otherwise you just grow old like everybody else. And you know, Janie, I like life-life-life. Mother, sit, relax, let me figure it out.

TASHA: But, honey, if I sit, who’s going to dance?

JANIE: Everything presses itself out.

TASHA: Unfortunately, Janie, the clock has a funny habit of keeping on ticking. I want to know who’s going to take care of you when we’re not around anymore.

JANIE: I guess I will. (Janie takes her mother’s hand.) Mother, don’t worry. I’m Tasha’s daughter. I know, “I am.”

TASHA: That’s right. I am.

(Tasha is crying slightly. Janie touches Tasha’s cheek; then they hug)

ACT TWO, Scene Six

SIMON: And Janie, from a man’s point of view, the next time someone wants you to make him chicken, you tell him I was at your sister-in-law Christ’s house the other day, and she ordered up lamb chops from the Madison Delicatessen. How hard is it to cook lamb chops? You just stick them in the broiler. If Christ can order up lamb chops, and she’s a girl from Nebraska, you don’t have to make anybody chicken. Believe me, you were born to order up.

JANIE: Sounds like Manifest Destiny.

SIMON: In fact, I have the number. We could have a family dinner right now.

TASHA: No, Simon, let’s go home.

SIMON: (Kisses Janie) Goodbye, Janie.

JANIE: Goodbye, Daddy. (He begins to exit.)

JANIE: Mother, one more thing. Take back your mink.

(Janie takes it off and puts it over Tasha’s shoulders)

TASHA: Fits me perfectly.

JANIE: Fits you perfectly.

TASHA: Where’s my partner?

(Tasha sweeps up to Simon and, arm in arm, they exit. Janie is alone for a moment in silence. She picks up her blanket and folds it neatly, picks up the mink box, and sets them on a crate. It’s time to finally unpack. She lifts all of the above and starts to exit into the bedroom as the telephone rings)

(Janie enters)

CYNTHIA PETERSON: (On phone machine) Janie, it’s Cynthia Peterson. It’s my thirty-fourth birthday. I’m alone. Nothing hap-
Isn’t It Romantic

pened with Mr. Houston. I should have married Mark Silverstein in college. Janie, by the time I’m thirty-five, this is what I want.

JANIE: (Flaps her foot) Flap.

CYNTHIA PETERSON: I want 100,000 dollars a year, a husband, a baby. Janie, are you there? I hear breathing.

JANIE: (Takes another step) Flap heel.

CYNTHIA PETERSON: I think someone’s there. Whoever you are, there’s nothing there worth taking.


CYNTHIA PETERSON: Janie, I met a man at the deli last night. He asked me if I wanted to have a beer in his apartment at one o’clock in the morning. Do you think I should have gone? (Janie starts to tap with some assurance as the tape continues)

There was an article in the New York Post that there are 1,000 men for every 1,123 New York hubby-hunters. (Music comes in [“Isn’t It Romantic”] as Janie crosses up and picks up her hat and umbrella) And there was this picture of an eligible man. He’s an actor and he likes painting. I like painting. Should I call him? (The music gets louder. Soft shoe fuller with orchestra Janie dances as Cynthia fades. A spot picks up Janie dancing beautifully.) I could take him to the Guggenheim with my membership. How many of these 1,123 women are going to call him? How many have memberships to the Guggenheim? I don’t know if I want to marry an actor. Maybe I should wait for tomorrow’s eligible bachelor.

(Spot fades on Janie, turning with the hat and umbrella, alone)

(End of play)