ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Loose Knit was originally presented in workshop by New York Stage and Film Company in association with the Powerhouse Theater at Vassar. Loose Knit premiered in New York City during the 1992–93 season of Second Stage Theatre, Carole Rothman, Artistic Director; Suzanne Schwartz Davidson, Producing Director. It was directed by Beth Schachter and had the following cast (in order of appearance):

LIZ ........................................ Mary B. Ward
LILY ....................................... Patricia Kalember
PAULA ..................................... Tamara Tunie
GINA ....................................... Kristine Nielsen
MARGIE ................................. Constance Shulman
BOB ....................................... Reed Birney
MILES .................................... Daniel Gerroll

Set Design ............................. Santo Loquasto
Lighting Design ....................... Frances Aronson
Costume Design ....................... Elsa Ward
Sound Design ............................ Mark Bennett
Production Stage Manager ......... Jess Lynn
Hair Design ............................. Antonio Soddu

CHARACTERS

LIZ: White, early-thirties, loose, easy going, intelligent, emotional, Lily's sister
GINA: White, mid-thirties, holds herself in, matter of fact, a lawyer
PAULA: Black, late-thirties, well-adjusted, sharp intelligence
LILY: White, mid-thirties, very feminine, very controlled, married
MARGIE: White, early-thirties, quite lovely but a bit scattered and erratic, always at the end of her rope
BOB: White, late-thirties, Lily's husband, not ambitious
MILES: White, mid-thirties, carries himself with all the assumptions of power and money, although it is never clear where he got it

TIME AND PLACE

The Present, New York City

SETS

A variety of locations: the apartments of Lily, Liz and Gina, and a small Japanese sushi restaurant. A large wooden table is the centerpiece of all three apartments. A small table representing the sushi restaurant stands to one side.
ACT I
SCENE I

Lily’s apartment. Three women sit draped on furniture, knitting. A fourth, Lily, stands among them holding a plate of banana bread. They stand in tableau for a moment, an almost archetypal image of womanhood. As the lights change, the tableau breaks and they move with dreamlike gestures as they examine their knitting pieces over the table. Lily bends and sets down the banana bread. Liz suddenly tears at her knitting and throws it on the floor.

LIZ: Fuck.
LILY: Oh, dear.
PAULA: I told you that was going to be too hard.
LIZ: You said it was easy.
PAULA: I said it was a lovely stitch.
LIZ: You said it was easy!
LILY: No, I think I said that. I thought it looked easy. (She takes the knitting from her.)
LIZ: I’m sorry, but I just think this knitting racket is a total fucking drag. You spend weeks just shoving needles and strings at each other until you’ve got a whole bunch of knots. What a great way to pass time.
GINA: You should have started with a scarf.
LIZ: Scarves are boring.
GINA: You hate knitting anyway! What do you care if you’re bored?
LILY: What a mess.
LIZ: Oh, leave it alone. I don’t like that pattern anymore. I’m not going to finish it.
LILY: (Takes the knitting and tries to unravel it.) Calm down. Everything’s such a catastrophe…
LIZ: I didn’t say it was a catastrophe. I just don’t want to finish it. It’s too short. Those little sweaters that hit you at the waist are never flattering. You think they’re going to be and then they’re not. And I don’t like this girl in the picture. She looks smug.
(GINA studies the instruction magazine in her hand and then shows the picture to Paula, who nods.)
LILY: Now, Liz, you always do this when you’re about to quit and I’m not going to let you quit this time.
LIZ: Ahhhh! Lily, please! I spend so much time avoiding Mom and Dad and then you just take over for them. I don’t know why I bother.

LILY: Since you mention it, I did see Dad the other day.
LIZ: So how is the old shithead?
PAULA: I love it when you two talk parents.
LILY: He’d like to see you.
LIZ: What he’d like to do is kill me. He’ll settle for locking me in his apartment and screaming at me for a couple of hours.
(She and Paula laugh.)
LILY: I still don’t understand why you’re so mad at him.
LIZ: Oh, for heaven’s sake, you do too. I’m mad at him because he dumped Mom and married his secretary. I mean, it’s all so tawdry and predictable. I’m downright embarrassed. His secretary? He has no imagination. And maybe Mom is no saint but the woman is over sixty and alone now—
LILY: (Overlap.) Really, Liz, that was over a year ago, and it’s not like it came out of the blue; he and Mom were making each other miserable for years. No one can live with her, you say it more than anyone, when was the last time you even went to see her?
LIZ: Who wants to see her? She’s always depressed because Dad dumped her!
(Pause.) I’m sorry. You’re right. I’ll go see her.
LILY: What about Dad?
LIZ: I will go see Mom, okay?
LILY: Would anybody like tea?
(Behind her back, Liz sticks her tongue out at Lily.)
PAULA: That would be great.
LILY: Hang onto that for a second, Liz; I think I’ve figured it out. It’s just like that top I made for Adelaide last year. It’s a leaf pattern.
GINA: Where is Adelaide tonight?
LILY: She’s at her play group. And guess what? They’re learning how to knit.
GINA: (Appreciative.) Awawaw.
LILY: You should have seen her going off with her little needles in her little Laura Ashley dress. You know, their children’s clothes are the only things you can buy any more. It’s a shame, but last week I was looking at their women’s dresses, and they just have too much up at the neckline now. You know, collars and bows, it’s too much. I like something that’s more open, you know, with all those flowers, you need a little bit more of a neckline. I think it’s because she died. Did you know that? Laura Ashley died two years ago. Fell down a flight of stairs.
(She exits. Liz watches her go.)
LIZ: Whenever she does that, I'm never sure if she's kidding.
GINA: So where's Margie?
LIZ: I don't know. (Calling.) Hey, Lily, where's Margie?
LILY: (Calling.) She should be on her way.
LIZ: Good. I have to admit, I just, you know, I don't feel comfortable until she's here. She's the only one who's a worse knitter than I am.
PAAULA: Why do you see this as a competition?
LIZ: Oh, Paula, don't start.
PAAULA: Don't start what?
LIZ: Don't start asking questions. I know you. One thing leads to another and all of a sudden my neuroses are spread all over the room.
PAAULA: Your neuroses are spread all over the room anyway.
LIZ: That's not true. Is that true? Oh, well, I can't help it. I get lied to all day so on my off hours I end up with this pathological urge to be honest. No shit, every day I am, like, bombarded with lies. Last Tuesday, I interviewed a certain extremely well-known and promiscuous rock star who lied to me twelve times in twenty minutes. I counted.
PAAULA: Really?
GINA: Who?
LIZ: Oh, who cares, they all do it.
PAAULA: Stop complaining. You have the most glamorous job of any of us, and all you do is complain.
LIZ: I spend half my life hustling stories and I'm always broke. It's not glamorous!
PAAULA: You meet movie stars.
LIZ: They're a bunch of liars.
PAAULA: So? I hang out with lawyers. They lie too. And, they're mean and boring and they're not on television. Your job sounds good to me.
PAAULA: If you really want to meet liars, you should become a therapist. People will pay you hundreds of dollars an hour so they can come in and lie. It's astonishing. I'm going to write a book about it.
LIZ: Really? They come in and lie?
(Lily reenters and silently serves tea while Paula speaks.)
PAAULA: Well, they don't know they're lying—or no, some of them do. You know. It's like anything. I just sort of listen and hope it's not my fault.
(Margie enters, breathless, dumps her stuff all over the floor and kisses Lily. She shakes off rain and peels off raincoat.)
MARGIE: I'm sorry, I'm sorry I'm so late—I hate this city—
GINA: Join the club.

LILY: Yes, we're all being very morose tonight.
MARGIE: Really? You guys are morose? You don't look morose.
PAAULA: We got started talking about reality. That'll depress anybody.
LILY: (To Margie.) Something came up at work?
MARGIE: No, I had an appointment at a dating service. Took forever.
LILY: You went to a dating service?
MARGIE: Yes, I went to a dating service.
LIZ: You did not.
MARGIE: What? Why shouldn't I go to a dating service? You go to a bar and you don't know who you're talking to; you could be talking to some serial killer or something. This way, if I end up getting murdered by my date I can at least sue somebody. Besides, what's wrong with just admitting you want to find a man? Is there something wrong with that? It's just, you know, the primal urge, and there's no reason we have to be ashamed of it. You go to a bar, all you do there is pretend that you want a drink when what you really want is a date, and the next thing you know, you're an alcoholic, and you're fat. I mean, no thanks, okay? It's time to be an adult.
LIZ: I didn't mean anything.
MARGIE: I'm just saying. You reach a point, reality sinks in.
LILY: I think it's a good idea.
MARGIE: You do?
LILY: Yes.
PAAULA: Me too. It's a control issue. Now you've got control.
LIZ: So, what was it like?
MARGIE: Well, given the fact that it was the most humiliating moment of my life, they were very nice. I mean, it was kind of like joining a cult, you know? Everybody smiled all the time and asked extremely personal questions. I don't know. It's probably just as big a waste of time as anything, but as long as you're wasting time you may as well live with hope, you know? I mean, I can't imagine, from what they asked me, that they're going to hook me up with an actual human being, but, you know, they might. Someone with biceps, he's out there somewhere, and they'll find him, with their little computer, and then I'll have a date with him. Biceps. That could be nice, huh?
PAAULA: I went out with a guy in college who had biceps. He was a pig.
MARGIE: Oh, for heaven's sake. I mean, come on. Geez.
PAAULA: What? I'm just saying...
MARGIE: No, you're not just saying. I'm trying to have some hope here, you
LIZ: It's all too complicated. We should just go back to whacking wet clothing against rocks.
GINA: Everything would lose it's shape.
BOB: Besides, how would you bleach anything? I mean, I mixed the bleach in with the fabric softener because—
GINA: You put bleach in with the fabric softener? Oh, no. Lily. Lily!
(She runs after them. Liz looks at Bob.)
LIZ: Very clever.
BOB: Thank you.
(He smiles and comes very close to her. She pushes him away.)
LIZ: I am going to kill you, Bob. How obvious do you want to be?
BOB: How obvious do you want me to be?
LIZ: She's in the next room!
(Laughing a little, he kisses her briefly once, then again. She gives in, then pushes him away just as Paula and Margie enter, oblivious. Liz pulls away; she and Bob cover quickly.)
MARGIE: Well, that was not the thrilling event it is cracked up to be.
LIZ: No?
PAULA: I'm sticking with those little sheets.
(Gina and Lily reenter. Lily carries a bottle of fabric softener.)
LILY: Bob, Gina tells me some wild story about bleach, and you're doing a load of colors. What on earth are you using bleach for?
BOB: No, I wasn't...I was going to use it for the whites.
GINA: You said you mixed it—
BOB: I can't remember what I was doing. Let me look.
(He exits quickly. Lily follows him.)
MARGIE: I have such a crush on him.
GINA: Me too.
PAULA: Yeah, there's something about a man doing laundry that just pushes my buttons.
LIZ: (Guilty) He's not doing the laundry. Lily's doing the laundry.
MARGIE: Yeah, but he tried. That's so sexy. Oh, man. That's what I should have told that stupid dating service. I'm looking for a man who'll do laundry.
GINA: I'm looking for a man who knits.
MARGIE: That would be good, too. Long romantic evenings, knitting by the fire. I can see it. Then again, I haven't had a date in so long I can see just about anything. God, this is beautiful, Liz. (She looks at Liz's knitting.)
LIZ: Oh, shut up. I'm such a failure.
MARGIE: No, I mean it; it's gorgeous—
LIZ: I know it's gorgeous! Lily fixed it. I just made a mess of it.
LILY: (Reentering) You did not make a mess of it. You were just twisting the yarn around the wrong way. Here, look (She demonstrates to Liz.)
LIZ: I don't know, Lily.
LILY: You'll get it.
LIZ: No, look, I should just go. I don't belong here...
P A U L A: You're leaving?
LIZ: I'm a lousy knitter.
LILY: Your knitting is fine. You were just twisting it around—
LIZ: It's hopeless, Lily.
MARGIE: No, it's not. Come on, Liz, you have to stay. This knitting thing is all the rage now. Plus, it's so politically correct.
LIZ: It is?
MARGIE: Yeah, I saw Gloria Steinem on Oprah the other day. She says women should have knitting groups for, like, support and all.
LILY: Well! An endorsement from Gloria Steinem.
LIZ: I guarantee you, Gloria Steinem does not knit.
MARGIE: I know, it's weird, but that's what she said. I mean, I thought this whole thing was a really stupid idea when Gina told me about it—
GINA: You did?
MARGIE: Well, Gina, you gotta admit it was kind of odd. A total stranger in a grocery store says, do you like to knit—
P A U L A: You guys met in a grocery store?
LIZ: Gina, you picked her up in a grocery store?
GINA: Lily said we needed another person for the group, and I thought she looked nice.
P A U L A: You met in a grocery store? I thought you were old friends or something.
LIZ: (Amused) We've been knitting for a whole month with a total stranger! Margie, you could be anybody.
MARGIE: Yeah, but I'm not. I mean, you guys aren't going to kick me out now that you know, are you? I mean, you could be anybody, too.
LIZ: Yeah, but at least we went to college together. And Lily and I are related.
MARGIE: Oh, now there are rules? Great, you can't even join a knitting group without it getting all complicated. This is worse than that dating service.
LILY: No one's getting kicked out. I think it's nice that people can still make friends in the grocery store.
MARGIE: Yeah, me too. I mean, it was weird, but nice.

PAULA: So nobody's going anywhere, right?
P A U L A: Good.
MARGIE: Look at this, is this right?
(Paula holds up a piece of knitting which goes straight up one side and slopes in dramatically on the other. It looks like absolutely nothing. All stare at it.)
GINA: I don't think that's right, Margie.
LILY: Oh, dear. What did you do? (She studies it.)
MARGIE: I just followed the instructions.
P A U L A: That can't be right.
MARGIE: I did, I followed the instructions. It said decrease every other row, so that's what I did.
LILY: No, you're supposed to decrease on alternate rows of each side. It's a raglan sleeve; it's supposed to slope in so you can set the sleeve—
MARGIE: That's what I did.
LILY: Clearly, that is not what you did.
MARGIE: I followed the instructions! You told me it was like a recipe. I mean, I work for a caterer, you know, I know how to follow a stupid recipe—
LILY: Well, then, you read the recipe wrong. (Paula pokes through Margie's bag and comes up with instructions.)
LIZ: Oh, God, isn't that the way it always goes? I swear, on my deathbed, someone is going to just look at me and say, but sweetheart, you read the recipe wrong, and it's all going to be just clear, in a flash. I'm going to get it, and then I'm going to die. I just know that's going to happen.
MARGIE: What?
P A U L A: It's a metaphor, Margie.
MARGIE: I know, but I don't get it.
P A U L A: Never mind.
MARGIE: No, I'm trying to—
P A U L A: All right, look. This weekend I went on a press junket. Which means I spent the entire weekend in a hotel, with about seventy-five other hacks, and they stuffed us all full of food, and then we filed in for our interviews, one after the other, you get five minutes alone with Schwartzenegger. Or whoever, I also interviewed his co-star, and I'm in this room with this woman, and she starts to tell me about America. This is a woman whose brains are all in her hair; and she's telling me things like, "Americans have forgotten how to dream. That's what my life is about. Showing people that dreams can come true." I want to kill this woman, Margie. But I write this shit down, and hand it in, and you
know what my creepy editor says about it? He says, nice job, Liz. She's pretty smart. And what a set of knockers. See? Somewhere along the line I read the fucking recipe wrong.

MARGIE: No, I don't see. What does that have to do with anything?

LILY: I really don't understand why you don't try to do something more productive, Liz. Dad always says, it's a crime, with your brains—

LIZ: Oh, fuck Dad.

LIZ: Lis!

LIZ: What? I'm not going to quit. I mean, I am not about to give him the satisfaction of doing what he wants me to do.

GINA: Listen. I come here to knit.

LIZ: What?

GINA: I just don't want to get into this, all right? I come here to knit.

LIZ: Well, the rest of us come here to talk.

GINA: No, you come here to complain.

LIZ: Gloria Steinem says that's good.

GINA: Gloria Steinem doesn't have to listen to you.

LIZ: Well, excuse me—

GINA: I don't think I will—

LILY: (Overlap.) You guys—you guys—could we all relax a little?

GINA: (Snapping.) I'm a little TENSE, all right?

(Pause. They all look at her.)

MARGIE: (Pause.) And you know, the stupid part is, if I had a man, none of this would matter.

(They all look at her. Blackout.)

SCENE II

The outline of an elegant Japanese sushi bar. In tableau, a man gestures a woman into a seat at a tiny, single table. As the lights come up, we see that the woman is MARGIE and the man is MILES. She sits and smiles nervously. MILES does not respond to MARGIE's remarks, but jots down a few notes in a large leather binder.

MARGIE: Oh, this is a great place. I love this. It's so...you know, it's really nice. The atmosphere. I mean, the party was great, too, but we didn't get much of a chance to talk, so it's nice that...yeah, this is great. (Pause.) I love your car. It's so...big. I mean, it's...never mind. (Pause.) Excuse me, but are you taking notes on me?

MILES: Excuse me?

MARGIE: I'm sorry. It just...it looks like you're taking notes on me.

MILES: Oh. I'm sorry. Please, forgive me. It's an insufferable habit. I don't know where I picked it up.

MARGIE: That's okay.

MILES: Sometimes I don't even know I'm doing it. (He writes.)

MARGIE: Oh. (She laughs, uncomfortable.) You're doing it!

MILES: (Laughing) I'm sorry. Here. You take a turn.

(He holds the pencil out to her. She laughs.)

MARGIE: No, it's okay, really. It's fine.

MILES: You're sure?

MARGIE: Sure.

MILES: You're very sweet. (He writes.) And I must thank you for letting me drag you to that awful cocktail party. All that business talk could not have been much fun for you.

MARGIE: Are you kidding? It was great. I mean, I had drinks with the mayor! I thought he was very nice. Short, though. I mean, he looks taller on television. But I have to say, the Donald looked just like I thought he would. And did you get a load of that blonde he was with? I swear, he just keeps going out with different women in the same body, doesn't he?

MILES: (Laughing) Well, I never actually thought of it that way.

MARGIE: Oh. I'm sorry. He's probably a friend of yours, isn't he? I'm sorry.

Gee, I didn't mean anything...

MILES: Are you nervous, Margie?

MARGIE: What?

MILES: You seem a little tense.

MARGIE: No! I mean, well, maybe. Blind dates are always a little nerve wracking, I guess.

MILES: They don't have to be. Actually, over the past year or so, I've begun to rather enjoy blind dates.

MARGIE: Really?

MILES: Yes. There's always something—surprising, or challenging that comes up. It's very much like business negotiations, the first flush of battle, where you don't know who your opponent is, what he—or she—wants, what the bottom line is. It's fascinating. The mystery. Don't you find that to be true?
MARGIE: Well... I don't know. I don't do this a lot. I mean, I did just sign with a dating service, but nothing's really come of that yet, so—
MILES: A dating service? *(He writes this down.)*
MARGIE: Is that a problem?
MILES: It's just not the way I do things. I prefer personal references. A dating service carries with it an air of desperation, doesn't it?
MARGIE: I don't know. —gee—
MILES: Am I being too personal?
MARGIE: No, I don't know. You're right. I mean, I signed with this dating service, and I've been apologizing for it ever since, so you must be right, right?
MILES: I'm sorry if I touched a nerve. I didn't mean to. *(He smiles at her.)*
MARGIE: So. You like blind dates, huh?
MILES: Well, of course, not always. During my twenties I really didn't have a lot of time for dating. I did crave companionship but it wasn't exactly romance I was looking for.
MARGIE: Oh.
MILES: I hope you don't mind my frankness.
MARGIE: No, no. It's very... refreshing.
MILES: In any event, it was time.
MARGIE: Time?
MILES: To take your gender more seriously.
MARGIE: Oh.
MILES: How much do you weigh?
MARGIE: What?
MILES: I hope you don't mind my asking.
MARGIE: Well, a little.
MILES: Do you have a weight problem?
MARGIE: No. I just... I don't know. It makes me self conscious.
MILES: Why?
MARGIE: Geez, I don't know. Do you tell everybody how much you weigh?
MILES: It depends on why they're asking.
MARGIE: Well, why are you asking?
MILES: I find you attractive, and I'm curious, that's all.
MARGIE: Oh. Well, I don't really know how much I weigh. I like, avoid the scale, you know?
MILES: I see. *(He writes.)*
MARGIE: I mean, it's probably around, one-fifteen, or something.
MILES: Would you like a drink?

MARGIE: You know, I really would. That's a great idea.
MILES: *(He waves at the waiter. To Margie.)* I hope you like sushi?
MARGIE: Love it.
MILES: Good. They have a wonderful chef here. Stole him from the emperor's nephew.
MARGIE: The emperor?
MILES: Of Japan.
MARGIE: Oh, sure. Right. The emperor of Japan! I didn't know he had a nephew.
MILES: Well, he does. And his chef is a genius.
MARGIE: Really? Wow. This is amazing, you know, this is—you must make a shitload of money. Oh. I'm sorry.
MILES: No, it's fine. I do make a shitload of money. When I was twelve years old, I decided I was going to make my first million before I was thirty. And I've done that.
MARGIE: And now you're on to your second.
MILES: *(Laughing.)* That's very sweet. Anyway, I don't think a lot about it anymore. After a certain point, money ceases to have meaning.
MARGIE: I've heard that. Well, Miles—I didn't quite get what you do, exactly.
MILES: Mergers, acquisitions, that sort of thing. It's complicated.
MARGIE: But legal, I hope! *(She laughs.)*
MILES: What is that supposed to mean?
MARGIE: I don't know. It means I hope... the stuff... you do is... legal.
MILES: Of course it's legal. I'm an American.
MARGIE: Oh, I didn't mean—
MILES: I respect the law, Margie. And I take my responsibilities as a citizen quite seriously. In fact, if more Americans felt as I did, I believe this country would be far more stable.
MARGIE: I was just kidding.
MILES: Why? Why, kidding? I mean, I really don't care about the money, but I'm not quite sure why you need to joke about this. A person works hard, and is successful, that's funny? Most Americans don't think that's so funny.
MARGIE: I didn't mean anything. Really. I'm sorry.
MILES: It's fine. *(He writes.)* And you... cook.
MARGIE: Actually, I'm an actress. I mean, cooking is what I do to keep myself together, you know. Do you have to write? I'm uh, a little... *(He stops and deliberately puts the pen down.)*
MARGIE: I'm sorry. Go ahead.
MILES: No. Please. You're an actress. Might I have seen you in anything?
MARGIE: I doubt it. I mean, uh, Carrie? Did you see Carrie, the musical?
MILES: No.
MARGIE: I was in that.
MILES: Really.
MARGIE: Yes. (Pause.) You have a very nice car!
MILES: Thank you.
MARGIE: I've never actually seen a Silver Shadow before. I mean, it's so, you know, decadent, it's great.
MILES: Decadent.
MARGIE: I don't mean decadent, I mean, decadent in a good way. I mean, you know, decadent, excessive, wasteful—no, that's not what I mean. I don't know what I mean. Forget I said it.
MILES: (Cold.) I do think it's important to have beautiful things in your life. Is that what you mean?
MARGIE: Yes! That's what I mean! I mean, it's great to have beautiful things in your life and while that might seem kind of decadent to a lot of people, it's not, really, because unless you have too much money, which is not really possible, because then you can have, like, beautiful things. You know what I mean. (Pause.) Don't you?
MILES: No.
MARGIE: (Alasbed.) Oh. I was hoping you did.
MILES: No.
MARGIE: Well. I do think it's nice to have beautiful things. In your life. I wish I had beautiful things in my life. I wish I had your car in my life. I mean, I'm glad it's in my life. It's in my life tonight, anyway, and I find that really just—wonderful. And I find you fascinating, but I also want to tell you to fuck off. Do you know what I mean? I mean, I don't really want to tell you to fuck off, really what I want to do is have sex in the back seat of that amazing car, but frankly, I don't know, I'm really just so stunned by all this, stunned and repulsed you know? The thought of kissing you makes my blood run cold but on the other hand, I'm really hoping that you'll pick me. Pick me, Miles. Pick me. Let's not waste time. That's why I signed up for that stupid dating service, because I didn't want to waste any more time, I don't have any more time to waste, but women aren't supposed to do that sort of thing, we don't choose, do we, you guys are the ones who do the choosing. Well, sometimes we FORGET THAT, ALL RIGHT? I wish I would shut up; I really do but I just don't think that's going to happen. What is the matter with me?

Why can't I do this? I'm really sorry. It's just, you know—you can't just be like this, but you are, and I—I want you. I want to fuck you in the back seat of that car. You make me sick.
(Pause. They stare at each other. Blackout.)

SCENE III

Liz's apartment. In tableau, a man and a woman lean in and kiss each other. As the lights come up, we see that it is Liz and Bob. She breaks the kiss.

LIZ: Bob, come on, this is crazy, she's going to be here any second.
(He pulls her back and kisses her again. They end up on the table. This kiss begins to get passionate. Bob is clearly trying to take off Liz's clothes.)

LIZ: (Laughing.) Oh, God, what are you doing? Bob—
(He dives. She holds him at bay.)

LIZ: Bob, this is clinical. I mean, do you want to get caught, much? What are you doing here?

BOB: I'm picking up the car. She's driving here and I'm supposed to drive away.

LIZ: See, this is my point.

BOB: (Nuzzling her.) I want to marry you.

LIZ: Yeah, well, I want world peace.

BOB: Lizzie...

(She holds out her hand and looks at him. After a moment, she pushes him away.)

BOB: Well, so, what's going on here? I mean, what, are you having second thoughts about this?

LIZ: Second thoughts? No, I'm not having second thoughts. What I'm having is more like heart failure. What I'm having is like, guilt, of Biblical proportions.

BOB: (Reaching for her.) Lizzie...

LIZ: No, Bob—what are we doing? What are we—we can't do this! You're married. To my sister. God help me; you're married to my sister. I'm going to hell.

BOB: So, we'll go together.

LIZ: Bob, we have to stop. Now. Before it's too late.

BOB: Before it's too late? What was last week?
LIZ: Last week was a big mistake, and it can't happen again.

BOB: Look, my marriage with Lily has been a mess for a long time. We're just
going through the motions. Sex is completely mechanical—
LIZ: Don't tell me this. Would you please? I don't want to know about my sis-
ter's sex life.

BOB: You are so cute when you're terrified.

LIZ: Bob, cut it out. I mean, God knows Lily and I have never had much use-
for each other, but this—I mean, this is just one step too far, okay?

BOB: (Pause) So, is that why you did it? To get at Lily?

LIZ: What?

BOB: I mean—ha. I'm sorry, I just thought—we've only been flirting with
each other for years.

LIZ: (Overlap) NO. That's—ridiculous. How could you even suggest such a-
thing?

BOB: (Overlap) I mean, call me crazy, but I kind of assumed you had some
feelings for me—

LIZ: Of course I have feelings, for God's sake, don't do this to me!

BOB: Well, I'm sorry to inconvenience you.

(Pause.)

LIZ: I'm sorry. I'm sorry (Pause) Of course I have feelings for you. Bob, you're
my best friend, but this—frankly, it scares me that we did this. This isn't
just some little indiscretion, or, I don't know, you some family
quirk. This is the sort of thing that people get very upset about. Sleeping
with your wife's sister? This is like, how Greek tragedies start.

BOB: I think it's much more common than people admit.

LIZ: Nevertheless!

BOB: You have to admit, there's a certain thrill—

LIZ: Bob! It's a bad thing. It happened, okay, it just—happened, and it was
great, but we can still walk away from it. It's not like we chose it. It's not
like we deliberately were trying to hurt anybody. It just happened. But
now, I have to get myself back on track. (Pause. Liz moves away.)

BOB: You know, she knows.

LIZ: What?

BOB: I said, she knows. And you know she knows.

LIZ: How could she know? We only did it once!

BOB: Twice!

LIZ: Okay, twice, that's still—I mean, what, did you tell her?

BOB: Of course not.

LIZ: Did she say something?

BOB: No.

LIZ: Then—

BOB: I'm just saying, she knows. And as long as she already knows, what's the
point of quitting before she finds out?

LIZ: (Pause. She looks at him.) The really scary thing is, that kind of makes
sense to me.

BOB: I was hoping it would. (He reaches for her.)

LIZ: Bob. Go downstairs. I mean it. I don't want her to find you here.

BOB: Oh, lighten up. You didn't expect me to just give up without a fight, did
you?

LIZ: I expect you to be reasonable about this.

BOB: Oh, for—be reasonable? What for? Life isn't reasonable. You work and
you work, you put everything in place, you have a beautiful home,
money in the bank, a lovely wife, a sweet little girl, and the next thing
you know, you're bored and miserable, you didn't get tenure, your wife
hates you, and your daughter thinks you're a geek. And you were rea-
sonable, you were. Then—something else happens, and there's one thing
in your life, one place you can go for comfort, and passion... Why the
hell should I be reasonable?

(His head is in her neck. She looks down at him, sad and affectionate.)

LIZ: Oh, Bob...

(She rocks him for a moment. There is a brief knock on the door. Paula enters
as they leap apart.)

PAULA: Boy, I love your security, Liz. The front door is wide open—Bob. Hi.

BOB: Hi, Paula.

(The tension is so thick you could cut it with a knife. Paula watches them,
surprised.)

PAULA: Well. Well, well, well.

LIZ: Well, what?

PAULA: Well, everybody else is right behind me. And you missed a button.

(Liz checks her clothing, desperate, as in a flurry. Lily, Margie and Gina
enter through the open door behind them.)

LILY: Really, Liz, this is New York. Security is generally considered to be a
good idea in this city.

LIZ: There's something wrong with the super; he gets hot and props every-
thing open—hi, hi—

(Lily crosses to Bob and gives him keys. They kiss.)

MARGIE: I can't believe you still live here. This is hell, you know; you live in
hell. Drug addicts are shooting up in front of your mailboxes.
LIZ: It looks worse than it is—

LILY: (To Bob.) I thought you were going to wait for me outside. So that I didn’t have to park the car.

BOB: Oh, I just...I thought I’d come in and say hi to Liz.

LILY: Oh. And did she say hi back?

BOB: I’ll try and be home in time for the news.

LILY: Pick up some milk, would you?

BOB: Sure. Have a good time quilting.

GINA: It’s knitting. We knit.

LILY: He’s trying to be funny.

GINA: Oh. (She laughs politely at Bob.)

MARGIE: Where are you going, Bob?

BOB: Basketball game. (He is gone.)

MARGIE: Of course. Even Bob. Even the perfect man.

LILY: He’s hardly perfect.

(Liz looks at her.)

PAULA: (Covering a little.) Men and sports! I have clients who come in and talk to me about sports for hours, and I always want to say, I’m sorry, even though I am your therapist I am also a woman. Could we talk about dreams or something? I do much better with dreams.

MARGIE: Women don’t talk about sports?

PAULA: Never. Not ever. And men don’t stop talking about it. They talk about sports more than they talk about women. They talk about sports more than they talk about sex.

MARGIE: That does not surprise me at all. They’re all gay. Every single man on this planet is gay; that’s what the problem is.

LIZ: What?

MARGIE: Oh, come on, haven’t you ever suspected that? I mean, are you telling me that it has never crossed your mind that they all were gay? Secretly?

LILY: No, I can’t actually say that it has.

MARGIE: That’s why they’re so hostile. They don’t want us here, really, at all. They wish we didn’t exist. They just want to fuck each other. They just want to fuck themselves.

PAULA: Margie, I must say, even for you this is unusually grim.

MARGIE: It’s true. What? It’s true. Even when they’re controlling us they can’t be sure, you know, they just can’t be sure, and they hate us for that. Any little gesture you make, any little slip, you know, and they know you’re not what they want, as hard as you try, you’re not what they want, you’re something else altogether, and that’s it. They can’t take it. It’s a lost cause.

(They all stare at her except for Gina, who keeps knitting, oblivious.)

LIZ: Margie, are you okay? You want a beer or something?

MARGIE: You have beer? I’d love a beer.

PAULA: I’ll have one too.

(Liz exits to kitchen. Margie pulls at her knitting, clearly upset. Paula and Lily watch Margie, confused. Gina knits.)

LILY: Did you get a chance to work on that stitch I showed you?

MARGIE: Don’t condescend to me, Lily.

LILY: I wasn’t—

MARGIE: Just because I can’t figure out some stupid knitting thing doesn’t mean I’m some sort of major failure as a woman, all right?

LILY: I didn’t mean—

MARGIE: I’m doing the best I can, ALL RIGHT?

LILY: Oh, dear, Margie?

(See sits next to her and touches her. Liz reenters and passes around beers.)

MARGIE: What?

PAULA: What’s the matter?

MARGIE: Nothing. (Pause.) I had kind of a weird date last night.

PAULA: What happened?

LIZ: Who was it? Did he hurt you?

MARGIE: No. Nothing happened. I don’t know what happened. I just kind of lost it. He was fine. I just—lost it.

(See drinks. Paula, Lily and Liz stare at her. Gina knits.)

GINA: I swear, I hate binding off worse than anything. Everything changes, you know, once you bind off, the whole shape of the thing changes and you’re just not sure of what you have. No matter how carefully you count the stitches or check the gauge, you always seem to end up with pieces that don’t look the way they’re supposed to, or don’t quite fit together and then there’s that sort of awful moment where you’re just not sure you can ever get the whole thing together. I really hate that.

(Pause. They all stare at her.)

MARGIE: I never seem to get that far. I mean, I always quit first.

GINA: You finished that scarf.

MARGIE: Big deal. A scarf. That’s all I’m capable of, a stupid scarf.

(See starts to cry. Lily puts her arm around her.)

LILY: Hey, hey, hey.

MARGIE: I’m sorry. I’m sorry, Lily. I blew it.
LILY: It's all right, honey.
MARGIE: It's not all right! Why aren't I a lesbian? Lesbians have it easy. Everybody listens to them. They're relevant and politically correct and even tempered because they don't sleep with those jerks! But am I a lesbian? No! I have to like men, and just be a total loser at getting one! Paula?
PAULA: Yeah?
MARGIE: Is it okay if I come by your office tomorrow? I mean, can I come talk to you about some stuff?
PAULA: (With some humor:) That might be a good idea
MARGIE: Okay. Okay, Lily, can you show me how to do this again? I think I did it right a couple of times, but then I started screwing it up again—
LILY: Of course. It's just following directions. Like following a recipe.
MARGIE: Okay.
(Lily picks up Margie's knitting and demonstrates for her.)
LIZ: So...so what happened?
MARGIE: Oh, nothing, you know, the same old stupid stuff. I keep taking stitches off one side and not the other. I don't know why it's so confusing.
LIZ: No, I don't mean about the knitting, I mean about the guy.
MARGIE: What guy?
LIZ: The guy! The guy!
LILY: Liz...
LIZ: What? One second she's losing it and the next second we're all knitting! I mean, could we have a reality check here?
MARGIE: This is real. This sweater is real, or at least it will be if I ever figure it out.
LIZ: What happened with this guy?
MARGIE: How come men are real and knitting isn't?
PAULA: If Margie doesn't want to talk about it, I don't think we should push her.
LIZ: But she's still upset about it.
PAULA: If she doesn't want to talk about it—
LIZ: Paula, Christ, it sounds like she was almost raped—
MARGIE: I wasn't raped!
LIZ: Well, what happened?
MARGIE: I don't want to talk about it, all right?
LIZ: Fine. (Pause.) I'm just saying—
PAULA: Liz, if you have such a powerful need for conversation, then you talk.

LIZ: What?
PAULA: Are you seeing anybody?
LIZ: No, I—
PAULA: Do you want to talk about that?
LIZ: Paula—
PAULA: Does it bother you?
LIZ: I am not the one with the problem here!
LILY: Are you sure about that?
LIZ: (Pause.) Never mind. (Pause.) Never mind.
(She looks away. They all knit silently. Blackout.)

SCENE IV

The Japanese restaurant. In tableau, a man and a woman stand before the table, bowing. As the lights come up, we see that it is Paula and Miles. Paula stares off.

PAULA: I've never seen them do that before.
MILES: Excuse me?
PAULA: I've never seen a waiter serve sushi like that. Like an offering. It's quite—remarkable.
MILES: I know. It's a little embarrassing. They call it the Imperial Feast, and the show comes with it. Sort of like those waiters who sing to you in pizza joints.
PAULA: I didn't think you went to pizza joints.
MILES: I don't. I come here. (He starts to serve her.)
PAULA: I hope you don't mind my asking, but don't you find this all a bit...overstated?
MILES: Don't you like sushi? I love sushi.
PAULA: That's not what I meant. It's just, most people I know would be uncomfortable with the politics of all this. I mean. I've had a wonderful time tonight; meeting the governor was really exciting, and the opening at the Whitney was nothing short of dazzling. But to tell the truth, I'm beginning to find this all a little unnerving.
MILES: Really? How so?
PAULA: Well, you know, all of it together is so—all right. Your air of patronage, the subservience of everyone in the restaurant, your car—I mean,
MILES: Do you really think so?

PAULA: Yes, I do.

MILES: I think you’d be surprised. The imperialistic structures which seem to disturb you so much have stood at the heart of the American culture for centuries. In fact, these structures, and the assumptions they are built upon, are the very things which have made culture possible. In America and throughout the world.

PAULA: Well, that may be, but—

MILES: Here, I think you’ll appreciate this; it’s a combination of abalone, salmon roe and mahi mahi. Only two people in the world know how to make it. It’s exquisite, really.

PAULA: Thank you.

(He places it on her plate and hands it to her, then makes a note in his notebook. As he interviews her, he continues to make notes.)

PAULA: What are you doing?

MILES: Just making a few notes to myself, that’s all. It’s a business habit. Annoying but harmless. I picked it up from my father.

PAULA: (Friendly) Really? What was he like?

MILES: No, no, no. I was warned about this. You’re famous for this. No prying about my parents until the second date.

PAULA: You can’t blame a girl for trying.

MILES: (Laughing) I hope you don’t mind my saying so, Paula, but this is the first time I’ve dated a woman of color. I find it quite stimulating.

PAULA: Really?

MILES: Don’t you think so?

PAULA: Well, I’ve dated white men before.

MILES: So the novelty’s worn off.

PAULA: I guess.

MILES: (He writes this down.) Do you have many white friends?

PAULA: Yes. Do you?

MILES: Well, it’s less of an issue for me, isn’t it?

PAULA: You tell me.

MILES: (Laughing) Therapists. All I meant was, clearly, it’s important for blacks to assimilate themselves into the high culture. Which you seem to have accomplished admirably.

PAULA: What?

MILES: An attractive black woman achieves a position of authority in a predominantly white profession? That looks like assimilation to me.

PAULA: Yes, well, just for the record, I’m not particularly interested in being assimilated into the “high” culture.

MILES: You’re not?

PAULA: No. Most of my “friends” are black. And, as you may or may not realize, my family is black. You might want to write that down, too.

MILES: Do you see them often?

PAULA: Yes, I do.

MILES: How often?

PAULA: Often enough.

MILES: And your “black friends”? How often do you see them?

PAULA: I don’t keep track of how often I—

MILES: And your white friends? How often do you see them?

PAULA: Often.

MILES: More often than you see your black friends?

PAULA: (Pause, cold) Maybe.

MILES: That’s the beauty of America, isn’t it? Social mobility. (He writes this down.)

PAULA: Okay. What’s going on here?

MILES: We’re trying to get to know each other.

PAULA: Is that what we’re doing?

MILES: Don’t you want to know me, Paula? Because I find you fascinating.

PAULA: You’re pretty fascinating yourself, Miles.

MILES: Thank you. So, you’re a psychologist. How many patients do you have?

(Beat. Cautious, Paula decides to answer.)

PAULA: They’re not patients, they’re clients.

MILES: White?

PAULA: Would it make a difference if they were?

MILES: You tell me. You’re the one who doesn’t want to be assimilated.

PAULA: (Pause) Yes. Most of them are white.

MILES: Do you like them?

PAULA: Oh, man. You know, we probably shouldn’t talk about my work.

MILES: Why, are you feeling defensive about it?

PAULA: Why, do you want me to?

MILES: (Laughing) Therapists...

PAULA: (Also laughing) Guys...like you...

MILES: So. You were saying—
PAULA: I was saying, mmm, this sushi looks good. Is this blowfish? That’s the stuff that’ll kill you if it isn’t cooked right, isn’t it? Here, have some, Miles.

MILES: Thank you. It’s tuna. You were saying you had some trouble dealing with your white patients.

PAULA: Actually, no. I did not say that.

MILES: Well, but it must feel odd to have white people come in and complain to you all the time.

PAULA: No, it feels just fine.

MILES: I think you’re being coy.

PAULA: Yeah, well, I think you’re attacking me.

MILES: I’m just trying to get to know you, Paula. And I really am interested in the whole therapeutic enterprise.

PAULA: Then maybe you should try it. I know a couple of people who might be able to help you with this notebook thing.

MILES: (Smiling a little.) I’ll think about it. So, how long, on the average, do you work with any given client? One year? Two? Five? Ten?

PAULA: Yes.

MILES: Have they gotten better?

PAULA: Oh, my God... 

MILES: Is that a delicate question? I’m sorry. I just don’t understand why someone would need your services for ten years. I mean, it’s a treatment, right? What good is a treatment if it doesn’t make you better?

PAULA: (Steely.) Well, Miles, some people have been terribly damaged by life. Their souls have been—wounded, whether by their family or events, or just the world—

MILES: Well, Paula, I’m sure you’re good at what you do, but I’m not convinced that talking to you is going to heal my soul or even make me a successful member of society. I’ve just never understood why anyone thinks that discussing their problems will make them go away.

PAULA: No one thinks that.

MILES: Don’t they?

PAULA: No.

MILES: I thought they did.

PAULA: Well, and so what if they do? The world’s a hard place. Once in a while, even the best of us needs an ear, and a little shot of compassion. Is that so awful?

MILES: If you require a person to pay for it, is it still compassion?

PAULA: Why are you attacking me?

MILES: Why do you see this as an attack? On the contrary, I have nothing but admiration for the shrewdness of your whole enterprise. You convince people they’re dependent on you for their happiness and then you charge them for that dependency. It’s brilliant.

PAULA: That is not what I do!

MILES: Oh, I’ve touched a nerve. I’m sorry. Have you tried the eel?

PAULA: No.

MILES: You should. (Pause.) Go ahead, try it. (Pause.) Try it.

(She reaches for it. He smiles. She sets down the sushi.)

PAULA: All right, Miles. All right. I think we’ve talked about me quite enough for one evening. I’d like to hear about you. Why don’t you tell me what kind of dreams you have?

MILES: You’re interested in my dreams?

PAULA: Very.

MILES: (Pause.) All right. (Pause.) There’s one I have where I’m in my office above the city, and there’s a document in the computer that I can’t get out. So I look in my desk for the key to the computer and it looks like a knife, or a letter opener; it’s quite sharp, but just as I’m about to put it into the computer, a white rat comes along and steals it out of my hand. So I chase it up and down the halls, and then I hear it behind me, so I turn, and hold out my hand, and the knife is in it—the key. I mean—but it’s a different rat, a black rat, only now she’s covered in blood because I’ve stabbed her. Because I had the key all along. (Pause.) Actually, I’ve had that dream several times.

PAULA: Really.

MILES: Do you know what it means?

PAULA: No. No. I have no idea. (She stares at him.) (Blackout.)

SCENE V

Gina’s apartment. While once again the table is the centerpiece of the room, this space is cluttered, swamped, with knitted items, piled on the floor, hanging from the ceilings. It is a maze, a jungle of knitting. All the women stand in the mids of the knitting, looking about. Tableau. As the lights change, the women start to turn, taking in the spectacle with wonder.

LIZ: Wow, Gina, this is—you been knitting a lot lately, huh?
GINA: I've had some extra time on my hands.
LIZ: I guess so.
GINA: Lily, this is that stitch I wanted to show you—
(She picks up a sweater from a pile and shows it to Lily, who takes it gingerly.)
LILY: Why, yes, oh, it's lovely—
PAULA: Gina, when did you do all this?
GINA: Last week. This week. The past couple weeks.
PAULA: Yes, but—
MARGIE: I could knit twenty-four hours a day, and I'd still...
LIZ: I don't know, Gina, this is—
GINA: Are we knitting or not? I thought you guys came here to knit.
(Pause. She knits. They watch her.)
LIZ: To tell you the truth, I'm not sure why I'm here, Gina.
MARGIE: Gina—how are things?
GINA: Fine.
MARGIE: Really?
GINA: Oh, sure.
PAULA: How's your family? How's work?
GINA: Work? Oh, come on, Paula. I'm through with all that.
LIZ: All what?
GINA: Everything.
(They all look at each other uneasily.)
GINA: What? What is the matter with you guys? This is America. No one starves in America. Look at the news, would you? Do you ever see starving people on the news? Well, okay, you do, but they're somewhere else. Ethiopia, Calcutta. Americans, Americans take care of each other.
LIZ: They do?
LILY: Liz.
GINA: You see it on television all the time. Someone will take care of you. Peter Jennings, The lady from Citibank, Your mother. You don't have to worry. You live in America. Maybe you live in a cave, but you also live in America. And that makes it all right. I mean, is there anywhere else in the world where you could be more free? If you were more free, you would die. Right?
LIZ: Well, when you put it that way.
LILY: Gina—do you have any juice, any apple juice or something? My throat's a little dry.
GINA: Oh—I'm sorry. Of course. Does anyone else—
LIZ: No.
MARGIE: I'm fine.
PAULA: I'd like some juice, too.
GINA: Okay. Great.
(She exits to the kitchen. The others speak quickly, furtively.)
LIZ: What the fuck is going on?
LILY: Look at this place—
LIZ: Paula, I think you should handle this—
PAULA: Handle what? I don't know what's—
MARGIE: Well, something's wrong—
PAULA: That is not my—
LIZ: Paula—
PAULA: WHAT? She is not one of my clients! And even if she were, I don't know if I—just because I have a fucking degree does not mean I have all the answers to everybody's problems, all right? All right? I don't have answers to anything. I don't have answers to shit.
GINA: (Calling from kitchen.) I can hear you.
LILY: What?
PAULA: (Quiet.) I'm sorry. I'm not myself today.
GINA: (Off, overlapping.) I can hear you talking about me!
LILY: Oh, no, we were just admiring all the work you've—
PAULA: (Overlapping.) I had a bad night last night, and right now I don't think I'm the person to handle this. I mean, look at this place! I can't solve this!
GINA: (Reentering.) I don't need to be solved. I'm a lot happier. And I've been getting a lot of knitting done.
MARGIE: Well, it's just—okay, look. I'm a little slow, all right. So what's going on? Did you get fired or something?
GINA: Oh, no. I didn't get fired. I was let go. They let me go. Like a balloon.
(She hands drinks out. They all watch her.)
LIZ: When did—
GINA: IT DOESN'T MATTER. (Pause.) I don't care. We're streamlining the department, see, and that's just that. I put my time in, eighty hour weeks, I work hard, my research is better than anybody's, and I'm the only person in the entire building who knows how to run the computers. And it doesn't matter. They don't care. You want to know why the city is falling apart? Because they fire everybody who knows what they're doing. It's policy. If you know what you're doing, you get fired.
LIZ: But don't they have to—
GINA: They don't have to do anything. They only have to do what they want.
And Morrison doesn’t like me because I’m a woman. It’s also because I know what I’m doing, but she’d be able to handle that if I weren’t a girl. She’s one of those women, you know, one of the ones who only like men? What am I talking about; we’re all the same. You’re all, the first thing you think is that I screwed up somehow, that’s the way the logic works. Women are the worst, and that’s the truth. We’re always watching each other like sharks; they don’t have to do it to us anymore because we’re only too willing to do it to ourselves. And who comes into the picture but little Mr. Harvard Law. The kid’s killing time! Everybody knows it. In six months he’s going to land a spot with Debuvois and Plimpton, whatever, he’s out of here, he’s doing his public service time so he can have a nice little mark on his CV. We’re a SLOT on his RESUME and she thinks he’s God’s gift. I don’t care. If I were black, you can bet it would be different. I’m sorry for being a racist, Paula, no one wants to be a racist but these morons making the decisions don’t leave you any choice! Davenport stays because he’s black, and Mr. Harvard Law stays because he’s Mr. Harvard Law, and I go because I’m a single white woman in my thirties and it doesn’t mean shit what I do. Let’s face it.

We’re the most useless group of people history has ever heard of; we’re a bunch of fucking spinsters, that’s what we are. I wish I was married. I wish I was black. Or no, you know what I wish? I wish everybody who got in—you know, everybody who got in—would turn into white men. All of them. Those Asian women newscasters, and those sleazy black male weather guys, all those snappy little white girls who look great in power suits—I wish they would just turn into white men over fifty. I wish all of them would turn into Bill Buckley. Because then we would know. We would know who the good guys were, and who the bad guys were. We would just know who was who and what was what. (She starts to unravel her knitting.) But it’s fine, okay? Everything is fine. If this were, you know, India or something, then maybe then I’d be in trouble. Not only would I be out of a job, I’d have to wear one of those stupid black things over my face. Right? But this is America. It’s better here than anywhere in the world. Everything is fine.

LIZ: Gina, when did this happen? How long have you been out of work?
GINA: I don’t know. A few weeks. Three weeks. Something.
MARGIE: Why didn’t you tell us?
GINA: I thought I did. I don’t know. I forgot.
MARGIE: We could’ve helped, Gina.
GINA: But I don’t come here for help. I come here to knit. (She continues to

untangle her sweater.) This yarn is beautiful. Isn’t it? It’s so beautiful I can’t stand to finish this sweater, so I keep pulling it out and knitting it over again. Someone else did that, didn’t they? Some woman. Kept knitting the same thing, for years and years?

PAULA: Penelope.
GINA: I understand her now. I think I really understand her.
LIZ: We’ll get you a lawyer.
GINA: I am a lawyer.
LIZ: Well, then you should know what your fucking rights are.
GINA: I do.
LIZ: Gina, you have to fight.
GINA: Why?
LILY: Liz—
LIZ: No! Christ! This is our problem, anytime someone steps on us, we go, I don’t want to make waves, it’s too much work, it’s not worth it. Well, the perfect man is not going to come along and make this all right! We have to do it ourselves!
GINA: God, you are so full of shit, Liz.
LIZ: I am not—would you, goddammit, would you put the fucking knitting down for a half a second and deal with reality; this is your life I’m talking about, you stupid woman—
(She grabs the knitting in Gina’s hands and tries to pull it away from her.
Gina hangs onto it.)
GINA: Leave me alone, LEAVE ME ALONE.
LILY: For God’s sake, Liz, leave her alone!
(Lily pulls Liz away. Gina shrouds herself in her yarn.)
LIZ: I’m sorry. I’m sorry. (Pause.) I’m sorry, Gina. (Liz sits, confused.)
(Pause.)
MARGIE: Well, I think I finally figured out this sleeve! Lily, look. I mean, I had to take it apart about fifty times but I finally got it! Sort of like Penelope, huh, Gina?
(Gina does not respond.)
LILY: It’s beautiful, Margie.
PAULA: It’s looking great.
MARGIE: Yeah, I love this color. Good thing, too, huh? Otherwise I might be pretty sick of it by now. I mean, it’s taking me long enough, right? Everything takes so long. Doesn’t it? I mean, some days it feels like, you know, life is just going to go on forever. Well, you know. You’re fast,
Gina, geez, I couldn’t knit this much in eight hundred years or something.

(Gina does not respond. The others knit. Pause. Liz watches her, becoming alarmed.)

LIZ: Oh, shit. You guys. She’s lost it.
PAULA: Liz, please.
LIZ: No, I mean it. She’s lost it. She’s not here. Gina.
LILY: Gina?

(Gina looks at them but does not respond.)

LIZ: Oh, shit.
MARGIE: What? What?
PAULA: Gina. Can you hear me? Gina. Lily—
MARGIE: Should we call a doctor?
LILY: No, she’s fine. She’s fine. Gina. Come on, Gina. Are you all right? You’re all right. Do you want to go lie down?

(Gina looks at her.)

LILY: Come on, Gina. Let’s go lie down.
GINA: (Very soft.) I’m fine.
LILY: I know you are. You’re just a little upset. Did Liz upset you?

(Gina nods.)

LILY: You just wanted to knit, and Liz upset you.
GINA: I thought we were going to knit.
LILY: That’s what we came here for.
GINA: Liz—
LILY: Liz just made a mistake.
GINA: If she doesn’t want to knit, she shouldn’t come.
LILY: I’ll talk to her about it.
GINA: I’m embarrassed now.
LILY: You don’t have to be.
GINA: I’m sorry, I’m just—I’m embarrassed.
LILY: Come on. Let’s just go into your bedroom for a minute and talk. Do you want to do that?
GINA: Yes, please.
LILY: Come on.

(She helps her stand. Gina looks around at the others for a moment.)

GINA: I’m sorry.

(And Lily exit into her bedroom.)
LIZ: Christ.

MARGIE: I’ve never seen anything like that. I mean, she lost it. Major. We’re talking planet ten.
PAULA: She’ll be fine.
LIZ: Paula, she lost it.
PAULA: I KNOW SHE LOST IT. BUT SHE’LL BE FINE.
LIZ: For God’s sake, could you not blow up—I mean, you’re the therapist here; why don’t you do something?
PAULA: (Overlap.) Don’t you fucking tell me how to handle this; if you hadn’t pushed her so hard none of this would have happened!
LIZ: (Overlap.) You’re not going to blame this on me!
PAULA: And you are not going to make this my problem!
LILY: (Reentering.) That is ENOUGH. What is the matter with you?
LIZ: Sorry.
PAULA: How is she?
LILY: (Crosses and picks up Gina’s knitting, which was left on the floor.) Somebody look in the bathroom and see if she’s got any tranquilizers around here.
LIZ: Tranquilizers? That’s the last thing she needs; she’s already a fucking zombie—
LILY: Paula?
PAULA: Right. (She exits to the bathroom.)
LIZ: Lily—
LILY: Margie, see if there’s anything in the kitchen. Warm up some milk or tea or something.

(Margie goes.)
LIZ: Oh, fuck, Lily, she’s having some kind of breakdown. You can’t fix this with a cup of warm milk and a hug—
LILY: Liz, just sit down and shut up. Or leave. Please.

(She exits the bedroom. Left alone in the living room for a moment. Liz is lost. She sits, confused, and picks up a piece of knitting. She looks at it, shakes her head, sets it aside. Paula reenters.)
PAULA: She doesn’t have anything here. I’m going to run up to my place and get her some Seconal.
MARGIE: (Reentering.) She doesn’t have anything here. Should we call somebody? Her parents or somebody? Maybe we should call the police.
LIZ: Great. They can arrest her. That’ll be a big help.
MARGIE: Look, Liz, you don’t have to be such a shit, you know, I’m just trying to help.
LIZ: I’m sorry, okay?
ACT II
SCENE VI

The sushi bar. In tableau, we see Liz standing behind Miles. She is dressed
elegantly, and she is holding his head in one hand and a dinner knife in the
other, as if she is about to slit his throat. Tableau. The lights come up as she
lowers the knife, sliding it up his chin slowly.

LIZ: Apparently, it was considered very erotic. It was just as important as sex,
so you had to learn how to do it right. Geisha 101. Shaving your mas-
ter.

MILES: (Tense.) Really.

LIZ: You don’t think this is erotic?

MILES: Well, actually—

LIZ: Miles. You need to learn how to relax.

(She twists his head violently. He allows his neck to relax.)

LIZ: That’s better. Good. (She runs the back of the dinner knife slowly across his
throat.) See? What’d I tell you? The Japanese really know how to live.

(She sets the dinner knife on the table and sits.) Of course, I myself know
nothing about it. If this really was a razor, instead of a dinner knife, I’m
sure I would have cut your throat.

MILES: I see. (He writes this down.)


MILES: Certain aspects of it, yes. I am less familiar with Geisha techniques
than perhaps I might be.

LIZ: Well, you should look into it. I bet you’d enjoy it. They were really into
subservience.

MILES: Yes. I will do that. (He writes.)

LIZ: So how many pages of notes have you taken?

MILES: Excuse me?

LIZ: Well, you’ve been writing for something like two hours now. I was just
wondering how many pages you filled. As you know, I’m a journalist—
more or less—so I’m just kind of curious about how many pages of notes
you’ve taken on me.

MILES: Five.

LIZ: Five.

MILES: Yes.

LIZ: I guess you’ve got other women in there, too, huh? I mean, that note-
book looks pretty full.

MILES: Yes. I have notes on other women as well.

LIZ: Do you have notes on Lily?

MILES: No.

LIZ: Why not?

MILES: It wouldn’t be appropriate.

LIZ: Oh, and this is? (Pause.) Come on, I’m just trying to figure this out. I
mean, if you don’t mind my saying so, this is all…it’s fucking weird, if
you want to know the truth. I mean, God knows it was pretty funny
meeting the vice president, but overall this is hardly a dream date, you
know what I mean?

MILES: You’re very different from your sister, aren’t you?

LIZ: Yes. I am.

(He writes.)

LIZ: So, are you going to take notes on me all night? I mean, if this, like, sud-
denly turned into a really glorious evening of sexual adventure, and we
made it back to your fabulous penthouse and I started ripping off your
clothes, would you need to take notes on that, too?

MILES: Does this bother you?

LIZ: Well, yeah, it kind of does.

MILES: Why?

LIZ: Because, Miles, frankly, it’s been my experience that when you write
things down, sooner or later, people start to lie.

MILES: Really?

LIZ: That doesn’t bother you, huh?

MILES: Not particularly. I don’t expect people to tell the truth. Whether I
write it down or not.

LIZ: (Cool.) That’s…really sad.

MILES: I beg your pardon?

LIZ: That was a sad thing to say, Miles. You strike me as a very sad person.

(Pause. He looks at her.)

LIZ: Listen, I’m going to take off, okay? Clearly, this isn’t working out, so I’m
going to go find myself a cab.

MILES: No. Please. Continue.

LIZ: Why should I? If you don’t care if I’m telling the truth, why should I keep
talking? I mean, I could say anything, right, and it might be the truth,
or it might be a lie, and you’ll write it down, and that will make it real.
And then I won’t matter anymore; I won’t even exist; the only thing that
will exist is this story, on your page. (Pause.) I mean, just between you
and me, I'm a little bit of an expert on this kind of thing, and I don't particularly like being on this side of the pencil.

MILES: Why not?
LIZ: The temptation to lie just might get the better of me. It was interesting meeting you. (She stands.)
MILES: Then you're easily tempted? To lie, I mean. I'm sorry, have I touched a nerve?
LIZ: Weren't you intending to? (Pause.) Everyone lies at one time or another.
MILES: I don't.
LIZ: No?
MILES: No.
LIZ: That's quite a feat.
MILES: Why don't you stay? I'll tell you all about it.
LIZ: What do you want, Miles?
MILES: Conversation. You seem to have a philosophical mind, and I love a good debate. Please. Sit down.
(Pause. She stares at him. He holds up his pencil, shows it to her, and sets it down. She reaches over, picks it up and breaks the pencil in two. She sits.)
MILES: You know, you should never walk away from a fight you may be winning.
LIZ: Excuse me?
MILES: Never walk away from a fight you may be winning. And if you're going to walk, don't come back. And if you're going to come back, get more of a concession than the pencil. I didn't really give you anything, did I? (He opens the notebook and pulls a pen out, then writes.)
LIZ: Boy, you really know how to romance a girl, don't you? I mean, that, you know, that really makes me hot.
MILES: You sat down, didn't you?
LIZ: Yes, I did, and if you keep this up, I may just fuck you right here in the restaurant. (Pause. She laughs.)
MILES: I fail to see what is so amusing.
LIZ: You are. You are really ridiculous, don't you know that? I mean, can I be frank? What am I saying, of course I can. You're Mr. Honesty, aren't you? Wouldn't it be more of a challenge just to be a real person, Miles? I mean all this power shit. Don't you think it's a little too easy? I'm just saying. You might want to think about developing a personality one of these days. The rest of us find them useful, particularly if you want to get laid, which is usually one of the points of a fucking date. I mean, I got a little power tip for you, Miles. Never lose sight of your goal.

MILES: (Pause.) I see. You're a radical. I should have known. Lily told me you were the second child. I should have suspected.
LIZ: Suspected what?
MILES: Suspected this. The arrogance, the foul language, everything. No, I was wrong. (He shuts his notebook.) You may go.
LIZ: Excuse me? What happened to the fun of a good debate?
MILES: I said, you may go.
LIZ: Oh. Well gee, thanks. I'll just get right on that. Now that you've dismissed me, I'll just scamper right out of here. Yes, sir. I'm scared. I'm running.
MILES: Do you know who you're talking to?
LIZ: No, Miles, I have no idea. Do you know who you're talking to?
MILES: Yes, I do.
LIZ: No, I don't think you do.
MILES: Yes, I think I do.
LIZ: No, I don't think you do!
MILES: (Pause.) I can have you removed.
LIZ: Well, great. Why don't you do that? I mean, that will really break my heart, since I was about to walk out on my own two minutes ago. You fucking creep.
(There is a terrible tense moment. Miles looks at her, quietly furious.)
MILES: You are nothing like your sister.
LIZ: No shit, Miles. I've spent most of my adult life being not my sister. I'm glad I've managed to achieve something.
MILES: Your sister is the finest woman I have ever met.
LIZ: Yeah, you and my father. Christ. I mean, this is, Jesus, this is so fucking classic I can hardly... are you an only child, Miles?
MILES: I would like you to leave.
LIZ: Miles, if you don't want to talk to me, why don't you leave? I mean, it's a free country, right? This is America! Walk out the door! What's the problem?
MILES: I would like... you to leave.
LIZ: Yeah, well, that's the problem with America, isn't it? We all want different things. You want me to leave, and I want you to be not such a huge fucking shithead.
(Miles stands. Liz stares at him.)
LIZ: (A taunt.) Going somewhere, Miles?
MILES: (He stares at her. After a moment, he sits.) Well. Well, well. This is interesting. We have a situation here, don't we?
LIZ: Is that what you call this? I was pretty sure it wasn't a date.
MILES: No, it's a date all right.
LIZ: Some date. This is like going out with my father.
MILES: It's my understanding that many girls dream about going on dates with their fathers.
LIZ: Yeah, well, it's my understanding that that is a big old male fantasy.
MILES: Oh, now we get to talk about male fantasies. I'm glad I stayed.
LIZ: Miles, you're starting to cross some lines here. And I thought you were such a good boy.
MILES: Well, I know you're not a good girl. I mean, it's been a long time since a real lady offered to fuck me in a restaurant.
LIZ: You pissed me off.
MILES: Yes, I did, and apparently you found it quite stimulating. I'll keep that in mind.
LIZ: You want to make a note about it? (She offers him the broken pencil.)
MILES: No, thank you, that detail I think I can hold onto. Unless it would really piss you off, in which case I'm prepared to write a whole novel.
LIZ: What are you doing?
MILES: I'm flirting with you. And what's more, you're enjoying it.
LIZ: Don't tell me what I'm feeling.
MILES: I beg your pardon. What are you feeling? Tell the truth.
LIZ: The truth is, you're starting to give me a headache, Miles. You make my father look like Mahatma Ghandi.
MILES: I understand that in his private life, Ghandi was a nightmare. Would you like to take a drive?
LIZ: What?
MILES: The only way to see New York is from the back seat of a Rolls.
LIZ: Excuse me, but it's not the only way. It's one way among many, and the majority of us enjoy New York just fine from the curb.
MILES: I'm sorry. That was an arrogant and presumptive thing to say. I'm sorry. (Pause.) I also have a Mercedes.
LIZ: Are you flirting again?
MILES: I'm just trying to point out that there are pleasures that come with having money. It's rare, very rare, that I feel like sharing them. You're clearly an intelligent and provocative woman. It's not—insane—that I should want to share them with you.
LIZ: Listen, this is not what I want. I only came on this stupid date as a favor to my sister, so—
MILES: Oh, you owed her a favor? What for?

LIZ: Never mind.
MILES: In any event, you're here now. And you've decided several times not to leave. If this isn't what you want, then why are you still here?
LIZ: I'm still here because you told me to go.
MILES: If I told you not to take a drive with me, would you come?
LIZ: Why don't you try it?
MILES: Are you flirting?
LIZ: No, I'm—I don't know what I'm doing...
MILES: All right. Let's stop this. We could joust with each other all night, but that's not what you want. What do you want?
LIZ: You wouldn't understand.
MILES: Do I strike you as a stupid man? Try me.
LIZ: I want...something authentic.
MILES: Liz, there's little in this world that is more authentic than a Rolls. I'm kidding! I'm sorry. I was just trying to make you laugh. I'm sorry. Clearly, you're a woman who cares about integrity. You're also an iconoclast. I admire that. I want to respect that. Tell me. What are you so angry about?
LIZ: (Stares at him.) The world isn't what I want it to be. (Pause.) I'm not the person I want to be.
MILES: That's right. You're a liar, aren't you? And you hate liars.
LIZ: Yes. I do.
MILES: Why don't you let me help you with that? I think I understand truth in a way that you might find useful.
LIZ: It's okay, Miles, really, I should...
MILES: It's simple, really. It's all about defining your terms instead of letting them define you. For example, let's say you're having an affair with your sister's husband. Hypothetically, Some people might say that makes you a liar and an adulterer, a bad person, but you know you're not a bad person. Whatever your reasons were, you did it. Hypothetically, You took an action. You broke a rule. From a certain point of view, that's actually honest. You knew what you wanted and you took it. You made the most authentic choice of all. You're not a liar. That is a truth as real as any. So that is the truth you choose. It's the truth I would choose. (Pause.) I told you it was simple.
LIZ: Oh, man. (Pause.) I should go. Really. I should get out of here.
MILES: Why?
LIZ: Because...because you're a bad guy, Miles. You're really, you know, I think you're a bad guy.
MILES: And you're a bad girl. (Pause) Isn't that true?
LIZ: You just said I wasn't.
MILES: No, I didn't. Are you ready for that drive?
LIZ: I don't...
MILES: Elizabeth. While it is true that there are many different versions of America, mine is clearly the most desirable. Think of it as stock. I own preferred, you own common. And tonight, I'm offering to share my stock with you. Come along. Take a ride around the city with me. What else are your options? Going back to your apartment and doing things you shouldn't? Railing at the human race because it's not what you want it to be? All your anger hasn't gotten you anywhere. All you've done is endangered everything and everyone who matters to you. Take a ride with me. Clearly, we're more alike than we first thought. We both love power. I want to win you, and you want to win me.
LIZ: No, I just want to win.
MILES: Close enough. (He kisses her.)
(Blackout.)

SCENE VII

GINA: No, the color is...I made a mistake about the color.
MARGIE: I like it!
GINA: It's much too long...no... (She tries to take it from him.)
LILY: You can't use Bob as a model for length. He has a funny body. He's very short waisted.
BOB: Thanks a lot.
LILY: Well, you are, Bob. You're very short waisted.
PAULA: I don't know, Gina. I think it's quite striking.
GINA: You do?
BOB: Looks good to me.
GINA: It does?
BOB: (Hands it to her gently) You have a real gift, Gina.
GINA: I don't know.
MARGIE: Oh, you do too. You're like the queen of knitting. Look at this place. The only thing wrong with you is you just let all these sweaters pile up here. It's a crime, you know? People would pay good money for this. The homeless or something.
LILY: The homeless can hardly afford hand-knit sweaters, Margie.
MARGIE: You know what I mean. We could give some away, and we could sell the rest to rich ladies on the upper east side. They live for this shit.
GINA: They do?
MARGIE: Oh, yeah. Last week I worked at this place, this lady had a whole bedroom that she was using for a closet. I walked into it by mistake when I was looking for the bathroom. These people, they're completely out of touch. You could charge them like a thousand dollars or something for one of these, and they'd tell all their friends what a bargain they got.
LILY: I hardly think so.
MARGIE: No, really.
LILY: I hardly think the rich are "out of touch." Otherwise, I doubt that they would be rich.
MARGIE: Yeah, that's what I thought, too, but I'm telling you, Lily, I've talked to a lot of these people, and they're like, most of them are on a totally different planet. You know, like that friend of yours? I been thinking about him, and—
LILY: That's enough, Margie. (Pause) I'm sorry, Gina, do you mind if I make us all some tea?
GINA: Oh, I'm sorry, I always forget. What kind do you want?
LILY: It's all right. I'll do it. (She exits.)
MARGIE: What's eating her?
BOB: I don't know.
GINA: Bob, do you think I should give my sweaters to the homeless?
BOB: No, Gina, actually, I agree with Margie. I think you should sell them for thousands of dollars to rich dingdongs on the upper east side. Take them for every penny you can get.
MARGIE: I'm telling you, Gina, it's a great idea. I could be your sales representative and all you'd have to do is sit around and knit all day. Which is what you do anyway.
GINA: That's true.
MARGIE: Then you could use the profits to buy more yarn.
GINA: You don’t think it would be bad for me to just, you know, run away like that?
PAULA: Actually—
MARGIE: Oh, so what if it is? Look, let’s face it, Gina. You played by all the rules and got fucked. Running away seems like a pretty good option to me.
PAULA: Margie, I don’t think you should be—
MARGIE: What? It’s true. My therapist tells me this shit. That guy you sent me to, Paula, I mean, he’s great. He says avoidance is like a great tactic for a while because it gives you time to get your shit together before you go back to war. He says life really is a war, and women don’t quite get that because they’re different from men, but that’s the way men see it, so we better get used to it. I love this guy. He tells me the most useful shit.
PAULA: Be that as it may; what’s useful for you is not necessarily as useful for Gina.
GINA: It sounds useful.
MARGIE: Oh, yeah, it’s great. I feel much better.
GINA: So I could just stay home and knit all day.
MARGIE: Yeah.
GINA: That sounds useful, Paula. Margie, what’s this guy’s name?
MARGIE: I got his card here somewhere. (She hunts in her purse.)
BOB: (Desperately casual.) Where’s Liz?
PAULA: I think she had a date tonight.
BOB: A date, huh? So who’d she go out with?
PAULA: I don’t know.
BOB: (Quiet, to Paula.) Come on, Paula, give me a break. I’ve been trying to get a hold of her for two weeks. She won’t even talk to me.
PAULA: Well, maybe she’s come to her senses. Granted, that’s unlikely with you guys.
GINA: Are you talking about me?
PAULA: No! Gina, of course not.
GINA: I wouldn’t blame you if you were. I lost it last week. Did they tell you?
BOB: Well, Lily did mention it.
GINA: Complete crackup. It was quite a scene.
BOB: I’m sorry I missed it.
PAULA: Bob was just wondering where Liz was. Because it’s our knitting night.
MARGIE: Oh, Liz isn’t very serious about knitting. I mean, she’s even worse at it than I am. If that’s possible.
GINA: She doesn’t take it seriously. She doesn’t understand.

BOB: I know, I just thought… (Intimate, to Margie.) A date, huh? So who’d she go out with?
PAULA: (Loud.) Why don’t we ask your wife?
LILY: (Reenters.) Ask me what?
PAULA: Who Liz went out with tonight.
LILY: (Abrupt.) I don’t know.
MARGIE: Dates. Man, I am so over that. I told that dating service to go jump in the lake, did I tell you?
LILY: Good for you, Margie.
MARGIE: Yeah, therapy is much more rewarding. I’m just going to do this father-mentor transference thing for a while. It’s so much easier than dealing with men. Present company excepted, of course.
BOB: Thanks, Margie.
MARGIE: So, you ready to learn how to cast on?
BOB: Oh. I guess so.
MARGIE: Gina, you show him. I’ll just confuse him.
GINA: (Shy.) He doesn’t really want to know how to knit.
BOB: Sure I do. That’s why I’m here.
GINA: Really?
LILY: Oh, really, Bob, don’t you think you’re carrying this just a bit—
BOB: I want to learn how to knit, Lily. If it’s not too much trouble.
LILY: (Pause.) I just think your time might be better spent working on your book, or applying for other positions. Daddy says that it’s not going to be easy for you to come up with something in this market, especially if we want to stay in the city.

(Pause.)
BOB: Well, tell him thanks for the advice, would you, hon? I never thought of that.
(Bob and Lily stare at each other for a brief, tense moment. Margie tiptoes away. The others notice but do not comment.)
BOB: Gina. How about that lesson?
GINA: Oh. Okay. We’ll start you off on big needles because they’re a little easier to handle, and also the knitting goes faster, so it’s more fun. You know; you start seeing progress right away. You’ll be knitting a scarf. (She hunts through her basket and comes up with a big pair of needles and some yarn.)
BOB: Okay.
GINA: Now, first what you should do, even before I show you how to cast on, is hold the needles, just hold them, one in each hand, for just however
long it takes to get used to them. Feel the metal. It’s nice, isn’t it? Feel
how smooth they are. They’re your friends. (She puts the needles in his
hands and holds them there.)

BOB: They are?
GINA: Yes. Actually, that’s the problem Liz always had with knitting. She
never made friends with her needles. She thought they were her enemies.

BOB: She did?
GINA: Well, she’s not a very peaceful person.

BOB: No, she’s not.
GINA: She’s very combative.

BOB: Yes, she is.
GINA: Have you made friends with your needles yet?

BOB: Well, just a second…okay. Okay. I think I’m ready.

(She looks at him to make sure. He smiles at her calmly. Pause. She smiles
back.)

GINA: You’re a very nice person, Bob.

BOB: (Gentle.) Thank you, Gina.

LILY: Yes, my husband is a real prince.
GINA: (Startled, unsure.) Well, he is.

LILY: (Suddenly pulls sharply at her own knitting, which seems to have a knot in
it. The yarn snaps.) Oh, damn it.

(They all stare at her.)

MARGIE: Is something wrong, Lily? You seem like, kind of upright or some-

thing.

LILY: No. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m just a little preoccupied. I was thinking
about something else.

LIZ: And what would that be, Lily?

(All jump a little, startled. Liz steps out from behind a pile of sweaters that
obscures the door. Her clothing and hair are quite tousled. She smokes a ciga-
rette and stalks into the room. In one hand she carries the notebook.)

MARGIE: Liz! What are you doing here?
LIZ: Well, I was just kind of cruising the city with this guy I had dinner with,
and I realized I was in the neighborhood. So I had him drop me off. Hi,
Bob.

BOB: Hey, Lizzie. How was your date?
LIZ: Oh, it was interesting. You’re taking up knitting, huh? I hope you’re bet-
ter at it than I am.

BOB: By all reports I could hardly be worse.
LIZ: Boy, that’s the fucking truth, isn’t it?

GINA: Liz, could you not smoke in here? It gets into the yarn, you know, and
it’s very hard to get out.

LIZ: Oh, sure. (She drops the butt on the floor and steps on it.)

GINA: (Irritated.) Liz! Not on the—my God, you have no, you just— (Gina
picks it up.)

LIZ: (Cool.) Sorry.

LILY: I’ll go get that tea.

LIZ: Oh, fuck the tea, Lily. Don’t you want to hear about my exciting date?

LILY: Not particularly. (Pause.) You’re a mess.

LIZ: Yeah, no kidding. I just had a little bit of a tussle with this guy in the
back seat of his car. A big, pretty Rolls. He had something I wanted. And
when I got it, guess what I found out? I found out that where I was, my
friends had been before me. (She looks through the pages for a moment and
hands several to Margie.)

MARGIE: What? Where’d you get this?

LIZ: From your pal Miles. Actually, I guess he’s Lily’s pal. Here, Paula, I
thought you might like a souvenir. (She hands her pages.)

PAULA: Thank you.

LIZ: You did very well, actually; he thought you were quite intelligent and
striking, for a black woman. He was going to give you a call back but
decided that his Japanese associates would never understand. Don’t take
it too hard; he really hated Margie. He thought she was pathetic.

GINA: What are you guys talking about?

MARGIE: (Reading.) He doesn’t say pathetic. He says I’m lovely, in a pathetic
way. I mean, geez, Liz—

LIZ: For crying out loud, Margie—

MARGIE: Oh, so what? The guy was a creep.

BOB: I’m sorry; I’m having a little trouble catching up with this. What are all
these pages?

LIZ: They’re notes. Miles takes notes.

(Shews the notebook onto the table. Bob looks at it, confused.)

PAULA: Lily, what is this? You set us all up with this guy?

BOB: What guy? Miles? That creep from your father’s building?

LIZ: Yeah. All three of us have been on dates with the creep from Daddy’s
building. All right, Lily. I’m willing to give you the benefit of the doubt.
You meant well, didn’t you? You didn’t know you were setting me up on
the date from hell. Right?

LILY: I guess that means you two didn’t get along.
LIZ: Lily! I told you I was a complete mess, and you sent me on a date with the Terminator!
LILY: Well, I’m sorry it didn’t work out. I’ll give this back to him when I see him. (She takes the notebook from Bob and puts it with her knitting things.)
LIZ: You did. You knew about all of it. You’ve even read that notebook, haven’t you?
LILY: Miles is a good friend. We share everything with each other.
MARGIE: Lily—
P A U L A: (Overlap.) What were you thinking?
GINA: So you set everybody up with this guy except me?
   (They all stare at her. The tea kettle whistles in the kitchen.)
LIZ: Gina. Go make us all some tea.
LILY: It’s all right, I’ll do it.
LIZ: No, you stay here. I have some questions for you.
   (Pause. Liz and Lily stare at each other. Gina does not know what to do.)
LIZ: Gina! Get the fucking tea!
GINA: All right! (She exits to the kitchen.)
LILY: Really, Liz, I don’t know what you’re so worked up about.
LIZ: I’ll tell you what I’m worked up about. You’ve been pretending to take care of all of us while setting us up on dates with a guy who hates women!
LILY: Really? He seems rather fond of me.
LIZ: Lily, he’s one step away from a sociopath—
LILY: He took each of you to an exquisite restaurant. I hardly think that makes him a sociopath.
LIZ: He treated us like bugs. He would’ve taken blood if there was a socially acceptable way to do it. He’s probably back at that restaurant right now, trying to figure one out…
LILY: (Overlap.) This is classic. All my single friends constantly complain about how there are no good men out there, and I actually find one, rich, powerful, handsome and all you can do is complain about his table manners! Well…
LIZ: (Overlap.) …Do I ask her for it politely, or just suck it out of her veins while she’s not looking?
LILY: (Overlap.) …Perhaps if he had been married you would have gotten along better!
   (Pause.)
LIZ: Oh, that’s what this is about, isn’t it?
MARGIE: That’s what is about?

PAULA: Margie, maybe you and I should—
LILY: I don’t know what you mean.
MARGIE: Neither do I.
LIZ: I was fucking Bob, and she’s mad about it.
   (Pause.)
MARGIE: Oh.
GINA: (Enters with a tray with several teacups, a teapot, and a box of cookies.)
   Okay, here’s the tea. It’s just Lipton, I hope that’s okay. And there’s some cookies that Lily brought. You’re much better at this than I am. Lily, I just get so wrapped up in the knitting I forget the other part of it. But this should do us, huh? Okay. Dig in! So. What did I miss?
MARGIE: Uh…actually, Gina…
P A U L A: Apparently, Liz has been sleeping with Bob.
MARGIE: And she thinks Lily is mad about it. So…that’s what we were talking about.
   (Pause.)
GINA: Really? Oh. (Pause.) Bob? You were sleeping with Liz? But—
BOB: Yeah, Gina, I know.
GINA: Lily? Did you know about this?
LILY: As a matter of fact I did, Gina, and it’s really not my concern. (She sits and starts pouring tea.)
GINA: It’s not?
LILY: No. It’s none of my business.
MARGIE: Aren’t you mad about it?
LILY: Not particularly.
MARGIE: Oh, come on, Lily—
LILY: Margie, really, I don’t care! (Lily picks up her knitting and knits.) Really. It doesn’t matter. If you want details, you’ll have to ask Liz and Bob. I had nothing to say about it while it was happening, and I have nothing to say about it now that it’s over.
BOB: Who said it was over?
LILY: Oh, I’m sorry. Liz lead me to understand that you two had decided not to see each other anymore. That’s not true?
BOB: No. That’s not true.
LILY: That’s not what Liz told me.
LIZ: Bob.
BOB: What?
LILY: Oh, did you two get your signals crossed? What a shame. And it didn’t
work out with Miles, either! Really, Liz. You just have a terrible time with men, don't you?

LIZ: Not all that terrible. Miles liked me a lot. I mean, how do you think I got that notebook?

(Pause.)

LILY: I have no idea.

LIZ: I'll give you this; he's a good kisser. He was interested in taking things further, but you know, it actually occurred to me, against all odds, it occurred to me that I was about to become everything I hate. So I stopped it. He was fine about it. He may have even been relieved; I have a feeling he was getting worried that I was going to scratch the interior of the Rolls.

MARGIE: So what happened then?

(Pause whacks her.)

MARGIE: What? This is better than the movies!

LIZ: He's sending the car back for me. We're going to rendezvous in that restaurant. Apparently, those little booths can be used for all sorts of activities.

LILY: No. Not you. You are not the one he wants.

LIZ: You are amazing. You are just—I mean, what, was I supposed to fail, is that the turn on for you, watching this guy go through us, one after the other? Well, I didn't fail, all right?

LILY: Good for you. I'm sure I'll read all about it.

BOB: Okay, okay, this is...I'm sorry, Lily. It should never have come to this. Come on, Liz. We'd better go.

LIZ: What?

BOB: I think the decent thing to do is go back to your place and let things cool down.

LIZ: That's not going to cool things down! Besides...Bob, I don't want you at my place. It's not going to solve anything, Bob.

BOB: Lizzie.

LIZ: Bob. Go.

(Pause.)

BOB: (To all.) I'm sorry. This is...a little disorienting and, uh...I'm going to take a walk. (He turns to go.)

LILY: Bob?

BOB: (Pause.) What?

LILY: Don't go home. All right?

BOB: Lily...

LILY: No. When I go home, I don't expect to see you there.

(After a moment, Bob is gone.)

GINA: Bob, wait—(He is gone.) He forgot his needles.

LILY: It's all right; I'll give them to him, Gina.

LIZ: Look, Lily, I'm sorry about what happened with Bob. I really am.

LILY: I have NOTHING to say to you. (She takes the needles from Gina.)

GINA: Are you going to see him, though?

LIZ: I was trying to end it—

LILY: Not as hard as you tried to begin it.

LIZ: That's not true!

PAULA: We should go.

(She stands, nudging Margie. Gina grabs the needles back.)

GINA: I mean, you told him not to go home.

LILY: Oh for God's sake, Gina!

PAULA: Gina, I don't think this is any of our business. In fact, the three of us should go.

MARGIE: Oh, for crying out loud, what kind of therapist are you? Things really start to heat up and all you want to do is leave.

GINA: Besides, why should I leave? I live here.

MARGIE: I think you should go back to the sushi restaurant, Liz. Take Miles for the biggest ride of his life.

PAULA: Margie!

MARGIE: What? I know, I said rich people were crazy. They are crazy. But, they have a lot of money. Why shouldn't she take advantage of it? If she goes after Bob, she's just going to have to live with the fact that she stole her sister's husband. I mean, they even have a kid. She can't do that! But, if she goes with Miles, she ends up with a guy who, like, owns half the city.

LIZ: Oh, and you don't think the fact that I find him completely repulsive is going to get in the way?

MARGIE: It hasn't so far. Come on, Liz. You can do it. It's your only chance.

PAULA: Chance for what?

MARGIE: I don't know! Chance for anything! What else is she going to do, fucking knit for the rest of her life?

PAULA: I think she has a few more options than—

MARGIE: I don't think she does!

GINA: She has Bob!
PAULA:
You're telling her to sell herself to the highest bidder!

MARGIE:
You bet I am! She could be one of those trophy wives, only with brains. Think about it! She'll be like a spy in the White House or something. Like Nancy Reagan, only on our side.

MARGIE:
For whatever reason, she's the one he wants, and that's the only way to control these guys. Like, they hate women, but they love sex. So you get in there and distract them, then whammo.

PAULA:
Christ, what has that guy been telling you? Two weeks in therapy, and you're a complete monster!

MARGIE:
Paula, confrontation is a good thing.

LIZ:
Besides, there are more than two men out there!

MARGIE:
Yeah, but the rest of them are gay.

PAULA:
So what if they are! We don't need them! We live most of our lives without them anyway! If you get ten minutes of their attention a day, you got a successful marriage on your hands! The rest of the time, they're reading the sports page or doing their little deals or slapping each other's behinds! Don't tell me about men, I know men! They do without us just fine. And we do without them. I say we leave it that way.

MARGIE: My point exactly. Any way you look at it, they're going to make you miserable, so you might as well take the one with the money.

PAULA: Honestly, Margie—

MARGIE: What? If you hate men so much why did you go on that damn date in the first place? Why did you sit there, letting him take notes on you?

LIZ: Why did any of us?

GINA: Because we're polite. And nobody wants to be alone. *(They look at her.)*

GINA: What? I'd rather have Bob, but I'd at least go on a date with Miles. I mean, there's always a chance, isn't there? That you'll be the one he's nice to. There's always hope. *(They all sit and think about this.)*

LIZ: What do you think, Lily?

LILY: I think you slept with my husband, Liz. *(Pause.)*

LIZ: I'm sorry.

LILY: *(Reaches for her knitting.)* Yes, you should be. And if you don't mind, I would really prefer not to talk about this anymore. I mean, I just, it's my life, you know, and you're all just tossing it around as if it were nothing, as if—never mind. What a mess. *(She starts to clean.)*

GINA: That's okay, Lily. I kind of like it like this.

LILY: Don't be ridiculous, Gina. There is a mess here, and I will clean it up. That's the kind of person I am. You can't live in messes. Of course, I am living in the middle of a big mess, but I will take care of it! *(She continues to clean violently.)* That's your whole problem, Liz, you don't have anyone to take care of. You're just floating and drifting, with nothing to hold you down. You're just like a man, aren't you? That's what's wrong with you. That's the only thing the matter with any of you. If you had someone. A daughter. A husband. Someone to take care of. That's all we need. To be happy. *(Liz reaches over to touch her. Lily shrugs her off.)*

LILY: I could have been happy. I am happy. It wasn't my failure. Liz! The perfect man. I hardly think so. The perfect man doesn't let everything, work, family, everything, he let it slip away like it was nothing, like... My father is paying our mortgage. Did you know that? It's humiliating! Liz
won't take money from him, and we have to! And then there's Liz. Well, I don't care, all right? I don't care!

LIZ: Lily?

LILY: I'm fine! But it's not easy listening to you all complain about Miles. If it had been me, none of this would have happened. If it had been me, it would have been fine! He's the one I understand! If I were with Miles, I could have another child. Did you ever think of that? We'd have the money for everything, pre-school, piano lessons, college. Everything. Miles is the person who takes care of those things. You all act as if he were...but if he weren't there, what do you think would happen? To any of us? None of it worked! Nothing. I don't know what's going on. I don't even like my daughter anymore. She's like a stranger, she's just another woman, she's...

LIZ: Lily. Lily. Shhh. Shh. (She holds her.)

LILY: You're the one they want. No matter what I do. Why?

LIZ: No, I'm not. Lily. It was always you. I'm just a big old mess. And you were always so good.

LILY: Oh, people hate you when you're good. I'd have tried being bad, once in a while, but I could never be as bad as you, so what was the point? (She suddenly pushes her away and turns away. Liz does not know what to do. Lily looks at all the others. They look back.)

LILY: Oh, dear. Now you're all staring at me. Yes, it's true. I'm as big a mess as the rest of you.

(They all laugh a little.)

GINA: Not me.

(They stare at each other. Blackout.)

SCENE VIII

The sushi restaurant. Two men stand in profile with their arms akimbo, as if they were about to draw their weapons. The lights come up, revealing that it is Miles and Bob. Tableau. They break tableau and shake hands.

BOB: Miles.

MILES: Bob, is it?

BOB: Imagine. Bumping into you like this. Mind if I join you? (He sits.) So, you've been having a little raw fish, huh, Miles?

MILES: Yes, I have.

BOB: It's kind of the new machismo, isn't it? Nobody eats steak anymore. It's all raw fish. Why is that, I wonder?

MILES: It's good for you.

BOB: There you go! How about a drink? (He pulls out a small bottle of sake and pours two drinks into glasses on the table.)

MILES: Well, I don't, usually, but perhaps I'd better.

BOB: So, Miles. I'm glad I ran into you. It's nice to finally have an opportunity to get to know you a little. I mean, Lily raves about you. As far as she's concerned, you walk on water.

MILES: I'm very fond of your wife. She's been a good friend to me.

BOB: Oh, Lily's terrific.

MILES: She's the finest woman I know.

BOB: Don't I know it. She's the perfect wife. Of course, Liz is something else altogether. Have you met Liz? Lily's sister?

MILES: As a matter of fact, that's who I'm waiting for.


MILES: Yes.

BOB: She's great.

MILES: Yes, she is.

BOB: I've slept with them both, you know.

MILES: (Pause.) Yes, I did know that.

BOB: Oh. You did.

MILES: Lily and I are friends. She tells me everything.

BOB: Well, isn't that cozy?

MILES: Are you all right, Bob?

BOB: No, as a matter of fact, I'm not all right. This morning I was all right. This morning, I had a wonderful wife, and a wonderful daughter, and a wonderful girlfriend. And tonight, I don't have anything. So, I'm not all right.

MILES: Perhaps you wanted too much.

BOB: Hey. Don't you talk to me about wanting too much, Mr. I Own Everything. I just got a real good look at your car out there. And might I add, that's quite a parking space. So, don't talk to me about wanting too much.

MILES: Shouldn't you go home, Bob?

BOB: Yes, Miles. I probably should, but that's the problem. I don't have a home anymore! So, I thought I'd come talk to you instead. Everyone
MILES: Neither do you.

BOB: Well, touché to that. Have some more scotch. These glasses are much too small. I'm drunk. (He pours them both a drink.)

MILES: Yes, I can see that.

BOB: Well, aren't you perceptive. What a gift. Don't we all wish we were you. Mr. Miles Perfect Wonderful.

MILES: What are you doing, Bob?

BOB: I'm picking a fight! I'm trying to get you to punch me in the nose!

MILES: That's not likely, Bob.

BOB: No?

MILES: Well, then maybe I'll punch you in the nose!

MILES: That's not likely, either.

BOB: You don't think so, huh?

(Bob swings or shoves Miles, who moves quickly out of the way, causing Bob to trip into a big pratfall. Miles picks him up.)

MILES: All right. I've had just about enough of this. Just understand: The only reason I'm not taking you apart is because I'm expecting someone, and I don't want to mess up my suit. But you're leaving. Now. (He shoves him out of the restaurant, sits, and pours himself a drink.)

BOB: (Off.) She's not coming!

MILES: I think I was very explicit about what's supposed to happen now, Bob.

BOB: (Reentering.) She's standing you up. How do you think I got here? The Rolls came back for her, and brought me instead. By the way, you're going to need to restock your wet bar.

(Bob sits, waving his bottle. Miles looks at him coldly.)

MILES: What did you do?

BOB: I didn't do anything. You underestimated her, Miles.

MILES: I'm really very irritated with you, Bob.

BOB: You kiss well, but other than that, she wasn't impressed. Compared you to a mosquito. Or maybe it was just a kind of generic blood sucker. I can't remember the specifics. But she's not coming back. She's standing you up.

MILES: That's not possible.

BOB: Possible or not, your chauffeur and I got along famously. Yeah, women are a mystery, and that's the truth. I mean, I thought when I married Lizzie, I...no, she's not the one I married. I married the other one, didn't I? Huh. Even then I wasn't sure why. Even then, I sort of wanted the other one. There was something so sad about her. I mean, you should have seen her in that dress. It was all pink, and it had this puffy stuff around the shoulders. She was supposed to be the maid of honor, you know, and she kept sneaking off to smoke a cigarette. Her father caught her. I saw it. She was out in the hallway, smoking a cigarette, and he came out and sort of took her by the arm, you know, and he said something, and then she said something, and then he grabbed her, right on the face, he hit her, and she didn't flinch; she stood her ground, but she looked so—I shouldn't have seen it. I was supposed to be making the rounds with Lily. And Lily looked great; she was perfect. All in white. Lace, something. It could have worked out. If I'd finished my book in time. If Lizzie hadn't worn that pink dress. It all just, it left room for doubt, you know? And now here I am, trying to explain it to you, and and you have no soul. Why am I here? Why don't you have a soul, Miles?

MILES: Frankly, Bob, I find your questions fatuous and irrelevant. If your marriage and your career have not gone as smoothly as you might have hoped, that's not my concern. I do what I have to get what I want; I am what I say I am, and I never pretend to be anything else. So if you're having a problem here, I suggest you deal with it and stop whining. You people. When it doesn't work out with me, all of you, you comfort yourselves with the idea that I have no soul. But I have a soul. It's you who are lost. I have what you want. Power. Money. Status. All of these things that you yearn for, I worked for and I claimed. Look at history. What do we remember? War. What do we care about? Power. What do we live for? Money. Am I getting through to you, Bob? I have more soul than any of you, because I know who we are. I know what we are. I alone am real.

BOB: (Sincere.) That's the saddest thing I've ever heard. You're a very lonely person, aren't you?

MILES: Bob, I think you should tell me what Liz is up to, then go home and save your marriage.

BOB: I can't. It's over. I'm lonely, and you're lonely, Miles. Women. They're the ones who brought us to this. The world would be a better place without them. And I like them. I mean, I'm one of those guys who actually likes them. But even I can't help thinking: What would it be like, without them? If there were no women? You and I could just get together, have a few drinks, slug it out, and then have babies. That's probably how it would work.

MILES: Look, are you going to tell me what Liz is doing, or not?
BOB: Forget about Liz! What do I know about Liz? I want to talk about Lily!
You've been sleeping with my wife, haven't you?
MILES: (Pause. Steely.) That would be adultery, Bob. Some people don't believe
in adultery.
BOB: Oh, I forgot.
MILES: Yes. You did. (Pause.) God, she is wasted on you.
BOB: What?
MILES: Lily! I've said to her, your husband is a loser. He is an invertebrate! It's
inexplicable why anyone would even talk to that bozo. She claims that
occasionally, you have a certain charm. I don't see it. Anyway, the fact is,
she's used goods. But, she has a sister, and the sister turns out to be an
interesting woman. A pain in the ass, but in a very interesting way. We
almost do it. In the car. But she has reservations, and I'm a little worried
about the upholstery. So we postpone it. But she's late, Bob. She was
supposed to be here, and she's standing me up, so all of a sudden, I'm
stuck on a date with you, and not only that, I'm thinking, she'll sleep
with him, but not with me! You want to know something, Bob? I resent
you. Times are changing, and I don't like it. Women are going for
pathetic losers like you. WHY?
BOB: I think it's because we talk to them.
MILES: Yeah, right. (He pours himself some more scotch.)
BOB: Lily said. I have a certain charm?
MILES: Shut up. (Impatient, he drinks from the bottle.)
BOB: Maybe she does still love me. Who else would put up with me?
MILES: You're not coming home with me, Bob.
BOB: You think she'd take me back? Lily, I mean.
MILES: Oh, for heaven's sake, which one of them do you want?
BOB: I don't know! If I did, do you think I'd be here on this stupid date with
you? I mean, Lizzie's great, but Lily's been my life! Lily and Adelaide.
Adelaide's a good kid. Sweet. Thoughtful. Always watching, you know
those kids who don't say much but you know they see everything. She's
going to be in therapy forever. Oh, God. What am I going to do?
MILES: Well, if you want Lily back, you could try making a little more money.
Get a job with her father and buy her a nice dress once in a while, would
you?
BOB: God knows I'm sick of academia. And it might be nice to actually make
a little money for once.
MILES: Duh, Bob.
BOB: Lily and I used to get along great. We could again! All I have to do

is...make more money. I don't know. It seems to me it's got to be more
complicated than that.
(Miles shakes his head.)
BOB: Women. They're a mystery. all right. If only I could figure out what I
want from them...What do you want from them, Miles?
MILES: (Thinking about this.) Comfort. Beauty.
BOB: (Excited.) Comfort! Beauty!
MILES: A nice meal once in a while.
BOB: A nice meal...
MILES: Sex.
BOB: Well, yes, there's always that. Sex.
MILES: Besides. A man shouldn't be alone.
BOB: No. We shouldn't. I think they'll take us back. They will.
MILES: You're making this up as you go along, aren't you?
BOB: Miles, I know women. And believe it or not, they're just as confused as
we are.
MILES: They are?
BOB: Completely lost. Like us. In fact, in a lot of ways, they're like us. Except
that they're also...very forgiving. They'll take us back. And until then,
at least we have each other.
(Miles stares at him. Blackout.)

SCENE IX

Lily holds out a plate of banana bread to Gina and Paula, as in scene one.
Margie stands to one side, holding her knitting. All three take banana bread
and start to eat it.

LILY: I tried a new recipe this week. I hope you like it.
GINA: Really? A new recipe!
PAULA: It's delicious, Lily.
LILY: Do you like it?
GINA: Oh, it's wonderful.
LILY: It has chocolate chips in it. At first, I was a little worried that it might
be too rich. I mean, too much sugar can drive you a little crazy, can't it?
And there really is an awful lot of caffeine in chocolate. Also, I read an
article about food allergies in the Times this week, and some people are
terribly allergic to chocolate, did you know that? There was a teenager in Florida who died from eating a bowl of chili because there was the tiniest bit of chocolate in it. Chocolate in a bowl of chili, who'd've thought? Deadly.

(Beat. They all set their banana bread down.)

PAULA: So, where's Liz? I tried calling her this week, but her machine was on—

MARGIE: Yeah, when I called it just rang—

LILY: Really? Gina, look, I've started a new sweater.

GINA: You have?

LILY: Yes, I finished that one for Adelaide. She looks adorable in it.

GINA: How is Adelaide?

LILY: Oh, she's fine. Just great.

PAULA: How's Bob?

LILY: He's fine too. He's home now. And guess what, Gina? Adelaide's teaching him how to knit!

GINA: (Appreciative.) Awww!

MARGIE: Yeah, that sounds healthy.

PAULA: So how's Liz? Did you two get a chance to—

LILY: Gina, could you look at this for me? I'm not sure which way I'm supposed to loop it.

GINA: Oh, sure...

MARGIE: Lily, why are we—

LILY: How's your sweater coming, Margie?

MARGIE: It's coming along just fine, Lily. Thanks for asking. I was just kind of looking at the different pieces the other day and thinking, you know, this really is lovely, in a pathetic way.

PAULA: You know, it is!

MARGIE: Yeah, yours looks good, too.

PAULA: I think it's quite intelligent and striking.

PAULA AND MARGIE: For a black woman. (They laugh.)

LILY: I don't know what's the matter with the two of you tonight.

MARGIE: Well, what's going on here? I mean, are we supposed to just keep knitting like nothing happened?

LILY: I don't know what you mean.

PAULA: Oh, come on, Lily. Last week—

LILY: Last week is over.

MARGIE: No it's not. I talked to my therapist about you, Lily.

LILY: Oh, good.

MARGIE: He thinks what you did is really fucked up.

LILY: I'm so glad you sent Margie into therapy, Paula. Really. It's always so wonderful to hear what a total stranger thinks about my life—

PAULA: (Overlap.) Maybe you should try it yourself, Lily. I agree with Margie. What you did is fucked up!

GINA: (Overlap.) You guys. You guys!

MARGIE: (Overlap.) And where's Liz, anyway? Is she, like, just out of the group now? I mean, do we get to say anything about anything anymore?

LILY: (Overlap.) I don't know where Liz is and I really don't care!

(Liz enters.)

LIZ: Hey, you guys! Sorry I'm late. I got stuck on the subway. Wow. What's this, chocolate chips?

(They all stare as she drops her knitting, picks up a piece of banana bread and eats.)

LILY: What are you doing here?

LIZ: It's our knitting night.

LILY: You're not welcome here.

PAULA: Lily!

LIZ: Gina, is that true? I'm not welcome?

GINA: Oh! I don't—oh—

LILY: Lily, you can refuse to talk to me on the phone—

LILY: Gina?

LIZ: —and you can not let me into your house, but you can't kick me out of Gina's apartment.

LILY: Gina? If Liz stays, I'm going to have to leave.

GINA: Oh. Can't we just knit?

LILY: No, Gina. We can't. It's Liz or me.

MARGIE: Come on, don't pick on Gina—

LILY: I'm not picking on anyone. (Pause.) Finc. (She starts to pack.)

LIZ: Aw, Lily, please don't do this. I just want to talk.

LILY: What you want, Liz, is not a high priority with me right now.

LIZ: Come on! What happened was bad, but we could work through it. Last week, when you were falling apart we were almost communicating—

LILY: Oh, now you want me to fall apart again! That's lovely—

LIZ: Please! Do we have to go back to this?

LILY: One hug and I'm supposed to forgive you everything, is that it?

LIZ: You're just supposed to talk to me! We never talk! We just—resent each other, and, and pick at each other, all our lives, that's all it's ever been! You're my big sister! I want you to like me!
LILY: And that's why you slept with my husband, I suppose. Very effective reasoning, Liz. Once again, your logic is right on track.

MARGIE: You guys?

LIZ: Look, I'm not the only one at fault here. I mean, all this shit with Miles was hardly innocent.

LILY: I set you up on a bad date! You slept with my husband! It's not exactly the same thing!

LIZ: I'm sorry, okay? That just happened, I didn't—

LILY: It didn't just happen! You did it deliberately! You're so obsessed with honesty, why don't you just try it yourself once in a while.

PAULA: You guys.

LIZ: (Overlap.) Could you stop accusing me and just—TRY? To communicate! God—I mean—we're sisters! Can't we just try?

LILY: (Overlap.) No. I don't want to try. I don't want to understand you. Frankly, I don't even want to know you.

(Pause.)

LIZ: Fine. That's fine with me. I never liked you anyway. Now, at least I don't have to pretend.

LILY: You're self-centered and thoughtless.

LIZ: Yeah, well, you're controlling and frigid.

LILY: You're a hypocrite and a liar!

LIZ: Not anymore! I admit it, ALL RIGHT? I fucked him to get at you! I fucked your husband, and the whole time, I was thinking about you.

MARGIE/GINA/PAULA: Liz, Geez, Liz... For heaven's sake! Liz!

LIZ: (Abashed.) Sorry.

MARGIE: You know, you guys, I could be wrong, but when Gloria Steinem said we should get together and communicate, I don't think this is what she meant.

PAULA: Me neither. I'm out of here.

GINA: You're going? Already? Are we meeting here next week?

PAULA: You may be, Gina. But I think I'm gonna pass.

MARGIE: Me too.

LILY: What?

PAULA: You heard me. I mean, what the hell are we coming here for? So we can sit around and listen to you two take each other apart? I mean, Jesus. It's hard enough just living in the world without getting jerked around by your knitting group.

MARGIE: Especially if you can't even knit.

PAULA: (To Liz and Lily.) Whatever this is—I hope you two work it out. (She starts to pack.)

GINA: Margie?

MARGIE: Sorry, Gina.

GINA: No, come on, you can't go! It's just Liz, again, unraveling everything—

LIZ: Would you give me a break? That's not what it is this time! I came here to try to put things back together for once! I know I've been a shit! I know! But I was hoping... I don't know what I was hoping. Just don't go.

PAULA: It's not just you, Liz. Lily's been lying to everybody. And enough is enough.

GINA: Lily.

LILY: What?

GINA: Say something. Say something to keep them here.

LILY: I don't care if they go.

LIZ: Yes, you do.

LILY: No, I don't!

GINA: Well, I do. What would have happened to me if you weren't here? Paula? Margie? Lily, ask them to stay. Please. Go. Tell them you're sorry. (Pause.)

LILY: I'm sorry.

(Pause.)

PAULA: That's it? Man. Don't you know anything about human behavior? I want to stay! I don't want to go! But you got to give me something here. Come on, Lily. Would you give us a little something?

LILY: All right. I admit that maybe Miles is... a little... hostile.

MARGIE/LIZ/PAULA: (Overlap.) A little? A LITTLE? A little.

LILY: Okay! He is hostile. And maybe... I was feeling competitive. And maybe... it made me feel... superior... to see him... reject you.

MARGIE: THAT'S supposed to keep us here?

LILY: I thought you wanted the truth!

MARGIE: Maybe we should go back to lying.

LIZ: Lying is what got us here.

PAULA: I prefer the truth. (To Lily.) Thank you.

LILY: I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done it. It's just—I was feeling so terrible. Things were going wrong even before Bob... you know. And then I met Miles, who was always so—

MARGIE: Rich.

LILY: Wonderful. He made me feel... perfect. Then he asked if I had any friends. Since I wasn't available, I didn't want him to want any of you. I
wanted him to want me, and see that no one else would do. My husband was having an affair with my sister. Being with Miles was the only thing that made me feel worth anything at all.

LIZ: Lily...

LILY: I know, that doesn’t make it all right for him to be mean to everyone else. I’m sorry. In spite of everything, I’ve always found men like that to be such a temptation.

LIZ: Hey. Don’t talk to me about it. He embodies everything I hate, and I still spent half an hour making out with him in the back seat of his car.

(Pause.)

LILY: What was it like?

LIZ: Lily...

MARGIE: Oh, come on, Liz, we’re all dying to know.

PAULA: (Overlap.) I have to admit to more than a passing curiosity...

GINA: (Overlap.) I wanted to ask, but I thought it might be rude...

MARGIE: (Overlap.) Spill it!

(They all clamor and sit around her.)

LIZ: (Sad.) It was wild. You feel the city all around you, just spinning by, and all of it, it’s all yours. It really made me think about all those rock stars and movie moguls I always complain about, and I realized: Groupies are not as stupid as they look. It scared me, how great it was. Just letting some guy give you things, take care of you, make you someone just by being with him. (Pause.) And now he keeps calling me.

PAULA: He does?

LIZ: Well, he doesn’t actually call. He sends the Rolls by. Every night, I watch it from my window, cutting slowly through the drug addicts like a big silver shark. He thinks he’s going to win me. (Pensive.) And who knows? Maybe he will.

MARGIE: Either that, or he’s going to lose his hubcaps.

PAULA: Liz. I have one word of advice for you: Don’t be such a fucking moron! Stay away from that guy! He’s bad news! Act like an adult for once in your life, would you?

LIZ: I’m trying! I’m here, aren’t I?

MARGIE: Yeah, what do you need him for? We have Gina.

LIZ: What?

MARGIE: The woman’s a gold mine. Look at this place. We’re going into business. You could get in on the ground floor.

LIZ: I could?

(Margie helps her into a sweater.)

MARGIE: Look at the quality of the work here. You won’t find that in any department store. For a mere five hundred dollars, that sweater can be yours.

GINA: Margie, you said a thousand.

MARGIE: (Handing out sweaters.) I priced them out at Missoni. We gotta be realistic. I mean it, we’re gonna do this, Gina. I talked to my therapist about it, and he thinks it’s a great idea. He says self-empowerment is the way to go here.

PAULA: Margie, if you’re just doing what this guy tells you to do, it’s not self-empowerment.

MARGIE: What?

LILY: I don’t know, Margie. When we started this group, it was supposed to be a haven, not a business.

MARGIE: Yeah. Some haven. Besides, Lily, you have to be practical. That guy Miles may have a big old Rolls, but we’ve got sweaters. Which would you rather have on a cold winter night?

LILY: Yeah, that’s a tough one.

(Gina stares at them, transfixed by the sight of the women in sweaters. As she speaks, the others get their knitting out.)

GINA: I can’t believe it. It’s so wonderful to see people wearing them. I never expected it somehow. And every piece of yarn went through my fingers. It’s like having my arms wrapped around all of you. You see? We’re fine. We don’t need men. Well, we do, actually, but you know what I mean. We have each other, and that’s enough! Well, it’s not, actually, but you know what I mean! We have our knitting! Here, Liz. These are your needles. They’re your friends.

(Shes holds needles out to Liz who reaches for them. The lights start to fade.)

LIZ: Okay. So who’s going to teach me to cast on again?

MARGIE: I’ll give it a whirl.

LIZ: Oh, great. The blind leading the blind.

LILY: Oh, Paula. I found an old book of Irish knits you might want to look at...

PAULA: Yeah?

LILY: Beautiful, beautiful sweaters...

(As they bend over their knitting, the lights fade to a lovely golden glow. Tableau and blackout.)

END OF PLAY