

# Intellectuals

By  
Scott C. Sickles

# INTELLECTUALS

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# INTELLECTUALS

*for Riley Jones-Cohen, Michael Montel,  
Alison Luce, and Greg Stuhr,  
and dedicated to the memory of Patricia O'Connell*

## INTELLECTUALS

### Cast of Characters

- BRIGHTON: Brighton Galloway, a film professor in his 40s; confident in the classroom, but not in himself; gay and perennially single, or so he thought!
- PHILIP: Philip Embers, a philosophy professor in his 50s; locked in a struggle between the schools of thought he teaches and how they apply to his suddenly discontented life; married to...
- MARGOT: Margot Welles, a therapist in her 50s; embraces dogma but doesn't realize she'd rather embrace her husband; has decided to give lesbianism a whirl.
- NICK: Nick Daldry, a charismatic man in his 20s; attracted to Brighton, yet with secrets from his family and a hidden past!
- ANTONIA: Antonia Burns, a student of Philip's in her mid-60s (or older); a mature woman with a thirst for life and a fondness for much younger men... a fondness she doesn't want her family to know about!
- HERA JANE: Hera Jane Smith, an African American lesbian attorney in her 30s/40s who believes that every woman has Sapphic potential. (Also plays HOSTESS.)
- LUISA: Luisa LeBlanc, lovely woman in her 20s; peripatetic waitress with a past connection to Nick! Yes, Nick! (Also plays STUDENT, SOPHIE, and CHELSEA.)

## INTELLECTUALS

Scene: Various locations in a medium-size university town, like Pittsburgh.

Time: The early aughts, before the advent of social media and long before dating apps. Mid-October. The week before the middle of the fall semester.

### Playwright's Notes

Doubling roles is optional. Sophie, Chelsea, the student, and the hostess can be cast separately.

The characters think on their feet, so they rarely stop to contemplate their responses to each other. As such, unscripted pauses are *strongly discouraged*. They mess with the comic timing and overall rhythm of the piece. A period is the end of a sentence, not the end of the world.

The play is meant to be performed on an abstract and versatile unit set. Scenes should flow directly into one another without stopping for complicated blackout scene changes. However, if scene changes can be choreographed in such a manner that keeps that momentum going, especially to establish a change in “days,” knock yourself out!

Finally, this play is very much about stereotypes and tropes, sending them up and turning them on their heads. It also reflects attitudes, prejudices (especially between gay men and lesbians), technology, and culture of the late 1990s/early aughts. Consider it a period piece.

Onward!

## INTELLECTUALS

INTELLECTUALS was originally produced Off-Off Broadway by the WorkShop Theater Company (Timothy Scott Harris, artistic director; Riley Jones-Cohen, executive director) in September 2006. The lighting design was by Deborah Constantine; the scenic design by Craig M. Napoliello with Amy Vlastelica; costumes by Isabel Fields; the sound design by Nick DiCeglie, Kevin Reifel, and David Gautschy. The production stage manager was Michael Palmer. David Gautschy directed with the following cast:

Margot Welles	Ellen Dolan
Philip Embers	Bill Tatum
Brighton Galloway	Bill Blechingberg
Female Student/Sophie/Chelsea/Luisa	Kari Swenson Riely
Antonia Burns	Patricia O'Connell
Male Student/Nick Daldry	Jess Cassidy White
Hostess/Hera Jane Smith	Kim Weston-Moran

INTELLECTUALS received a developmental production by The 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Workshop (Tony Sportiello, artistic director) in New York City in 2001. The lighting designer was Drew Levy. The stage manager was Portia Poindexter. It was directed by Michael Montel with the following cast:

Margot Welles	Riley Jones-Cohen
Philip Embers	Bill Tatum
Brighton Galloway	Greg Stuhr
Female Student/Sophie/Chelsea/Luisa	Patricia LoPiccolo
Antonia Burns	Patricia O'Connell
Male Student/Nick Daldry	Jeff Taylor
Hostess/Hera Jane Smith	Veronique Jean Marie

In addition to WorkShop Theater Company and the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Workshop, INTELLECTUALS has been developed by the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation at CAP 21, Algonquin Productions, the Carnegie Collaborative at Manhattan Theatre Club, and the Carnegie Mellon Festival of New Plays.

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# INTELLECTUALS

ACT 1  
MONDAY

*Philip and Margot's living room. Monday night. 11:00 p.m. The week before Mid-Semester Break.*

*MARGOT WELLES, a woman in her 50s, dressed professionally, enters with suitcases. She puts them down in an obvious but out-of-the-way location. She looks at her watch, paces for a moment, looks out the window. Nothing. She fills a snifter with brandy and sets it out, just so. She checks herself in a mirror but does not primp. Sound of a car pulling into the driveway. Margot primps briefly and poises herself in the middle of the room. The car shuts off; doors open and shut. Jovial men's voices are heard.*

*PHILIP EMBERS is a scholarly man in his 50s, dressed professorially. BRIGHTON GALLOWAY is in his 40s, dressed in business casual. Philip and Brighton enter laughing.*

**MARGOT.** So, how was it? *(The laughter stops.)*

**BRIGHTON.** Philip?

**PHILIP.** No, no. You go right ahead. I know it's killing you. *(As the conversation ensues, Philip looks around the living room for something.)*

**BRIGHTON.** Thank you. Oh, my god. It was so bad, Philip actually suggested we call you during intermission so you could bring over rotten vegetables for the second act.

**MARGOT.** That was Philip's suggestion?

**PHILIP.** I was inspired. We couldn't call during intermission, though, because...

**BRIGHTON AND PHILIP.** There WAS no intermission!

**BRIGHTON.** We thought we'd need Amnesty International to get us out of there.

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**PHILIP.** The only thing keeping us going was the comforting promise of coffee and dessert that awaits us here.

**BRIGHTON.** Hear hear! (*Awkward pause as there is no coffee and dessert in sight and Margot doesn't offer or explain.*)

**PHILIP.** Which I'm sure awaits us in the kitchen. Brighton, you regale Margot with tales of terrible theater and I—

**MARGOT.** Philip.

**PHILIP.** No, no. You've been busy, dear. I will get the refreshments myself. Brighton, continue. (*Philip exits. Margot moves the suitcases into the middle of the room as Brighton speaks.*)

**BRIGHTON.** Anyway, I must say, I've never seen a King Lear with so many dance numbers.

**MARGOT.** How many were there?

**BRIGHTON.** Merely two. In *KING LEAR*! The first extravaganza featured an actress spinning down center wearing Malcolm McDowell's outfit from *A Clockwork Orange*, complete with bowler hat and eyelash, and then... she pretended to be a clock!

**MARGOT.** (*Occasionally looking to see if Philip reemerges.*) Oh, my!

**BRIGHTON.** The second one was even better! It was of course the storm. Lear bouncing across the stage, and by bouncing, I mean bouncing.

**MARGOT.** Bouncing?

**BRIGHTON.** This Lear was downright sprightly. Meanwhile, there's a chorus line of people slowly waving at him, making whoosh noises – I'm not kidding – and for some reason, someone keeps running backwards, in a straitjacket, past the opening of the thatched hut. Yes, I said both “straitjacket” and “thatched hut.” I nicknamed it “The Who's Marat/Sade.”

**MARGOT.** Well, I'm sorry I missed it.

**BRIGHTON.** No. You're not.

**PHILIP.** (*Reemerges.*) Brighton, the coffee is going to take too long; how about a nightcap, instead?

**BRIGHTON.** No thanks; I'm driving.

**MARGOT.** Me too.

**PHILIP.** Margot?

**MARGOT.** Yes, Philip?



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**PHILIP.** (*Discovers full brandy snifter.*) Ah. You've already poured one. Is this for me?

**MARGOT.** Uh, yes. Indeed, it is.

**PHILIP.** (*Trying to cover suspicion.*) Wonderful! You used the large snifter. And it's quite full. Why, this is very thoughtful of you, Margot.

**BRIGHTON.** Okay! Time for me to go. I have to run home and write my review.

**MARGOT.** I can't wait to read it.

**BRIGHTON.** You've already heard half of it. Don't get me wrong: there is such a thing as good concept Shakespeare. I've seen it happen. Less than five times, but I have seen it. It might happen more often. If only Ph.D. candidates weren't allowed to direct. Good night! (*Exits.*)

**PHILIP.** Did you get everything done that you needed to do?

**MARGOT.** I think so.

**PHILIP.** I'm sorry, I've forgotten. How long is your trip?

**MARGOT.** My trip?

**PHILIP.** Two suitcases. I didn't think you'd be gone that long.

**MARGOT.** Really, how long did you think I'd be gone?

**PHILIP.** Just a day or two at the most.

**MARGOT.** And where do you think I'm going?

**PHILIP.** Uh... Okay, you caught me. I saw the suitcases and figured you had packed for an important trip that we most likely discussed at some point and I didn't want you to realize I had forgotten about it. But I did. I'm sorry.

**MARGOT.** You didn't forget. I didn't tell you.

**PHILIP.** I see. Margot. What's wrong?

**MARGOT.** Nothing.

**PHILIP.** I went into the kitchen to find the coffee and dessert. What I found instead was printed instructions taped to the coffeemaker about how to use it. Color photos and everything, quite beautifully produced.

**MARGOT.** I wanted it to be aesthetically pleasing.

**PHILIP.** You succeeded. Um. When I opened the refrigerator, I discovered a Tupperware orgy of lunchmeats, breads, and things you adorably labeled as "fixin's."

**MARGOT.** I had a very colloquial moment there, didn't I?

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**PHILIP.** So, in light of your leaving notes on all of the food and beverages in our home, I must ask: have you been reading Lewis Carroll?

**MARGOT.** *(Pause. Indignant:)* Maybe.

**PHILIP.** Margot... What are you trying to tell me?

**MARGOT.** I... I think we need some time apart.

**PHILIP.** Did I...? Should I have—

**MARGOT.** No, no. It's not you. *(Pause; gathers her thoughts.)* Philip. I've come to realize there are aspects of my life that I've left unexplored; aspects that, by their nature, I cannot explore with you.

**PHILIP.** Such as?

**MARGOT.** I've been doing some reading and—

**PHILIP.** Uh-oh.

**MARGOT.** Excuse me?

**PHILIP.** Go on.

**MARGOT.** No, what did you mean by “uh-oh”? I tell you I've been reading... and you say—

**PHILIP.** I was not railing against the right of women to read. I was merely reacting to how you are, at times, readily influenced by trends you read about. You don't have to, as the youth might say, “go all Margaret Atwood on me.”

**MARGOT.** I am not easily influenced by trends.

**PHILIP.** We have a basement with a pottery wheel, a home wine-making system, and a loom, each of which have been used once or twice and then never again. But let's not discuss this right now. You were leaving me.

**MARGOT.** I was saying: I've been doing some reading and realized, not just from this reading, but also from counseling women with similar unexplored alcoves in their experience, that my feminine potential has largely remained untapped. I wish to tap that potential.

**PHILIP.** Meaning?

**MARGOT.** I'm becoming a lesbian.

**PHILIP.** You are?

**MARGOT.** I don't know for how long. Just until I can determine if it's who I am.

**PHILIP.** And how long do you think it will be before you know whether or not lesbianism is your cup of tea?

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**MARGOT.** I'm not enjoying your tone.

**PHILIP.** Margot, how do I say this? Lesbianism is a sexual orientation, not a car. You can't test-drive it.

**MARGOT.** There are many case histories of women who don't realize they're lesbians until their first experience.

**PHILIP.** Yes, but they at least wonder.

**MARGOT.** I've wondered.

**PHILIP.** Since when?

**MARGOT.** The point is: this is something I have to find out about, and in order to do that—

**PHILIP.** You have to leave me. I can't believe this. You're casting aside twenty-two years of marriage—

**MARGOT.** I'm not casting anything aside.

**PHILIP.** I see. You're not deserting me. This is just a... separation.

**MARGOT.** Don't think of it as a separation, then. Think of it as more of a... sabbatical.

**PHILIP.** We have plans! The Museum Ball on Saturday. I reserved a table for us at the University's Fall Carnival.

**MARGOT.** Philip, please don't! (*Doorbell.*)

**BRIGHTON.** (*Offstage:*) It's me!

**PHILIP.** It's open. (*Brighton reenters.*)

**BRIGHTON.** Sorry to do this, but I left my playbill here. Let's see. Where.... Ah. There it is. Okay, so I'm pretending I didn't leave this here on purpose to give myself an excuse to come back and ask you why you're acting so *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*-y. You find me painfully transparent and tell me what's up.

**PHILIP.** By all means. Margot?

**MARGOT.** You'd find out tomorrow anyway. You see, Brighton... I've... come to, uh... some... conclusions...

**PHILIP.** Don't hesitate. Let it out! Don't let his potentially very negative reaction daunt you.

**MARGOT.** I'm not daunted.

**PHILIP.** You seem nonplussed.

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**MARGOT.** I am perfectly plussed. Brighton, I know that because you are my friend and because you have struggled with similar issues in your own difficult, yet triumphant, life—

**BRIGHTON.** Spit it out.

**MARGOT.** I'm becoming a lesbian.

**BRIGHTON.** (*Pause.*) Oh, thank God. I thought you two were serious. You really had me.

**MARGOT.** It's not a joke.

**BRIGHTON.** It has to be. "I'm becoming a lesbian." No one "becomes" a lesbian. It's not like Judaism. You can't convert.

**MARGOT.** I'm not "converting."

**PHILIP.** It's more like a test-drive.

**MARGOT.** Brighton, listen to me. I've come to realize there are certain aspects of my life that I've left unexplored; aspects that, by their nature, I cannot explore with Philip. I've been doing some reading and I've realized, not only from this reading but from counseling women with similar unexplored alcoves in their experience, that my feminine potential has largely remained untapped. I wish to tap that potential.

**PHILIP.** You've been rehearsing that!

**MARGOT.** I have not!

**PHILIP.** Those are the exact same words you used to explain this cockamamie sabbatical to me before! The only way you could use the exact same words is if you rehearsed it.

**MARGOT.** Though it obviously has not occurred to you, Philip, perhaps the reason I am able to explain myself clearly with similar and, perhaps, identical language is because I have given the matter a great deal of thought.

**PHILIP.** Clearly, you have. Apparently, you also gave a good deal of thought to how you were going to break the news to me?

**MARGOT.** Yes, Philip.

**PHILIP.** Kept saying it out loud until you got it just right?

**MARGOT.** Yes, Philip.

**PHILIP.** And you don't call that rehearsal?

**MARGOT.** I respect your... Socraticism. However—

**BRIGHTON.** May I ask you a personal question, Margot?

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**MARGOT.** Certainly.

**BRIGHTON.** Are you attracted to women?

**MARGOT.** I adore women.

**BRIGHTON.** I mean sexually.

**MARGOT.** What does that have to do with anything?

**PHILIP.** For starters, it's a prerequisite for lesbianism.

**MARGOT.** Well... I didn't want to make this about anything as superficial as sexual attraction and gender, but... sure.

**PHILIP.** "Sure?"

**MARGOT.** Yes. "Sure." A word used to express certainty.

**PHILIP.** Ah, I see what you're doing. Oh, Margot, I am onto you so. Is that how the kids say it today, Brighton?

**BRIGHTON.** They say "so onto you" but "onto you so" is more you.

**MARGOT.** And how and to what extent, Philip, are you "onto me so?"

**PHILIP.** You knew I would be reluctant to go along with your little experiment.

**MARGOT.** "Little?" Exploring one's identity is hardly—

**PHILIP.** Margot, have you been dissatisfied, disappointed, or otherwise disenchanted with our marriage?

**MARGOT.** What complaints could I possibly have?

**PHILIP.** Is that rhetorical or a "no"?

**BRIGHTON.** I think it's actually a direct question designed to place the blame on you for being ignorant of your matrimonial shortcomings.

**MARGOT.** It's a "no."

**PHILIP.** A "no"?

**MARGOT.** Yes! A "no."

**PHILIP.** Excellent. Then the passion sparking your odyssey of self-discovery has nothing to do with anything I've said or not said, done or not done, or with who I am, was, have been, or could be?

**MARGOT.** That's right.

**PHILIP.** Then, Margot, I congratulate you!

**MARGOT.** You do?

**BRIGHTON.** No, you don't.

**PHILIP.** This is a great moment. You must pull anchor and set forth. I shall impede you no longer. You've packed your things. *(Beat. Softly:)*

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You've packed your things. *(Beat.)* Far be it from me to render that act in vain. Wait here. I'll bring the car around for you.

**MARGOT.** You will?

**PHILIP.** Unless there's some reason I shouldn't.

**MARGOT.** No. Please do!

**PHILIP.** Happy to oblige.

**MARGOT.** It's quite gentlemanly of you.

**PHILIP.** If I'm anything, it's a gentleman.

**MARGOT.** *(Beat.)* Do you need the keys?

**PHILIP.** I have my keys. Do you have yours?

**MARGOT.** Of course I do. I'm all set.

**PHILIP.** Good for you. Then, there's no point in waiting any longer. I'll get the car.

**MARGOT.** Thank you.

**PHILIP.** Fine. Excuse me. *(Exits.)*

**MARGOT.** I must admit, he's taking this much better than I thought he would.

**BRIGHTON.** Yes! I'm so relieved that neither of you is behaving in any way that resembles passive-aggression or denial.

**MARGOT.** It is a relief, isn't it?

**BRIGHTON.** Margot, if you were having these thoughts, why didn't you talk to me?

**MARGOT.** I needed to do this on my own.

**BRIGHTON.** You were afraid I could talk you out of it.

**MARGOT.** I was worried you might say something to Philip.

**BRIGHTON.** And you were afraid I could talk you out of it.

**MARGOT.** This isn't easy for me. I'll need your help.

**BRIGHTON.** Lunch. Your office. Tomorrow.

**MARGOT.** Thank you, Brighton. *(Philip enters.)*

**PHILIP.** Your chariot awaits.

**MARGOT.** Thank you, Philip. *(Margot picks up her luggage. She leaves one piece for Philip and looks at him expectantly.)*

**PHILIP.** You can make two trips.

**MARGOT.** That won't be necessary. I've got it. *(She doesn't.)*

**BRIGHTON.** Philip, do you need me to stay?

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**MARGOT.** I've got it. *(She doesn't.)*

**PHILIP.** No, thanks. I'm sure I'll see you in the morning.

**MARGOT.** I've got it. *(She does!)*  
*(CROSS-FADE TO:)*

### TUESDAY

*Brighton's office. Tuesday morning. A desk with a phone, a stapler, and papers. Brighton gathers notes for his lecture. Philip enters, holding something in his hand.*

**BRIGHTON.** Well, if it isn't the Happy Bachelor.

**PHILIP.** If you love someone, you must set them free!

**BRIGHTON.** The last time I did that, I had to contend with a rather uppity bail bondsman. What the hell were you doing last night?

**PHILIP.** I was blindsided. I thought she was bluffing; I wanted to call her on it. I didn't think she'd actually leave.

**BRIGHTON.** Not even when you started her car and drove it to the front door? Why so cheerful?

**PHILIP.** Voilà! *(He presents a gold charm bracelet.)*

**BRIGHTON.** For me? You shouldn't have! It's just what I wanted.

**PHILIP.** I gave this to her on our first anniversary. It has a little gold number for every year we've been married, musical notes from our days as symphony addicts, a little gold menu with the name of the restaurant where I proposed to her engraved on it. Misspelled. *(Beat.)* I found this hanging out of the jewelry box. Which means: she's coming back.

**BRIGHTON.** Or she's so disenchanted with you that she's left behind any and all physical evidence of your marital union. *(Sees that Philip is stunned.)* But that's probably wrong.

**PHILIP.** Have you spoken to her today?

**BRIGHTON.** I'm meeting her for lunch.

**PHILIP.** Really? Where?

**BRIGHTON.** Philip.

**PHILIP.** I'm not going to crash your lunch.

**BRIGHTON.** Of course you would. That's why we're eating in her office.

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**PHILIP.** How nice. She has a nice office.

**BRIGHTON.** You want progress reports on my conversations with her.

**PHILIP.** Will you give me progress reports?

**BRIGHTON.** I'm a naturally indiscreet person. I'll keep each of you informed about the other, so be careful what you tell me and especially careful about what you ask.

**PHILIP.** Fair enough. And while you're...

**BRIGHTON.** Teaching Remedial Lesbianism?

**PHILIP.** I was wondering if you might...

**BRIGHTON.** You want me to convince Margot that lesbians are evil.

**PHILIP.** Just convince her that she wouldn't make a very good one. I mean, it's not as though you don't already have issues with lesbians.

**BRIGHTON.** I do not have issues with lesbians.

**PHILIP.** You don't like lesbians.

**BRIGHTON.** That is a gross generalization. I don't like the lesbians I have met. I'm sure there are plenty of lesbians... of quality out there. Our circles simply have not overlapped.

**PHILIP.** Fair enough. Lesbians bother you. I don't have to understand why.

**BRIGHTON.** (*Exasperated:*) What's not to understand? Lesbians—

**PHILIP.** The one's you've met.

**BRIGHTON.** Yes-yes-of-course-who-else! "Those people" – and I mean that in the best possible way – tend to exhibit the same annoying traits as most of the lesser gay men I have known: stereotypical behavior, prejudices, obsession with labels, an almost complete absence of any sense of humor. Where gay men think everything is a joke, lesbians often don't see the humor in humor. Of course, the abject hatred of men is a turnoff; the absence of any sense of style – it's garish or it's Santa Fe; the maximum of five haircuts, all of them unflattering.

**PHILIP.** But the lesbians, at least the ones I've encountered recently, seem to be "letting their hair down." So to speak.

**BRIGHTON.** And the theater! Oh, my God, the theater! Show after show about intelligent, sensitive women escaping the clutches of Neolithic men, who just don't understand the uniqueness that can only happen between two women blah blah blah. "But these are my feelings" blah blah blah;



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“Our relationship” blah blah blah, “I disagree with your position on Insert Women’s Issue Here” blah blah blah; “When she first touched me” “drenching rain” “long drought in my soul” blah blah! And all the while I’m sitting in the bleachers praying that SOMETHING, ANYTHING will happen. But does it? NO! We have to sit through some dyke’s fucking “Internal Journey.”

**PHILIP.** I hadn’t realized you felt this—

**BRIGHTON.** On the upside, you can be a fat lesbian and get a date. I hate people. Thank God I’m a teacher. Don’t worry, Philip. If Margot wants to immerse herself in the waters of Sapphic sisterhood, I know just the pool in which she should dip her toe! (*CROSS-FADE TO: Margot’s office. There is a desk with a computer and a chair. Brighton stands as Margot sits behind her computer.*)

**BRIGHTON.** Welcome to Internet personals!

**MARGOT.** Are you sure?

**BRIGHTON.** Absolutely. This is the fastest, most efficient way of surveying the playing field. Let’s browse, shall we?

**MARGOT.** Okay... Women seeking women, obviously.

**BRIGHTON.** Between ages...?

**MARGOT.** 25 and 50?

**BRIGHTON.** Cradle robber.

**MARGOT.** I’m interested in younger perspectives as well.

**BRIGHTON.** You’ll end up with a nut job harboring an Electra complex.

**MARGOT.** Kind of relationship? Casual?

**BRIGHTON.** Only looking for sex.

**MARGOT.** Long-Term Serious?

**BRIGHTON.** Picked out the China pattern; looking for someone to go with it.

**MARGOT.** Long-Term Casual?

**BRIGHTON.** Probably your safest bet. Click that.

**MARGOT.** “Only search ads with photos”? I don’t want to be superficial.

**BRIGHTON.** Remember that when your date asks if you’re distracted by her goiter.

**MARGOT.** Fine. Here’s one: “Young Soul Pioneer—”

**BRIGHTON.** Fruitcake!

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**MARGOT.** “ISO Elegant Femme to Explore Life’s Frontiers.”

**BRIGHTON.** That doesn’t reek of autoerotic asphyxiation to you?

**MARGOT.** Stop it. What does ISO mean?

**BRIGHTON.** “In search of.”

**MARGOT.** Like Leonard Nimoy?

**BRIGHTON.** Probably.

**MARGOT.** Am I femme?

**BRIGHTON.** You’re not butch.

**MARGOT.** Is butch bad?

**BRIGHTON.** I like it.

**MARGOT.** Look: she enjoys pondering the universe and writing poetry and keeps nature close to her at all times. There’s nothing about oxygen-deprived orgasms.

**BRIGHTON.** Maybe there should be.

**MARGOT.** I’m going to reply. Dear “AlphaOmegan.”

**BRIGHTON.** You’re kidding.

**MARGOT.** (*Typing:*) “My name is Margot Welles...”

**BRIGHTON.** Don’t give her your full name.

**MARGOT.** “...Margot, and I believe I am the femme for whom you have been looking.”

**BRIGHTON.** Good.

**MARGOT.** “I am relatively new at this.” I don’t want her expectations to be too high.

**BRIGHTON.** These are Internet personals. If she has high expectations... Here. Type this: “My experience has mostly been with men...”

**MARGOT.** Good. Okay.

**BRIGHTON.** “...so, judging from your description, you won’t be too much of a stretch.”

**MARGOT.** (*Laughs.*) Brighton! Be serious, please.

**BRIGHTON.** “You seem like the sort of woman with whom I might feel comfortable.”

**MARGOT.** That’s nice. Brighton, I know it must be difficult being in the middle of this—

**BRIGHTON.** Philip did not put me up to this.

**MARGOT.** He didn’t ask you to—

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**BRIGHTON.** Of course he asked.

**MARGOT.** And you didn't agree to—

**BRIGHTON.** I most certainly did not. Though I probably gave him a tacit impression I did. Margot, look: I love you. I would never do anything to compromise the integrity of your efforts.

**MARGOT.** Oh, Brighton. That is so sweet of you. Now: the virtual world certainly has provided an interesting overview. Can you recommend any place in the actual world?

**BRIGHTON.** The Women's Center downtown has a support group for bi-curious women and newly out lesbians.

**MARGOT.** Sounds good. Any place I should avoid?

**BRIGHTON.** The Women's Issues section at Barnes & Noble.

**MARGOT.** Thanks. Let's write one for me, now. (*CROSS-FADE TO: Philip's classroom. Tuesday afternoon. Philip stands behind a lectern. FEMALE STUDENT and ANTONIA are planted in the audience. Philip holds a copy of Plato's Meno.*)

**PHILIP.** That wraps up Plato's *The Meno*. Any questions?

**FEMALE STUDENT.** Yes, uh, Professor Embers. Uh, I don't get the bit about knowledge versus true opinion. What's the difference?

**PHILIP.** A child burns himself on a hot stove. He has true knowledge that touching the stove is dangerous. Another child, who has not touched the stove, can only have the opinion that touching the stove is dangerous. That opinion may be correct, but his inexperience precludes it from being true knowledge.

**FEMALE STUDENT.** But don't they amount to the same thing?

**PHILIP.** Practically speaking, yes. In this instance, the child who has learned from the other's experience has lucked out.

**FEMALE STUDENT.** So sometimes the correct opinion is better than true knowledge.

**PHILIP.** Sometimes, but certainly not always. Can anyone think of an example where true knowledge wins out? Anyone at all?

**ANTONIA.** Love.

**PHILIP.** (*Beat.*) Go on.

## INTELLECTUALS

**ANTONIA.** It's better to have experienced love and to know what love is from the inside, than to be around friends who are in love and observe them.

**FEMALE STUDENT.** But what about heartbreak? Is it better to have true knowledge that heartbreak is devastating or is it better to have the correct opinion?

**PHILIP.** *(To Antonia:)* Would you care to respond, Miss... I'm sorry, I don't recall your name.

**ANTONIA.** Burns. *(Pronounced: Ann-toe-NEE-uh.)* Antonia Burns. And the answer is... true knowledge.

**PHILIP.** Why?

**ANTONIA.** So when people tell you they know what you're going through, you can tell them to go to hell.

**PHILIP.** *(Smiling wide:)* Well. There it is. *(Checks time.)* Looks like we're out of time. The reading for next time is from Aristotle's *(Pronounced: nee-koe-MAH-kee-uhn.) Nicomachean Ethics.* Have a good weekend. *CROSS-FADE TO: Brighton in his lecture hall. NICK is planted in the audience.)*

**BRIGHTON.** Your script must be filled with images. I don't mean long strings of adjectives. Be evocative. Be picturesque. Be concise, but vivid. Take the sequence we watched today from *Out of Africa*. Sure, we have John Barry's lush score and David Watkin's breathtaking cinematography as we watch Robert Redford fly Meryl Streep around. What makes those beautiful aerial images matter? What's happening? Anyone? *(Pause.)* Come on, people. This isn't quantum physics. Look at them! It's obvious—

**NICK.** *(From the audience.)* ...falling in love...

**BRIGHTON.** I'm sorry. I didn't hear that.

**NICK.** I said, they're falling in love.

**BRIGHTON.** Bravo. Wasn't that simple? Now, tell me this. How can you tell?

**NICK.** The way she reaches back for his hand and he takes it. How they both change once he does.

**BRIGHTON.** Are they saying anything?

**NICK.** No. It's just... what they're doing.

## INTELLECTUALS

**BRIGHTON.** And what we're seeing them do. See, class. Actions and images. Thank you, Mister...?

**NICK.** Daldry.

**BRIGHTON.** Thank you, Mister Daldry. Actions and images...

*(CROSS-FADE TO: An empty area of the stage. Philip enters with his overcoat and briefcase.)*

**ANTONIA.** *(Offstage:)* Excuse me. Doctor Embers! *(Philip stops. Antonia enters. She is in her mid-60s (or older), colorfully dressed but never tacky.)*

**PHILIP.** Miss Burns, right?

**ANTONIA.** Antonia.

**PHILIP.** I enjoyed your participation in class today.

**ANTONIA.** You know what they say... Experience brings wisdom, a gift unappreciated by the young.

**PHILIP.** Who said that?

**ANTONIA.** Actually, I did. I'm always pretending I'm quoting people. It disguises the fact that I'm trying too hard.

**PHILIP.** Trying too hard to...

**ANTONIA.** To be quotable, of course.

**PHILIP.** I'm of the opinion you should speak up more often. So, how can I help you?

**ANTONIA.** I have a few questions about the reading assignment.

**PHILIP.** You seemed to understand it perfectly.

**ANTONIA.** Not the Plato. That's fine. I mean the Aristotle. I read the passages you assigned.

**PHILIP.** You read them? Already?

**ANTONIA.** Yes.

**PHILIP.** Really?

**ANTONIA.** Yes?

**PHILIP.** *(Wistful:)* No student of mine has ever read ahead. I usually consider myself lucky if they read it at all, but... you... you read ahead.

**ANTONIA.** Doctor Embers, please. Your enthusiasm is making me blush.

**PHILIP.** No, it isn't. I get the impression not much does. *(Awkward moment.)* So, we were talking about...

**ANTONIA.** Aristotle. It's chilly. Do you mind if we talk over coffee?

## INTELLECTUALS

**PHILIP.** I... I'd love to, but I can't tonight.

**ANTONIA.** Another time, then. *(They begin to exit in opposite directions. Philip turns to Antonia.)*

**PHILIP.** I'm free tomorrow evening. *(Antonia stops and faces Philip. She is smiling. CROSS-FADE TO: Brighton gathering his notes at the lectern. Nick enters and crosses to him. Nick is a charismatic man in his 20s.)*

**NICK.** Mister Galloway.

**BRIGHTON.** Mister Daldry. Thank you for your participation in class today. It was nice hearing a voice that wasn't my own.

**NICK.** My pleasure. Actually... I was sort of making up for lost time.

**BRIGHTON.** How so?

**NICK.** The first time I took this class, I don't think I said a word.

**BRIGHTON.** Did I fail you because of it?

**NICK.** You gave me an A-minus.

**BRIGHTON.** You must have earned it. I give nothing. So, if you've already passed the course, why are you taking it again?

**NICK.** I'm not. I was just sitting in.

**BRIGHTON.** Why?

**NICK.** Uh, well. I started out as a Psych major in undergrad. Then I took this course and I changed my major to film.

**BRIGHTON.** And now you're here to exact some kind of revenge on me for ruining your life?

**NICK.** On the contrary. You... God, this sounds so cliché, but... You... changed my life.

**BRIGHTON.** Really? Thank you.

**NICK.** That's not the reason I'm here, though.

**BRIGHTON.** Oh?

**NICK.** All right, here goes. When I first took this course, I was nineteen and I didn't think it would be appropriate, but now I'm in my twenties and I'm a little more experienced, with life and such, and I'm a little more confident, although you can probably tell I'm a little nervous right now.

**BRIGHTON.** A predicate, I'm begging you.

**NICK.** Would you like to go out with me tomorrow night?

**BRIGHTON.** *(Pause.)* To what end?

**NICK.** Um. A date?

## INTELLECTUALS

**BRIGHTON.** What do you mean? *(No response.)* I see. You're an actor then. Researching a role? *Sweet Bird of Youth?*

**NICK.** No, I'm not an actor. And I'm not your student anymore.

**BRIGHTON.** But you are still a student.

**NICK.** Not in this department. I'm in the graduate film program.

**BRIGHTON.** This is a film course.

**NICK.** Taught through the English department.

**BRIGHTON.** In conjunction with Film Studies.

**NICK.** Still, you teach undergrad. I'm a grad student. There's no conflict of interest.

**BRIGHTON.** I don't know if it would be kosher. This isn't the theater department, you know.

**NICK.** Okay. If you don't want to go...

**BRIGHTON.** I never said that. I'm... It's just... I'm having a Woody Allen meets Derek Jarman moment and it's just a little...

**NICK.** Buñuel?

**BRIGHTON.** Buñuel? No, not Buñuel. Buñuel?

**NICK.** You know: surreal.

**BRIGHTON.** It is surreal. Not quite Fellini surreal, but more like... it feels Canadian.

**NICK.** Like Atom Egoyan.

**BRIGHTON.** Yes. Only chronological. What time tomorrow?  
*(CROSS-FADE TO:)*

## WEDNESDAY

*Margot's office. Early Wednesday evening. Margot primps a little. Philip enters.*

**PHILIP.** Aren't you a vision.

**MARGOT.** Just happened to be in the neighborhood?

**PHILIP.** I'm checking up on you. I brought your mail as a ruse.

**MARGOT.** Clever.

**PHILIP.** I have my moments. What's the occasion?

**MARGOT.** I have a date.

## INTELLECTUALS

**PHILIP.** Already?

**MARGOT.** And one tomorrow.

**PHILIP.** Impressive.

**MARGOT.** Surprised?

**PHILIP.** That you were able to get two dates this quickly? Not at all.

**MARGOT.** Funny; I was. They're not really "dates," of course. Just drinks.

**PHILIP.** I see. And then what?

**MARGOT.** Philip, please. I'm not that kind of girl.

**PHILIP.** I remember exactly what kind of girl you were. Drinks could lead to a concert or a play. Afterwards, if all went well, there might be dancing. Beyond that—

**MARGOT.** What are you and Brighton doing this evening?

**PHILIP.** Nothing. He has a date.

**MARGOT.** Who does?

**PHILIP.** Brighton.

**MARGOT.** Our Brighton?

**PHILIP.** How many do you know?

**MARGOT.** A date?

**PHILIP.** Yes.

**MARGOT.** He said "date?" He used that exact word.

**PHILIP.** Yes.

**MARGOT.** What do you think he meant?

**PHILIP.** He must have told you.

**MARGOT.** He didn't say anything.

**PHILIP.** Must be something in the air. He's meeting someone tonight. You're meeting someone...

**MARGOT.** It's just drinks.

**PHILIP.** I'm meeting someone too.

**MARGOT.** Are you?

**PHILIP.** A student.

**MARGOT.** Preschool or grammar?

**PHILIP.** Lovely girl. She reads ahead.



## INTELLECTUALS

**MARGOT.** You must be in heaven. Careful, Philip. You don't want to commit moral turpitude with an ethics student. The irony alone is too much.

**PHILIP.** She's auditing.

**MARGOT.** How convenient.

**PHILIP.** Besides, it's not a date. Just coffee.

**MARGOT.** You have a nice time.

**MARGOT.** You, too.

**PHILIP.** *(Gestures for her to leave first. She goes. As she passes him:)* She better not look anything like me. *(Margot laughs in spite of herself and exits. Philip follows. CROSS-FADE TO: Brighton's office. Brighton frantically tries on different ties. His telephone rings. He answers it.)*

**BRIGHTON.** Hello? *(SPOT UP ON Philip at a pay phone.)*

**PHILIP.** You didn't tell me Margot has a date.

**BRIGHTON.** Philip?

**PHILIP.** Yes. Who else?

**BRIGHTON.** I thought you might be Nick.

**PHILIP.** Aren't you about to see him?

**BRIGHTON.** Yes.

**PHILIP.** Then why would you think it was Nick?

**BRIGHTON.** I was afraid he was calling to cancel.

**PHILIP.** Why would he do that?

**BRIGHTON.** Gee, Philip, I don't know: he could have sobered up; regained his eyesight; his medication could have reached its therapeutic window. THERE ARE A MILLION REASONS!

**PHILIP.** This isn't why I called you.

**BRIGHTON.** Let's look at the facts. He asked me out because he's attracted to the lecturer. But he's not going out with the lecturer. He's going out with the date. I'm a bad, bad date.

**PHILIP.** No, you're not.

**BRIGHTON.** How would you know?

**PHILIP.** I was just trying to be supportive.

**BRIGHTON.** Stop it.

**PHILIP.** Brighton, why didn't you tell me Margot has a date?  
*(Call-waiting beep.)*

## INTELLECTUALS

**BRIGHTON.** Hang on. My other line is beeping. *(Brighton clicks his phone. PHILIP'S SPOT CROSS-FADES TO: Margot on a cell phone, seated as though in a cab.)* Hello?

**MARGOT.** Philip tells me you have a date.

**BRIGHTON.** I told you too.

**MARGOT.** No, you didn't.

**BRIGHTON.** Oh. I thought I had.

**MARGOT.** You can share anything with me.

**BRIGHTON.** I know. I do.

**MARGOT.** There's no reason to hide anything, ever.

**BRIGHTON.** I know. I don't.

**MARGOT.** I know you don't.

**BRIGHTON.** Good.

**MARGOT.** Oh, Brighton. Has Philip mentioned any of his students to you?

**BRIGHTON.** No. Why?

**MARGOT.** He seems to be going on a date with one.

**BRIGHTON.** He hasn't mentioned this to me.

**MARGOT.** I believe you, Brighton. But I want to let you know that you can tell me these things about Philip. It doesn't bother me.

**BRIGHTON.** That's a relief. My other line is beeping.

**MARGOT.** I didn't hear anything. There's usually a click on this end. *(Brighton clicks the stapler near the phone.)*

**BRIGHTON.** There it is again. Hang on. *(Brighton clicks his phone. MARGOT'S SPOT CROSS-FADES TO: Philip on the pay phone.)*

**BRIGHTON.** Hello?

**PHILIP.** It's Margot, isn't it?

**BRIGHTON.** No.

**PHILIP.** I've been wasting nickel after nickel in this damn machine.

**BRIGHTON.** Where is your cell phone?

**PHILIP.** I dropped it in the toilet. Don't ask.

**BRIGHTON.** Don't worry, I won't. Philip, I've got to go.

**PHILIP.** What is she saying about me?

**BRIGHTON.** That you're dating your students.

**PHILIP.** Did she seem upset?

## INTELLECTUALS

**BRIGHTON.** Philip, I have a date coming in a matter of minutes. My hair has declared independence. I stupidly ate onions at lunchtime. I don't even want to think about my skin.

**PHILIP.** Let me take your mind off of it. What did Margot— *(Call-waiting beep.)*

**BRIGHTON.** That's my other line again.

**PHILIP.** You're not clicking the stapler into the phone, are you?

**BRIGHTON.** Hold on. *(Brighton clicks his phone. PHILIP'S SPOT CROSS-FADES TO MARGOT'S.)*

**MARGOT.** Brighton, please don't put me on hold. I forgot to charge my phone and I'm on my last little bar.

**BRIGHTON.** Why have you both suddenly forgotten how to take care of your cell phones?

**MARGOT.** So it is him!

**BRIGHTON.** For Christ's sake.

**MARGOT.** Brighton, don't you think it's rather soon for Philip to start dating?

**BRIGHTON.** You're dating.

**MARGOT.** I'm exploring untapped feminine potential.

**BRIGHTON.** Margot, you're dating.

**MARGOT.** Okay, fine. You're right. I'm just a little nervous. I haven't been on a date in twenty-five years. What does one do on a date these days?

**BRIGHTON.** You're asking me?

**MARGOT.** You've dated more recently than I have.

**BRIGHTON.** Yes, but... *(Clicks the stapler.)* Hang on. I won't be but a minute.

**MARGOT.** The battery! *(Brighton clicks the phone. MARGOT'S SPOT CROSS-FADES TO PHILIP'S.)*

**BRIGHTON.** Hello?

**PHILIP.** This fucking phone is bleeding me dry!

**BRIGHTON.** Philip.

**PHILIP.** Every two minutes, it asks me for a nickel. So, I've been giving it a nickel every two minutes. Then I run out of nickels. I give it a quarter.

## INTELLECTUALS

Two minutes later, it asks me for another fucking nickel! I just gave it a fucking quarter!

**BRIGHTON.** That must really suck for you. I need your advice, Philip. I'm going on a date. What should I do?

**PHILIP.** Be yourself?

**BRIGHTON.** Okay, let's pretend for a moment that you're helpful. If you were helpful, what would you say?

**PHILIP.** Uh... Try to relax. Pay attention. Avoid politics. Ask questions.

**BRIGHTON.** See. That was helpful. *(Clicks stapler.)* Whoops! That's my stapler. Hold on. *(Brighton clicks the phone. PHILIP'S SPOT CROSS-FADES TO MARGOT'S. THERE IS LOUD STATIC. MARGOT'S SPOT FLICKERS WILDLY.)* Hello?

**MARGOT.** *(Shouting:)* My battery's dying!

**BRIGHTON.** I've thought about your question!

**MARGOT.** What!

**BRIGHTON.** Try to relax! Pay attention! Ask questions!

**MARGOT.** What are you saying?! You're breaking up!

**BRIGHTON.** Relax!

**MARGOT.** I can't hear you!

**BRIGHTON.** RELAX! RELAX! *(MARGOT'S SPOT FLICKERS OUT. The static ends abruptly.)* Hello? Margot? *(Brighton clicks the phone. PHILIP'S SPOT COMES UP ON a very angry Philip.)* Philip?

**OPERATOR'S VOICE.** Please deposit five cents... for the next two minutes.

**PHILIP.** I JUST GAVE YOU A QUARTER!

**BRIGHTON.** Philip!

**PHILIP.** Brighton?!? I'm out of change!

**OPERATOR'S VOICE.** *(On "change")* Please deposit five cents... for the next two minutes... or your call will be terminated... This is a recording.

**PHILIP.** What was that? I couldn't hear you!

**BRIGHTON.** I said, thanks for the advice.

**PHILIP.** You're welcome. Brighton, why didn't you tell me Margot had a— *(PHILIP'S SPOT BLACKS OUT.)*

## INTELLECTUALS

**BRIGHTON.** Philip? Hello? Thank God. *(Brighton hangs up the phone. Nick enters knocking on the door.)* Come in?

**NICK.** Hi. So, are you ready?*(CROSS-FADE TO: Coffee shop. Antonia sits with coffee, book, notes, and Philip.)*

**ANTONIA.** I'm concerned about Aristotle. He writes that human beings act on their basic needs by fulfilling them as pleurably as possible. So, ethically, we should live our lives as happily as possible, without depriving others or causing them displeasure.

**PHILIP.** But what if... What if providing for your own needs necessarily means doing so at the expense of someone else's happiness?

**ANTONIA.** It probably depends on your perspective. If you're getting what you want, it seems fair. If you're not, you feel screwed.

**PHILIP.** I suppose that's so.

**ANTONIA.** I think Aristotle would recommend meeting your remaining needs as happily as possible.

**PHILIP.** That's a contemporary way of looking at it, but yes.

**ANTONIA.** Good! I like Aristotle. I'm all for happiness. How about you?

**PHILIP.** I'm certainly not opposed to it.

**ANTONIA.** So, what would make you happy right now?

**PHILIP.** Who says I'm not?

**ANTONIA.** You mean you are?

**PHILIP.** Sure.

**ANTONIA.** Could you be happier?

**PHILIP.** I suppose.

**ANTONIA.** And how would you meet those needs?

**PHILIP.** Are you thinking of something specific?

**ANTONIA.** What do you think of older women? *(Pause. CROSS-FADE TO: Theater lobby. Nick and Brighton stand uncomfortably.)*

**BRIGHTON.** It's ten of. I wonder if they're ever going to open the damn house. *(Brighton looks at Nick, who smiles back. Pause.)*

**NICK.** Dinner was good.

**BRIGHTON.** Yes, it was.

**NICK.** You enjoyed the brisket?

**BRIGHTON.** I did. It wasn't too dry.

**NICK.** Good.

## INTELLECTUALS

**BRIGHTON.** Sometimes that's a problem. Dry brisket.

**NICK.** Yeah, I've heard that. I wonder why that is.

**BRIGHTON.** I don't know. It must dry easily.

**NICK.** There's probably some... you know...

**BRIGHTON.** Window of opportunity.

**NICK.** Exactly. To keep the brisket from...

**BRIGHTON.** So...

**NICK.** So... *(Pause.)* I haven't been to this theater in years. In fact—*(Points out poster.)* —that's the last show I saw here.

**BRIGHTON.** No wonder you stayed away.

**NICK.** You didn't like it?

**BRIGHTON.** Oh, please! All those sidelong, "I really want fuck you if only I could say so" glances between the two leads. It was like watching *Remains of the Day* with the sound off.

**NICK.** I thought it was a refreshingly honest interpretation of those characters.

**BRIGHTON.** It was *The Sound of Music*! Oh, and the Maria—

**NICK.** —is a very dear friend of mine—

**BRIGHTON.** — was lovely. Oh, look. They've opened the house.

*(Brighton and Nick exit. CROSS-FADE TO: Margot sitting alone, waiting, looking at her watch, checking herself in the mirror, occasionally craning her neck inquisitively to see if an offstage passerby is the one. No. She dials her phone and checks her messages. As she does, SOPHIE enters. She is goth-chick top to bottom: white face, black eye makeup, spider web patterns on her hands, army boots, carrying a journal and a backpack with something moving inside it.)*

**SOPHIE.** Hey... You're not, Margotte... are you...? *(Margot closes her phone and smiles bravely. CROSS-FADE TO:)*

## THURSDAY

*Brighton's office. Thursday morning. Brighton gathers his lecture items. Philip enters.*

**PHILIP.** How'd it go?

## INTELLECTUALS

**BRIGHTON.** It was the *Heaven's Gate* of dates.

**PHILIP.** The movie or the suicide cult?

**BRIGHTON.** Take your pick. (*Sighs.*) It was my fault. I was a pompous blowhard. I don't want to talk about it.

**PHILIP.** Okay then, tell me about Margot's date.

**BRIGHTON.** You don't care about me at all.

**PHILIP.** You said you didn't want to talk about it!

**BRIGHTON.** It's only fair. She's your wife. It's only natural you'd be more interested in her romantic life than mine. Now, I don't have all the details, but she did say, "I haven't had this much fun since counseling death row inmates."

**PHILIP.** Excellent. Brighton, question: if a student made a romantic overture toward you, what would you do?

**BRIGHTON.** Verbally pummel them with my opinions until they ran away screaming, but that's me.

**PHILIP.** Are you sure you don't want to talk about this?

**BRIGHTON.** What is there to say? It was a disaster. I am the romantic equivalent of Chernobyl. I've said it out loud. Eleven steps to go!

(*Nick enters.*)

**NICK.** Is this a bad time?

**BRIGHTON.** Uh... no. Nick Daldry, this is Philip Embers. He's with the philosophy department.

**NICK.** Pleasure to meet you.

**PHILIP.** Same here. Anyway, Brighton—

**BRIGHTON.** I'll spread good cheer. Pity you must go.

**PHILIP.** Indeed. Pleasure to meet you, Nick. Brighton, call me.

**BRIGHTON.** Oh, I will. (*Philip exits.*) This is a surprise. Did you leave something in the car?

**NICK.** I have to be honest with you.

**BRIGHTON.** No, you don't.

**NICK.** It was my fault.

**BRIGHTON.** Though I like where this is heading.

**NICK.** I was so nervous. I mean, you'd be nervous too if you suddenly found yourself out on a date with your crush from undergrad.

**BRIGHTON.** Oh.

## INTELLECTUALS

**NICK.** Yeah. And, um. I think I was trying too hard and expecting... I don't even know what I was expecting. All I know is...

**BRIGHTON.** Nick.

**NICK.** I know. You're dying for a predicate. Do you want to go out again?

**BRIGHTON.** You wouldn't be happier getting root canal or...

**NICK.** Look at it this way. After last night, it's got to get better.

**BRIGHTON.** When you put it that way...

**NICK.** Tonight then?

**BRIGHTON.** Tonight?

**NICK.** Yes.

**BRIGHTON.** You're so young, too young to realize it's often considered insulting to ask someone out the day of. It means that you assume the person you're asking out has such a barren existence, that they couldn't possibly have plans of their own.

**NICK.** So, you're busy.

**BRIGHTON.** No, I'm free as a bird. See you at six. *(CROSS-FADE TO: A restaurant bar. There is a bar, the hostess's station, and a table for two. Nick and Brighton enter. They're having a good time.)*

**NICK.** I'm shooting a documentary about Duncan James. He's this legendary ninety-two-year-old jazz vocalist. You hear the word "legend" and you think "been around forever and is very, very good." But his voice... there are a million experiences he brings to every note! I'd just sit there and listen to him tell story after story, never repeating a one, while I let the camera roll. It was truly a privilege.

**BRIGHTON.** I'd love to see some of the footage.

**NICK.** I think that can be arranged. I'm going to hit the head before we leave.

**BRIGHTON.** Are you sure there's time?

**NICK.** The movie doesn't start for another forty minutes.

**BRIGHTON.** Why won't you tell me which movie we're seeing?

**NICK.** It gives me a perverse sense of power.

**BRIGHTON.** Good Lord. Go pee. I'll meet you outside. *(Brighton and Nick exit in opposite directions. Beat. Antonia enters with Philip.)*

**PHILIP.** I'll see if our table is ready.



## INTELLECTUALS

**ANTONIA.** I'll be right here. *(Philip crosses to the hostess's station. Nick enters, passing Philip, and he and Antonia see each other. They are both surprised.)*

**ANTONIA.** Nicky.

**NICK.** Grandma? What are you doing here?

**ANTONIA.** Oh. Just grabbing something to eat.

**NICK.** Are you with someone?

**ANTONIA.** Me? No. I come here by myself all the time. How about you?

**NICK.** I'm all by myself too. *(HOSTESS – played by the actress who will be playing HERA JANE – enters and silently greets Philip.)*

**PHILIP.** Yes, a reservation under Embers. *(Nick turns around and spots Philip, who doesn't see him.)*

**NICK.** Oh.

**ANTONIA.** Do you know that gentleman?

**NICK.** Him? No. Do you?

**ANTONIA.** Oh, no. I'm here by myself.

**NICK.** Yes. Me, too.

**PHILIP.** That's fine. Thank you.

**NICK.** *(Overlapping:)* I'll be seeing you.

**ANTONIA.** *(Overlapping:)* Bye-bye. *(Nick and Antonia share the briefest of pecks, and he bolts out. Philip makes his way over.)*

**PHILIP.** Who was that?

**ANTONIA.** My grandson. I tried to get him to stay a moment, but he had to run.

**PHILIP.** He looks familiar.

**ANTONIA.** He probably has one of those faces.

**HOSTESS.** Embers party of two, right this way.

**PHILIP.** After you. *(Hostess leads Antonia and Philip out. Margot and CHELSEA, a pretty, breezy woman, enter. The hostess calls out to them from offstage.)*

**HOSTESS.** I'll be right back. You can have a seat at the bar if you like.

**MARGOT.** Thank you. That's fine. *(Margot and Chelsea cross to the bar. Philip bolts back in and sees that yes, that was Margot's voice he just heard! He bolts back out.)* Chelsea is a very nice name.

**CHELSEA.** Thank you! That's so nice. Margot is a very nice name too.

## INTELLECTUALS

**MARGOT.** Thank you.

**CHELSEA.** So, what made you respond to my ad?

**MARGOT.** Well—

**CHELSEA.** Not that anything made you. I mean, you did exercise free will when you responded, right?

**MARGOT.** Absolutely.

**CHELSEA.** You're not just saying that to be nice?

**MARGOT.** I don't say things to be nice. I'm a therapist.

**CHELSEA.** Oh. You're not the kind who tells women to leave their lovers, are you?

**MARGOT.** Well, it depends—

**CHELSEA.** Because I'm an optimist and I think things can be worked out.

**MARGOT.** That's generally a healthy outlook to have—

**CHELSEA.** At least they could have been, but my girlfriend's therapist — oops! Did it again. Okay, rewind. What I meant was: my EX-girlfriend's therapist told her... Her therapist is Wanda O'Shell. Do you know her?

**MARGOT.** Not well, but I've met her. *(During the following, Philip enters and eavesdrops.)*

**CHELSEA.** Loudmouth bitch; you don't want to know her well. She'll just tell you to leave the people you love and do her bidding. You would never do that, would you? Tell someone to leave someone who loves them?

**MARGOT.** Let's not talk about me.

**CHELSEA.** Just say you wouldn't! Even if it's a lie! Can't you just... JUST SAY IT? *(Philip smiles to himself and sneaks off.)*

**MARGOT.** I would never do that, Chelsea, and I mean that.

**CHELSEA.** Thank you. Thank you! *(Chelsea dries her eyes. Margot looks at her watch. CROSS-FADE TO: Nick and Brighton sitting next to each other as a projector LIGHT FLICKERS above them. The SOUNDTRACK is of an intense, horror/science fiction film. Brighton holds the popcorn. Nick holds the beverage. Nick watches casually. Brighton watches with a confused but intense expression on his face. THE MUSIC SWELLS FOR AN INTENSE MOMENT AND CLIMAXES. Brighton laughs, but never takes his eyes off the screen. Nick looks over at*

## INTELLECTUALS

*him and smiles. He's rather taken with Brighton. Nick puts the beverage down as Brighton eats some popcorn. Nick goes to put his arm around Brighton, who starts coughing and gestures for the beverage. Nick leans back over and gets the drink for Brighton. He hands it over, and Brighton gulps it down, stops, takes a deep breath.)*

**NICK.** *(Whispering.) ...you okay? (Brighton nods and hands the drink back to Nick, who just holds it. They watch intently for a moment. MUSIC SWELLS SUDDENLY and both Nick and Brighton jump. SOUNDS EFFECTS ARE SCREECHY AND SQUISHY. Brighton and Nick wince.)*

**BRIGHTON.** *(Involuntarily:) Ewwwww... (Nick puts his arm around Brighton, who becomes aware of it. Brighton nervously adjusts himself in his seat. Nick starts to play with Brighton's hair. Brighton brushes the hand away. Nick persists, and Brighton brushes.) I'm watching this. (Nick stops playing but keeps his arm around Brighton. They watch for a moment, very intensely. Brighton looks over at Nick. He examines Nick's face. Nick catches him looking and smiles back at him. Brighton looks away, then looks back. Nick squeezes Brighton's shoulder, bringing Brighton closer to him. Brighton relaxes and rests against Nick. They watch contentedly. MUSIC FLARES, and Nick and Brighton jolt again.) (CROSS-FADE TO: Philip and Antonia at her front door.)*

**ANTONIA.** Thank you for a wonderful evening.

**PHILIP.** The pleasure was all mine.

**ANTONIA.** It was a lovely concert. It's fascinating, isn't it? New Composers of Classical Music. It's so rare to be able to applaud for a composer who's alive to hear you clapping. Meanwhile, I'm sure all those poor souls can think about is whether or not we'll still be applauding them hundreds of years from now. *(Pause. Philip's mind is elsewhere.)* Philip?

**PHILIP.** I'm sorry.

**ANTONIA.** What is it?

**PHILIP.** There's something...

**ANTONIA.** Are you married?

**PHILIP.** *(Laughs.)* More or less. My wife and I separated.

**ANTONIA.** I see. Recently?

**PHILIP.** *(Looks at his watch:)* Almost seventy-two hours ago.

**ANTONIA.** Oh.

## INTELLECTUALS

**PHILIP.** My wife was at the restaurant tonight.

**ANTONIA.** I thought you seemed preoccupied.

**PHILIP.** I hope I wasn't too terrible a companion.

**ANTONIA.** You were fine.

**PHILIP.** Under the circumstances?

**ANTONIA.** Regardless.

**PHILIP.** That's very sweet. She wasn't there long. Besides, she was... on a date.

**ANTONIA.** Why are you smiling?

**PHILIP.** Am I?

**ANTONIA.** Did her date not go well?

**PHILIP.** Not from what I could see. I should probably feel ashamed of myself: spying on her.

**ANTONIA.** It's only natural that you feel this way. I'd be jealous as hell if I were you.

**PHILIP.** But when you truly love someone... don't you want them to find their own happiness?

**ANTONIA.** Not within the first seventy-two hours after they leave you.

**PHILIP.** (*Laughs. Pauses. Takes her hand.*) Thank you.

**ANTONIA.** It was my pleasure. I hope you get her back.

**PHILIP.** Me, too. (*Pause.*) Would you... I shouldn't ask you this, but would you like to... help me get her back?

**ANTONIA.** How?

**PHILIP.** She and I were supposed to attend a museum fund-raiser this weekend. It's a lovely affair. Would you like to join me in her stead?

**ANTONIA.** I don't want to come between you and your wife.

**PHILIP.** If anything, you'd help bring us back together.

**ANTONIA.** You think she'll hear about us being there together and get so jealous she'll realize she was wrong to leave you?

**PHILIP.** It's passive-aggressive, I know.

**ANTONIA.** True. But that doesn't mean it wouldn't work. You don't think a younger woman would be more effective in incurring her jealousy?

**PHILIP.** Oh, no. It might annoy her, but she would just dismiss a coed as a passing fancy. A mature, elegant, sophisticated—

**ANTONIA.** Older.

## INTELLECTUALS

**PHILIP.** –vivacious, enchanting and, sure, older woman... You. She couldn't dismiss you. It would not be possible.

**ANTONIA.** You flatter me.

**PHILIP.** Not at all. You'd be saving my life.

**ANTONIA.** (*Beat.*) I don't know, Philip. If my family caught wind... My daughter is very active in the church. In fact, she married the minister.

**PHILIP.** That is active.

**ANTONIA.** He's one of those people who leads protests against family planning clinics and runs a program to reform gays. After twelve years, she still expects me to be mourning my husband: wearing black, lighting candles, sleeping on his gravestone! I just want to tell her, "I don't think your father would have wanted me to become an asshole." (*Pause.*) So, what does a mature, vivacious, and enchanting woman wear to a museum? (*CROSS-FADE TO: Empty stage space. Brighton walks Nick home.*)

**BRIGHTON.** (*In medias res:*) Because the film... dare I call it a film? The *movie* went right for the audience's basic fear response. It's manipulative. And I'm sorry, but if you bury a pickax in someone's head, even once, they don't get back up. If you don't believe me, ask Trotsky.

**NICK.** Look, I'm not asking you if you thought it was good. Obviously, it's not particularly artful filmmaking.

**BRIGHTON.** I am so relieved you said that.

**NICK.** What I'm asking you is: did you enjoy it?

**BRIGHTON.** On what level do you mean—

**NICK.** It's a B horror movie! Right off the bat, you know it's going to be bad. You don't have to analyze it. You can just watch it and enjoy being with... whoever you're with.

**BRIGHTON.** So, did you have a good time?

**NICK.** I had a blast. (*Long pause.*) Here we are.

**BRIGHTON.** Okay. Well, then... Thanks for the evening.

**NICK.** My pleasure.

**BRIGHTON.** Yeah. Me too.

**NICK.** At some point, preferably in the near future, I would really like to kiss you good night.

**BRIGHTON.** Oh?

**NICK.** Would that be all right with you?

## INTELLECTUALS

**BRIGHTON.** Uh... yeah.

**NICK.** Would now be an acceptable time?

**BRIGHTON.** Well, let me, uh, think... Now works. (*Nick crosses to Brighton and kisses him. It's a good kiss.*)

**NICK.** Would you like to come up?

**BRIGHTON.** Sure. (*CROSS-FADE TO:*)

### FRIDAY

*The Women's Center. Friday morning. Margot holds her coat and purse. HERA JANE – an African American woman, 30s/40s, – enters. A Brahms selection plays over the first part of this scene.*

**HERA JANE.** Hello. Are you Margot Welles?

**MARGOT.** Yes.

**HERA JANE.** Welcome. I'm Hera Jane Smith, the volunteer coordinator for the Women's Center. Sorry to keep you waiting.

**MARGOT.** Quite all right. Brahms was keeping me company.

**HERA JANE.** Good. I like to keep it on the classical station.

**MARGOT.** I love classical music. I used to go to the symphony all the time.

**HERA JANE.** Why'd you stop?

**MARGOT.** (*Beat.*) I don't know.

**HERA JANE.** Believe it or not, choosing classical music for the lobby was a controversial decision.

**MARGOT.** (*Gasps!*) Adult contemporary!

**HERA JANE.** Isn't it sad? Still, I suppose people should just enjoy whatever it is they enjoy, so long as they feel good about it.

**MARGOT.** But that's not how you really feel?

**HERA JANE.** That's right. You're a psychologist.

**MARGOT.** Whoops. Was I prying? Occupational hazard.

**HERA JANE.** No problem. I pry too. I'm an attorney.

**MARGOT.** Really? So this isn't what you do?

**HERA JANE.** It's one of several things. So, why do you want to volunteer? I'm sure you meet a vast array of people in your line of work.

## INTELLECTUALS

**MARGOT.** I do. And it's fascinating. But I'm hoping to help people more... like me.

**HERA JANE.** Women?

**MARGOT.** Lesbians in particular.

**HERA JANE.** You're a lesbian?

**MARGOT.** Sur— yes! “Yes, I am,” as Melissa once said. I must confess, I'm really very new at, um... the gay thing.

**HERA JANE.** Welcome aboard.

**MARGOT.** Anchors aweigh!

**HERA JANE.** How's it going? Are you meeting people?

**MARGOT.** Well...

**HERA JANE.** I see. Don't worry. I've been there.

**MARGOT.** Oh, have you?

**HERA JANE.** I could tell you stories.

**MARGOT.** I'd love to hear them.

**HERA JANE.** Oh? All right then. Uh. How about this? I have an extra ticket to the R&B Society tonight. Would you like to go with me?

**MARGOT.** Me?

**HERA JANE.** Oh, God. I can't believe I just... That sounded so forward.

**MARGOT.** No, no.

**HERA JANE.** What an impression I must be giving you of the Center... and of me.

**MARGOT.** No. Believe me, I know how difficult it can be to find people who enjoy Renaissance and Baroque.

**HERA JANE.** It's hard to find anyone who knows I'm not talking about Rhythm and Blues. You know a lot about music, don't you?

**MARGOT.** I support public broadcasting.

**HERA JANE.** At the risk of appearing forward again, would you like to join me? We could get some dinner. And I'd love to field any questions you have about... coming out and all that.

**MARGOT.** I would really appreciate that. I've been doing a great deal of research regarding the lesbian motif, but what I'm lacking is good field experience.

**HERA JANE.** *(Beat.)* You really do need to get out.

**MARGOT.** Oh, I am out.

## INTELLECTUALS

**HERA JANE.** Of the books, I mean. I can show you around the Center now. Then later tonight, I can just show you around. Deal?

**MARGOT.** Sure! (*CROSS-FADE TO: Empty stage space. Margot and Hera Jane walking together. They are having a good time.*) They had such lovely voices.

**HERA JANE.** They did.

**MARGOT.** Their technique was so precise. Very evocative.

**HERA JANE.** It made me want to dance.

**MARGOT.** Really?

**HERA JANE.** That kind of music makes me close my eyes and transports me to... amazing places. It's almost otherworldly. Don't you think so?

**MARGOT.** (*Beat.*) Yes.

**HERA JANE.** You think I'm a lunatic. But it's very kind of you to indulge me.

**MARGOT.** I have made no such diagnosis. In fact, I must admit I'm a little jealous.

**HERA JANE.** Of what?

**MARGOT.** We went to the same concert, heard the same voices and melodies. And you. You shot across the universe, but... I never left the concert hall. I feel like I've cheated myself.

**HERA JANE.** We'll just have to go back and try it again.

**MARGOT.** I'd like that. (*CROSS-FADE TO:*)

## SATURDAY

*Margot's house. Margot prepares to leave. The doorbell rings. Margot answers it and Brighton blusters in.*

**MARGOT.** Good! Come in! I need to talk to you.

**BRIGHTON.** Yesterday, I woke up in the arms of a significantly younger man!

**MARGOT.** That's wonderful! I myself had a very eye-opening evening—

**BRIGHTON.** As I was leaving, he swore he'd call me. And he did!

**MARGOT.** What a positive step forward for you. That's so much better than the answering machine, a Post-it, or an e-mail. One of these days,



## INTELLECTUALS

you'll meet someone who will be healthy enough to break up with you in person.

**BRIGHTON.** He didn't break up with me.

**MARGOT.** Then why did he call?

**BRIGHTON.** To talk! Jesus! He enjoys my company, even when I'm not there.

**MARGOT.** So, you're saying he's gay, available, and genuinely interested in you?

**BRIGHTON.** Apparently.

**MARGOT.** You're going to dump him, aren't you?

**BRIGHTON.** What else can I do? Nobody's really this perfect! Therefore, he must be hiding his flaws, which is tantamount to deception in my book. I feel so betrayed.

**MARGOT.** No, you don't. You just want to feel betrayed, so you can avoid having this relationship, and not risk getting hurt.

**BRIGHTON.** And that's not a healthy response?

**MARGOT.** That's right; it's not. Now, what would be a healthy response?

**BRIGHTON.** Facing my fears with an open mind and positive attitude... *(Quickly adding:)* by having him and me meet you for drinks this evening so you can advise me!

**MARGOT.** I can't; I have plans.

**BRIGHTON.** With your new gal pal? Philip will be so pleased.

**MARGOT.** I'm sure Philip is having too good a time with his "student" to care. Has he mentioned how old she is? Not that I am concerned about this. I mean really. It's none of my business.

**BRIGHTON.** You're right. It's not. Meet my needs instead! You can size up Nick. I can size up your friend, which you were going to ask me to do anyway.

**MARGOT.** Not tonight!

**BRIGHTON.** Drinks! Just meet us for drinks. You can convince me everything's all right, then Nick and I will get our own table, completely out of your eyeshot.

**MARGOT.** I don't know...

**BRIGHTON.** It's just drinks. It may also be needy, neurotic, selfish, and solipsistic. But it is just drinks.

## INTELLECTUALS

**MARGOT.** You'll go to a completely different restaurant for dinner.

**BRIGHTON.** Deal. Where and when?

**MARGOT.** Seven o'clock at Adagio.

**BRIGHTON.** You're kidding, right?

**MARGOT.** Her choice; she goes there all the time; who am I to say no?

**BRIGHTON.** Fine.

**MARGOT.** Don't tell Philip.

**BRIGHTON.** Do I look like I have a death wish? (*LIGHTS CROSS-FADE TO Philip in pursuit of Brighton.*)

**PHILIP.** Brighton? Brighton!

**BRIGHTON.** I'm not telling you.

**PHILIP.** I don't care where it is, so long as it's romantic.

**BRIGHTON.** Why do you want it to be romantic?

**PHILIP.** Because if the atmosphere is romantic and the company is as well, once they're finally alone, Margot and her date might become intimate and—

**BRIGHTON.** Philip, please! I have to eat with these people!

**PHILIP.** —and Margot will have to figure out that she's... whoever she is. Then all of this will be over, and we can move on from there. You're sure the restaurant is romantic?

**BRIGHTON.** Yes! The critics agree: "Adagio is romantic!"

**PHILIP.** You're going to Adagio?

**BRIGHTON.** (*Beat.*) No...?

**PHILIP.** Excuse me, Brighton. I have to make a phone call.

**BRIGHTON.** Philip. Promise me you will not do anything I will regret.

**PHILIP.** Sure. (*CROSS-FADE TO: Brighton and Nick in Brighton's car. Classical music plays. They smile at each other. Nick gets bored with the radio.*)

**NICK.** Can I change the station?

**BRIGHTON.** You may. (*Nick changes the station from classical to news to static. He finds an adult contemporary station playing a Celine Dion ballad, e.g., "Only One Road." Brighton reacts. Note: if you need to get the rights, play something similar in the public domain and just say it's a Celine Dion ballad.*) What in God's name are we listening to?

**NICK.** Celine Dion.

## INTELLECTUALS

**BRIGHTON.** Make it stop.

**NICK.** You don't like listening to music written or sung by anyone who hasn't died.

**BRIGHTON.** You're right. Kill her and her so-called songwriters and I'll listen with glee.

**NICK.** I missed you.

**BRIGHTON.** You really get off on my pseudo-intellectual cultural elitism, don't you?

**NICK.** Way back when, when I listened to your lecture about *American Graffiti* and Truffaut's *Small Change*... what did you title the lecture – don't tell me.... “Plot-Free Masterpieces: Don't Try This at Home.”

**BRIGHTON.** That was it.

**NICK.** I think I fell for you right then and there. (*Silence. A new, similar song plays.*)

**BRIGHTON.** Is that fucking song still playing?

**NICK.** It's a completely different song.

**BRIGHTON.** How can you tell?

**NICK.** (*Changes the radio station to jazz.*) Is this better? (*CROSS-FADE TO: A high table in a bar, no stools. Margot and Hera Jane wait.*)

**MARGOT.** I'm sure they'll be here any minute.

**HERA JANE.** No problem. The longer they take, the more time we have together.

**MARGOT.** You're sure this is okay? Inviting them to join us?

**HERA JANE.** Yes. It's perfectly fine. Perfectly fine.

**MARGOT.** Why'd you say it twice?

**HERA JANE.** What?

**MARGOT.** “Perfectly fine.” You said it twice. I should have consulted you first.

**HERA JANE.** It doesn't matter now. We can make the best of it. It's just drinks.

**MARGOT.** What's wrong?

**HERA JANE.** I don't mean to be so... I'm not always comfortable around gay men.

**MARGOT.** Really? I'm sure you and Brighton will get along fine. He's very bright and witty.

## INTELLECTUALS

**HERA JANE.** Aren't they all?

**MARGOT.** *(Beat.)* Um. I'm sure you'll have a great deal to talk about. You both enjoy culture and the arts. In fact, he's a theater critic.

**HERA JANE.** Not Brighton Galloway?

**MARGOT.** Yes.

**HERA JANE.** The gay misogynist theater critic?

**MARGOT.** Excuse me?

**HERA JANE.** Don't worry. I'm sure since he's your friend he's perfectly nice. Is this them? *(Brighton and Nick enter and cross to Margot and Hera Jane.)*

**MARGOT.** Hello!

**BRIGHTON.** Thanks for inviting us. I hope we're not imposing.

**MARGOT.** No. Of course not. No.

**BRIGHTON.** You said that twice.

**MARGOT.** You must be Nick. I'm Margot Welles.

**NICK.** Pleasure to meet you.

**MARGOT.** Likewise. Nick, Brighton, I'd like you to meet my friend Hera Jane.

**NICK.** Cool name.

**HERA JANE.** Thank you.

**BRIGHTON.** Wonderful to finally meet you.

**HERA JANE.** Mm-hm.

**BRIGHTON.** Okay...

**NICK.** I'll be right back. If the waitress comes, could you order a Sam Adams for me?

**BRIGHTON.** Sure.

**NICK.** Thanks. Pardon me, ladies. *(Nick exits. The others sit.)*

**MARGOT.** He seems very nice.

**BRIGHTON.** Yeah.

**HERA JANE.** He's rather young, isn't he?

**BRIGHTON.** Yes. He is young. So, you're a lawyer?

**HERA JANE.** Yes.

**BRIGHTON.** Civil rights?

**HERA JANE.** No. Real estate.

**BRIGHTON.** That's fabulous.

## INTELLECTUALS

**HERA JANE.** What made you think I was a civil rights attorney?

**BRIGHTON.** Just a guess.

**HERA JANE.** I thought it might be because I'm Black.

**BRIGHTON.** Actually, it had occurred to me that being Black, female, and gay might have incurred enough prejudice and injustice to spark a more globally reaching proactive political consciousness.

**HERA JANE.** I am very active. Politically.

**BRIGHTON.** Good for you.

**HERA JANE.** Are you?

**BRIGHTON.** I vote. (*LUISA the waitress – 20s, extroverted and charming – comes to the table.*)

**LUISA.** Good evening, everybody. Oh, hello.

**HERA JANE.** Hi.

**LUISA.** Always a pleasure to see you. And new friends! Wonderful. Hi, there. My name is Luisa. What can I get you? Now, I know you want a Bloody Mary.

**HERA JANE.** That's right.

**LUISA.** (*Points to Nick's space.*) Brandy Alexander?

**HERA JANE.** Uh, no.

**LUISA.** Oh. (*Beat as she figures it out.*) Oh! Okay. And you, Ma'am?

**MARGOT.** Gin and tonic.

**LUISA.** Sir?

**BRIGHTON.** Kamikaze, double, on the rocks.

**LUISA.** Great. I'll get those for you right away.

**BRIGHTON.** And... (*Points to Nick's space.*) He'll have a Sam Adams.

**LUISA.** Oh, so you do have one more?

**BRIGHTON.** (*Beat; appalled she'd assume he's alone.*) Yes!

**LUISA.** Well, that's great. I'll just... Uh-huh. (*Exits.*)

**BRIGHTON.** Great restaurant. It's very romantic.

**HERA JANE.** Yes. It is.

**BRIGHTON.** Come here often?

**HERA JANE.** Somewhat.

**BRIGHTON.** I haven't been here in ages. Margot, when was the last time you were here? (*Nick enters.*)

**MARGOT.** So, Nick. You used to be a student of Brighton's?

## INTELLECTUALS

**NICK.** He's the reason I became a filmmaker.

**HERA JANE.** Brighton, you write films, don't you?

**BRIGHTON.** I write screenplays.

**HERA JANE.** What's the difference?

**BRIGHTON.** Films have been shot.

**HERA JANE.** Well... Someday.

**NICK.** What fun things have the two of you planned for the weekend?

**HERA JANE.** I was thinking we might take in that program of women's monologues the Magnolia Project is doing. What is it called again?

**BRIGHTON.** (*Shudders; hissing:*) *The Velvet Embrace...* Subtitled *Prayers from the Goddess of the Only True Love.*

**HERA JANE.** I take it you didn't enjoy it.

**BRIGHTON.** My wrists opened by themselves.

**HERA JANE.** What was so wrong with it?

**BRIGHTON.** I don't know. What could be wrong with an endless and agonizing series of two-dimensional feminine stereotypes yammering on in the past tense using adjective-noun groups that no one would ever really use. What was that line? "But mother, you've never experienced love with another woman. The gossamer fluidity." (*Pause.*) Gossamer fluidity. Did she fuck a goose?

**HERA JANE.** And gay men's theater is any better?

**MARGOT and NICK.** Don't get him started—

**BRIGHTON.** I am so with you. With lesbians portraying themselves as codependent, introspective windbags and gay men as swishy activists running around naked talking about how funny they think they are, it's no wonder everyone hates us.

**HERA JANE.** Stereotypes do, unfortunately, have clear origins. Feminists often have no sense of humor. Gay men often swish and lisp. Critics are often frustrated artists who can't break into the worlds they judge.

**BRIGHTON.** That's completely true. We're all like that. Just the way many lawyers are soulless purveyors of deception.

**MARGOT.** All right. That's—

**HERA JANE.** (*Overlapping Margot:*) You know, it's people like you—

**MARGOT.** Enough! This stops now!

**HERA JANE.** I'm sorry, Margot. But your friend here is attacking—

## INTELLECTUALS

**BRIGHTON.** Typical. Blame the man.

**MARGOT.** You are both being ridiculous. Now, as much as I'd like you to work out whatever differences you have, I'd like to have a pleasant evening. If that means Nick and I do all the talking, so be it. Understood?

**BRIGHTON.** (*Simultaneous with Hera Jane:*) Repression isn't healthy—

**HERA JANE.** (*Simultaneous with Brighton:*) I will not be a victim—

**MARGOT.** Or the evening ends now. What'll it be? (*Philip and Antonia, dressed for an elegant evening out, enter and cross to the others. Antonia sees Margot and stops short of the table. She doesn't see Nick, but Nick sees her.*)

**BRIGHTON.** Oh, my God.

**NICK.** Oh, shit. (*Hides behind menu.*)

**PHILIP.** Hello, Margot. What a surprise.

**MARGOT.** Yes. It is.

**PHILIP.** (*To Hera Jane:*) You must be...

**MARGOT.** This is Hera Jane.

**PHILIP.** Ah. The wives of Zeus and Tarzan.

**HERA JANE.** Excuse me?

**MARGOT.** I think it's a lovely name.

**PHILIP.** So do I. I never meant to imply otherwise. Everyone, I'd like you to meet—

**MARGOT.** Antonia?

**ANTONIA.** Hello, Doctor Welles.

**PHILIP.** You know each other?

**ANTONIA.** Doctor Welles is my therapist.

**MARGOT.** Have you been cruising my lobby, Philip?

**PHILIP.** I most certainly have not! Antonia is auditing one of my lectures.

**MARGOT.** She's the "student" you took to the symphony?

**PHILIP.** And to the Museum Ball tonight.

**MARGOT.** You're going?

**PHILIP.** We are.

**MARGOT.** I thought we agreed to send a check.

**PHILIP.** I did. They sent me tickets. And here we are.

**BRIGHTON.** (*Trying to prevent World War III.*) Lovely to meet you, Ma'am. I'm Brighton Galloway. And this is—

## INTELLECTUALS

**ANTONIA.** Nicky?

**NICK.** Hi, Grandma.

**ANTONIA.** Um. Do you know Phil—

**PHILIP.** Yes, Nick. Brighton introduced us the other morning. Good seeing you again.

**NICK.** Likewise. So, Grandma, are you and Professor Embers—

**ANTONIA.** So how do you and Mister... Galloway, was it? How do you know each other?

**HERA JANE.** They're on a date.

**ANTONIA.** Really?

**BRIGHTON.** As are we all, apparently! Why don't you join us? *(Sees Margot and Hera Jane glaring.)* At a completely different place and time. *(Luisa enters.)*

**LUISA.** Your drinks will be ready in a moment.

**NICK.** Luisa?

**LUISA.** Nicky! Oh, my God! *(Nick and Luisa hug.)*

**BRIGHTON.** You know everyone, don't you?

**NICK.** Luisa, this is Brighton.

**LUISA.** Nicky's film professor from undergrad?

**BRIGHTON.** The very one.

**LUISA.** Well, that's—

**ANTONIA.** Hello, Luisa.

**LUISA.** Mrs. Burns? Mrs. Burns! Oh, hello. You're here with Nicky... and his... his professor...

**BRIGHTON.** So, Luisa. How do you know Nicky?

**LUISA.** I'm his... um... wife. *(Blackout.)*

### END OF ACT 1

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—  
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