

22

THREE RADIO PLAYS

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ABSTRACT

THREE RADIO PLAYS

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This thesis comprises two-character radio plays on the theme of parting.

Pièce de Résistance deals with a reunion between two women, childhood friends, who have not seen each other in thirty years. To their meeting they bring differing expectations which fail to be met, and contradictory memories of their shared experiences.

Owed to Alexander Graham explores the relationship between a timid widowed schoolteacher and an obscene caller-- a relationship that against all odds enables each to overcome his crippling inadequacies.

In The Picasso Affair the mammoth exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in the summer of 1980 has a catalytic effect on a love affair.

The Radio Drama course which I took led me to an interest in working for the medium. Owed to Alexander Graham which is heavily dependent on a series of telephone calls, could function only as radio drama. The other two plays could, with some changes, function on the stage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1.

Pièce de Résistance

CHARACTERS

KAY an established artist, aged 54.

CLARA an American housewife, aged 55.

SOUND: MUSICAL BRIDGE

CLARA: Mind if we have our tea in the kitchen? It'll be cosier...and less fuss.

KAY: Good idea.

SOUND: TWO SETS OF FOOTSTEPS ON A TILE FLOOR.

CLARA: Here, Katie. Sit down.

SOUND: A CHAIR BEING PULLED FORWARD.

SOUND: KAY SEATS HERSELF AND HITCHES HER CHAIR INTO PLACE.

CLARA: We can catch up with each other while I put the finishing touches to my baking...that is, if you don't mind.

KAY: Of course not, Clara.

CLARA: How d'you like the place mats? We brought them back for Max's mother...the last time we were in Miami.

KAY: Flamingoes...

CLARA: Aren't they cute? Don't you just love them?

KAY: They remind me of rosy peonies...on long stems. (pauses) I've always wondered why they stand on only one leg?

SOUND: CLARA'S LAUGHTER.

CLARA: You haven't changed, Katie. You always had to know why. Why...and how...and everything in between.

SOUND: CUPBOARD DOORS BEING OPENED AND SHUT.

CLARA: I wonder where Mother keeps her icing sugar? Ah...here it is. Now, let's see...I'll need a set of bowls...and her measuring spoons...and, oh yes, a spatula.

SOUND: DRAWERS BEING OPENED. THE CLATTER OF PREPARATIONS.

CLARA: Yeah, Katie...why can't you just accept things as they come? Why d'you always have to go looking under the covers?

KAY: Oh, I don't know. Because that's me, I guess. So, in line with your own advice, Clara, you'll just have to take me as I am.

SOUND: A LIGHT LAUGH BY KAY.

Those silly flamingoes seem to defy Darwin's theories. How come one of their legs doesn't just atrophy and drop off? (pauses) And why on earth are their heads always tucked under their wings? You think they're trying to shut out the sight of all those tourists in Hawaiian shirts?

CLARA: Oh, shut up, Katie! We haven't seen each other in over thirty years...and all you can find to talk about is flamingoes.

KAY: Has it really been thirty years? It doesn't seem possible.

SOUND: CLARA BEATING UP SOME EGGS.

KAY: What on earth made you call me? after all this time?

CLARA: What kind of question is that? (muttering) what made me call you...

KAY: It's a natural question, Clara, in view of the fact that I hadn't heard from you even once... in all that time.

CLARA: We live in Philadelphia.

KAY: But your family and your husband's family all live here. I'm sure you visit them regularly ...but you've never called me. What made you call this time?

CLARA: This time? Oh, I don't know. Just a minute, Katie, I need a pinch of salt.

SOUND: PANTRY DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING.

SOUND: THE CLICK OF MEASURING SPOONS. THE SOUND OF STIRRING.

CLARA: If you must know, Katie, you have my sister to thank for it. Ethel's been nagging me for years to give you a call. But whenever we'd come in for a few days there was always so much to do... so many people to see...that somehow (cont.)

CLARA: (cont.) I could never get around to it. Do you see the bitter chocolate anywhere around? Never mind. I've got it.

KAY: I've thought of you often, Clara. Very often.

CLARA: Really? Gee...and here I was...afraid you might not even remember me. Like I said, I only called this time because of Ethel...and her nagging. "Call her, Clara," she's always saying. "Call her. After all...you knew her when."

KAY: "When"?

CLARA: Yah...y'know...when...before you became such a V.I.P.

KAY: What on earth are you talking about?

CLARA: Don't give me that. Don't go all coy on me, Katie. Y'know darn well what I mean. Ethel's always sending me clippings. "Kay Hammer Shows at the Montreal Museum"... "Kay Hammer Represents Canada at Sao Paulo"...stuff like that. Ethel makes sure I don't lose touch with the old hometown.

SOUND: GRATING OF ORANGE PEEL.

SOUND: CRACKING OF WALNUTS.

CLARA: You ever grate orange peel into your white icing, Katie?

KAY: I'm afraid I'm not very domestic.

CLARA: It's delicious. You should try it. Looks nice, too. Anyway, what were we talking about?

KAY: Ethel's clipping service.

CLARA: Oh yes. Well...like I was saying...every time any of my friends would get married...or have children...or die...Ethel would always send me the announcement. And with the ones who made it...like you...or Lewis Arnett who became a judge...or Marty Balcer, y'know, the disc jockey...well, she always sends along anything she finds in the papers...French and English, both. (pauses) I have to chop up these walnuts...for the date squares. Lucky (cont.)

CLARA: (cont.) for me, Mother, has a Cuisinart. The children all chipped in and bought it for her.

SOUND: THE WHIRR OF THE CUISINART.

CLARA: I must say, when Ethel first wrote me that you'd become an artist, you could've knocked me over with a feather. I was sure she'd got things wrong. But then she sent me a couple of articles with your picture in them. So that's when I knew for real it was you. But frankly, Katie, I've never understood it. I still don't. You were never that interested in art when we were kids. And when we were teen-agers, all you ever thought about...all you ever talked about...was boys, boys, boys. (pauses) I still have to do the meringue for the lemon pie. I simply didn't have the time this morning...what with all the phone calls. (pauses) Oh, say, this'll interest you. Y'know whom I was talking to this morning? Ruth Robbin. I told her you'd be coming over this afternoon, and she said to be sure to give you her regards.

SOUND: BEATING OF EGG WHITES.

CLARA: You remember Ruth Robbin, don't you, Katie? We used to call her Robin Redbreast when we were kids...remember?

KAY: I'm sorry, but I don't.

CLARA: Katie, how can you say that? What do you mean, you don't remember her? Ruth Robbin. She was in our class at school...in our home room...in Grade Five. How can you not remember her? She certainly remembers you. Like I said...she sent you her regards.

KAY: I'm sorry, Clara, but Grade Five was a very long time ago.

CLARA: Sure...but still...she was one of our best friends. Hold on, I have to pop this in the oven to brown.

SOUND: OPENING AND SHUTTING OF THE OVEN DOOR.

CLARA: Want a brownie...while you're waiting?

KAY: No, thanks.

CLARA: That how you've managed to stay so skinny, Katie? Me...I'm lucky. My Max doesn't care for skinny women. Says they're frigid. I've never asked him how he knows. You sure you won't have a brownie? Well, suit yourself, but I'm not gonna wait. Mmmm...is it ever good. Wanna change your mind?

KAY: No. I'll wait until we have our tea.

CLARA: I meant to ask you, Katie...you see much of Anna? Anna Rozansky?

KAY: The name's familiar. Wasn't she at high school with us?

CLARA: Sure. In Mrs. Brennan's class. Grade Eight, Room Nineteen. She sat in the second row... third seat. She played on the volleyball team with us, remember? She's a social worker now. Never married...poor girl.

KAY: How on earth do you remember all that stuff? Which room...which row...which seat...God!

CLARA: Maybe it's because I never became so important that I could forget all my old friends. Besides, we've kept in touch.

KAY: All these years? with everyone we ever went to school with?

CLARA: Hey, have a heart. Not with everyone. Oh, my goodness, my lemon meringue pie!

SOUND: QUICK FOOTSTEPS.

SOUND: OPENING AND CLOSING OF THE OVEN DOOR.

CLARA: It's just perfect! I'll leave it on the table to cool off. Change your mind, Katie? Want a brownie? No? Well, okay. But you're sure not like Ernest...your cousin. He could never resist my brownies.

KAY: I guess he had a sweet tooth in those days.

CLARA: Ernest? He was sweet all over. What used to be called a dreamboat, in our day. I was crazy about him. We had something good going for us for a few years.

KAY: Who? You and Ernest?

CLARA: You can say that again.

KAY: You? and my cousin, Ernest?

CLARA: What's the matter with you? What's the big surprise? (pauses) Well, of course, you were always so busy with your little adolescent crushes, you never did see what was going on right under your nose.

KAY: But you and Ernest!

CLARA: Yes! Me and Ernest! For heaven's sake, Katie, what's the big deal? You think that no one... but no one...is ever attracted to fat girls? (pauses) I got married, didn't I?

KAY: Gosh, Clara, I didn't mean anything like that.

CLARA: Then why d'you keep saying, "You and Ernest... you and Ernest". After all, he lived right next door to you. And he was in and out of your house all the time...at all hours of the day and night. He practically lived at your house, for Pete's sake.

KAY: It's just that I never dreamt...I never for one moment suspected...and I'm sure my mother didn't either...You never let on that you...that you and he...You never even seemed to like him, let alone be in love with him.

CLARA: Well, you and I are different, Katie. You always had to confide everything in me...everything you did...everything you said...even everything you ever thought.

KAY: It's a good thing my mother never knew. She'd've had a fit. After all, she felt responsible for you...when you stayed with us.

CLARA: Your mother was super, Katie. I was always jealous of you...because of your mother.

KAY: And I was always very fond of your father. To this day, I can't put up any potatoes to bake without thinking of him. Remember how he used to bake potatoes every afternoon, in that big nickle-plated wood-stove you had? And how he used to hand them around...as if they were something very special...a delicacy?

CLARA: What else did he have to do...besides bake potatoes...and read the newspapers? He was always out of work. Last one hired...first one fired.

KAY: I loved him.

CLARA: Did you really?

KAY: Oh yes. He was wonderful. He used to treat me like a grown-up. And he'd always take the time to talk to me.

CLARA: That was the one thing he had plenty of...time.

KAY: Your mother...if you'll forgive me for saying so...terrified me. There was no pleasing her. Or if there was, I could never find the proper formula. I remember once...oh, never mind.

CLARA: Tell me.

KAY: Let's forget it, Clara. It's not important.

CLARA: But I want to hear it. So tell me.

KAY: Well once...when I came by to call for you... your mother said, "I hear you're very clever at school, Katie." I was embarrassed...and anxious to dismiss any claim to brilliance, I said, "Oh, no...I'm just average." Well, she just exploded. "Just average!" she said. "Then what does that make my Clara? An idiot?"

CLARA: I guess she thought you were putting on an act. After all, she knew you won the scholarship award every year.

KAY: I was always too frightened to talk to her after that.

CLARA: She had a hard life. Three small children. Not trained for anything. No way she could get work. In the depression, who would want her? I remember her always scrounging...and cadging... and borrowing. Borrowing money she knew she'd never be able to pay back. While my father sat around making potatoes. (pauses) It was a real blessing to her that I could stay at your house for months at a time...and that your mother'd always invite me to spend the summers with you in the Laurentians.

SOUND: CLARA SIGHING.

CLARA: One less mouth for my mother to feed...and I was never a small eater...that's obvious.

KAY: Are you telling me that's why you used to stay with us?

CLARA: I suppose.

KAY: And that's why your mother never objected?

CLARA: Objected? Christ, she must've been relieved... delighted, even. (pauses) Besides, I'm sure she never missed me. I was never her favourite. I looked too much like my father...and acted like him, too, I suppose. My mother favoured my brother and my sister. They were go-getters. She liked that...

KAY: But I always thought...

SOUND: SILENCE.

CLARA: You thought what?

KAY: Never mind.

CLARA: Oh, come on...

KAY: Well, I always thought you used to stay at my house because we were so close. I loved you, like a sister...more even.

CLARA: I was your mirror...that's all.

KAY: My mirror!

CLARA: More like your echo, actually. You used to tell me about all your little triumphs...your little flirtations...and I'd make admiring noises. (pauses) Not that it wasn't fun... in a way. You were always so popular. And you'd manage to get me included in parties and on dates...that I'd never've been invited to on my own.

KAY: What are you trying to tell me, Clara? I'm not sure I understand.

CLARA: Oh, grow up, Katie. You're not a child anymore. You're fifty-four years old.

KAY: Are you telling me that you always considered our friendship in terms of convenience...(cont.)

KAY: (cont.) nothing more?

CLARA: Listen, Katie, when you don't have much, there's nothing to cushion you. You grow up fast. You have to.

KAY: But, Clara...

CLARA: It was a laugh, let me tell you...some of those double-dates you used to fix me up with. All those wet-behind-the-ears college boys. And all of you showing off...reading Freud...and that crazy Gertrude Stein, with her a rose is a rose is a rose. I never knew what the hell you were talking about...and neither did any of you, probably. But I, at least, was honest. I read what I liked. And what I liked were those movie magazines...and pulp-paper love stories. I still like to read that kinda stuff...but nowadays it's more fashionable. Love stories are a million-dollar business.

KAY: I guess you were ahead of your time.

CLARA: But I don't want you to get the wrong impression of me. I wasn't just a taker. I tried to pay you all back...to pay my way. Remember how I'd always shampoo your hair for you?

KAY: I used to offer to shampoo your hair, too.

CLARA: Oh, but I never let you.

KAY: I used to think it was because you liked to wash your own hair.

CLARA: And I used to help your mother in different ways...like when she was baking. (pauses) That's your mother's recipe I use for my blueberry muffins. Putting in orange juice, and grating orange peel for the icing was her idea. Funny...baking makes me think of that expression...crumbs from the rich man's table.

KAY: We were never rich, Clara.

CLARA: But you were never poor either...like us.

KAY: I always remember how hard my father worked.

CLARA: I always remember how little my father worked.

KAY: I loved your father.

CLARA: You could afford to love him...to have him as a pet. We couldn't. Don't you know that peasants only keep dogs that can do work?

KAY: What I remember best from my childhood was our fights...none of which ever made any sense to me. And how you'd get mad and leave...and not come back for months at a time.

SOUND: CLARA'S LAUGHTER.

CLARA: I remember! Especially the one we had over the Max Baer-Joe Louis bout.

SOUND: KAY'S LAUGHTER.

KAY: Right! For some reason...I can't think why...you had your heart set on Max Baer winning. And when he lost, you got up, without saying a word, and flounced out of the house. Slamming the door behind you.

CLARA: We didn't speak to each other for months after that. (pauses) I'd better put up the kettle.

KAY: Oh, Clara, sit down. It can wait. Let's talk a bit longer.

CLARA: All right. What else do you want to talk about?

SOUND: A CHAIR BEING SCRAPED ACROSS THE FLOOR.

SOUND: CLARA SITTING DOWN HEAVILY.

KAY: Remember how I'd always insist you sleep over at my house...the night before the scholarship awards were to be announced? Every year I'd be in deathly fear that if you broke the pattern, I wouldn't win the scholarship.

CLARA: Funny, eh? You'd be worrying about your damn scholarship...and I'd be worrying about whether or not I'd be promoted.

KAY: Remember the old radio programmes, Clara? Remember how we used to shiver with fright over The Hound of the Baskervilles?

CLARA: You shivered. I didn't. I thought Sherlock (cont.)

CLARA: (cont.) Holmes was a big bore...a pain in the ass. I remember your mother used to come in and sit with us...because you used to get so scared. I never could understand why you'd insist on listening to murder mysteries when they scared you half to death.

KAY: Oh, I'm still the same. Only nowadays my husband has to sit with me.

CLARA: Come to think of it...how is that husband of yours? Still a hot-shot lawyer?

KAY: Well, he's still a lawyer, but I'd hardly describe him as a hot-shot.

CLARA: Lots of money in divorces. Especially nowadays.

KAY: He doesn't do that type of thing.

CLARA: No? Then what does he do?

KAY: Teaches, mostly. Constitutional law. And once in a while he gets dragged into doing some consulting work...usually for the government.

CLARA: I see. Well..I'd better put this left-over icing in the fridge. Unless you want to finish it off?

KAY: No, thanks.

CLARA: Want to lick the spoon?

KAY: It's a long time since I've done that.

CLARA: Well, if you won't, I will. I haven't got your will-power. See that poster of the hippo? On the fridge door? I always bring it with me when we come to visit.

SOUND: CLARA'S SIGH.

CLARA: Trouble is, it never seems to do much good.

KAY: Am I going to get to meet your husband, Clara?

CLARA: Depends on when he gets back. I sent him off to the movies. He just loves movies.

KAY: Did you say his name was Max?

CLARA: That's right. Max.

KAY: Max Waxx. His parents must've had a sense of humour.

CLARA: Oh, his name is really Boris. He changed it to Max himself. He thought Max Waxx was a catchier name than Boris Waxx. And he's right. No one ever forgets his name.

KAY: What does he do, Clara?

CLARA: Oh, he's an accountant. Didn't you know that? He's always saying that's why he married me... because accountants like rounded figures.

KAY: Stands to reason.

CLARA: Did you know that your mother was responsible for my meeting Max?

KAY: I never knew that.

CLARA: Well, indirectly. After all, if it hadn't been for her, I'd never have gone on to business school...after I dropped out of high school. On top of which, she got me my first office job.

KAY: I always thought you got it on your own.

CLARA: Not me. I needed a push. Anyway, I met Max in the last office I worked in. He was the firm's accountant. Oh, and I have the world's most wonderful mother-in-law. She has four daughters-in-law, but I'm her favourite. Everyone says so.

KAY: Where is your mother-in-law? At the movies, with Max?

CLARA: She's taking her afternoon nap. Ninety-one... and sharp as a tack. Always says exactly what she thinks. Says that's the advantage of being old...and she likes to take advantage of her advantage. You'll meet her when she wakes up.

KAY: That'll be nice.

CLARA: So now you know about everyone...except for my children.

KAY: How many do you have?

CLARA: Two. A boy and a girl. Both graduates of Penn State. Harold's an accountant...in his father's firm. And Debbie's a physiotherapist. And your children?

KAY: They're busy...working...studying. Oh, Clara, let's not talk about our families. Let's be selfish, and gossip about old times.

CLARA: They're not drop-outs, or anything?

KAY: Who?

CLARA: Your children.

KAY: Oh, no. Two of them are still at university. The other two are busy with their professions. (pauses) Where's that tea you promised me?

CLARA: I'll put the water on to boil.

SOUND: CLARA GETTING UP.

SOUND: CLARA WALKING ACROSS THE TILE FLOOR.

SOUND: RUNNING WATER.

CLARA: I must say, Katie, you surprise me.

KAY: Why do you say that?

CLARA: 'Cause you're just like anyone else.

KAY: What on earth did you expect? I'm not a movie star.

CLARA: But still...I thought you'd be different. Look different. Dress different. You know...more exotically. And I thought you'd be talking about all the places you've been...the prizes you've won...the famous people you've met. Instead of which...

KAY: But those things aren't important, Clara.

CLARA: Aren't important! Are you crazy? If they aren't important, then how come you go on working? Why don't you just stop and take things easy?

KAY: I didn't say that art isn't important to me. Of course it is. But it's in the process that the importance lies...in the act of creation...in the special moments when you find that you've managed to pull off something that you thought was beyond you...something worthwhile...even special. It's the search that keeps me going...the unending search. (pauses) I also like the fact that my work can be public...while I remain private.

CLARA: What's the use of being famous, if...

KAY: But I'm not famous, Clara.

CLARA: All right...well-known...recognized. Don't be so picky, Katie. You know damn well what I mean. And what's the use in all that...if you don't capitalize on it? Makes no sense to me.

KAY: Sorry if I've been a disappointment to you.

CLARA: Well, hey...listen...it doesn't matter to me. It's your life...not mine. I was just asking.

SOUND: CLARA'S FOOTSTEPS.

SOUND: WATER BEING POURED INTO THE TEAPOT.

CLARA: Tea at last! I'll trot out the goodies.

SOUND: CLARA BUSTLING AROUND.

CLARA: I'd better take stock...make sure I don't forget anything. Let's see: brownies...blueberry cupcakes...lemon meringue pie...date squares... and...oh yes...a surprise!

SOUND: OPENING AND CLOSING OF THE REFRIGERATOR DOOR.

CLARA: TA-DA! The pièce de résistance!

KAY: What a beautiful cheese-cake! and so huge! You expecting anyone else?

CLARA: Just us.

KAY: I feel guilty that you've gone to so much trouble on my account.

CLARA: Don't worry about it. Everyone enjoys showing off. So, Kate, wouldn't you say that (cont.)

CLARA: (cont.) this cheesecake is a work of art?

KAY: A masterpiece.

CLARA: See that? There are still a few things I can do a darn sight better than...than other people.

KAY: Indeed.

CLARA: Y'know, Katie, cheese-cake is my very favourite food. I go all gloppy at the sight of it. Even had to have it for my wedding-cake. Remember the little bride and groom...on top of the cake...standing in a field of fresh, ripe strawberries?

KAY: No.

CLARA: Oh, don't be crazy! You can't have forgotten it. Everyone remarked on it. It was so spectacular.

KAY: I never saw it.

CLARA: How can that be? It was the centrepiece of the buffet. For Pete's sake, can't you remember anything?

KAY: I wasn't there, Clara. I wasn't at your wedding.

CLARA: Oh, that's right. You weren't. You couldn't come...for some reason or other. What was it now?

KAY: I wasn't invited.

CLARA: Oh, come off it, Katie. I don't remember anything like that. (pauses) Well, anyway, what does it matter? It was so long ago. Here, let me cut you a nice big piece of the cheesecake.

KAY: Perhaps later, thank you.

CLARA: Well, someone's gotta taste it...make sure it's as good as it looks. I'll just cut myself a tiny sliver. There!

SOUND: CLARA'S FORK ON HER PLATE.

CLARA: Mmmm! Is that ever good! Delicious! That recipe's never failed me. It's my mother-in-law's.

KAY: It hurt me. It hurt me very much...at the time.

CLARA: What did? What hurt you?

KAY: Your not inviting me to your wedding.

CLARA: It wasn't a very big wedding, Katie.

KAY: Was Ruth Robbin there?

CLARA: Ruth? Oh, sure.

KAY: And Anna Rozansky?

SOUND: CLARA'S LAUGH.

CLARA: She had to come. She was my bridesmaid. And Ethel, of course, was my maid of honour.

KAY: At my wedding, you were the maid of honour.

CLARA: You had a large wedding.

KAY: Who else was there?

CLARA: Where? Oh, at my wedding. Let's see. Oh, Frances was there. You remember Frances Porter? She was in our class in seventh grade. And Louise. Louise Farmer. She's married to a dentist...an oral surgeon. She's very rich ...goes without saying. Have you ever gone to one of them...for root canal work? They charge an arm and a leg.

SOUND: SILENCE.

CLARA: It was a small wedding, Katie.

KAY: Are you trying to tell me that if I'd been invited, it would've gone from being a small wedding to a Hollywood spectacular?

CLARA: I'm not trying to tell you anything. You're the one who keeps harping on my wedding. I don't understand you. It was thirty years ago...for heaven's sake! Why're you going on and on about it?

KAY: Because all these years I've wondered about it ...aggravated myself about it.

CLARA: Really? I find that hard to believe.

- KAY: I've often asked myself what I'd done wrong. How I could have hurt your feelings. Whether I'd neglected to do something I should have done...to say something I should have said. Or whether I'd been so lost in my own world after I got married that I'd neglected our friendship. After all, you'd been like a member of the family. And if you didn't want me at your wedding, I must've done something awful...something terribly unkind.
- CLARA: Oh, come on, Katie...
- KAY: I mean it, Clara. I'd really like to know. So please tell me. What did I do?
- CLARA: You? What on earth did you have to do with it? (pauses) Y'know something, Katie? The trouble with you is that you not only think you're the centre of your own universe, but you think you're the centre of everyone else's as well. (pauses) If I didn't choose to invite you to my wedding, that was my business. Mine. Not yours.
- KAY: Didn't you think back...if only for a moment...to my wedding? To the fact that it was you who'd arranged my wedding veil...that it was you who had preceded me down the aisle...that you'd been a part of everything...everything?
- CLARA: Frankly, no. I was too busy...too busy with my own affairs. Too busy playing the leading role...for once...to think of you, or anyone else. Looking back, I think I plain forgot about you.
- KAY: In spite of the fact that I'd sent you a wedding present...as soon as I heard you were going to be married?
- CLARA: Big deal. That didn't mean I had to invite you to the wedding. I sent you a thank-you note, didn't I?
- KAY: Oh, sure. Sure you did. Standard Model 5B. "Thank you for the lovely gift. My husband and I look forward to using it." I still have it. You didn't even go to the trouble of mentioning what the gift was.
- CLARA: Oh, I knew what it was. A hand-made (cont.)

CLARA: (cont.) covered silver dish...from Peterson's ...and very expensive, I've no doubt. (pauses) I often point it out to visitors...as a present sent to us by my very dear friend, the famous Canadian artist, Kay Hammer, who has represented Canada in lots of international shows...and has won tons of prizes...and had one-man shows all over the damn place.

KAY: I wrote you a long letter...when you lost your father. You never even answered it.

CLARA: There was nothing to say.

KAY: I understand.

SOUND: SILENCE.

KAY: Well, I must say, I'm glad we've had this talk.

SOUND: KAY'S CHAIR BEING PUSHED BACK.

SOUND: KAY GETTING UP.

KAY: It's getting late, Clara. I have to be going.

CLARA: You can't go yet! We haven't had our tea.

SOUND: SILENCE.

CLARA: Katie, you're not mad, are you?

SOUND: SILENCE.

CLARA: Try to understand. I was the bride. The star of the show. I didn't want you there...outshining me...upstaging me. It was my wedding.

KAY: I understand. And I'm glad we were able to talk about it. I'm grateful, in fact.

CLARA: Good. Then it's all worked out for the best.

KAY: Yes. It has. Well, thanks for asking me over.

CLARA: Oh, don't run off yet. Sit down. We haven't had our tea.

KAY: Sorry, Clara, but I'm going.

CLARA: But you can't! You can't just get up and leave! Do you realize how much trouble I've (cont.)

CLARA: (cont.) gone to 'on' your account? I've been baking for two days. Who d'you think is gonna eat all this stuff?

SOUND: (AWAY FROM THE MIKE) "CLARA"...

CLARA: Oh dear...it's Mother. She's up.

KAY: You'd better go to her, Clara.

CLARA: I'll see you to the door first, Katie. That is, if you still insist on running off.

SOUND: (AWAY FROM THE MIKE) "CLARA"...

CLARA: (loudly) Coming, Mother.

KAY: Don't worry about me, Clara. I can see myself out.

CLARA: You sure? I wanted to say good-bye properly.

KAY: I think our good-byes were said long ago.

CLARA: You could be right. We probably should have left things as they were.

KAY: Maybe. But then again, I'm glad we didn't.

SOUND: TWO SETS OF FOOTSTEPS WHICH SEPARATE TO GO IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.

SOUND: (AWAY FROM MIKE) "CLARA"...

CLARA: (away from mike) Coming! Coming, Mother!

SOUND: DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING.

SOUND: MUSICAL BRIDGE.

The End.

Owed to Alexander Graham

CHARACTERS

FAY a schoolteacher, aged 49.

ROY an assistant bank manager, aged 27.

SOUND: RINGING OF THE TELEPHONE

FAY: Hello?

ROY: Is that F. Lambek?

FAY: Speaking.

ROY: I want to get into your panties.

FAY: Whaaat?

ROY: I said I...

FAY: Never mind! I heard you! You should be ashamed of yourself, Adam. I've a good mind to report you to the Principal.

ROY: It's not Adam. It's Roy.

FAY: Roy? I don't know anyone named Roy.

ROY: You don't have to know anyone named Roy. This is an obscene phone call.

FAY: Oh, my goodness!

ROY: Is that all you can say? "Oh, my goodness"?

FAY: What did you expect me to say?

ROY: Something more exciting than "Oh, my goodness". What are you? A nun or something?

FAY: I'm sorry.

ROY: Is that all you can say, "I'm sorry"? D'you realize what you've done? You've spoiled everything for me.

FAY: Listen, you've got your nerve!

ROY: Me?

FAY: Yes, you! You call me up...you make an obscene remark...and then you...

ROY: It wasn't that obscene.

FAY: All right, I'll grant you that. It wasn't very obscene. But still...it was hardly (cont.)

FAY: (cont.) a polite remark. And when I try to treat you like a human being, you start criticizing me. How would you like it if I criticized you, for heaven's sake?

ROY: Lady! Lady! Stop it! Just stop it. This isn't going at all the way it's supposed to... the way I expected...

FAY: What did you expect?

ROY: I thought I'd get you all upset...nervous... and that would sort of get me...y'know what I mean...

FAY: No, I don't know what you mean. What do you mean?

ROY: I mean...well, y'know...sort of turned on.

FAY: Turned on?

ROY: Hell! What's the matter with you, anyway? Don't you understand anything? You're making me feel like a kid who sits down to dinner without washing his hands. (pauses) And that's hardly what I had in mind. Goddamn you!

SOUND: RECEIVER BEING REPLACED WITH A BANG. FOLLOWED BY THE GENTLER SOUND OF FAY REPLACING HER RECEIVER.

SOUND: A GENTLE SIGH.

SOUND: A MUSICAL BRIDGE.

SOUND: RINGING OF THE TELEPHONE.

FAY: Hello?

SOUND: HEAVY BREATHING.

FAY: Hello? Hello?

ROY: I'd like to get into your panties.

FAY: Oh, it's you again.

ROY: Yeah. I thought I'd try again. I thought maybe this time things would go the way they're supposed to.

FAY: I see.

SOUND: SILENCE.

ROY: Hell! it's no better. It's as if I were talking to my Grade Five teacher.

FAY: Grade Seven.

ROY: What?

FAY: Didn't you hear me? I said Grade Seven. That's what I teach. Grade Seven.

ROY: Omigawd...a schoolteacher! (pauses) Looks like I'm a natural-born loser.

FAY: Me too.

ROY: You too what? What're you talking about?

FAY: I was just saying that I'm a natural-born loser myself.

ROY: This is ridiculous. Look, I'm gonna hang up. I can't take much more of this. I'm gonna try someone else.

FAY: Good luck.

ROY: Hey, wait a minute! Don't hang up yet!

FAY: Why not?

ROY: Because I like your voice. You have a very nice voice.

FAY: Thank you. So have you. Your voice is very musical. And it sounds as if you have a sense of humour...although frankly, I haven't seen much evidence of that, as yet.

ROY: It's been a long time between laughs.

FAY: Oh now, Roy, you mustn't let yourself get depressed. It's hard to get out of...depression. Roy? You did say your name was Roy?

ROY: That's right. Roy. And what's your first name?

FAY: I'd rather not say.

ROY: That's okay. I'll call you Princess...if that's all right with you? Sort of romantic, eh, (cont.)

ROY: (cont.) my not knowing your name? It's like going to a masked ball.

SOUND: FAY'S GENTLE LAUGH.

ROY: You married, Princess?

FAY: I was.

ROY: Divorced?

FAY: No.

ROY: Then you must be a widow, right?

FAY: That's right.

ROY: Sorry about that.

FAY: And you?

ROY: Me? Oh, I'm married.

FAY: Then why on earth are you making obscene phone calls?

ROY: Hey, c'mon...you're making it sound like it's my profession. Actually, you were my first one ...my very first obscene phone call.

FAY: I guess you just need more practice.

ROY: Well, thanks a lot...teacher.

FAY: Oh, I'm not much of a teacher. I doubt whether I could teach an Australian how to crawl.

SOUND: A GUFFAW.

ROY: Hey, wait a minute. You really meant that, didn't you?

FAY: I'm afraid so.

ROY: Why don't you try doing something else?

FAY: What?

ROY: How should I know? I'm not a guidance counselor. Anyway, work's work. I'm not particularly happy in my job either.

FAY: As what?

ROY: As an assistant bank manager.

SOUND: FAY'S LAUGHTER.

FAY: A bank manager!

ROY: What's so funny?

FAY: Oh, I don't know. It's such a very proper kind of job...and here you are...making obscene phone calls.

ROY: I see what you mean.

FAY: You happily married, Roy?

ROY: Y'think I'd be making obscene phone calls if I were happily married?

FAY: I guess not.

SOUND: DOOR CHIMES.

FAY: I've got to go, Roy. There's someone at my door.

ROY: You trying to get rid of me?

FAY: Of course not.

ROY: Okay, I believe you. Call you tomorrow.

SOUND: RECEIVER BEING REPLACED.

SOUND: FAY'S FOOTSTEPS.

SOUND: DOOR BEING OPENED.

SOUND: MUSICAL BRIDGE.

SOUND: RINGING OF THE TELEPHONE.

FAY: Hello?

ROY: It's me.

FAY: Roy! How are you?

ROY: Had a really dismal day.

FAY: You want to talk about it?

ROY: Sure. It's that job of mine. I don't know how much longer I can hack it.

FAY: Which bank do you work at, Roy? I don't think you've ever mentioned it.

ROY: You don't expect me to tell you that?

FAY: I didn't mean the branch. I only meant...

ROY: Yeah, I know. And I wish I could tell you. But somehow, I don't think I'd better.

FAY: It's all right. I understand. I don't intend to tell you what school I teach at either.

ROY: Afraid I'd turn up and you'd have some fancy explaining to do, eh?

FAY: Something like that. Anyway, what's wrong at the bank?

ROY: The manager, for one thing. What a prune! You should see his private office. Plastic flowers all over the place. And on his desk... you won't believe this...but he has photographs of his hatchet-faced wife and all his seven children.

FAY: Lots of people have photographs of their families on their desks.

ROY: Yeah...but not placed so that they face the visitor, eh? Everybody who comes in for a loan or whatever first has to comment on his wife and kids. I know it for a fact. I've heard them.

FAY: If you want a loan, you'd better admire his family.

ROY: That's about it. Anyway, let's talk about something else.

FAY: Like what?

ROY: Like books, for instance. I like to discuss books.

FAY: Especially with schoolteachers.

- ROY: Don't get so up-tight, Princess. It's not as if you were a librarian.
- FAY: What have you been reading?
- ROY: Melville. I've just finished Bartleby the Scrivener. Powerful stuff. Have you read it?
- FAY: Oh, Roy...that character's too close to the bone.
- ROY: I know. It was like looking into a mirror.
- FAY: How very strange.
- ROY: Why? Why do you say that?
- FAY: Because you think Bartleby's like you....and I think he's like me...a curse on the conscience of the man who hired me...Do you know...can you even imagine...what it's like to know that you hold a job on sufferance? Without Mr. Nathanson's protection I'd've been fired within a week. And who could blame them? I can't teach. I can't maintain discipline. It's just awful. The children make fun of me...behind my back...to my face...
- ROY: Poor Princess! Why don't you just leave... find something else to do?
- FAY: I'm not qualified for anything else. I went straight from Teachers' College into marriage and motherhood. (pauses) That poor Mr. Nathanson...I can't tell you how kind he is...how hard he tries. He's forever giving me articles on teaching methods, which he clips out of the Christian Science Monitor...always hoping that some day...somehow...something will rub off on me. But it never does.
- ROY: Sounds like a real nice guy.
- FAY: That's the trouble. Too nice. It makes me feel so guilty. Well, they're stuck with me until he retires. After that, it'll be the knacker's for me.
- ROY: Oh come on, Princess...you can't be that bad a teacher...nobody can.
- FAY: Well, thanks a lot, Roy. That's very comforting.

SOUND: SILENCE.

ROY: Princess?

FAY: Yes, Roy?

ROY: I didn't mean to hurt your feelings.

FAY: I know.

ROY: Guess what? I joined another library. Near the bank.

FAY: Oh? Which one? The Westmount Library? The Fraser-Hickson? The Atwater? The Côte Saint Luc?

ROY: You're wasting your time, Princess. It's none of your business.

SOUND: FAY LAUGHING.

FAY: You certainly do a lot of reading.

ROY: That's about all I do.

FAY: And your wife doesn't mind?

ROY: My wife? Oh, we don't seem to have much in common any more since I...(voice fades away)

FAY: Sorry...I can't hear you.

ROY: (in a rush of words) Since I became impotent.

FAY: Ohhh...

SOUND: A CLICK AS ROY HANGS UP.

SOUND: THE RECEIVER BEING REPLACED.

SOUND: MUSICAL BRIDGE.

SOUND: RINGING OF THE TELEPHONE.

FAY: Hello?

ROY: Hello, Princess.

FAY: Oh, Roy, I'm so glad you called. I was afraid I might never hear from you again.

ROY: Would you have missed me?

FAY: Yes.

ROY: I'm glad.

FAY: How are things?

ROY: The same.

FAY: You want to talk about it?

ROY: Yes.

FAY: Well...talk.

ROY: Just like that?

FAY: Sometimes it's the best way. Just start. It'll get easier as you go along.

ROY: I can't. I can't do it. (pauses) How would it be if you asked me questions and I answered?

FAY: All right, Roy...if you think you'll find it easier that way. (pauses) Do you love your wife, Roy?

ROY: No.

FAY: No? How long have you been married?

ROY: Two years.

FAY: I see.

ROY: What do you see?

FAY: Nothing, really. It's just an expression.

ROY: Well...go on. Ask me some more questions.

FAY: Were you in love when you got married?

ROY: No.

FAY: Then why on earth did you get married?

SOUND: SILENCE.

FAY: Did you have to?

ROY: She told me she was pregnant.

FAY: She told you she was pregnant...but she wasn't?

ROY: You got it.

FAY: You feel that she tricked you into marriage?

ROY: I guess you could say that.

FAY: Is that so terrible...if she loves you?

ROY: I don't know how she feels about me. I don't believe anything she says. Any feeling I had for her vanished when I realized what she had done.

FAY: But maybe she really thought she was pregnant.

ROY: No. She knew exactly what she was doing.

FAY: I see.

ROY: And so...after that...after I found out...I just couldn't...I guess I didn't want to...with her, I mean. And after a while...with anyone.

FAY: Why don't you go and see someone? a psychiatrist, maybe?

ROY: Thanks...but no thanks. Anyway, now that you know...if you don't mind...I don't want to talk about it any more.

SOUND: SILENCE.

FAY: I've been having some problems at school.

ROY: You haven't been fired, or anything? Have you?

FAY: No. But it may not be long now.

ROY: What happened?

FAY: One of my boys handed in the very same essay on Sir John A. that his older brother had handed in to me last year...and that their mother had probably written in the first place. So I failed him. I had to. What else could I do? I feel sick about it...on account of poor Mr. Nathanson. The boy's father is on the School Board.

ROY: You did the right thing, Princess. There's comfort in that.

FAY: I know.

SOUND: FAY SIGHING.

ROY: I had a weird experience in the library today. I ran into one of those vandals who write in the margins of books.

FAY: He was doing that? right in the library?

ROY: Yeah. My first instinct was to punch him out. But then I decided to talk to him...to try to understand why he was doing it. Turned out he was chopping Henry James' sentences and paragraphs into more manageable chunks.

FAY: The very idea!

ROY: Spoken like a true schoolteacher!

FAY: Well, what did you expect?

ROY: From you, Princess? A little more openness... sympathy, even. After all, aren't you working at rehabilitating an obscene caller?

FAY: Oh, Roy, you'll only encourage him to deface more and more books.

ROY: He was a pathetic little man, Princess. Lonely. And in his own way, dedicated. Sitting there, poring over Henry James...looking for all the world like some ancient Talmudic scholar.

FAY: You Jewish, Roy?

ROY: No. You?

FAY: Yes, I am.

ROY: Must be nice. You have such close family ties.

FAY: So do other people.

ROY: I suppose. Anyway, does it matter to you? My not being Jewish?

FAY: Why should it? We're hardly likely to get married...have children...and quarrel about what religion to bring them up in.

ROY: I guess not.

FAY: Well...I'd better say good-night. I brought home two sets of exams to correct, and I should get started. Otherwise I'll be up half the night.

ROY: Just a minute, Princess. Do you realize we've been talking to each other every night for the past three months.

FAY: So?

ROY: So, isn't it time we met?

FAY: I'm afraid that's out of the question, Roy.

ROY: But why?

FAY: Because there's no point in it.

ROY: Will you at least think about it? That's all I'm asking. Don't say no until you've turned it over in your mind. You can let me know tomorrow night. Okay?

FAY: Okay. Good-night, Roy.

ROY: Good-night, Princess.

SOUND: RECEIVER BEING REPLACED.

SOUND: MUSICAL BRIDGE.

SOUND: RINGING OF THE TELEPHONE.

FAY: Hello?

ROY: Well?

FAY: Well, what?

ROY: Well...when and where are we meeting? Have you decided?

FAY: Oh, Roy...let's just leave things as they are.

ROY: You're not afraid of me, are you? I know I didn't make a very good first impression.

FAY: It's nothing like that, Roy. It's just...it's just that there's no point to it. We're not teenagers, arranging a blind date.

ROY: But it would mean so much to me.

FAY: I'm sorry. Really I am. But it's not possible..

ROY: Fine. Then I'll stop phoning.

FAY: You wouldn't! (uncertain) Would you?

ROY: Try me.

FAY: Roy! Oh, Roy, it's a silly idea...plain silly. You don't even know what I look like. I don't know what you look like.

ROY: I could wear a rose in my lapel.

FAY: But what if the Prime Minister happened to turn up at the same time?

ROY: Well, you know what he looks like. Oh, c'mon on, Princess, don't be so difficult. It'll be fun...you'll see. Look, we could meet at the Musée...down at Le Havre? It's always quiet there...and there are lots of corners where we can sit and talk.

FAY: It's too out of the way. I don't drive.

ROY: Neither do I. Can't afford it...on my salary. Say, what about a hotel lobby--the traditional rendezvous for lovers?

FAY: We hardly fit into that category.

ROY: Well anyway...we're at least good friends. What about the Windsor? Or the Queen E? Or maybe the good old Mount Royal? We could look for each other behind the potted palms.

FAY: I really don't like hotels. I find them phony. Everyone pretending to be what he's not...even the bellboy.

ROY: Well, where then?

FAY: Maybe outdoors? What do you think? In a park. At dusk. I love the twilight...It's such a magical time of day. Oh, and I know just the park. Not far from the school where I teach. Beaubien Park...on Ste. Catherine Road. There's a bus stop at the corner of McEachran.

ROY: Sounds good to me. Beaubien Park at twilight. Let's set the day. How about this Friday?

KAY: So soon?

ROY: Not too soon for me. So? Is it agreed?
(His voice fades out.)

SOUND: MUSICAL BRIDGE.

SOUND: STREET NOISES. CAR HORNS.

FAY: Oh, this is crazy...absolutely crazy! I must've been out of my mind. Why on earth did I ever let myself be talked into this? (pauses) What would my children say, if they knew? What would Mr. Nathanson think? What if one of my students passed by and saw us? Dear God, why am I standing here...in the autumn of my life...waiting for an obscene caller? I can't believe I'm doing this... (pauses) There's not a soul around. If I had to scream, who would hear me?

SOUND: A CITY BUS BRAKING TO A STOP.

FAY: The bus. People are getting off...an old lady...children...a man. He's looking around. Oh, but that can't be him. He's only a youngster. Can't be more than twenty-six or seven. He's certainly thin...seems to be lost in his coat. (pauses) Oh, my goodness...he's heading this way. If that's Roy, I'll just pretend to be someone else. I'll simply tell him I'm waiting for my husband. Oh, what'll I do? He's quickening his pace. He's running.

ROY: (out of breath) Princess?

FAY: (tentatively) Roy?

ROY: You weren't expecting anyone else, were you?

FAY: Oh, Roy...

ROY: Oh, Princess, I love you.

SOUND: FAY'S LAUGHTER.

FAY: Are you ever silly! C'mon, let's walk. It's too cold to stand in one place.

ROY: You cold? Gosh! I'm sorry. I've kept you waiting. I did come early, but I should've made sure I'd be here first. I feel terrible about it.

SOUND: TWO SETS OF FOOTSTEPS ON THE PATH.

FAY: It doesn't matter. Really, it doesn't.

ROY: Of course it matters. I'll make sure it never happens again.

FAY: Again?

ROY: Yeah. Next time. When we meet again next Friday.

FAY: You want to do this again?

ROY: Sure, every week.

SOUND: THEIR FOOTSTEPS SLOW DOWN AND STOP.

FAY: Be frank with me, Roy. Are you disappointed?

ROY: Why should I be? You came, didn't you? I could hardly sleep all night...I was so sure you wouldn't turn up.

FAY: What I meant was...aren't you disappointed... in me? In what I look like? I'm almost old enough to be your mother.

ROY: You're exactly as I pictured you. Beautiful.

FAY: Oh, Roy, I'm forty-nine years old...and mousy.

ROY: Princess, the radiance of your smile lights up this gloomy park.

FAY: I'd be foolish not to leave it at that. Shall we go to the right or to the left?

ROY: To the right. But wait a minute. You haven't told me what you think of me. Were you disappointed?

FAY: Well, you're very young.

ROY: That's no problem. That'll change...with time.

SOUND: THEIR FOOTSTEPS START UP AGAIN.

FAY: You like this park, Roy? It's a favourite of mine.

ROY: It's got a lovely old-fashioned feeling to it. All it needs is a lamplighter.

FAY: Oh, c'mon, Roy...I'm not that old.

ROY: You? You're ageless, Princess. Like a character in a fairy-tale. And the park is the perfect setting for you. Reminds me a bit of the blackish-green park in Antonioni's Blow-up.

FAY: You're right, you know. It is a bit like that. Did your mother take you to see the film..when you were small?

ROY: Oh, come on, Princess...stop it...(Roy's voice fades out.)

SOUND: MUSICAL BRIDGE.

SOUND: RINGING OF THE TELEPHONE.

ROY: Well, good-evening to you, Fay. (pauses) That's a neat name...Fay.

FAY: It used to be Fanny. But I didn't like it... so I changed it.

ROY: Mind if I go on calling you Princess?

FAY: Of course not.

ROY: Princess suits you. You even have long hair...like Rapunzel. Maybe when we meet next week, you can leave it long...instead of skewering it up into a bun.

FAY: Maybe, We'll see.

ROY: Tell me, were you at all excited at the idea of our meeting last night...after all this time?

FAY: You really want to know?

ROY: Yes.

FAY: I felt like a British Queen on the way to her execution.

ROY: If I'd known, I could've brought along an axe and helped you live out your fantasy...to the very end.

FAY: You're too kind.

ROY: You still upset about my age? or the lack of it?

FAY: No...not any more.

ROY: There are lots of ways of measuring age. One is by suffering.

FAY: Then I must be at least ninety.

ROY: Me too. See? We're the same age, after all.

SOUND: SILENCE.

ROY: Princess?

FAY: Yes, Roy?

ROY: When I got home last night, I read a book that had been a childhood favourite of mine, Ivanhoe.

FAY: It's been a long time since I've read Sir Walter Scott.

ROY: I think of you as my Rebecca...and some day, when I'm better...I'll convert to Judaism and we can be married.

FAY: Oh, Roy...you've got your own religion...and you've already got a wife. And you're not in love with me. We're simply friends...good friends.

ROY: All right, Fay. We'll leave it at that for now. (pauses) Have you lined up a park for next week?

FAY: I've been working on it. Poring over city maps. Checking out bus routes. How about Carré Saint-Louis? It's so charming...all those Victorian houses looking down protectively on the little park. Besides...it's not too far from the Municipal Library. We could nip in there to warm up.

ROY: Sounds great...just great...(Roy's voice fades out.)

SOUND: MUSICAL BRIDGE.

SOUND: RINGING OF THE TELEPHONE.

FAY: Hi, Roy!

ROY: Hey! Aren't you taking a big chance... answering the phone that way? What if it had been your sister? or your daughter? or Mr. Nathanson? or one of the kids at school? or someone calling you for a date?

FAY: You worry too much. At seven o'clock it's always you. I've often wondered how you manage it.

ROY: No problem. At two minutes to seven I'm in the phone booth. At one minute to seven I'm dialing your number. And at seven o'clock I hear your lovely voice.

FAY: Doesn't your wife ask questions? about your being out of the house every single night at seven o'clock?

ROY: She's used to it. I'm a dedicated jogger... winter and summer...rain or shine.

FAY: You're full of surprises, Roy. Hey, wait a minute. That means that this very minute I'm having a conversation with a man in a phone booth, wearing Adidas and a gray jogging suit.

ROY: Right. And what do you wear every night? Something sexy, I hope?

FAY: No such luck. Right now I'm wearing a tweed skirt, a faded sweater and sensible shoes. And, oh yes, my hair in a bun.

ROY: The Compleat Schoolteacher.

FAY: Not all that Compleat. A schoolteacher with an Obscene Caller as a friend.

ROY: Oh, come on, Fay. It's been ages since I've done that.

FAY: That's true. I apologize.

ROY: Do anything special last night?

FAY: I went to a dance.

ROY: A dance! How come you didn't mention it last night...when we talked?

FAY: It was a last-minute decision. One of my friends, Laura Overland, talked me into it.

ROY: And how was it?

FAY: Awful. Just awful. It was a singles' dance. That translates into divorced, widowed, and never-marrieds. (pauses) Are you laughing at me, Roy? For going to a thing like that?

ROY: I'd never laugh at you, Princess. In fact, I'm sorry I wasn't there. We could've danced together.

FAY: You'd've stuck out like the proverbial sore thumb. Everyone there was over forty. Well over forty. And there were about three women to every man.

ROY: Well, come on. Tell me all about it. What did you wear?

FAY: Me? Oh, I looked pretty drab...a sparrow among the peacocks. You should've seen the other women. Gold's the big thing this season, and they were all shining and glowing...like fireflies. I tell you, they looked as if they were dressed up for some tribal rite...ready to sacrifice their virginity...or what was left of it...to the few men who were there...picking and choosing from among the proffered victims.

ROY: Hey, come on, Fay...you sound like an amateur sociologist. Why didn't you just relax...have a good time?

FAY: Are you kidding? I was paralysed...paralysed with fear. I wanted nothing more desperately than to escape into that perpetual haven for wallflowers...the Ladies' Room.

ROY: We all want to run away from things. The important thing is that you didn't. (pauses) You didn't, did you?

FAY: Only because I was afraid that if I set (cont.)

- FAY: (cont.) foot into the Ladies' Room, I'd never get up the courage to come out again... that I'd still be in there when the building was being locked up.
- ROY: Oh, you're too hard on yourself. Too self-critical. You should leave the judgment to others. You might be agreeably surprised.
- FAY: Funny you should say that....
- ROY: Why?
- FAY: Because...oh, I can't tell you...it's too silly.
- ROY: There you go again. Let me decide whether it's silly. If you pre-judge your every action, you'll never get to do anything in life.
- FAY: Well...there was this nice-looking man...about my age...looked intelligent...and well-bred. I was standing near the door...poised to escape...when he came right across the room to ask me to dance. The music was pretty loud... and I wasn't quite sure I'd heard him right. And y'know what I found myself blurting out? "If you'd like to dance, I'm sure you can find yourself a partner. Want me to introduce you to some of the women I know?" Well, you should have seen the look he gave me...before he excused himself and walked away.
- ROY: Small wonder. You humiliated him.
- FAY: Oh, Roy! I felt awful about it. Now you've made me feel even worse.
- ROY: Don't blame yourself, Fay. Having an inferiority complex doesn't leave a person much room to think of the feelings of others.
- FAY: You think me self-centred?
- ROY: Sure, Princess. Insecure people are always selfish. They have no alternative.
- FAY: I feel terrible. The worst of it is, I'll never be able to make it up to him. It's not likely I'll ever see him again.
- ROY: But you've learned something. I guarantee (cont.)

ROY: (cont.) you'll say "yes" to the next man who asks you to dance...even if he turns out to be an orangutan. Anyway, I'm glad you didn't dance with him. I'd've been jealous. (Roy's voice fades out.)

SOUND: MUSICAL BRIDGE.

SOUND: RINGING OF THE TELEPHONE.

FAY: Roy! I've been waiting at the phone for the past half hour!

ROY: But it's barely seven o'clock.

FAY: I know...I know...but I've been bursting to tell you...

ROY: That your historical pageant was a howling success.

FAY: Roy! How'd you know?

ROY: Your voice, Princess. Your voice!

FAY: This is becoming ridiculous. You can read me like a book.

ROY: And you know how much I love books.

FAY: I can never thank you enough. Never! Without your encouragement...without your help... I'd never have been able to pull it off. I'd have been completely overwhelmed...engulfed by all the organizing, the writing, the costuming, the rehearsals.

ROY: But you did it. And you did it all by yourself.

FAY: I still can't believe it. The kids were ecstatic. All the parents rushed over to congratulate me. And oh, you should've seen Mr. Nathanson. He was glowing...positively glowing. I think I was even happier on his account than on my own. At last, thanks to you, I've redeemed myself.

ROY: You've been mentioning that man a bit too often for my taste. He's safely married, I hope?

FAY: Poor soul. His wife died...about a year and a half ago.

ROY: Oh..oh!

FAY: Stop it, Roy. He's just a friend.

ROY: I was only teasing, Princess. (pauses) Now to serious business...I was wondering whether we couldn't go back to the Botanical Gardens this week? That is, unless you have your heart set on something else.

FAY: I was thinking of Lafontaine Park and the animals...but that can wait until next week.

ROY: We must've gone through about forty parks by now. I never knew we had that many in Montreal.

FAY: Well...there are all the parks in Outremont... and in Westmount...

ROY: In St. Lambert and Longueuil...

FAY: Notre Dame de Grâce and St. Henri...

ROY: Verdun and Ahuntsic...

FAY: The big, well-kept parks...with the oldest trees and the newest playgrounds...

ROY: And the little mousehole parks...with bare patches of earth or gravel...and peeling swings.

FAY: And that little excuse for a park under the shadow of the expressway...

ROY: Funny, isn't it? Them that has gets. All the affluent areas that have lawns of their own... and where the kids go away to camp for the summer...or on family trips...they're the ones that have fine parks...while the poorer areas are given minimum facilities...if any...(Roy's voice fades out.)

SOUND: MUSICAL BRIDGE.

SOUND: STREET NOISES.

FAY: Hi, Roy. What've you got there?

ROY: Flowers...for our anniversary.

FAY: Anniversary? What on earth are you talking about?

ROY: Will you listen to that! And they say women are sentimental! (clucks his tongue) Don't tell me you've forgotten? It's exactly a year since our first meeting...at Beaubien Park.

FAY: Oh, Roy, how sweet of you to remember!

ROY: I'm afraid we'll have to cart the flowers around...on our walk. Maybe I should have had them sent,

FAY: I'm glad you didn't. Look, there's an empty bench! Why don't we sit down?

ROY: Good idea.

SOUND: FAY AND ROY SEATING THEMSELVES, AND PUTTING DOWN THE BOX.

FAY: You feeling all right, Roy? You look kinda pale.

ROY: I'm fine. Never better.

FAY: You don't look well. Maybe you should've stayed home tonight and gone to bed early.

ROY: Stop your fussing, Princess. I'm okay.

FAY: But you're not okay. You look awful...as if you haven't eaten in two days. Something's wrong. I know it. Roy, look at me. What's the matter? Did you lose your job or something?

ROY: Or something...

FAY: I knew it! I knew something was wrong as soon as I laid eyes on you. What is it? What's wrong?

ROY: It's my wife. She's pregnant. She saw a doctor on Wednesday.

FAY: Oh, my goodness. I guess there must be someone else. Has she asked you for a divorce?

ROY: There's no one else, Fay.

FAY: I don't understand.

SOUND: SILENCE.

FAY: Oh, I see! (pauses) Well, isn't that nice! Really. I mean it. It's wonderful news.

ROY: Oh, stop it, Fay! If it's such wonderful news, then how come I feel so rotten about it? Why do I feel that I've...that I've somehow betrayed you?

FAY: Oh, but you shouldn't. You shouldn't feel that way. I won't let you.

ROY: It happened only once. I want you to know that.

FAY: It's all right, Roy. There's no need to talk about it.

ROY: But I want to, Princess. I have to! You were part of it. You were the reason for it. It was you I was thinking of. You that I couldn't stop thinking of. And suddenly... suddenly I needed you. God, how I wanted you. And there was Maureen...right beside me.

FAY: Roy! Stop it! I don't want to hear any more. You're looking at this the wrong way. You should be happy. You should be feeling wonderful! You've a right to happiness...to a full life.

ROY: (angrily) You're not listening to me, Fay. You don't understand! What I'm trying to tell you is that the baby is ours...yours and mine. Maureen was just a stand-in for you...a surrogate...

FAY: I understand, Roy.

ROY: I knew you would.

SOUND: SILENCE.

FAY: What kind of flowers did you bring me? You didn't say.

ROY: Tea roses. They reminded me of you. Oh, and I have something else for you.

FAY: Another present?

ROY: This one is something special. Here...open it.

SOUND: OPENING OF A BOX.

FAY: Oh! a ring! (pauses) Looks like a wedding ring.

ROY: My mother's.

FAY: Your mother's! Oh, I can't accept that, Roy. It should go to your wife...and later on, to your child.

ROY: No, Goddammit! It's for you.

SOUND: A SOB OF FRUSTRATION.

FAY: Oh, please...please don't. Look, Roy, I'll put it on. There! How does it look? It fits perfectly.

ROY: I knew it would.

SOUND: A KISS.

ROY: That's the first time you've ever kissed me, Princess.

SOUND: SILENCE.

ROY: You'll wear it?

FAY: Yes...I'll wear it.

ROY: Always?

FAY: Yes...always.

ROY: You promise?

FAY: I promise. After all, if nuns can wear wedding rings, I guess I can too.

ROY: Oh, Princess, I do love you.

FAY: I know.

SOUND: MUSICAL BRIDGE AND FADE.

The End.

The Picasso Affair

CHARACTERS

LISA

a painter, aged 34.

BOB

a gynecologist, aged 36.

SOUND: A KEY TURNING IN A LOCK.

SOUND: A DOOR OPENING.

SOUND: A MAN'S FOOTSTEPS ON A TILED FLOOR.

BOB: (A little away) Now that's what I'd call one helluva weekend. Great little hotel...great food...and a great show, to boot.

SOUND: A SUITCASE HITTING THE FLOOR.

SOUND: A MAN'S FOOTSTEPS.

SOUND: A COAT BEING TOSSED ON A COUCH.

BOB: (Closer to mike) Boy, am I ever bushed!

SOUND: BOB FLOPPING DOWN ON THE COUCH.

BOB: But it was worth it, eh? Aren't you glad I nagged you into going, Lisa?

LISA: (A little away) Yes...I'm glad.

BOB: So am I. I've got enough small talk to see me through my office hours for months to come.

LISA: (A little away) That your main motivation in going, Bob? It's a pretty weird reason for going to an exhibition...to stock up on small talk.

BOB: Well, hey...not an exhibition, Lisa. The exhibition of a lifetime. Or, at least, of the eighties. Anyway, it wasn't my main reason for going. I went mainly on your account.

LISA: (A little away) But I told you...

BOB: Oh, I know what you told me. But I know better. Lisa! Are you still standing in the doorway? Come in and sit down. Put your damn bag down and take your coat off. What's the matter with you, anyway?

LISA: (A little away) I'm leaving, Bob.

BOB: Oh, sit down, Lisa. Relax. We'll have a bite to eat...unpack...and then, if you still want to, we'll go out. Although why you'd want to is beyond me.

LISA: (A little away) I'm going, Bob. I'm leaving you.

BOB: This your idea of a joke?

LISA: (A little away) I'm serious, Bob. I want out.

BOB: I don't believe it! You can't walk out on me ...just like that. What's gotten into you?

SOUND: BOB GETTING UP.

SOUND: BOB'S FOOTSTEPS.

SOUND: A SLIGHT STRUGGLE.

BOB: (A little away) Put your suitcase down, Lisa. Put it down, for Chrissake!

SOUND: SUITCASE HITTING THE FLOOR.

BOB: (Approaching mike) Now, come here and sit down.

SOUND: LISA'S DRAGGING FOOTSTEPS.

SOUND: LISA SEATING HERSELF.

BOB: Okay. Now, what's bugging you? Tell me. What is it? Have I done something wrong? Y'think I didn't tip the taxi-driver enough? Is that what you're pouting about?

LISA: How would I know what you tipped the driver?

BOB: Hell, I know what it is. You didn't like the hotel. That's it. You didn't like sleeping on mats. I suppose you found it a bit artificial ...a Japanese hotel right in the middle of Manhattan. Was that it?

LISA: Oh, I didn't care. If it gave you pleasure to stay at a genuine Japanese inn...in the middle of New York City...well, it was all right with me.

BOB: Well then, what was it? What set you off? There must've been something. Hey, was it that little creep...the one outside the Museum... who burns Picassos? Was it because I told him to shove off and stop bothering us?

LISA: That was awful. Heartless. Everyone in the lineup knew he was weird. But you were the only one who had to go and let him know it.

BOB: That why you set up a rendezvous with him for the next day? To make it up to him? (pauses) It didn't occur to you, of course, that you were making a fool out of me...in front of everyone.

LISA: Oh, Bob...no one took him seriously.

BOB: Or were you attracted to the little runt?

LISA: Grow up, Bob. For heaven's sake, grow up.

BOB: You lack discrimination, Lisa. You're always starting conversations with anyone and everyone. But you really hit rock-bottom with that little weirdo. What was his name, anyway?

LISA: Paul.

BOB: Right! Paul. A real creep...standing there, handing out nude photographs of himself.

LISA: He wasn't all naked, Bob. He was wearing a fig leaf.

BOB: Yeah...and did you see the size of it? Mere boasting...that's all it was.

LISA: Don't tell me you felt threatened?

BOB: Me? Why should I feel threatened?

LISA: Then why are you expending so much nervous energy on him? A harmless little man who has never accomplished anything in life, and probably never will. We all like to feel important, Bob...to feel that we've accomplished something in life. And if we can't create anything, some of us start looking around for something to destroy. That's all poor old Paul was doing...ranting on about Picasso...calling him a con artist...burning what he claimed were original Picasso prints. Isn't it a damn sight better that he work off his frustrations that way than by bombing the Museum?

BOB: All right...okay...but why on earth did you have to get involved with him? Why can't you learn to mind your own business?

LISA: You don't understand. I liked him. He's an original. Reminds me of the man who broke (cont.)

- LISA: (cont.) into a museum just to nail one of his own paintings up on the wall. Or the man who used to give free annual concerts at Plateau Hall to perform the compositions he'd written for his wife. People like that enrich life. I adore them. I can't help myself.
- BOB: Oh, you could help yourself all right...if you really wanted to. But instead you go out of your way to encourage those lunatics. Take this guy, Paul. You had to tell him that you always bring along original Picasso lithographs to put up over hotel-room reproductions. And naturally he believed you. Then you have to make things even worse by arranging to meet him the next day to burn your mythical Picassos with him.
- LISA: Oh, Bob, I'd never've gone. I'd never have had the nerve. Maybe that's why I admire people like Paul. Because they live out my fantasies.
- BOB: Real life is plenty good enough for me, Lisa.
- LISA: I know.
- BOB: What you can't seem to realize, Lisa, is that what you do when we're together reflects on me.
- LISA: I don't see why. We're two individuals.
- BOB: No, we're not. We're a couple. Everyone regards us as a couple. And instead of realizing that, you go blithely from one crazy stunt to another. Look what you pulled with the youngster who was directing people to the entrance of the Museum.
- LISA: What was wrong with that? The boy stands there, saying the same damn thing...over and over again...all day long...seven days a week. "Checking on your left. You enter on the right. Checking on your left. You enter on the right. Checking on your left. You enter on the right."
- BOB: But what business was it of yours? All you had to do was to check on the left and enter on the right. That's what every normal person did. But not you. Oh, no! You had to go and ask him whether he keeps saying, "Checking on your left, you enter on the right", when he gets home at night.

LISA: So what? I was curious. Weren't you? Seems to me a doctor should be curious.

BOB: Doctors don't have to be curious. We simply have to know how to cure...how to repair.

LISA: Well, in that case, you're just glorified technicians.

BOB: Maybe. But let's see you trying to do without us. Anyway, there's no point in discussing that now.

SOUND: BOB PACING ANGRILY.

BOB: Christ! We no sooner come in the front door then you drop a bomb about leaving me. And instead of talking things over like two adults, we start in on all these peripheral people... all these inconsequential, peripheral people.

LISA: But they're not peripheral, Bob. They're central to the whole issue. Can't you see that?

BOB: Your logic baffles me.

LISA: Well, there you are. You've put your finger on it. We never can see things the same way. Your concern is with society and your place in it. I only care about the individuals who make up a society. Take that woman you bought the tickets from...the one who wheels her carriage full of catfood up and down the Miracle Mart aisles, scalping tickets to a fashionable event like the Picasso show...that she'd never in her wildest dreams think of going to see.

BOB: Lisa! I don't want to discuss that crazy woman. I want to talk about us...about you and me and our relationship.

LISA: (Sighing) All right, Bob. Sit down and we'll talk.

SOUND: BOB SEATING HIMSELF.

LISA: I'm sorry about all this. Really I am. I'd intended to pick the right moment. Instead, I just blurted it out. And I feel terrible about it. Because you're a wonderful man. You'll make someone a great husband.

BOB: Next thing you'll be telling me is that you love me like a sister. Well, if you're my sister, my feelings toward you are pretty incestuous. I want things to stay as they were.

LISA: It's too late, Bob. It's over.

BOB: I can't understand you. I take you to New York...first class all the way. I drop everything...cancel appointments left, right and centre. And what do I get in return? This!

LISA: I didn't want to go. I told you that. You knew I was working on that large canvas for my show. I remember trying to explain to you that by the time I got back to it, it would end up as a totally different piece of work. Especially after having my teeth rattled by all those Picassos. But you refused to listen. You just forged ahead.

BOB: But I only did it for you. I thought you'd love it. You've been working too hard...much too hard. I thought a weekend in New York would recharge your batteries. Tell the truth. Once you got there, you had a good time, didn't you?

LISA: No.

BOB: Lisa!

LISA: Well, it's true.

BOB: (Shouting) D'you realize what I had to go through just to find that damn scalper? And what I had to shell out for the tickets?

LISA: (Enthusiastically) Oh, tell me all about the scalper, Bob. Did you get to ask her how she got into scalping tickets at a Miracle Mart?

BOB: Lisa! I don't give a damn about the scalper!

LISA: But it's so fascinating...picturing her going round and round with a wagon that's never gonna make it to the check-out counter.

BOB: You make a career out of collecting lunatics, Lisa. Small wonder you find me dull.

LISA: Oh, Bob...you're not dull. You're a wonderful guy. You'll find someone who'll...

BOB: I don't want anyone else. I want you. Look, I think we should get married...right away. Tomorrow!

LISA: Thanks, Bob, but I don't need a husband.

BOB: Everyone needs a husband.

LISA: Fine. Get yourself one and leave me out of it. Look, Bob, we're getting nowhere...just going round in circles. I'm leaving.

SOUND: LISA GETTING UP AND MOVING AROUND.

BOB: No, Lisa! Don't go!

SOUND: BOB GETTING UP.

BOB: Lisa, we're fighting over nothing. Over stupid things. Over whether I wanted to see the Picasso show just so I wouldn't be upstaged by my patients.

LISA: You said it yourself. You were so damned afraid that you wouldn't have anything topical to say while you were peering into your patients' vaginas that you had to drop everything and run off to New York.

BOB: You're making me sound pretty superficial, Lisa. I'm sure you don't mean it that way.

LISA: Maybe I do.

BOB: You couldn't be that unpleasant.

LISA: Face it, Bob. I'm often unpleasant. And that's just the point. You deserve someone nicer... someone who'll appreciate you...your kindness... your generosity.

BOB: (Absent-mindedly) My position in the community.

LISA: (Mockingly) Right! Your position in the community.

BOB: Your mother appreciates all that.

LISA: Well, good! Marry her. You have my blessing.

BOB: You're disgusting.

LISA: I know. Disgusting...flippant...irresponsible. Not at all the proper material for a doctor's wife.

BOB: You'd learn. All you have to do is try. God knows, I've tried. I've done my best to please you...to like your friends...to avoid arguments. I've looked the other way countless times. Like when you used my love letters in a collage... and then sold the goddamn thing. Did I say anything? I didn't say a word.

LISA: You're saying plenty now.

BOB: Well, who wouldn't? Other women tie their love letters with pink ribbons. You put them into a collage...for the whole world to read...and for a stranger to own. Christ! You don't even know who bought it!

LISA: Who cares? Anyway, I never thought you'd mind. To tell the truth, I wasn't even aware of what I was doing...on the conscious level. When I'm working, I'm ruthless. Anything that a collage needs gets fed into it.

BOB: (Bitterly) Don't I know it! Family pictures ...real money...anything that isn't nailed down. Let me tell you, Lisa, I've put up with a lot of nonsense from you.

LISA: Well, why did you? And for that matter, why should you have to go on putting up with it?

BOB: 'Cause I love you. Goddammit, Lisa, I love you!

LISA: Come off it, Bob. In the three years we've been together the only thing you've really loved has been the physical me. The rest of me is an embarrassment to you. Like Professor Wallace's wife.

BOB: Professor Wallace's wife? Oh, you mean Claire ...the so-called actress.

LISA: I mean Claire, the actress. The one who appeared in that bare-breasted scene...with the fat man nibbling on her nipples.

BOB: Was that ever awful!

LISA: I thought it was a pretty good film.

BOB: No one from McGill went to see the film. They all went to drool over Claire's breasts. The whole student body...and a helluva lot of the Faculty too.

LISA: Y'think Claire should give up acting?

BOB: Well, acting in films where she has to let it all hang out.

LISA: Maybe her husband should give up teaching physics instead?

BOB: Are you crazy?

LISA: Don't you realize what I'm trying to tell you?

BOB: Sure. You're trying to tell me that you're not a suitable wife for me...that you don't fit the faculty mold. Well, I don't give a damn about those things. Besides, you'd be painting under your own name.

SOUND: LISA MOVING AROUND.

LISA: Look, Bob, you've been sweet. It's been fun. But it's over.

SOUND: BOB GRABBING LISA AND KISSING HER PASSIONATELY.

BOB: You still gonna tell me it's over?

LISA: You're a very attractive man...great in bed. But that's not enough. Not for me. There's only one compartment of my life that I can share with you. I want someone with whom I can share it all...the whole thing.

BOB: Everything was all right before this weekend. Something happened at that damn Picasso show that turned you against me. Hey! Was it the old lady? Sure! That's what it was. The old lady!

LISA: Wasn't she a treasure?

BOB: Forget about her, Lisa. She has nothing to do with us. You know why all this is happening, don't you? It's all because we're not married. If we were married, we'd've worked things out. But this way, what can you expect? We're not single...not married. We're nothing. I never even know how to introduce you. If I call (cont.)

BOB: (cont.) you "my friend", I sound silly. "My girl friend" sounds even sillier. After all, we're not kids. And "my fiancée" makes me sound like a hypocrite. Everyone knows we're living together. And if they don't, you're sure to tell them.

LISA: Why shouldn't I? As you said, we're not kids. Anyway, you won't have to worry about that problem any longer.

BOB: Breaking up's no solution. Look, if it's what you want, I'll introduce you to everyone as my mistress.

LISA: And what'll I introduce you as--my master?

BOB: There's just no pleasing you, Lisa, when you get into one of your moods. Let's give it a rest, eh? I'll fix us a couple of drinks.

LISA: No, thanks. It's late and I want to get going.

BOB: (Pleading) If only I could understand why all this is happening! (pauses) Was it because I was rude to that cracked old lady?

LISA: Cracked? Listen, she had more genuine insight into art than you're likely to have in a couple of lifetimes.

BOB: Oh, sure! Right! Well, at least I know the price of things.

LISA: Sure you do. Like Oscar Wilde said, you know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

BOB: You still trying to tell me the old lady knew more about art than I do? For God's sake, she thought all the Picassos were for sale!

LISA: That's not so terrible.

BOB: She said that each of the paintings might be worth hundreds of dollars. Picassos! Imagine!

LISA: The Museum was filled to bursting with people who knew no more than she did. The only difference was, the others were careful to protect their ignorance. I guarantee you that at least eighty per cent of the people there were seeing their very first Picassos. They only (cont.)

LISA: (cont.) came because of all the hype...because it was the in-thing to do. They came because they wanted to be able to make small talk at parties.

BOB: A dig at me, eh?

LISA: If you want to take it that way.

BOB: While we're on the subject, Lisa, I think it was darned inconsiderate of you to spend so much time with the old lady when there was so much to see...and so little time to see it in.

LISA: No one was holding onto you. You could've gone ahead. I found her interesting. You should've heard her explaining abstraction. How the painter starts from reality and moves further and further away from it...until at the end he's left with only its very essence. She said...listen to this...she said that if you look hard enough you can still find the original idea hidden in the painting. She called it a game of hide-and-seek. I've had students wrestle with the concept of abstraction for years and never come that close.

BOB: Hell, Lisa, these things don't mean a damn in the real world. Does it really matter if I understand all that crap, as long as I understand you?

LISA: But that's just it. If you can't understand art, you'll never understand me...my motivations...my values.

BOB: As far as that goes, what the hell do you know about gynecology? Or obstetrics?

LISA: That's different. Your field isn't accessible to the layman. Mine is.

BOB: Okay...fine, Lisa. But you do realize, don't you, that while we're wasting time on all these esoteric questions, life is passing us by. I'm not getting any younger and neither are you.

LISA: That's the best reason for us to make a change... now!

BOB: Look, Lisa, I have to admit that things haven't been going that well these last few months. (cont.)

BOB: (cont.) I sensed it. That's why I thought a weekend in New York was a good idea.

LISA: We could've gone to the country...walked...talked...exchanged ideas.

BOB: But I thought the Picasso show...

LISA: You meant well. You always mean well.

BOB: But?

LISA: But it's not enough. We're just too different. I'm that fat old housewife, scalping tickets at the Miracle Mart. And you're the well-dressed culture-vulture who crosses my path...and takes care not to brush up against me too closely...in case I have fleas.

BOB: What the hell are you talking about?

LISA: Oh, Bob, it's no use. We see everything so very differently. Look at how differently we see New York. Tell me, what's New York to you, Bob?

BOB: New York? Well, New York means theatres, museums, parades. It's the city where it all comes true. The Big Apple.

LISA: To me, it's just another hick town.

BOB: You're nuts!

LISA: Look, Bob, if New York were what you say it is, it would've taken Picasso in its sophisticated stride. But it didn't. It couldn't. With Picasso in MOMA's womb, the city was like a village in which a miracle was purported to have taken place. Earnest pilgrims spilling over from the sidewalks onto the streets. Jugglers...street musicians...and hawkers peddling more souvenir shirts of Picasso's face and signature in more colours than I would've believed possible. I tell you, New York City was a hick town...a hick town during a county fair. All it lacked was a tombola.

BOB: Right! I see what you mean.

LISA: Oh, Bob...Don't cave in like that! You don't have to abandon your views to echo mine. There are lots of people out there...people who (cont.)

LISA: (cont.) are just like you...or just like me. What we have to do is go out and look for them ...not turn ourselves inside out, trying to be them...or each other.

BOB: I love you, Lisa. All that matters to me is that we stay together. You're what I want. You're unique...not like other wives...not like all the women my mother used to keep picking out for me.

LISA: Be reasonable, Bob. We're too different...far too different. Even when we're looking at the same thing, each of us is seeing something completely different. Take the Picasso show. There's the best example.

BOB: I don't want to play games, Lisa.

LISA: Well, what do you want?

BOB: I want to make love to you.

LISA: I can't say much for your sense of timing. Look, I'd better go. I'll be at my mother's for the next couple of days. You can reach me there, if you have to. By Wednesday, I'll have arranged to move all my stuff out. That okay with you?

BOB: No. It's not okay. We have to thrash things out. Let's talk...and if you can convince me that our differences are irreconcilable, I swear I'll let you go without another word.

SOUND: LISA SIGHING.

LISA: Okay, Bob. Sit down and we'll talk.

SOUND: LISA AND BOB SITTING DOWN.

LISA: Let's go back to the Picasso show. We came into the Museum and what was the first thing we saw?

BOB: Picasso's very early work. The stuff he did when he was a teen-ager.

SOUND: LISA'S LAUGHTER.

LISA: Oh, Bob...only you would think of describing the young Picasso as a teen-ager.

BOB: (Coldly) All right. We saw the academic pieces he did when he was fifteen.

LISA: And then?

BOB: Then we saw his greatest stuff...his masterpieces.

LISA: We saw his most sentimental works...heavily indebted to Toulouse-Lautrec.

BOB: What're you talking about? We saw all those magnificent studies from his Blue Period and his Rose Period. The circus people. The blind beggar. His best stuff.

LISA: Well, that's what you saw. What I saw was a group of sentimental and derivative studies. Nice...but unimportant.

BOB: If they didn't interest you, why didn't you just go on ahead?

LISA: You wouldn't let me. You considered it sacrilegious for me to skip them. You wanted us to worship at the same shrine.

BOB: I thought we'd never be able to find each other again, if we separated.

LISA: You're rationalizing.

BOB: The trouble with you is that you've become jaded. You've stopped reacting.

LISA: I don't find it a great thrill to push and shove for a momentary view of paintings that I've seen time and time again...and that have been reproduced ad nauseum.

BOB: I never realized how much of a snob you are. Until this weekend, you'd managed to keep that side of you well-hidden.

LISA: It was never hidden. You just never noticed.

BOB: Well...maybe...

LISA: Hold on! Now that I stop to think about it, the publicity on the Picasso Show was a giant scam.

BOB: Now what?

LISA: Don't you see? The come-on was that we were going to see Picasso's Picassos. Stuff that had never been shown publicly...and that had never been reproduced. But there was only one roomful. Paintings of his children...when they were tiny. Great paintings...fresh...inventive. No wonder he held onto them.

BOB: There must've been more. They'd never have advertised it the way they did if there was only a handful.

LISA: Oh, I might've missed two or three...in the crush. But there were so many old friends hanging on the walls, it was like attending a college reunion. Stuff from Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, Paris...And that portrait of Gertrude Stein...the one with the story attached to it...about how, when it was completed she'd protested that she didn't look like that...and Picasso was said to have replied, "Don't worry, you will", and eventually she did.

BOB: Probably muttering, "A portrait is a portrait is a portrait".

LISA: (Dryly) Probably. And then there were all those from the Modern's permanent collection... The Three Musicians, the Girl Before a Mirror, Guernica. (pauses) And while we're on the subject of Guernica, why the hell did you have to line up to see it?

BOB: But it was leaving for Spain...right after the close of the exhibition.

LISA: Who cares?

BOB: Who cares? Lots of people. Lots of people wanted to see it for the last time before it left. I wasn't the only one.

LISA: It wasn't a person, Bob. You didn't have to kiss it good-bye.

BOB: What've you got against Guernica? Aside from the fact that you've seen it a million times, no doubt.

LISA: You want me to go into all that...now?

BOB: Damn right! You've made me feel like a fool. So tell me, why was I such a dummy? Me and a million other people?

LISA: Guernica's nothing more than a pastiche. All those drawings of crying women and distorted horses's heads were images he'd used and re-used dozens of times...long before Guernica. Come to think of it, the damn thing's more of a cartoon than a painting.

BOB: I wouldn't go round repeating that. People won't like it.

LISA: Y'think I should regard Guernica as a religious ikon? That what you think?

BOB: It won't do you any harm to show respect for an institution...for once in your life.

LISA: Look, Bob, Picasso was a great painter...one of the greatest. But he had no social conscience. He was no Goya. Even when he flirted with communism...like other millionaires before him... even then, the depth of his commitment lay in tossing off a lithograph of a pigeon for the cause.

BOB: What's the use in talking to you? You put everything down.

LISA: For heaven's sake, Bob...Picasso lived through two World Wars and the Holocaust. You'd never know it from his work. No Horrors of War for Pablo. Only pink ladies. For him, the ultimate in wartime tragedy would've been a replay of Lysistrata's tactics. A neat lady, Lysistrata. Picasso, however, would scarcely have thought so. That man was the complete sensualist. Did you notice that tiny gouache he did...of a dead woman-toreador lying across a white horse... done in pale pinks and delicate mauves? As if it dealt not with violent death but with interior décor.

SOUND: SILENCE.

LISA: Doesn't his choice of palette surprise you?

BOB: Me? Who am I to pass judgment on Picasso?

LISA: Jesus, Bob...even a genius can have bad (cont.)

LISA: (cont.) breath, flat feet, myopia...and an occasional lapse in taste.

BOB: Lisa...

LISA: What?

BOB: I've been thinking...

LISA: That's nothing to be ashamed of.

BOB: Why do you always have to be such a smart-ass?

LISA: That's what attracted you to me in the first place...remember? At that awful party where we met.

SOUND: BOB'S LAUGHTER.

BOB: That was some dull party! Until you livened it up with your outrageous remarks...

LISA: I was desperate! Turned out all right in the end. Even the poets stopped taking themselves seriously.

SOUND: LISA'S LAUGHTER.

BOB: You were wearing your blue dress...the chiffon. I remember thinking that you'd matched your dress to your eyes...or maybe it was the other way round.

SOUND: LISA AND BOB LAUGHING.

BOB: You should wear that dress more often, Lisa. I love you in that dress.

LISA: Yes, well...it's hardly the kind of dress that fits in with my life style.

BOB: You were at your best that night. Funny. God, you were funny! I'd never met anyone like you.

LISA: Seems so long ago now.

BOB: We could get it back. I know we could. Oh, Lisa...Lisa...let's try again. I don't care what went wrong. I don't care what you might've done...

LISA: Me? I haven't done anything. What are you getting at?

BOB: What I meant was...if you've had a fling with someone else, I'm willing to overlook it. I don't even want to hear about it. I don't care who it was. As long as you consider it over and done with.

LISA: There isn't anyone else.

BOB: All right, Lisa. I believe you. (pauses) But if it's not that...if it's only because you consider me a...a visual illiterate... couldn't you teach me? I'm not stupid.

LISA: We have nothing in common, Bob. Nothing.

BOB: (Growing angry) Okay, then! If you want to break up with me just because I like Picasso's early work...or because I wanted to have one last look at Guernica, I guess there's nothing more to be said. Except that you're a pretty callous woman...a helluva selfish bitch! And I'm well-rid of you!

SOUND: SILENCE.

BOB: Goddammit, Lisa, I didn't mean a word I said. Not a word! I want you back, Lisa. I'd do anything to get you back. Anything!

SOUND: A DISTRESSED SOUND FROM BOB.

SOUND: LISA MOVING TOWARD BOB.

LISA: (Tenderly) Don't, Bob. Please don't. I'm not worth it. (pauses) And maybe I haven't been completely honest with you.

BOB: So there is someone else! I knew it!

LISA: No.

SOUND: BOB HITTING HIS FOREHEAD WITH THE PALM OF HIS HAND.

BOB: Boy! Am I ever stupid! It's that girl!

LISA: What girl?

BOB: You know. The girl. At the Modern. The one wearing old jeans and a purpley-brown sweater.

LISA: And long blonde hair.

BOB: I knew it. I knew it! It was the girl. You're jealous! I made you jealous. Oh God, I knew there was something. There had to be. Lisa, you've got to believe me. She didn't mean a thing to me. Not a damn thing.

LISA: I know that. Oh, I have to admit I did experience a feeling of outrage...of betrayal. But I certainly wasn't jealous.

BOB: Sweetheart...sweetheart...don't sublimate it! You were jealous. It's a healthy emotion... jealousy. Nothing to be ashamed of. Proves you love me. You love me! You love me!

LISA: Stop it, Bob. Get hold of yourself! Y' think I'm jealous of that little...that little art history major?

BOB: I'm not blaming you. Darling, who could blame you? She's young...beautiful. It's only natural.

LISA: Not to me it isn't.

BOB: And she was so knowledgeable...in your field.

LISA: Like hell! She knew absolutely nothing. That's why I felt betrayed.

BOB: You're wrong, Lisa. That girl...Nancy...

LISA: Oh, it just had to be Nancy. Or Elspeth...or Mindy...or maybe Angie...

BOB: Whatever her name was, she really knew her stuff. No doubt about it. She spent more than half an hour on one painting. Shows you how deeply she went into it.

LISA: Or how many ways she could find to repeat the same tired observations...or how dull her students were...

BOB: You mean me?

LISA: Yes, you! Standing there for over half an hour with your mouth open! Like the class dunce.

BOB: There were plenty of other people listening to her.

- LISA: What does that prove? Beyond the fact that everyone loves a free show? A performance?
- BOB: She wasn't performing. She was explaining.
- LISA: Listen, Bob, I've taught enough classes to know that everyone who teaches is a performer. It's in the nature of the beast. Your little friend was no different. She was playing to the gallery. Didn't you notice how her voice kept growing in volume? How her gestures became more and more theatrical? Sure...people were hanging around...but not as long as you did...not nearly as long. They stood around for a few minutes and then moved on. But you! You became her shill. I hope you didn't try to tip her before you left? Art history majors from the Sister Colleges do everything for free. Noblesse oblige.
- BOB: You sound pretty bitter...over what you claim was an impersonal reaction.
- LISA: It was a disgusting performance on your part... and on hers too. That painting she was so painstakingly dissecting was Picasso's one attempt at minimalism. It took him only one attempt to realize how minimalist is minimalism. It took your young friend longer to explain the painting than it took him to paint it. I tell you, if Picasso had been there he would've laughed himself sick.
- BOB: Maybe you don't understand minimalism, Lisa. That ever occur to you?
- LISA: Listen, Bob, that painting was roughly thirty inches by forty inches...done in white, ochre and dark gray. That's all there is to be said about it. As for you, Bob, you're either lacking in discernment about art...or about people. In the end, it amounts to the same thing.
- BOB: You're just jealous.
- LISA: I won't bother to answer that. But tell me just one thing...whatever happened to your fear that you wouldn't get to see every damn Picasso in the place before closing time? That was your one big worry when I was talking with the old lady.
- BOB: I learned a lot listening to Nancy. I (cont.)

BOB: (cont.) considered it time well spent. No matter what you say, she really knew her stuff. She had all the terminology right at her finger tips.

LISA: The terminology!

SOUND: A SHORT SCORNFUL LAUGH BY LISA.

LISA: Sure. She knew that all right. Said all the right things. Trouble is, they came out all wrong. All the clichés of too many art history courses...wedded to too little insight. Your Nancy was the worst kind of fool...an over-educated one.

BOB: She was very young.

LISA: Oh, I can forgive her youth. I can even forgive her lack of insight...although that comes harder. But what I can't forgive is her misplaced self-confidence...a self-confidence that comes not from knowledge...not from experience...but simply from having been born rich. And for thinking that her money and education had unlocked for her the door to art and that she was now in a position to hold it open for the less fortunate. (pauses) You know what my little old lady had to say about her?

BOB: (Sarcastically) I'm hanging on her every word.

LISA: She said, "That young woman's been explaining that one painting for ever so long a time. I wonder whether she knows what she's talking about? Seems to me the longer I listen, the more I doubt it."

BOB: Everyone else seemed to find Nancy's remarks very illuminating.

LISA: Did you conduct a poll? You were there long enough.

BOB: You still trying to tell me that you're not jealous?

LISA: Goddammit! Is that the only emotion you can understand? If only I'd confess that I was having an affair with your best friend or with your brother! Or if I'd admit that I was jealous of Nancy, everything would be okay. I don't know, Bob. I just don't know. (cont.)

LISA: (cont.) Maybe it's your profession. You seem to feel that people are only capable of thinking with their genitals. Well, I'm not about to let you off the hook with the only answer you can understand. The truth is...I'm leaving you because after the Picasso show I find it impossible to respect you. Because that show was the watershed in our relationship...and there's no turning back.

BOB: You bitch!

LISA: I told you as much.

BOB: And you're right!

LISA: So...if it's okay with you, I'll be going.

BOB: So that's it! So that's what it's all about! You've gone out of your way to be unpleasant ...insulting...just so I'd let you go.

LISA: Maybe. Who knows? I suppose that's the question we'll each be asking ourselves...occasionally ...in the middle of the night...when we can't sleep. Before...and maybe even after...we've each found someone else. But that's life...

SOUND: BOB GETTING UP.

BOB: I don't know, Lisa...I just don't know. I always thought...Well, never mind. (pauses) C'mon, I'll drive you to your mother's.

SOUND: LISA GETTING UP.

SOUND: THEIR FOOTSTEPS.

LISA: (A little away) Some day, Bob, our Picasso weekend will be a funny story...something we'll both laugh at...like that party at which we met.

BOB: (Away from mike) Yeah, sure...

The End.