

FIRST DATE —  
HOW BAD CAN IT BE AND YOU STILL END UP TOGETHER?

a play in two acts  
by  
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## CHARACTERS

THOMAS	An optometrist in his early 30s. Somewhat socially awkward, though a pleasant and well meaning man.
MELINDA	An accountant, 29. She's been wandering in her life for a while, and is trying to take more control of it.
POMPOM	The handyman in Thomas's building. He's in his mid-30s and immigrated to the U.S. about five years ago. He speaks English well, though with the accent of his country of origin (wherever that may be.) He'd tries to fit into American society, though finds himself quite lonely. He's a bit eccentric.
HARRY	One of Melinda's permanent house-guests. Not the most well meaning man. About five years ago he and Melinda went out. He's about 40.
JERALD	Harry's buddy and Melinda's other permanent house-guest. Really enjoys Melinda's hospitality and doesn't want to lose it. Also callous like Harry. Same age as Harry.
MRS. FINKUS	Thomas's late 50s/early 60s downstairs neighbor. She's a spunky woman who's regressed into a crankier and more insolated life as she's gotten older.

Around the present.

TIME

New York City

SETTING

## Act I

## Scene 1

( Melinda is standing in a supermarket, shopping. Thomas is shopping in the egg-section. Thomas begins inspecting the eggs, taking one in his hand. He accidentally sends it flying into the air. It comes down right in front of Melinda, who catches it, but also crushes it. )

THOMAS

Oops.

MELINDA

(holding the remains of the egg)

I think you dropped something.

(Thomas comes over to Melinda.)

THOMAS

Excuse me, it just slipped out.

MELINDA

That's okay,

(handing Thomas the broken egg)

here you go.

THOMAS

Thank you.

(Melinda turns away.)

THOMAS

It was cracked already.

(Melinda turns around.)

THOMAS

You know how you're taught to always check the carton of eggs first to see if any are broken? Well I did, and one of the eggs was cracked. So I decided to take it out and replace

it with a good one from another carton. Because I thought, why should no one buy this carton of eggs just because it has one bad one. As I was doing that, it slipped out of my hand and over to you.

MELINDA

Hmm, I was just thinking, what do they do with the cartons no one buys?

THOMAS

They must throw them out, you think?

MELINDA

That's so sad.

THOMAS

Well sure, if eggs had feelings.

MELINDA

They do. Don't they?

THOMAS

I guess. I'm not sure. But it's sad anyway. It's melancholy.

MELINDA

That's right, that's what I was getting at.

THOMAS

How the eggs are abandoned, when if someone would just pay attention to them, value them, they'd provide a lot of benefit for that person.

MELINDA

Yeah, it's sad. We live in a cruel society. Full of cruel people, who throw away good food, because it looks a little off.

THOMAS

(getting excited)

Or smells a little off, or annoys them for some little reason, but how is the food or the person supposed to realize that? And then puff, before you know it, they discard you, you're garbage. It just isn't fair.

MELINDA

Yeah.

(pause)

Lot of groceries, live alone or...?

THOMAS

Alone. You?

MELINDA

Right now alone. But I have a lot of guests usually. They call me Maitre De' Melinda. 'You should stay with Maitre De' Melinda because she cooks great meals, and has a nice comfortable futon and fast internet access, and unlimited long distance.' So yeah, I live alone. I just wish everyone else would realize that.

THOMAS

Huh. I always thought it'd be nice to have roommates.

MELINDA

It's not bad, I just wish living with other people would be better, less uneven.

THOMAS

Makes sense.

MELINDA

Yeah, I guess. Do you want to put that egg down?

(Thomas realizes the broken egg is still in his hand. However, he still does not put it down.)

MELINDA

I don't know why I gave that to you. It must be something to do with a repressed childhood memory.

(in a different voice)

You mustn't break eggs in the store, now carry it home with you and then eat it.

(Melinda laughs.)

THOMAS

That happened?

MELINDA

Could have, I don't know. But yeah, could have.

THOMAS

Do you need to get anything else?

MELINDA

Oh I don't know, I have a list here somewhere.

(Melinda looks through her purse for the list.)

Here we go - carrots, check, rice, check, private, check, juice, no check, silver-foil, check, peas, check, carrots, check, licorice, check, ice-tea, check. Just the juice I guess.

THOMAS

Umm, I think you got carrots twice.

MELINDA

Umm, no. One's baby carrots and one's regular. One's for snacks and lunching and one's for salads and cooking.

THOMAS

Oh, I see, makes sense. I just got confused, mentioning it twice.

MELINDA

That's okay. Want to come along with me to get juice?

THOMAS

Sure. Say, uh Melinda, right, my name's Thomas and...

MELINDA

(putting her hand out to shake and shaking)

A pleasure.

THOMAS

Sure, and would you like to have dinner tonight? You could come over and I'd cook. Or we both can. Not just you cooking, I know you wouldn't want that, but we could together, as a tag-team.

MELINDA

Tag-team? Like wrestling?

THOMAS

You like wrestling?

MELINDA

When I was a kid. Strange childhood.

THOMAS

No, I did too. I don't anymore, but I have the video games. We could play over dessert.

MELINDA

All right, let me go get that juice and you can give me a call when you've got dinner ready.

THOMAS

So I'll cook?

MELINDA

Yeah, why not? I could use the time to catch up on my e-mail, I'm scandalously behind.

THOMAS

Okay. Do you live close by?

MELINDA

Yeah, why do ask?

THOMAS

Well, just thinking how much time in advance I should call you.

MELINDA

Oh good point. I do. I guess you do too.

THOMAS

Ah yeah, this is my neighborhood grocery store.

MELINDA

Funny how we haven't met sooner.

THOMAS

Well, I've just ended a long love-affair with take-out.

MELINDA

Oh, should I be worried about letting you cook?

THOMAS

Oh no, I have all these videos on it.

MELINDA

Oh, good.

THOMAS

Well, let me get your number.

MELINDA

(a moment of hesitation)

Hmm.

THOMAS

What?



MELINDA

Oh, sorry, the produce mist must be getting to my head. Um, it's 226-1199.

THOMAS

Okay, give me about two hours.

MELINDA

Sure, I'll bring juice.

THOMAS

Good, that's fine.

MELINDA

See you later.

(Melinda turns and exits to get the juice.)

THOMAS

(waving with the egg in his hand)

Bye.

(realizing his hand is covered in egg)

Ehh, gross. I hope she didn't notice. Unless she finds eggs attractive.

(Thomas goes to get more eggs. End of scene.)

## Scene 2

(Melinda's apartment. Melinda is serving a meal to her two permanent guests, Harry and Jerald. There is beer on the table.)

MELINDA

Look you guys, the meal's over, you have to go. I have to go. We *all* have to go.

HARRY

(as if reciting an ode)

Oh Maitre De' Melinda, I love your dishes. Baby, nothing can out do your knishes.

MELINDA

I didn't make any knishes.

(picking up the beer)

What did I tell you about bringing beer here. No. You are not to get drunk here.

(Harry gets up and goes to the kitchen.)

JERALD

Melinda, do you have any more quiche? It was really good.

MELINDA

Oh thank-you, but no.

JERALD

You don't? Because I'm still really hungry.

MELINDA

That's not my fault. It's not like you're paying me anything for this.

JERALD

Okay, okay, okay, fine, but I need more food.

MELINDA

You'll have to go elsewhere.

JERALD

But your food's the best.

MELINDA

Thanks, but still...

HARRY

(calling from the kitchen and then coming in)

I couldn't find anything to mix the beer with except this juice.

JERALD

Bring it over.

MELINDA

No, no, not that juice.

(Harry brings the juice over to Jerald)

JERALD

It's very berry.

HARRY

Is that good with beer?

JERALD

Let's see, pour it. Melinda dear, you still haven't fulfilled my request.

MELINDA

(pulling the two out of their seats.)

Get out, get out, do not come back.

(Harry and Jerald reach for the food)

Leave the food.

(they take the bottle of juice)

Take the damn berry, berry, juicy juice with you, but go.

(Jerald reaches for the food again)

You are not to get more food, you are to leave.

JERALD

But we have more beer in your fridge.

MELINDA

Get out.

JERALD

But we bought it with our own money. You'd be like stealing it from us.

MELINDA

All right, hold on.

(Melinda goes to the kitchen and soon comes back.)

MELINDA

I couldn't find it.

HARRY

Oh yeah, I put it in the freezer to get cold.

(Melinda goes back to the kitchen to get it and comes back with the beer. A piece of chicken has frozen onto the beer.)

MELINDA

It stuck to my chicken.

JERALD

Can't you cook that? Stir-fry, that doesn't take long.

MELINDA

No, no, no. Absolutely no. This is crazy. You're making me crazy. This isn't a bed and breakfast. This is a nice young woman's *home*. A single girl. I should be taking control of my life, eating crackers and cheese for dinner, and blended tofu-shakes. Not red meat. I will not cook anymore red meat. Now get out.

(throwing the beer/chicken to Harry and Jerald and backing them towards the door)

Take your beer, defrost the chicken, sauté it in the berry juice and have yourself a nice meal.

(Melinda pushes Harry and Jerald out the door and slams it. There's a slight knock at the door. Melinda opens it, Harry and Jerald are standing there, right where they just were.)

HARRY AND JERALD

(together)

Maitre De' Melinda, pu-lease.

MELINDA

And I'm changing the locks, so tell any of your friends you've made keys for, the ride's over. It's Ally McBeal re-runs and a lot of celery in this house from now on.

(Melinda closes the door and slumps onto the couch. She's overwhelmed. Soon, the phone rings. She perks up, remembering Thomas is supposed to call. She picks up the phone.)

MELINDA  
Hello?

THOMAS  
Melinda, it's Thomas.

MELINDA  
Oh hi. How are you?

THOMAS  
Good, good. The food's ready, you can come over.

MELINDA  
All right, where do you live?

THOMAS  
On 12<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, by the Keyfood, 22 West 12<sup>th</sup>, Apartment 21C.

MELINDA  
Okay. I'll be there soon.

THOMAS  
Okay. Is everything all right?

MELINDA  
Oh, I'm okay. Just a little flustered by some of my guests.

THOMAS  
You have guests now?

MELINDA  
I did, for like five years. Bu they're gone now. I kicked them out.

THOMAS  
You did?

MELINDA  
Uh-huh, they've abused me enough. They pushed me too far, so I gave 'em the boot.

THOMAS  
Well good for you.

MELINDA  
Thanks. Well, see you soon.

THOMAS

Yeah, okay. Take it easy. Oh, you got the address, right?

MELINDA

Yep, 23 West 12<sup>th</sup> by 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Apartment 32 something, by the Keyfood, Thomas's place.

THOMAS

No. It's 22 West 12<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Apartment 21C. By the Keyfood. Thomas Underhill.

MELINDA

I got the Keyfood right.

THOMAS

And the 12. And the 11. You were over 50%.

MELINDA

Yeah, I might have found you by the end of tax season.

THOMAS

So you got it?

MELINDA

I hope so. I do. Don't worry.

THOMAS

Okay.

MELINDA

Bye.

(Melinda hangs up the phone and gets up.)

MELINDA

What to wear?

(She thinks. End of scene.)

## Scene 3

( Thomas is fixing up his apartment, cleaning it, setting the table, and finishing up the food preparations. The doorbell rings.)

THOMAS

(calling)

One minute Melinda.

(Thomas finishes setting the table and goes to the door. He opens it and sees Pompom, who's wearing a tool-belt. Thomas shuts the door immediately and continues arranging and cleaning his apartment.)

THOMAS

Pompom, not now.

POMPOM

But Mr. Overalls, I must fix your bathtub - the leak's getting bigger in Mrs. Finkus's apartment. Plus I have nothing else to do and I'm bored.

THOMAS

Pompom, it's Mr. Underhill.

POMPOM

Oh, of course, over under, I'm sure it's a common mistake. People must call you overalls all the time, all over, over all, haha. Now let Pompom in and work his magic on your bathroom.

THOMAS

Look Pompom, not now.

POMPOM

But Mrs. Finkus has a moisture-sensitive porcelain collection and she threatened to dock me my Christmas bonus. And I'm trying to save up for an X-box.

THOMAS

I'm just about to have dinner with someone. I don't want to have any interruptions.

POMPOM

I'll be very quiet. You won't even hear me as I mercilessly rip apart your tub.

THOMAS

It leaks, it just leaks. You don't have to destroy it. Please don't ruin it.

POMPOM

Are you still mad about the floor refinishing incident?

THOMAS

You put a hole in my floor Pompom. Mrs. Finkus spent an entire week sitting in her apartment just watching me.

POMPOM

I know, she's a bit nosy. She gave me 200 bucks to link her TV into the building security cameras. All right, chit-chat's over, I've got a key, I'm coming in.

(Pompom opens the door and comes in. He goes over to the coffee table and picks up a magazine.)

POMPOM

I didn't know you get Reader's Digest. I'm always sending in funny things that happen to me for them to publish. I figure, if I can get two in there per issue, at 400 bucks a pop, I could go part-time. But so far, no luck – the plight of undiscovered writer.

THOMAS

Would they even publish more than one from the same person?

POMPOM

That's why I send them in under various aliases, like Barney McCratic, a 56 year-old floor refinisher from Boise, Idaho with a penchant for overdoing the job.

THOMAS

But don't you mail them in from here? You don't think they'll see the postmark?

POMPOM

When was the last time you read Reader's Digest? It's not exactly New Yorker material. Those dopes are lucky if they can number the pages right.

THOMAS

Actually, I think it's really informative and interesting. It's like a slice of America in an easy to carry form.

POMPOM

A slice of puke-pie perhaps, gag-me.

(The doorbell rings.)



THOMAS

(a little frenzied)

Damn, that's my guest.

POMPOM

(realizing)

Oh, I get it - hot date time. Excellent. Party on. I'll go to the bathroom and leave you kids alone.

(Pompom goes into the bathroom.)

THOMAS

Just a minute Melinda.

(Thomas goes to the bathroom door and tries to open it.)

POMPOM

I think you'll find it's locked.

THOMAS

You better not make any noise. I'm serious.

POMPOM

I'll be as quiet as my apartment on a Saturday night with my lonely self inside, softly sobbing.

THOMAS

Right. Well just be good.

POMPOM

I'll try.

(The doorbell rings again. Thomas goes to answer it.)

THOMAS

(to Pompom in the bathroom)

Remember what I said.

POMPOM

I'll give it a shot, lay off Casanova.

(Thomas opens the door, revealing Melinda.)

THOMAS

Hi Melinda, come in. You look great. Can I take your coat?

(Thomas moves to take off Melinda's coat.)

MELINDA

It's part of the outfit.

THOMAS

Oh, I'm sorry.

MELINDA

It doesn't look good, does it? I knew it was a mistake, but I felt compelled to wear it. I have no self-control.

THOMAS

No, you look really fine. Forget about that, make yourself comfortable. I'm sorry it took me so long to get the door, my handyman insisted on fixing the bathtub now. I hope you don't mind.

MELINDA

Well, it's important to bathe.

THOMAS

That's true - I bathed recently actually.

MELINDA

Oh, but I thought your bathtub didn't work.

THOMAS

No, it does. Just Mrs. Finkus downstairs gets a little wet when I use it.

MELINDA

(laughing)

You're terrible.

THOMAS

Well, you've never met Mrs. Finkus. Have a seat, dinner should be ready, let me just check the oven.

(Thomas goes to the kitchen. Melinda goes over to the couch and sits down. She looks around and picks up a Reader's Digest. Thomas returns.)

THOMAS

Oh, you like Reader's Digest too?

MELINDA

Well, I don't get a chance to read it very often. But it's fun. I like those ridiculous little stories that people make up and send in.

POMPOM

(from off-stage)

Hey.

MELINDA

Excuse me? Did you hear something?

THOMAS

Must be the pipes acting up.

MELINDA

Oh, well those stories are cute. I like them - they're sort of clever.

POMPOM

(off-stage)

Now we're talking.

MELINDA

You heard that.

THOMAS

Just the pipes I think.

MELINDA

Just pipes say 'now we're talking'?

THOMAS

Bag-pipes might.

MELINDA

Is there someone in your bathroom?

THOMAS

Yes.

MELINDA

Oh.

THOMAS  
I thought you knew.

MELINDA  
You're gay?

THOMAS  
What are you talking about?

MELINDA  
Well the man you live with is in the bathroom, isn't he?

THOMAS  
You mean Pompom, my handyman?

MELINDA  
Are you telling me you live with your handyman? Or a pet name for the man you keep handy?

THOMAS  
No, neither.

MELINDA  
Oh God, I can't imagine. Wait 'till my mother hears about this one. She tells me not to live in the city. The men are less crazy in the country, more together. Well yeah Mom, if you like men who mow.

THOMAS  
(excitedly)  
I'm not gay. Pompom, my handyman's real name, is fixing my bathtub. I was trying to ignore him so he wouldn't mess up our date, but I guess I should have made things clearer to you. And I'm not crazy and I don't even know what to mow is - is that like cow tipping?

MELINDA  
No, like mowing a lawn. Oh, I'm so sorry, this is really embarrassing. Maybe I should go.

THOMAS  
No,  
(calming down)  
it's okay. A lot of people think I'm gay, and for much worse reasons. Like because they see me in the Pottery Barn.

MELINDA

Oh

(laughing and regaining comfortability)

I'm surprised you feel comfortable going in there, what with your propensity for accidentally hurling store merchandise and the fragility of their products.

THOMAS

I'm actually banned from Pottery Barns in the state of Connecticut.

MELINDA

You're kidding.

THOMAS

Yeah. Want to eat now?

MELINDA

Sure.

THOMAS

Follow me.

(Thomas leads Melinda to the table.)

THOMAS

Here we are.

MELINDA

Wow. Very nicely set.

(picking up the dishes)

Pottery Barn?

THOMAS

99¢ store actually.

MELINDA

Very interesting.

THOMAS

Well there's one right next to my job, I don't go out of my way to shop at them. I'm not cheap, these just caught my eye in the window.

MELINDA

No, that's okay, I'm an accountant. I understand.

THOMAS

Thanks, I thought I might have blown it.

MELINDA

No, I think the whole making me food and not ravaging all of mine buys you a little more of a chance than that.

THOMAS

Great.

MELINDA

Not that I've seen any of it yet.

THOMAS

Oh, I'm so sorry. You must be famished - accounting is really hard work, no?

MELINDA

I don't work on the weekends.

THOMAS

Right, let me get the food.

(Thomas goes into the kitchen to get the food.)

MELINDA

(to Thomas in the kitchen)

So what do you do, Thomas?

THOMAS

(all these lines from off-stage)

I'm an optometrist.

MELINDA

That's not the MD, right? That's the pharmacist for eyes, right?

THOMAS

Kinda, well no.

MELINDA

I'm sorry. I know there are ophthalmologists and optometrists.

THOMAS

Yeah, but let me come in, it's hard to explain from here.

MELINDA

You're not going to give me an eye-exam, are you?

THOMAS

Not unless you really want one.

MELINDA

I actually could use one I think.

(Thomas comes in.)

THOMAS

Really?

MELINDA

If we have time, but first tell me about your job.

THOMAS

Well, I'm an optometrist, which means I inspect people's eyes, diagnose eye-problems, and prescribe glasses prescriptions. I work in an eye-glass store, but optometrists also work in private practices, even hospitals. Yeah, you'd be surprised, there are a lot of optometrists in hospitals, especially Veteran's hospitals. At some point they cornered that market, keeping the ophthalmologists, who have the MD's, out.

MELINDA

That's very interesting.

THOMAS

But you're hungry?

MELINDA

Well yeah, but don't let me interrupt you.

THOMAS

That's okay. I'll remember where I left off.

(Thomas goes back into the kitchen to get food.)

MELINDA

Great.

(Melinda's cell phone rings. She takes it out of her purse.)

MELINDA

Hello? Mother? No, not now. Because I'm on a date. With an optometrist. Look, I know

that's boring, but I'm doing my best. I know you said I'd meet better guys if I was a model. Well I *wanted* to take over Dad's business. Than you should have married Fabio. Bye.

(She hangs up. Thomas enters with food.)

THOMAS

Were you speaking with Pompom?

POMPOM

(singing from off-stage)

Someone's calling my name.

MELINDA

Uh, no, I was on my cell-phone, I thought you wouldn't even hear me.

THOMAS

Oh no, I wasn't listening in. I just heard some mumbling and thought maybe Pompom was bothering you. Anything wrong?

MELINDA

I was just talking to my mom. She's always bothering me. She likes to know what's going on in my life, preferably with updates fifteen before and after the hour.

THOMAS

Like the news?

MELINDA

Yeah, except she doesn't do traffic.

THOMAS

Care to sit at the table?

MELINDA

Sure.

(The two go and sit.)

MELINDA

Smells great.

THOMAS

Thanks. Here, let me serve you.

(Thomas starts to serve when he remembers he forgot the drinks.)



THOMAS

Oh, would you like something to drink? All I have is water I think. Oh, unless you brought that juice?

MELINDA

Oh, oops. I gave it away.

THOMAS

You mean like to the Salvation Army?

MELINDA

No. You know how I mentioned I kicked out all my freeloading guests today and told them not to come back. For some reason I gave them parting gifts, like the juice. I guess to sort of ease the pain.

THOMAS

That's creative.

MELINDA

I guess - it was just time they left. It was either I go or they do, and since I was paying the rent and all I thought...

THOMAS

Sure. So would you like water then?

MELINDA

Yeah, I usually just drink water anyway.

THOMAS

One second.

(Thomas goes to get water, he comes back in a little bit.)

THOMAS

I don't think the water's working. Nothing came out of the faucet except a horrible "bleh" noise.

MELINDA

Yeah, that's not a good sounding noise. I don't think I'd drink the water even if it did come out.

THOMAS

It doesn't always make that noise. No, it's good water, very clear. I have a feeling

Pompom's responsible for this. Can you excuse me a second.

(Thomas goes over and knocks on the bathroom door.)

THOMAS

Hello Pompom.

POMPOM

Yes boss.

THOMAS

We don't have any water.

POMPOM

Really?

THOMAS

This surprises you?

POMPOM

Well, not exactly.

THOMAS

I didn't think so. Will we have any anytime soon?

POMPOM

Pretty unlikely.

THOMAS

What are we supposed to drink then?

POMPOM

Why didn't you ask that in the first place?

(Pompom opens the door and starts walking excitedly to the kitchen.)

POMPOM

(turning to Thomas)

Now you have lemon-juice, don't you?

THOMAS

I think. What are you going to do?

POMPOM

Pompom is going to make you a traditional beverage from my village that will knock your socks off.

(speaking to Melinda)

And in case you're not wearing socks madam, it'll knock your feet off.

(Pompom disappears into the kitchen.)

POMPOM

(off-stage)

Where's the sugar?

THOMAS

I think in the cabinet above the refrigerator.

POMPOM

You think or there is? Pompom can just forget the whole thing.

THOMAS

Then there's definitely not.

POMPOM

Oh, I see it. Now where's the cardamom ? Oh I see it.

MELINDA

What an interesting building you have. My handyman hides from me so he doesn't have to finish fixing my bathroom. He's been working on it for nine long months.

THOMAS

So he should give birth to a new bathroom any day now.

MELINDA

What?

THOMAS

(covering up for his failed joke)

Yeah, Pompom's unique. He has no life beyond his job, or so he tells me the three to four times a week he's in here fixing things, or breaking things so he can fix them. He's very dedicated.

(leaning in closer so Pompom won't hear)

Though between you and me, sometimes I think there's more of a need to be very medicated.

MELINDA

Wow. It's too bad there's no lonely, but cute and spunky handywoman in my building. We

could set them up.

THOMAS

That'd be very Brady Bunch.

MELINDA

Really, how so?

THOMAS

Well you know,

(sings to the tune of the Brady-Bunch theme song)

this is a story, of a lovely lady, who was living with a handywoman all alone, the handywoman had a wrench set, the smallest one a half inch, till one day when this lady met this fellow, who was living with a handyman of his own, and together they would form a family, called the Thomas and Melinda and Handy-people Bunch. The Thomas and Melinda and Handy bunch, that's the way they became the Thomas and Melinda and Handy-people bunch.

MELINDA

Yeah, that'd be cute. Very weird and sort of freaky, but cute.

(Pompom enters with a pitcher of drink and three glasses.)

POMPOM

Here we are - some Laki Loki for all. I hope no one's allergic to nuts.

THOMAS

Actually, I think I might be.

POMPOM

Well, while I pity you for missing out on the sweet delectable nutrition of the nut family, you are in luck. This drink is nut-free!

THOMAS

Too bad my apartment isn't.

POMPOM

What?

(pouring)

Now some for you, some for the

(singing to the tune of Roy Orbison's *Pretty Woman*)

pretty woman, sitting on the chair,

(stopping singing)

and some for Pompom. Okay, all at once - down the first glass.

(Thomas and Melinda look at each other - trying to decide if they should drink or not.)

POMPOM

Come on, you don't want the Anti-Defamation League on your back, do you?

MELINDA

How bad can it be?

THOMAS

You've never tried his cooking.

MELINDA

(raising her glass)

To us and to grocery stores and unusual meeting places that make charming stories.

THOMAS

To us and flying animal products and bold women not afraid to get their hands dirty.

POMPOM

To all of us and finding happiness.

(The three toast and drink.)

MELINDA

This is really good, what's in it again?

POMPOM

Hey, why don't I just e-mail you the recipe.

MELINDA

Sure, let me write down my address.

(Melinda writes down her address.)

POMPOM

Can you receive attachments?

MELINDA

Sure, definitely.

POMPOM

Great, I'll get it out to you pronto.

MELINDA  
Thanks so much Pompom.

POMPOM  
Please, call me Pom.

MELINDA  
Okay Pom.

THOMAS  
Pompom, can I speak to you a second?

(Thomas pulls Pompom to the side.)

POMPOM  
What is it? I was making chit-chat.

THOMAS  
Pompom, I know you are lonely and don't have nice pretty girls like Melinda to talk to, but up until today neither did I. So can you please leave?

POMPOM  
Can I be frank?

THOMAS  
Yeah, sure.

POMPOM  
Okay, well no, I can't leave.

(Pompom turns back to Melinda)

Now who wants to play my favorite childhood party game? It involves animal noises.

(The doorbell rings.)

THOMAS  
I'll get it.

POMPOM  
(excited)  
Oh, more players.

THOMAS  
(at the door)

Who is it?

HARRY

It's Harry.

THOMAS

Who?

JERALD

And Jerald.

THOMAS

I'm sorry, I don't know who you are. Please go away, this is not a good time.

(Melinda, who's been engaged in conversation with Pompom, suddenly realizes who's at the door.)

MELINDA

Oh my God Thomas, they're for me.

THOMAS

What?

HARRY AND JERALD

Let us in, we hear you Melinda.

MELINDA

They're my guests I kicked out.

THOMAS

What are they doing here?

MELINDA

They must have followed me. I didn't invite them - I'm not crazy.

THOMAS

What should I do?

MELINDA

I don't know, ask them to leave.

THOMAS

I did. They won't.

MELINDA

Try again.

THOMAS

Okay. Sirs, you must leave now, you mustn't stay.

HARRY AND JERALD

No. Let us in.

THOMAS

I think I better call the police.

POMPOM

Oh no,

(putting two fingers close together)

Pompom is this close to a green card. No one's taking me to the docks tonight.

JERALD

There's a draft in the hallway. Open up, I'm cold.

HARRY

We need to talk Melinda.

THOMAS

Well, it's up to you Melinda. They can come in if you want - or we can just turn up the TV really loud until they go away.

MELINDA

No, we'd better let them in. I did end things rather abruptly with them. Even if they were no good freeloading, rude, immature toads. Open the door.

(Thomas goes and opens the door. Harry and Jerald walk in.)

HARRY

So this is what you left us for - gay men.

THOMAS

We're not gay.

JERALD

We heard you talk about animal-noise games, and you got your Bed Bath and Beyond catalogue in the mail.

(holding the catalogue up)



MELINDA

What do you want guys? I'm on a date. This is Thomas, my date. This is Pompom, his handyman. These are my ex, I don't know what, Harry and Jerald.

HARRY

We need a reconciliation.

MELINDA

First of all, did you follow me here? That is not okay.

JERALD

You gave us no choice. Would you have rather us starved?

MELINDA

Ever hear of a restaurant? A supermarket? Your own mothers for God's sake?

HARRY

Look Melinda, we want to be nice about this. We love you, you're the best, we need you. Please, let's get back together.

MELINDA

Enough. You don't care about me for one second. Where were the cards, the flowers, the stuffed animals with cute sayings on tiny t-shirts? Harry, when in the last five years did you demonstrate any feelings for me, let alone any *love*? Now get out of this nice man's house and stay away from my life!

JERALD

I told you being nice wouldn't work. Idiot.

POMPOM

Gentleman, something to drink?

JERALD

That's more like it.

(Pompom serves the men drinks.)

POMPOM

It's a traditional beverage from my country that I invented.

JERALD

It's really good. Make sure to give Melinda the recipe before we go.

POMPOM

Oh, I'm already e-mailing it to her.

(Thomas and Melinda stand on the other side of the room, talking. At this time, Pompom, Jerald and Harry begin to eat the food on the table.)

THOMAS

Melinda, I'm really sorry our date is a disaster.

MELINDA

What do you mean *you're* sorry? I'm the one who's demonstrating themselves to be insane. You only brought Pompom along, and he's supposed to be here and he's very pleasant. I brought along two crazy people who are stalking me in your apartment, not to mention my  
(holding her purse up)  
mother who should be calling any second.

THOMAS

Well, none of this is your fault. You told them how you felt very forcefully, but appropriately, and now they have to follow your wishes.

MELINDA

I didn't tell my mother how I really felt. And don't you think that was too much with them? I don't really hate them, they kept me company and all. They just weren't very nice.

THOMAS

They're pigs Melinda. You deserve better.

(pause)

You deserve me if I can be frank.

MELINDA

Oh be Thomas. You're sweet.

(she gives him a hug, or a little kiss or some physical sign of affection)

THOMAS

Wow, thank-you.

POMPOM

Hey you love birds, get a room, we're trying to eat.

THOMAS

Hey, put that food down - it's not for you.

JERALD

You don't have any tartar sauce, do you?

(The doorbell rings.)

JERALD

I don't think the door is going to get itself.

THOMAS

(speaking to Melinda)

I'm afraid to get it. I'm not expecting anyone.

MELINDA

Well, I'm not either.

THOMAS

But that's what you said last time.

(The doorbell rings again.)

THOMAS

Could it be your mother?

HARRY

Can someone get that door?

POMPOM

All right, I'll get it.

JERALD

Thanks Pom.

(Pompom goes to get the door. He opens it. Standing in the doorway, visibly wet, wearing a bathing suit, is 60ish Mrs. Finkus.)

POMPOM

Mrs. Finkus.

THOMAS

Mrs. Finkus.

MELINDA

Mrs. Finkus?

HARRY

Who the hell is Mrs. Finkus?

MRS. FINKUS  
(stepping into the apartment)

I'm Mrs. Finkus.

POMPOM  
Mrs. Finkus, you're all wet, have you been swimming?

MRS. FINKUS  
In my apartment, you no good...

(Mrs. Finkus starts hitting Pompom.)

POMPOM  
Please Mrs. Finkus, I'm delicate.

(Mrs. Finkus continues to hit Pompom.)

THOMAS  
Mrs. Finkus, you have to stop.

(Mrs. Finkus stops and looks at Thomas.)

MRS. FINKUS  
I knew you two were responsible for this. Probably trying to make some porno of me in the bathroom. But the installation didn't work, did it? Now my bathroom's a little swimming pool and I'm in my bathing suit. Well get a good look at me boys, get your cameras out - take all the pictures you want now, you sick bastards.

MELINDA  
Mrs. Finkus, I think there's been a misunderstanding.

MRS. FINKUS  
You involved in this too? Don't think I'm posing with her.

THOMAS  
Mrs. Finkus, Pompom was just trying to fix my bathtub, we're not trying to take advantage of you in any way. I'm very sorry for the inconvenience.

MRS. FINKUS  
What's that smell? Is that chicken?

JERALD

It's delicious - orange, garlic and mustard.

MRS. FINKUS

Dijon?

JERALD

What else?

MRS. FINKUS

Hand me a plate.

(Mrs. Finkus takes a plate and sits down to eat. Pompom slowly approaches the table, being careful not to get too close to Mrs. Finkus.)

MRS. FINKUS

Oh sit down already you big pervert, you're making me nervous.

POMPOM

Oh thank-you, but Mrs. Finkus, can I get you a robe? There's one in the bathroom and I'm afraid you might catch a chill.

MRS. FINKUS

All right.

(Pompom goes to the bathroom to get Mrs. Finkus a robe.)

MRS. FINKUS

What is this drink, it's phenomenal.

JERALD

Pompom made it.

MRS. FINKUS

No kidding.

(Pompom returns with the robe, and gives it to Mrs. Finkus. She puts it on and Pompom sits down at the table and starts eating.)

THOMAS

(to Melinda)

What should we do - I could call the police.

MELINDA

Yeah, but that'd ruin our date. And can you arrest someone for not leaving your apartment?

(whimsically)

Because don't tell me I could have had those two out of my life years ago.

THOMAS

I don't know, they must be doing something illegal. I'm sure we could get them to leave someday.

MELINDA

How about we just try ignoring them?

THOMAS

But they're eating all our food, you aren't hungry?

MELINDA

I'm okay, but we could go out to eat. They'd probably be gone by the time we came back.

THOMAS

I'd rather not leave them all alone in my apartment, especially Mrs. Finkus - she's very nosy.

MELINDA

You have a lot to hide?

THOMAS

Not really, some fungus medication from a few years ago, but it's all cleared up now, and a few, eh, adult periodicals in my bedroom.

MELINDA

Really, can I see?

THOMAS

Why'd you want to see them?

MELINDA

I've never seen one before, I want to know what all the fuss is. And hey, my mom always wanted me to be a model, maybe I'll get some ideas.

THOMAS

Well, I would love to get away from them for a minute, I'm using every ounce of self-control I have not to flip out.

MELINDA

Come on then, it'll be fine.

(Melinda and Thomas exit to Thomas's bedroom.)

JERALD

(to Mrs. Finkus)

How do you know Melinda?

MRS. FINKUS

Who? The broad?

JERALD

Yeah, her name's Melinda - she's a great cook.

MRS. FINKUS

She make this?

POMPOM

No, Thomas made it. Tasty, no?

MRS. FINKUS

Is he gay?

JERALD

Uh-huh.

POMPOM

Oh no no. He's on a hot date right now with Miss Melinda. They're probably having sex right now.

HARRY

(very surprised)

No, you don't think?

POMPOM

I don't know - a man has needs.

MRS. FINKUS

So does a woman.

HARRY

I doubt it - she never had guys over when we were there. And she's a bit of a prude.

JERALD

Yeah, she wouldn't even be in a robe before us - no offense Mrs. Finkus, you look great in a robe - but it was always fully clothed for her.

MRS. FINKUS

Who the hell are you?

JERALD

We're friends of Melinda.

POMPOM

From work?

HARRY

No, nothing like that. I went out with her a bunch of years back. If you can believe it, we were pretty serious. But you know, it didn't work out. Our personalities and all. But she was just so nice and felt so bad about ending it. Insisted we stay friends, I come over, she cook me dinner, we talk. I knew it was a bad idea, and we shouldn't see each other, but she kept on inviting me, and then I got evicted from my apartment, and she invited me to crash at her house. I was all ready to move on, but she just kept on being so nice to me, so I started taking advantage of her - inviting my friends over, eating all her food, calling her Maitre de Melinda behind her back, then soon enough in front of her, and yeah, that's how I know her.

JERALD

I didn't know that Harry. I thought she was just some goody-two-shoes we were taking advantage of.

HARRY

No. We were almost engaged. But it was only because she was really young and I used to be a pretty good-looking guy.

MRS. FINKUS

You still are.

HARRY

Oh come on, but you're very nice, thank you.

POMPOM

I'm afraid I don't understand - why are you in Thomas's apartment then?

HARRY

She kicked us out today.

JERALD



Laid down the law - see ya' suckers. Adios. Sayonara. Averterzane.

MRS. FINKUS

But you seem like nice guys.

JERALD

We are.

HARRY

Not really. Look at us - we're shmucks. I don't know what we were thinking.

MRS. FINKUS

Come on, you were keeping her company. Letting her practice her domestic skills. I know since my husband got run over by a street-sweeper, I haven't had much company - even with all the accidental-death insurance money I got. Believe me, it's lonely, you've been doing her a favor.

POMPOM

But I still don't understand, did you *follow* her here?

HARRY

Yeah, that was probably a mistake. But you know, when you get used to something for so long, when it ends, it's a shock. Even if it was absurd.

JERALD

We were like, how can she do this to us? After all we've done for her - all the time we've spent together. We're family.

HARRY

It just seemed like the right idea, to follow her, demand she take us back. I think it's pretty clear it's time to move on.

JERALD

(very surprised)

What? From everything? From the cheesecake? From the Mexican lasagna? Think about what you're saying.

HARRY

Look at us - we commandeered some poor shmuck's apartment, his dinner, his date, his handyman, and his lovely neighbor.

MRS. FINKUS

Thank you.

HARRY

Sure. But we're acting like crazy people. We need to get on with our lives, make our own food - as delectable as Melinda's tasty treats are. Look at her, she's trying to have her own life and we're stopping her. It's not right.

JERALD

I don't know - I don't have high-speed Internet access at my place.

HARRY

You'll get - we'll both get.

JERALD

What about out-of-town guests - where will they stay?

HARRY

In *our* apartment's.

JERALD

But mine's not nice enough for guests, neither is yours.

POMPOM

(excited)

Let them stay with me then, or Mrs. Finkus, we can make it work.

MRS. FINKUS

They're not staying with me.

POMPOM

Oh come on Mrs. Finkus, you said you were lonely. I've seen your apartment, stacks of TV Guides don't count as company.

MRS. FINKUS

All right, I'll cook you two guys a meal or two. But no one is staying over, unless, *they're staying over*.

POMPOM

Can I come too?

MRS. FINKUS

Yeah, you can come Pompom, as long as you behave.

POMPOM

Oh I always behave Mrs. Finkus. You're the best.

HARRY

So we agree we should leave her alone?

JERALD

Yeah,

(just agreeing)

sure. I don't know how I'm going to break it to my parents though. Her brownies are like the only reason they come to visit me - they're going to be really pissed at me.

HARRY

Let's get our stuff and get out of here.

JERALD

We don't have any stuff here.

HARRY

We can just go then.

JERALD

Should we say good-bye?

HARRY

Better not disturb the happy couple.

JERALD

We could leave a note - a thank you note - we've never done that. It might be fun.

HARRY

She'd probably worry we'd really flipped out- come on. Bye Mrs. Finkus.

(Mrs. Finkus hands Harry her number on a piece of paper.)

HARRY

What's this?

MRS. FINKUS

Call me.

HARRY

For what?

MRS. FINKUS

For a meal - either with your friend, or without.

HARRY

Oh.

MRS. FINKUS

All right, get out of here.

JERALD

Bye.

(Jerald and Harry leave.)

MRS. FINKUS

Nice guy.

POMPOM

Oh, very charming. Should we clean up?

MRS. FINKUS

What do I look like, a busboy?

POMPOM

That's true. Would you like to play Nintendo?

MRS. FINKUS

What's that?

POMPOM

Video games.

MRS. FINKUS

I'm fifty, forty, thirty-years old. I think I've outgrown video games.

POMPOM

Mrs. Finkus, stop being such a spoil sport. First you don't let Thomas and I take nude pictures of you, then...

MRS. FINKUS

I knew it.

(Mrs. Finkus starts hitting Pompom again)

You sick, perverted lunatics.

POMPOM

I was kidding. Stop, no more pain, we never wanted to take photos.

MRS. FINKUS

Oh. Well I guess I could play one video game.

POMPOM

Very good - let's see what he has.

(Pompom goes over to Thomas's video games)

Wrestlemania 12, Scrabble, and Pokemon. What a pathetic collection.

MRS. FINKUS

Pokemon - my nephews love those cute little

(searching for the right words)

animated, round, globs of colors, whatever the hell they are. Let's play that.

POMPOM

(disapprovingly)

Oh no, no, no.

MRS. FINKUS

Well if you don't like Pokemon, we can do Wrestlemania, the Rock's a stud.

POMPOM

No, no, no - I love Pokemon too. It's the TV, it's so small, it won't do.

MRS. FINKUS

Why not?

POMPOM

Mrs. Finkus, as you may have imagined, I have passed hours, no, years, of my when you get down to it, meaningless life, playing these fun, and occasionally erotically stimulating games. And I can tell you it is the visual component, the projecting yourself into the world of the game that's so mesmerizing. And it's not happening on a nine-inch screen - my penis is larger than that.

MRS. FINKUS

It is?

POMPOM

Well if you're 30, I'm a 9 plus. In any event, we'll play at my place, I have a 32 incher there. Here, help me with these cables.

(Pompom unplugs the Nintendo. Mrs. Finkus helps him with the cables, playing with them suggestively.)

MRS. FINKUS

Are you sure it's your TV that's 32 inches?

POMPOM

Mrs. Finkus, are you coming on to me?

MRS. FINKUS

I don't know, should I be, Big Guns?

(Pompom goes to the door with the Nintendo.)

POMPOM

You are a pervert.

(They laugh.)

MRS. FINKUS

Look, when you get to be my age and you're single, you start taking chances.

POMPOM

Great, I have something to look forward to: dirty old-man-hood.

MRS. FINKUS

(laughing)

You're not so bad Pompom. I shouldn't give you such a hard time.

POMPOM

No sweat Mrs. Finkus. Can you get the door?

(Mrs. Finkus opens the door.)

MRS. FINKUS

Say, you must have a ruler, no better make it a yard stick, at your house, don't you?

POMPOM

Mrs. Finkus, you're terrible.

MRS. FINKUS

For the TV Pompom, the TV.

End of Act I

## Act II

## Scene 1

(Melinda comes out of the bedroom, into the darkened living room. A number of hours have passed, it's now early morning. She goes over to her purse and gets out some hair and make-up accessories. Her cell phone rings. She lunges at it to stop it from ringing anymore. She answers it and talks softly.)

MELINDA

Hello. Yes it's Melinda. I'm fine mother. I'm not dead. But I'm not dead. I'm not dead because you're speaking to me and dead people can't speak. Yes, I wasn't there because I was with Thomas. The optometrist. I'm not going to tell you that. Well, less boring. Sort of nice actually. Look, I got to go, I don't want to go over on my cell phone bill. No, I won't upgrade plans if you pay for it. I have to go. I don't know where, good-bye.

(Melinda hangs up. She tip toes into the bathroom. Thomas enters. He looks around the room, looking for Melinda.)

THOMAS

(calling)

Melinda? You here Melinda?

MELINDA

(from the bathroom)

Yes, in the bathroom.

THOMAS

Oh, I'm sorry, I thought maybe you'd left.

(Melinda pops her head in.)

MELINDA

Why would I do that?

THOMAS

I don't know, people do that sometimes.

MELINDA

But you didn't think I'd do that, did you?

THOMAS

I hoped not.

MELINDA

But I could?

THOMAS

I just didn't know, but I'm happy you're here. Finish up in the bathroom, I didn't mean to disturb you.

MELINDA

Okay.

(Melinda goes back into the bathroom. Thomas goes to the table and starts to clean up, starting to sing something happy. After a while Melinda comes out humming and walks over to Thomas.)

THOMAS

Good morning.

(Melinda answers with a pleasant hum.)

THOMAS

You always hum in the morning?

MELINDA

Only when I'm happy.

THOMAS

I sing when I'm happy.

MELINDA

So we're both happy.

THOMAS

Yeah. Do you want breakfast?

MELINDA

Sure, I feel like I haven't eaten for days.

THOMAS

You haven't.



(Thomas continues cleaning up last night's dinner, Melinda helps.)

THOMAS

(sarcastic)

It was nice of them not to clean up. They really could have just eaten all my food and cleaned up, but no, they insisted on not cleaning up, at all.

MELINDA

I'm really sorry about Harry and Jerald, I know they ruined our dinner.

THOMAS

But not our night.

MELINDA

You're right. But this all won't happen to us again, I'll get a restraining order if I have to.

THOMAS

If we make it that far.

MELINDA

(surprised)

Excuse me, what?

THOMAS

I don't know, maybe they'll kill us or something. Or you'll break up with me.

MELINDA

Oh.

(pause)

Are you okay? Everything's okay between us, isn't it?

THOMAS

(unsure)

Well, I hope so. I'm not sure.

MELINDA

You're not?

THOMAS

You really like me?

MELINDA

Of course.

THOMAS

You're not just saying that because it'd be a really uncomfortable situation if you didn't?

MELINDA

No.

THOMAS

All right, I was just checking. Well how about some eggs, we have a great track record with eggs.

MELINDA

Oh Thomas, I don't really eat eggs.

THOMAS

You don't?

MELINDA

Occasionally egg substitutes. But I'd have an egg-white omelet.

THOMAS

I just assumed you liked eggs.

MELINDA

I do, I just don't eat them much anymore.

(Thomas goes to sit down.)

THOMAS

So when you were saying how much you feel for eggs when they get thrown away, you were lying?

MELINDA

Thomas, be reasonable. I just don't eat eggs often, I don't go out of my way to cause them irreparable suffering.

THOMAS

It just sounds like you were misleading me, I thought you were being genuine.

MELINDA

We were flirting Thomas.

THOMAS

So you didn't mean *anything* you said. How about last night, was that all just flirting too?

MELINDA

Woe, Thomas, be rationale, of course not, everything was genuine. I was just kidding around a little in the supermarket.

THOMAS

So you don't care about eggs?

MELINDA

Thomas!

THOMAS

I'm just trying to be clear about your actual feelings.

MELINDA

I care about eggs, I do, I'd just rather concentrate on getting to know you right now.

THOMAS

I just don't want to feel uncomfortable around you.

MELINDA

(trying to figure it out)

And my feelings on eggs make you feel uncomfortable?

THOMAS

Well, I don't know. They're how we got started. If that wasn't true, how could I know if anything else you said was true?

MELINDA

I guess. But can't you just trust me?

THOMAS

It's just hard for me. This is all very unusual and overwhelming – I'm not used to having women in my apartment like this.

MELINDA

But with time you'll trust me, right?

THOMAS

I'd like to. I want to.

MELINDA

Well, if you make me an egg-white omelet, will you feel okay about it? You won't be upset by it?

THOMAS

Maybe I shouldn't make eggs, not yet. When we know each other better I will.

MELINDA

Okay, I like toast, or is there something you'd like to serve?

THOMAS

No, toast is very good, it's very non-confrontational.

MELINDA

Who could hate toast?

THOMAS

So you *hate* eggs?

MELINDA

Not again Thomas.

THOMAS

I'm sorry. I'm not sure what came over me, anxiety I guess. How do you like your toast?

MELINDA

Medium with some jam. But Thomas, just relax.

THOMAS

I need to check what type I have, you know, what flavor.

MELINDA

I'm sure anything you have is fine.

THOMAS

Okay. I'll look.

MELINDA

Okay, I'll wait here. Not moving.

THOMAS

Sorry about that. Sorry.

MELINDA

Go. Shew.

(Thomas goes to the kitchen, Melinda stays where she is.)

THOMAS  
(calling from the kitchen)

Blueberry jam.

MELINDA

I didn't know they made that.

THOMAS

You don't want it?

MELINDA

It's fine.

THOMAS

Oh, okay.

(Melinda goes to look at a magazine when there's a knock at the door.)

MELINDA

Thomas, someone's knocking at the door, should I see who it is?

THOMAS

Could you, I want to keep an eye on the toast so it doesn't burn.

MELINDA

Okay.

(Melinda walks over to the door.)

MELINDA

Who is it?

HARRY

Oh my God Melinda, it's me. It's Harold.

MELINDA

Harold, Harry, I'd thought you'd left. You can't keep on bothering me.

HARRY

No, no, this is important. I need to speak to you, about serious things.

MELINDA

This has to be the last time.

HARRY

Whatever you want.

MELINDA

This is really bad timing.

HARRY

I know, I'm sorry.

(Melinda opens the door. Harry comes in and latches onto her hands.)

HARRY

Oh, it's good to see you darling.

MELINDA

What are you doing?

HARRY

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I don't know what's come over me. Can we sit?

(Harry goes over to the couch and sits down. He pats the couch, motioning for Melinda to come and sit down.)

HARRY

Over here.

(Melinda goes and sits down next to Harry.)

HARRY

Now Melinda, you've been wonderfully good to me over the years. Too good. And to Jerald. And to all our friends and relatives. But this isn't about that – there's no way to make up for all that. What I want to talk to you is about us, your and my relationship. Now I know it hasn't gone very well since we broke up, and I've been mean to you, but that was probably because I was mad at you for ending the romantic side, and I didn't want to let that go. And I'm sorry that it sometimes takes a long time to realize these things. I just didn't realize you still loved me. And *only then* could I realize I still love you - that's why I couldn't leave you.

MELINDA

What are you talking about Harry?

HARRY

Honey, when you told me I hadn't loved you for five years, it came to me that you though, had loved *me*. That's why you were so nice to me and treated me like a husband, even better. When you finally met somebody else, yeah, you tried to move on and throw me out, but only then.

MELINDA

No Harry, I'm sorry. I haven't loved you in years. For a long time. And I saw other guys before Thomas.

HARRY

Who?

MELINDA

A bunch, no one serious, but like, at least ten dates.

HARRY

In five years? You were just passing the time 'til I woke up. And I'm here baby, I haven't felt this real since I found that book of Starbucks coupons on the street.

MELINDA

(laughs)

Oh, I wish you were kidding.

HARRY

You know I'm not.

MELINDA

I don't love you, at all, Harry. It just took *me* a while to realize how awful you and Jerald treated me. I didn't have a very high opinion of men, so I didn't think to keep on looking for a nice one like Thomas.

(Thomas enters carrying, with one of his hands, a tray with toast, jam, and other breakfast goodies. In his other hand is a pitcher of orange juice.)

THOMAS

Sorry this took so long, but I found some oranges so I thought – it's a special morning, how about fresh-squeezed. You again?

HARRY

But come on Melinda, you love me, think about it, you do.

(Thomas drops the breakfast tray to the ground, but holds onto

the pitcher of orange juice.)

THOMAS

I'll be in the kitchen if you need me.

MELINDA

No Thomas, wait.

(Melinda goes over and starts picking up the breakfast.)

THOMAS

Don't bother, they're 99¢ dishes.

MELINDA

Thomas, no, I want it.

THOMAS

But the toast is dirty.

MELINDA

No, I mean let's still have breakfast, Harry was just leaving.

THOMAS

Even though you're in love with him?

MELINDA

I'm not in love with anybody right now – especially Harry. He's crazy.

THOMAS

Can you ask him to leave then? He's making me very nervous.

HARRY

It's not like I can't hear you.

MELINDA

Harry, please, please go. You know as well as I do we don't have anything between us. I know you may love the way of life I gave you, but it's crazy, it can't go on, I won't ruin my life for you. I'm going to get old, and I'll need something in it. It's not going to be you and Jerald.

HARRY

But we had so many good times together. The holidays, the time we went to the zoo, the birthday parties - those were fun, with the cakes and cards. Don't tell me those were nothing.



MELINDA

They were always for you – you never gave me one.

HARRY

You didn't ask.

MELINDA

I didn't have to, I knew what the answer would be.

HARRY

You're wrong, we would have said yes.

MELINDA

Sure, and then forgotten.

HARRY

Oh Melinda, you're making a big mistake, big.

(The doorbell rings.)

MELINDA

You better not get it.

POMPOM

(from outside)

It's okay, I have a key.

(Thomas goes and opens the door. Pompom enters.)

THOMAS

Pompom, not now.

POMPOM

You have to hide me from Mrs. Finkus, she tried to seduce me while we playing your Nintendo.

THOMAS

You were playing Nintendo here last night with Mrs. Finkus?

POMPOM

No. We took your Nintendo to my place so we could use my bigger TV. It was going fine for a while, but then she couldn't control herself.

THOMAS

You can't be serious Pompom.

POMPOM

I wouldn't say it unless it was true. She's a sex fiend. I was just kidding around with her about my penis size, and boom, she goes for it.

THOMAS

Pompom, I'm sure it was a mistake.

POMPOM

No, no, she distinctly said, 'no more Pokemon, let's try poke the man.' And grabbed for me. I had to make a run for, it, it was horrifying.

MELINDA

(sympathetically)

Oh Pompom.

HARRY

Come on, she's just feisty that lady.

POMPOM

Oh you can have her mister.

MELINDA

That's actually not a terrible idea. Just go one floor down to 20C.

POMPOM

C for sin.

MELINDA

There, that sounds like your type Harry, go and try her.

HARRY

I'm not leaving.

THOMAS

Not again.

(The doorbell rings.)

THOMAS

Not again.

POMPOM

Have mercy on me.

(Pompom runs into the bathroom.)

JERALD

(from outside)

It's me, Jerald. Is Harry there?

MELINDA

Thomas, I'm trying.

THOMAS

It's okay, I'll get the door.

(Thomas goes and gets the door, Jerald comes in.)

JERALD

(to Harry)

What happened to you? Did you ditch me?

HARRY

Oh, we just got lost.

JERALD

You told me to look up and started running in the other direction.

HARRY

I got mixed-up, anyway, forget it, have a seat.

THOMAS

Please, make yourself at home, some fresh-squeezed orange juice?

JERALD

Oh, that'd be lovely, my throat is really parched.

THOMAS

I was kidding, it's not for you.

JERALD

Well then, someone didn't get much sleep last night, did they?

MELINDA

Uhh, could you take Harry home?

JERALD

That's what I came here for.

HARRY

Well I'm not going anywhere without Melinda.

JERALD

I thought we turned over a new leaf Harry – we're back with the old game plan?

HARRY

No, you can go.

JERALD

Why do you get to stay?

HARRY

Because

(motioning to Melinda)

we're in love with each other.

JERALD

That's crazy.

MELINDA

That's what I said.

JERALD

Of course it is, how could he be in love with you?

MELINDA

I don't know, he's confused.

HARRY

I'm not confused, can everyone just go and leave Melinda and me alone?

JERALD

Harry, what kind of a scam are you trying to pull now?

HARRY

No scams, I'm done with scams.

JERALD

Oh sure, and I'm lost aviator Amelia Earhart. Pleased to meet you, can I give you a lift

somewhere?

HARRY

Look, I'm telling the truth here. Last night Melinda told me how hurt she was I never expressed love for her, and now, finally, I'm making it up. Maybe this is rushing things, but how does the name Melinda Stockson sound to you?

JERALD

How can you marry Melinda, you're gonna divorce Tiffany?

HARRY

Jerald.

JERALD

What?

MELINDA

You're married.

HARRY

Technically.

MELINDA

Legally?

HARRY

Approximately.

MELINDA

When were you thinking of mentioning this, when we moved to Utah?

HARRY

So you *are* in love with me.

MELINDA

Absolutely not. I just completely underestimated how low of a creature you are.

JERALD

It's really not so bad, he hardly sees Tiffany. There were those six months she spent in jail - he's seen you more than her.

HARRY

(to Jerald)

When you want to help, let me know, cause I'm waiting.

MELINDA

When did Harry marry Tiffany?

JERALD

I don't know, maybe two, two and a half years ago. They met in Atlantic City, standing right next to each other at the slots,  
(seriously)  
very romantic.

MELINDA

That's really shocking.

JERALD

No, a lot of couples meet that way.

MELINDA

Do they live together?

JERALD

Technically, I mean I guess, when it's convenient.

MELINDA

People, married people, live like that?

JERALD

Hey, I do.

MELINDA

You're married too?

JERALD

(holding up his ringless hand)

Twelve years. To Rachel.

MELINDA

How come you didn't bring her to your birthday parties?

JERALD

Rachel? She's no fun, she would have ruined it.

MELINDA

Am I the biggest sucker ever?

JERALD

No, I know much bigger suckers than you.

MELINDA

Thank you.

JERALD

Come on, it's funny when you look at it. How we must have always been making up really crazy excuses to our wives why we ate already, why we didn't need high-speed Internet access - why we were always otherwise engaged on our birthdays. It's very comical really.

MELINDA

I don't

(pause)

think so. But maybe like in ten years, I'll laugh for like a second, thanks to you.

JERALD

I think she's getting mad, can we go?

HARRY

Things were going fine 'til you came.

JERALD

Okay, but I think she hates us now, so now would be the opportune time to get out of here.

HARRY

(putting two fingers together)

I was this close.

MELINDA

(angry)

To what?

HARRY

To convincing both of us we were in love. I really thought we were. Sorry.

MELINDA

Go to your wife.

HARRY

I don't even know where she'd be.

MELINDA

Find her, tell her you'll be spending a lot more time with her, tell her you've been a

shmuck, tell her what you told me. Okay?

HARRY

All right. Look, I'm really sorry it had to end like this - it was a mistake.

MELINDA

It was my mistake - get out.

JERALD

Would you mind if Rachel e-mailed you for a few recipes?

MELINDA

I thought you didn't have Internet access?

JERALD

No, no, not high-speed. So it's okay?

MELINDA

Yeah, sure.

JERALD

Great, I couldn't live without your peach pie - or your lemon chicken. I'm getting hungry just thinking about them.

HARRY

Jerald, *now* we should leave.

JERALD

All right, it was nice to meet you Tim.

THOMAS

Thomas.

JERALD

No, no, it's Jerald.

THOMAS

Right.

HARRY

So, if you want get in touch, call the cell.

MELINDA

Bye.



Bye. JERALD

Have a nice day. THOMAS

Okay. HARRY

(Jerald and Harry go to the door and start to go out. They bump into Mrs. Finkus who's entering the apartment. She's in tears.)

Mrs. Finkus. HARRY

Oh, hello. MRS. FINKUS  
(still very upset)

How are you? HARRY

Oh, okay. MRS. FINKUS

You don't look so great, usually yes, but. HARRY

I'm not myself, excuse me. MRS. FINKUS

(She walks past Harry and Jerald to Thomas and Melinda.)

Well see you Mrs. F. HARRY

(Harry and Jerald exit.)

Mrs. Finkus, what's wrong? MELINDA

MRS. FINKUS  
(going to Melinda)

Oh, it's terrible, I thought maybe he was here.

MELINDA

Who, sit down.

MRS. FINKUS

Pompom.

(starts crying again)

I can't even say his name.

MELINDA

What happened?

MRS. FINKUS

Oh, no, I can't talk about it.

MELINDA

Don't worry, it's only me and Thomas, there's nothing to be scared of.

MRS. FINKUS

Oh, you're really kind. But everyone's going to find out. It'll be humiliating. I'll never leave my apartment again.

MELINDA

I'm sure it's not that bad, whatever it is.

MRS. FINKUS

He just left, I tried to stop him, but he told me I had used him and pushed me to the side. Oh, I can't tell you, I don't even know who the hell you are.

MELINDA

I'm Thomas's girlfriend, it's okay. Do you want Thomas to leave?

MRS. FINKUS

Maybe that would help.

MELINDA

Thomas, can you go to the kitchen, maybe make some coffee?

THOMAS

If the water's working.

(Thomas exits to the kitchen.)

MRS. FINKUS

How long have you been dating?

MELINDA

About 18 hours.

MRS. FINKUS

So you'd understand. You spend a few lovely hours with a man, so you trust him, and you're lonely, and so you want to, you want to be close to him.

MELINDA

Of course.

MRS. FINKUS

So I told Pompom he should stay with me for the night. I know he's like some crazy foreigner, but I'm some aging crazy Jewish woman. It makes sense if you think about it. I thought so. And he thought so, he did. You should of seen him, he was singing me these love songs from his homeland. He's not really a freak, and I'm a normal woman. Tell me, that's terrible?

MELINDA

No, and not crazy either. It's sweet.

MRS. FINKUS

So why'd he leave?

MELINDA

Men are very jumpy. They freak out. Even if they're not actual freaks, they become them.

MRS. FINKUS

How would you know, you're 18.

MELINDA

Thank you, but I'm almost 30. Which is a whole slew of problems altogether. But Mrs. Finkus, do you think there's something real between you and Pompom?

MRS. FINKUS

I think, at least something sexual. I mean maybe not a long term thing, but we could be good company for a while. I just want to see my Pompipamps.

(A rattle is heard from the bathroom.)

MRS. FINKUS

(getting up)



(shouting)

Thomas, come here Thomas.

(Thomas comes out from the kitchen.)

THOMAS

What's up? I got the coffee on.

MELINDA

I need you to get Pompom out of the bathroom.

THOMAS

Okay. I'll do my best. Just don't let me forget about the coffee.

(Thomas goes to the bathroom and knocks.)

THOMAS

Pompom, it's Thomas. I need to use the bathroom.

POMPOM

Use a cup.

THOMAS

Pompom, this is my house. I need you to come out now.

POMPOM

It's not a good time.

THOMAS

Well, you can't monopolize my bathroom.

POMPOM

Give me a minute.

THOMAS

Look, I have a key. 1, 2,...

POMPOM

Okay, hold on, let me make myself decent.

(Pompom opens up the door and comes out, wiping his face with a tissue.)

POMPOM

I fixed the water.

THOMAS

I noticed, I put up coffee. Oh God, the coffee, I have to check it.

MELINDA

Thomas, I'm sure it's fine, just wait a minute.

POMPOM

Hello Mrs. Finkus, kind Melinda.

MRS. FINKUS

Pompom.

MELINDA

Why don't we sit. Thomas, maybe now's a good time for the coffee? And I'll help you serve.

THOMAS

That'd be very helpful – I don't have a very good track record with dishes today.

(Thomas and Melinda start towards the kitchen.)

MRS. FINKUS

(angry)

How could you do that to me?

POMPOM

(shouting)

How could you do that to me?

(Melinda and Thomas turn around.)

MELINDA

All right you kids, hold on. What is going on here?

POMPOM

It's her.

MRS. FINKUS

Me? What did I do, what did I do that you didn't want me to?

MELINDA

Pompom said you tried to seduce him.

MRS. FINKUS

Seduce? Come on, women my age don't seduce. Maybe some suggestive kvetching, but that's nuts. I told you, he only flipped out when we woke up this morning. He ran off.

MELINDA

And what are you saying happened Pompom?

POMPOM

Just like I said before, we were playing Pokemon on Nintendo, we were making a few off-color jokes, and she put her hands all over me.

MRS. FINKUS

Yeah, that's true, but you let me.

POMPOM

How could I?

MRS. FINKUS

I don't know, it made sense to you last night.

THOMAS

But Pompom, what did you do after she tried to touch you?

POMPOM

I ran. I came here to hide like you saw me.

MRS. FINKUS

That liar, what happened to the sex part Pompom?

THOMAS

Well it doesn't make any sense to me. You two left here hours ago with my Nintendo, but you're saying she tried just to seduce you like an hour ago. You were together for all that time in-between. You must have spent the night together, at least playing video games, no? But is it really believable Mrs. Finkus played video games for like six hours? Something doesn't add up. What are you not telling us Pompom?

MRS. FINKUS

Yeah, what do you say to that Pompom?

POMPOM

All right, okay, can you just stop attacking me everyone. I did it, I lied, I was with Mrs. Finkus last night, all of it, I *let* her touch me. Okay? But it's my offense, everyone else just leave it alone. I'll deal with it by myself.

THOMAS

Pompom, it's not a crime.

POMPOM

No crime? We're not married, she's not from my people, I hardly know her, I work for her, and she's old - that's nothing?

THOMAS

What's wrong with being old?

POMPOM

Well, just the cultural stigma.

THOMAS

Okay, but Pompom, it's nothing to go berserk over, even if you regret it.

POMPOM

I've been a terrible, terrible person. I was used and I used her,  
(speaking to Mrs. Finkus)  
you. How can I make that any better?

THOMAS

Well don't be mean to her for one.

POMPOM

Oh Mrs. Finkus, I didn't mean to hurt you. I'm just not ready for this. I'm filled with shame, but it's not because of you, you are really a very good woman. I don't know, maybe I need to see if the building covers psychiatric care.

MRS. FINKUS

That's okay, even just last night was nice.

POMPOM

I was good?

MRS. FINKUS

Yeah.

THOMAS

I did not need to hear that.

MRS. FINKUS

But we're over, right?



POMPOM

I'm sorry.

MRS. FINKUS

All right, what can you do. Hey, you think that Harry guy will call?

MELINDA

He's married. So yes.

MRS. FINKUS

That bastard, I'll cut his balls off.

THOMAS

Mrs. Finkus.

MRS. FINKUS

Sorry, I know men hate that image.

POMPOM

May I show you to your apartment Mrs. Finkus? I owe you a private apology.

MRS. FINKUS

It's all right. I feel okay as long as I know it wasn't anything I did, and just your crap. I can get over it. It would help though if the building was full of horny young handymen with unstoppable sex-drives, but okay, this isn't Florida.

POMPOM

All right, I think I'm going to go home and call my mother then. Take care.

(Pompom leaves.)

MRS. FINKUS

So you're serious about not mentioning this to anyone?

MELINDA

Mm-hmm. It won't get past this room.

MRS. FINKUS

Well then I owe you one. If you guys get married, I'll give you a nice check.

MELINDA

Thank you.

MRS. FINKUS

Well thank you too. She's very nice Thomas, I like her. I hope it works out. Bye-bye.

(Mrs. Finkus exits. Thomas and Melinda smile at each other, begin to walk towards each other.)

THOMAS

Oh God, the coffee! It's probably burnt.

(Thomas runs to get the coffee. Melinda's cell-phone rings. She turns it off. Thomas returns with the orange juice and glasses.)

THOMAS

It's burnt. But I still have the orange juice, want some?

MELINDA

Sure.

(They sit and drink.)

THOMAS

What were you saying, you know before, before all of this happened?

MELINDA

(laughing)

I don't know, that was a really long time ago. Maybe something about golf.

THOMAS

We never talked about golf - hate it though.

MELINDA

Yes, very boring. Oh wait, you were telling me about being an optometrist.

THOMAS

I was? That must have bored you.

MELINDA

Oh Thomas, don't be silly.

THOMAS

(being playful)

I'm not silly, you're silly.

MELINDA

No you're silly.

THOMAS

Uh, are we going to talk about what happened last night?

MELINDA

Between us, or the other 700 hundred people that were here?

THOMAS

I don't know, whomever.

MELINDA

Well, the truth is we shouldn't talk about it now, because I'm afraid that if we talk about it, you'll flip out again and we'll probably never see each other anymore. But we can talk about other stuff.

THOMAS

Like how I need better locks and more of them?

MELINDA

And a doorman.

THOMAS

Maybe even a bodyguard.

MELINDA

Or just better plumbing.

(pause)

But you seem distracted, is there something on your mind?

THOMAS

I don't know. There was one thing I was wondering about.

MELINDA

What is it?

THOMAS

Well, you said to Mrs. Finkus that you were my girlfriend.

MELINDA

Oh, *that*. It was just a figure of speech.

THOMAS

It was?

MELINDA

Not exactly. You are my boyfriend, but. No, we're going to have to skip this conversation for a little while. The whole non-freaking out thing. Just forget I said that. Any of that. Remember in a few months and ask about it.

THOMAS

Oh.

MELINDA

You know, maybe we should just forget about a lot of the stuff that happened today.

THOMAS

Why?

MELINDA

Because this was the craziest, weirdest day of my life, and in the beginning of a relationship you're supposed to take things slow, get to know each other better, and hold back your entire life story and most intimate details for at least three dates.

THOMAS

Well I thought it was pretty amazing – the best date I've ever been on.

MELINDA

So you're not mad at me for what happened?

THOMAS

No, it was really exciting. I wouldn't want to do this everyday or date, but I'm not mad at you. Definitely not.

MELINDA

Good.

THOMAS

But I *am* really tired.

MELINDA

Well we really didn't sleep much.

THOMAS

I thought that was off-limits to talk about that.

MELINDA

You're right. What *can* we talk about?

THOMAS

Are you going to work today?

MELINDA

Yeah, you're right. I should probably go soon.

THOMAS

I didn't mean that, I don't want you to go. I want you to stay. I'll be lonely without you.

MELINDA

That's sweet. I'd miss you too. We should have met sooner.

THOMAS

So you'll go on another date with me?

MELINDA

Yeah, we should, just to see if everything happens again. No, but seriously, I really want you to tell me all about optometry.

THOMAS

Are you being serious?

MELINDA

Of course. You didn't speak to my mother, did you?

THOMAS

What?

MELINDA

Oh nothing. But I really am intrigued by optometry, to look deep into people's eyes all the time.

THOMAS

That's right.

(They pull up face to face with each other, and look into each other's eyes.)

MELINDA

Wow, that's a weird feeling. But cool. You have nice eyes.

THOMAS

Wait 'till I bring you to the office, I can magnify that 50 times.

MELINDA

That must be amazing.

THOMAS

You really like optometry?

MELINDA

I don't know, you're going to tell me about it on our next date.

THOMAS

Right, but I'm warning you, optometry's a four year degree program, there's a lot to it.

MELINDA

Well we should go somewhere where we can talk then.

THOMAS

Hmm, well, my apartment's obviously out. Your apartment is just really asking for it. Uhh, how about the park? Maybe we'll get mugged, but they won't stay and chat.

MELINDA

That'd be an improvement.

THOMAS

So I'll call you.

MELINDA

You better, I know where you live.

THOMAS

Okay.

(Melinda starts to get her things together to go.)

THOMAS

Hey, what about breakfast?

MELINDA

Oh sure, I have a minute.

THOMAS

I just don't have anything left, but eggs.

MELINDA

You're bad.

THOMAS

At least take a rain-check on the eggs.

MELINDA

I'm going to grab something on the way to work and not respond to that.

THOMAS

Scrambled eggs would just take a minute.

MELINDA

Bye. I'll speak to you soon.

(Melinda goes to the door.)

THOMAS

I'll miss you Melinda. Bye.

(Melinda exits. Thomas looks around his apartment.)

The End