

CHARACTERS

JAKE

MAGGIE

KAREN

MOLLY (at 12)

MOLLY (at 21)

EDITH

JULIE

SHEILA

TIME & PLACE

In Jake's apartment in Soho and in his mind.

MUSIC NOTE

Licensee shall select the music used near the end of the play. Licensee is responsible at its own expense for obtaining any necessary music clearances for the use of the musical composition and any sound recordings thereof, and licensee shall indemnify Samuel French, Inc. and the Author and Owners of the play against any claims arising in connection therewith.

JAKE'S WOMEN

ACT I

Scene 1

The action of the play takes place both in Jake's apartment and in his mind. The apartment is minimal, his mind is overflowing. There are no walls, no windows, no sense of place and even time is indefinite.

There is, however, a staircase that goes up at an angle, stops at a second level. This is Jake's office. A desk, a chair and a word processor. Nothing else. Next to it, a single door.


Downstairs is a sofa and a few chairs.

The people in Jake's imagination hopefully or seemingly appear from nowhere and leave the same way. Lights should help achieve this. It's important that they can appear and leave almost instantly.

AT RISE: JAKE, a man in his early fifties, is upstairs at work at his processor. HE types, leans back to think, types again. The PHONE RINGS. HE stays lost in thought. It RINGS twice more before HE picks it up, irritated by the interruption.

JAKE. (*Into phone.*) Hello? ... Yes, Karen, I'm working ... No, I'm not *always* working, I'm just working

now ... Okay, so I'm working every time you call, what is it, Karen? ... No, Maggie isn't home yet. (*Losing patience.*) We're all having dinner Saturday night, yes, I know.

 *MAGGIE, an attractive woman in her late thirties, appears downstairs, unnoticed by JAKE. SHE stands, thumbs through a magazine.*

JAKE. (*Into phone.*) Primolo's restaurant on 63rd, I know ... Karen, why do you always have to confirm what we've already confirmed? ... I don't talk to you like a stranger, I talk to you like my sister ... You don't feel I do? ... Do you want me to confirm that you're my sister? ... Karen, I have to get back to work ... I don't know what I'm writing, I haven't read it yet ... I'm hanging up now, Karen. Please don't call back to confirm I've hung up on you. Goodbye ... (*HE hangs up.*)

MAGGIE. (*Looking through magazine.*) You are, you know.

JAKE. I am what?

MAGGIE. Always working.

JAKE. I stop when you come home, don't I?

MAGGIE. You stop typing but your mind keeps working.

JAKE. Not out of choice. My mind has a mind of its own ... Why did I send for you?

MAGGIE. Beats me. I'm still out there on 48th Street looking for a cab. You see what I mean? I'm just a thought in your head right now and you're so busy working, you can't even think of why you just thought of me.

JAKE. No, no. I remember. I was just thinking about the first day we met.

MAGGIE. You love to play back that tape, don't you?

JAKE. Do it with me, Maggie. The way we met.

MAGGIE. You do it too much, Jake.

JAKE. I must need it. Come on, Maggie, do it.

MAGGIE. (*Looks at her watch.*) Well, I've got ten minutes before I get home. Why not? Okay ...

(SHE pretends to pick up a glass. THEY stand on opposite sides of stage.)

MAGGIE. East Hampton. Eight years ago. The July 4th party at the Tabacks ... A sunset.

JAKE. A beautiful sunset.

MAGGIE. A beautiful sunset. I'm wearing a light blue Laura Ashley dress that I borrowed from my friend, Laura Ashley, who unfortunately is *not* the designer, so it hangs a little ... I'm on my second Margarita, feeling a little nervous because this is the In crowd and I'm an Out girl and don't know a soul here including the guy who brought me ... Then I notice you noticing me so I pretend not to notice because you look kind of sexy and intelligent and I don't think I can handle sexy and intelligent on two Margaritas on an empty stomach.

JAKE. Will you just skip to the part when we meet?

MAGGIE. Hey, Jake. These words are coming out of your mind. You're the one who just made yourself sexy and intelligent.

JAKE. Okay okay okay ... So I notice you and you notice me. Then you turn to talk to this Yuppie couple.

MAGGIE. So I turn to talk to this Yuppie couple, both dressed in white slacks, white blazers and white buckskins, looking like two bandaged index fingers. *(To the imaginary couple, SHE laughs heartily.)* Oh, God, I haven't made up my mind *who* to vote for ... No, I understand the issues, I just don't know *who's* running.

JAKE. *(To imaginary friend.)* Frank! Hey, Frank. Who's the girl in the light blue dress? ... *That's* Laura Ashley? ... No, not the dress. The girl. Well, ask because I'd like to know.

MAGGIE. *(To couple.)* It's Maggie ... No, I don't think we have ... Oh, my God. You're *that* Ralph Lauren ... How nice. I thought you two were always on safari. *(SHE drinks.)*

JAKE. *(Pushing through crowd.)* Pardon me. Coming through ... Oh, hi, Barbara ... You *did* like the book? Oh, I'm so glad ... The *L.A. Times*? No, I didn't read it ... You *mailed* me a bad review? How thoughtful ... Excuse me.

MAGGIE. *(To a man.)* Oh, hello. Nice to meet you, Ed. *(SHE shakes his hand.)* You look so familiar. Are you an actor? ... What do you mean, sort of? ... Oh, God. You're Mayor Koch, aren't you?

JAKE. Excuse me. Coming through ... Oh, hi, Martha ... Of course I'll give. What's the charity? ... The Homeless of East Hampton? ... You mean the ones who couldn't rent a house this summer?

MAGGIE. Would you excuse me, Mr. Ed? Mr. Koch ... I see someone who knows where the bathroom is.

(MAGGIE and JAKE turn and bump into each other. SHE spills her drink.)

MAGGIE. Oh, God, I am *so* sorry.

JAKE. *(Looks at his crotch.)* That's okay ...

MAGGIE. Would you like my napkin?

JAKE. *(Looks at crotch again.)* Well, it's an awkward place to be rubbing.

MAGGIE. Well, *I* wasn't going to rub it. I thought *you* would.

JAKE. It'll dry. No one will notice if you stand in front of me for a while.

MAGGIE. Well, I'm not feeling all that well. There's Mayor Koch. He might want to stand in front of you.

(SHE starts to go, HE blocks her.)

JAKE. Are you — here with anyone?

MAGGIE. Yes, I'm with a date ... Charley something.

JAKE. That's odd. My date is Sybill something.

MAGGIE. Oh? Maybe they're married.

JAKE. Gee, I hope so ... Are you here for the summer?

MAGGIE. Nooo ... Are you?

JAKE. Nooo ... Amazing how many things we have in common ... Is your name Jake?

MAGGIE. No. It's Maggie. Do I look like a Jake?

JAKE. No. I do. I'm just looking for a hook in this conversation ... Could I er ... buy you dinner?

MAGGIE. Oh, that's very nice of you but I think the food here is free ... Well, it was nice meeting you, Jake.

JAKE. This can't be goodbye.

MAGGIE. It won't be. We'll meet again.


JAKE. When?

MAGGIE. *(Looks at her watch.)* Well, I'll be home for dinner in ten minutes. Go back to work, Jake. Living out


the past is not going to get us through the future. (*SHE puts down the glass and starts out.*)

JAKE. Dammit, Maggie! Can't we just have ten good minutes together? Because I'm afraid tonight may not be so wonderful.

MAGGIE. Really? Well, I don't know what's going to happen tonight, Jake, do I? And that scares you. Because you can never control what I say when reality begins.

 (*SHE leaves. JAKE faces audience.*)

JAKE. (*To audience.*) She's right, you know. Reality is a bummer. God, how much better writing is. (*HE points to his office.*) That little room up there is eight by ten feet but to me it's the world. The universe! You don't get to play God, you get to *be* God! ... Push time backwards or forwards or put it on hold. Bend it, twist it, tie it in knots or tie it in ribbons, the choice is yours. And oh, what choices ... The downside? You get to be a slave to the thing you love. Eight hours go by up there in ten minutes and that ten minutes is captured forever on paper ... but the eight hours of your life is gone and you'll never see those again, brother ... How much living have I missed these last thirty years? ... And is creative pleasure better than real pleasure? ... We're all writers in a sense, aren't we? ... You're driving in your car to work, having an imaginary conversation with your wife. She says this, you say that, she says that, you say this. She's so damn stubborn and intractable — only she's not saying it. You wrote it! You're bright, witty and clever and she's a pain in the ass. You win the argument and she's not even there, what the hell kind of victory is that? (*HE looks at his watch.*)

Maggie'll be home soon, knowing something is up with us and she'll be armed to the teeth with honesty. Honesty can bring a writer to his knees and Maggie's got enough to bring me to my hips. (*HE calls out.*) Karen! I need help. (*To the audience.*) My sister Karen is no wizard but she *is* family. Married, divorced, went to NYU Film School. Made a three hour student film of *her*, just sitting on a kitchen chair called, "Loneliness" ... But she'll be on my side. Loving, encouraging, sympathetic, because that's how I need her and that how I'll make her. And no matter what she's doing, she'll come the minute I think of her. (*HE calls out.*) Karen! It's Jake. 

(*KAREN comes out. SHE's about forty, dressed in a rather unflattering dress.*)

KAREN. What? I'm here. Stop yelling. You have to think of me now? I was watching "The Godfather I, II and III" ... If he makes 4, 5 and 6, forget it, I need a life ... What's wrong, Jake?

JAKE. It's Maggie and me. We're having trouble and I need advice, Karen.

KAREN. Is she here? Do you want me to speak to her? Where is she; I'll talk to her?

JAKE. If she were here, how could you talk to her, Karen? (*Points to his head.*) You're here, here in my head.

KAREN. I never know how that works. When I'm here, I can talk to you. But when someone *else* is here, I can't talk to *them*. It's very confusing Jake. I feel like I'm in a Woody Allen movie.

JAKE. (*Turns to audience.*) The interesting dilemma here is not "Why is Karen irritating me now," but why am I making her irritate me?

KAREN. I'm irritating you now, aren't I?

JAKE. A little. It's nothing. It's a mind exercise. I keep writing in my head like magicians twirl a coin over their fingers.

KAREN. Don't write me, Jake. Let me be me. You have such a distorted picture of me these days.

JAKE. *I do?*

KAREN. Where did you find this dress I'm wearing? This dress is not me. Bette Midler does a concert in a dress like this.

JAKE. I'm sorry. I was working. I didn't have time to go shopping for clothes, Karen ... I wanted to talk to you now. I need advice and you're the only one in the world who can help me now ... Would you?

KAREN. Of course. I *want* to hear. I care about you. I worry about you. You're my brother, I love you ... See, that's a good speech. That's how I should talk. Giving, caring, nurturing. Make a note of that.

JAKE. (*To audience.*) They make you pay for these conversations. I used to think of my mother and she'd make me eat a whole imaginary dinner while I talked.

KAREN. So what is it, Jake? Tell me what's wrong.

JAKE. I think Maggie's getting ready to leave me.

KAREN. Don't tell me. Oh, my God, no. Why? What happened?

JAKE. A lot of things that never should have happened.

KAREN. Alright, don't jump to conclusions ... Don't try to guess what's going on in someone else's mind. I used to worry that Harry was going to leave me too.

JAKE. But he *did* leave you.

KAREN. Because I kept saying, "You're going to leave me one day, I know it." It drove him crazy ... Besides, we had big problems. You and Maggie had eight good years together. She loves you, that I would bet my life on.

JAKE. She's been seeing another man.

KAREN. I'm such a bad judge of character. Are you positive, Jake?

JAKE. It's someone new in her office. I don't know if he means something to her or if it's just a symptom of what's wrong with us.

KAREN. What *is* wrong with you?

JAKE. Something stopped.

KAREN. I am so depressed. Is there something wrong with our family, Jake? Mom got divorced. Pop got divorced. I got divorced. Now you're getting divorced.

JAKE. Mom and Pop is one divorce. And I'm not divorced yet. Don't make it an epidemic, Karen.

KAREN. Have you been seeing anyone?

JAKE. Me? No.

KAREN. You haven't been seeing another woman?

JAKE. Didn't I just say no?

KAREN. Who's the other woman?

JAKE. An actress, about a year ago. It only lasted about three weeks.

KAREN. You mean if it's under a month, it's not an affair? Every man in America is looking for a calendar like that.

JAKE. I expected you to be supportive.

KAREN. No, you expected me to say what you want to hear. Alright, how's this? ... "You're entitled to an affair,

Jake. You work hard. It would kill Momma to hear but she's dead anyway so what do *you* care?"

JAKE. Karen, I don't need you to make me feel guilty.

KAREN. Yes, you do. I don't mind. I'm not working anyway ... So tell me, are you still seeing this tramp?

JAKE. She's not a tramp ... No. It's over. The truth is, I love Maggie more now than I ever have in my life. I don't want to lose her, Karen. If I lose her, I lose everything.

KAREN. Oh, Jake, Jake. You're so dependent on women. I've always known that. I wish I could hold you right now. I want to grab you in my arms the way Momma did and make you feel wonderful and safe and loved. I'm sorry Julie died. I'm sorry Maggie is so unhappy. But you have me, Jake. You can count on me ... This is another good speech. Give me more lines like this. This is a woman you could like.

JAKE. Everyone likes you, Karen.

KAREN. So why can't I make a marriage work? Don't end up alone like me, Jake. I live in the movies, night after night, and you can't be happy living in a popcorn world ... No! See that's crappy dialogue. You're getting even with me now for that crack about Momma.

JAKE. I'm sorry. I'll fax you the rewrites tomorrow, okay?

KAREN. Does that mean I'm going?

JAKE. (*Turns his head.*) No. I hear Maggie coming up the stairs. Stay a few minutes.

KAREN. I'm in your head. How am I going to get out, when you sneeze?

JAKE. (*To audience.*) Maggie'll come in with a big smile on her face, always hiding her true feelings ... "Hi, hon. Sorry I'm late."

MAGGIE. (*Comes in carrying her leather case.*) Hi, hon. I actually found a taxi.

JAKE. (*To audience.*) Close enough.

MAGGIE. Do you mind if we call in for Chinese? I'm too tired to eat low fat food tonight.

KAREN. She gets to dress so pretty and I have to wear this ugly shmata.

MAGGIE. (*Crosses, gives Jake a cheek kiss.*) Ohh, you smell good. You took a shower. That's what I need. You get so grimy from ambition. (*SHE starts upstairs.*)

JAKE. You going to be long?

MAGGIE. Not if I use soap. Why?

JAKE. I just thought we'd talk.

MAGGIE. Before dinner?

JAKE. (*Shrugs.*) Before. During. After.

MAGGIE. Really? It's been years since we had a marathon conversation ... Sure. Just let me wash my face, I'll be right down ... Anything I should feel nervous about?

JAKE. Depends on what makes you nervous.


MAGGIE. ... Answers like that. (*SHE is gone.*)

KAREN. Oh, Jake, Jake! You're asking for trouble.

JAKE. What do you want me to do, forget about this other guy?

KAREN. No. Just wait. Bring it up on your fiftieth anniversary.

JAKE. I really love you, Karen. I make you sound silly and foolish and irritating. The clown with a heart of gold. You'll meet the right man. Trust me. I'll look myself.

KAREN. Find him, don't think of him. I don't want a man who dresses worse than me. (*SHE is gone.*) 

(*MAGGIE appears upstairs, a towel around her neck.*)

JAKE. (*Quietly.*) Round one!

MAGGIE. (*Makes a drink.*) So what kind of day did you have ... she asks cautiously.

JAKE. I worked. I spoke to Karen.

MAGGIE. Oh. How is she?

JAKE. Lonely, miserable, frustrated. Not bad, actually ... She's having a dinner party this Saturday. We're invited. We have to find her a date, which is why she's having the party.

MAGGIE. *This Saturday?*

JAKE. Yes.

MAGGIE. I have to go to Philadelphia on Saturday. I told you that.

JAKE. No. You said you *thought* you had to go.

MAGGIE. Yes. I said, "I think I have to go to Philadelphia on Saturday."

JAKE. I think I'm going is indefinite. I'm going is "I'll be back on Sunday." Or do you *think* you'll be back on Sunday?

MAGGIE. I will be back on Sunday. Are you in a lousy mood or do I just *think* you are.

JAKE. Sort of a lousy mood.

MAGGIE. Yes, I sort of noticed ... This isn't what you wanted to talk about, is it, Jake?

JAKE. No.

MAGGIE. Something else then.

JAKE. Yes.

MAGGIE. (*Smiles.*) Okay. What?

JAKE. I'm thinking.

MAGGIE. (*Lightly.*) You looking for a topic?

JAKE. No. I have a topic.

MAGGIE. What is it, Jake? You look so pained. (*HE doesn't answer.*) Tell me. I'm not going anywhere.

JAKE. I want to get the first sentence right. It's important.

MAGGIE. The first sentence is?

JAKE. It's the writer in me. Always afraid I'll lose my audience. Did you ever read *The Naked and the Dead*? ... Great first sentence.

MAGGIE. What was it?

JAKE. "Nobody could sleep."

MAGGIE. Yeah. Great first sentence alright ... What's yours, Jake?

JAKE. (*HE pauses.*) ... Do you want out of this marriage?

MAGGIE. (*Looks at him stunned, then lets out a breath of her own.*) Well, you've just topped Norman Mailer ... Is this what this conversation is going to be about?

JAKE. Well, let's see if it turns into a conversation first.

MAGGIE. Where did this come from, Jake? And why now? Isn't this the kind of talk one prepares for? Take the phone off the hook, get out a bottle of scotch?

JAKE. You get the phone, I'll get the scotch.

MAGGIE. I thought the reason you were in a lousy mood was because I couldn't have dinner with Karen on Saturday. Shows you where my mind must be.

JAKE. I don't *know* where, Maggie. Tell me.

MAGGIE. Whoa, Jake. I gave you time to think of your first sentence. Give me a chance to get my second wind ... Why not yesterday, Jake? Or last week or last month? Did something happen today that never happened before?

JAKE. Yes.

MAGGIE. What?

JAKE. I decided to ask you.

MAGGIE. I see. Well, I guess sleeping back to back for the last few weeks doesn't make this *too* much of a surprise ... Okay. You want to know if I want out of this marriage? The answer is "No," I do not want out of this marriage.

JAKE. I'm glad to hear it. So everything is fine.

MAGGIE. I didn't say it was.

JAKE. I didn't think it was.

MAGGIE. No, everything is *not* fine, Jake. Does that come as a shock to you?

JAKE. No. It's been obvious for months. So why haven't either of us talked about it before?

MAGGIE. We talk about it every day. In the lack of warmth we show each other. The way you sometimes don't even acknowledge me when I walk in the door.

JAKE. On the nights I'm lucky enough to still be up when you walk in.

MAGGIE. Yes, I've been working a lot more than I used to. Moving up the corporate ladder has its drawbacks, I'm sorry. Are we just going to stand here matching complaints? Where are we going with this?

JAKE. I don't know. It's our first trip ... Are we in trouble, Maggie, or are we in *big* trouble?

MAGGIE. I love how *I* get to be the one on the witness stand. I don't know, Jake. We're in trouble. That's more than we've ever been before so the size of it seems irrelevant.

JAKE. Really? I'd hate to get a report like that from my radiologist. "Well, there's something there, Jake, but the size of it is irrelevant."

MAGGIE. Jesus, I love what you consider a "talk before dinner" ... What have you got in mind for "during and after"?

JAKE. It's amazing but I don't even know what you're feeling right now. Are you hurt? Are you frightened? Angry? Defensive? What?

MAGGIE. (*Snaps it out.*) *Claustrophobic!* Isolated! Airless! Atrophying! ... Christ, I can't believe I'm saying these things. This is dangerous, Jake. Let's put it off for a while. Please! Maybe it'll even go away in the morning.

JAKE. Go away?? After "Claustrophobic? Airless? Atrophying?" ... Those words have a certain permanency. They tend to stick to your ribs.

MAGGIE. Christ, you wanted this conversation, Jake. Not me. Isolated and airless are painful things to say and I'm sure to hear, but probably a lot less terrifying than the death of a marriage ... but I guess we'd better get on with it ... Okay. I have a first sentence for you, Jake ... How about separating for six months just to give us some breathing space?

JAKE. (*Stunned.*) Separate for six months? ... That's a lot of breathing space. That's about as big as Arizona ... How long have you been thinking about this?

MAGGIE. It just came up. More or less impromptu.

JAKE. Do you actually think after six months apart, we'd be able to get together again?

MAGGIE. Why not?

JAKE. Why not? Half our problems are based on the fact that we're apart three or four months of the year to begin with. I don't understand how separating is the answer to being separated too much.

MAGGIE. I need the time, Jake.

JAKE. For what?

MAGGIE. For myself. I feel lost, out of control. I feel like I'm skiing down a mountain without a pole and there's nothing but trees and rocks at the bottom.

JAKE. Maybe I could be there to catch you.

MAGGIE. Catch me? I thought you were the one who pushed me ... I didn't mean that. Oh, God, I'm so lousy at being unhappy.

JAKE. Don't you want this marriage?

MAGGIE. I have always wanted this marriage. I would give anything to go back and start it over from the beginning. But you only get one beginning to a marriage.

JAKE. Who says? Why can't we go back? Why don't we get married again. (*SHE dismisses it.*) I'm serious. New wedding ring. New party. Different hors d'oeuvres. They're probably cold by now ... It's possible if you want it badly enough.

MAGGIE. Thank you, Jake. That's a very sweet offer.

JAKE. Then take it.

MAGGIE. We're having enough trouble making this marriage work, let alone starting a new one.

JAKE. I don't think we should separate. I think it would be the end of us.

MAGGIE. Jake, don't you see me? Don't you see how much I've changed? I can't stop running. I run for taxis, for planes, for elevators. I run for analyst sessions and lunch appointments. I run ten miles every weekend and it's still not far enough or fast enough. I'm no good for anybody until I learn to stop running and find out what it is I'm running from. And if I'm still running six months from now, there won't be anything left of me worth being married to.

JAKE. I love you, Maggie.

MAGGIE. I love you too, Jake. At least we have that to hang on to. That's worth waiting six months for, isn't it?

JAKE. It's also worth staying here and fighting for.

MAGGIE. NO!!! I don't *want* to fight for it. I've tried so hard this last year to *talk* to you but I always ended up just listening. We started off with a marriage and ended up with a monologue. You never listen, Jake. Not even to what I'm trying to say now. You just want it to be better without even wanting to know what's wrong. We shouldn't be fighting for our marriage, we should have been living it.

JAKE. Then let's start tonight because six months apart will kill us.

MAGGIE. So will forcing me to stay. I'm sorry, Jake. Maybe there is a chance for us but not with a quick resolution. I have to get in a hot tub and just be alone for an hour. I don't know what else to say. We're not going to settle this right now anyway ... Okay? ... Jake? ... Did that go by you too?

JAKE. No. I caught it.

(SHE looks at him, then starts up the stairs.)

JAKE. ... How much does Michael Jaffe have to do with this?

MAGGIE. (Stops, turns.) What?

JAKE. Michael Jaffe ... Wrong name or just the wrong time to say it?

MAGGIE. (Nervously.) What are you talking about?

JAKE. I'm talking about Michael Jaffe.

MAGGIE. What about him?

JAKE. Right. What about him? I know very little except he's extremely bright, that he's brought a new "energy" to your office, that everyone likes him and that things have really "perked up" since he's come to work there ... And a jogger too, didn't you tell me that? You went jogging with him when you were all in Chicago, I believe you said. It's nice for someone like you who's always running to have someone to run with, am I right, Mag?

MAGGIE. I'm not going to get into one of these discussions. (SHE turns.)

JAKE. (HE snaps.) Oh, come on, Maggie, get into it. I want to know just how "perked up" things are with you two ... Is that an unfair question to ask, seeing as it comes on the heels of you asking me for a separation? ... Are you having an affair with him or not? (SHE looks at him, speechless.) ... No answer? Does that mean you're not having an affair with him?

MAGGIE. ... No.

JAKE. No ... So you're *not* having an affair with him.

MAGGIE. No.

JAKE. Alright, let me rephrase the question ... Have you slept with him?

MAGGIE. (As if it's the last words she'll ever speak.) ... Yes.

JAKE. Yes?

MAGGIE. Yes.

JAKE. Jesus Christ, what did I ask that for?

MAGGIE. I'm sorry, Jake.

JAKE. Oh, ■■■, Maggie.

MAGGIE. Jake—

JAKE. I was smart enough to figure it out and dumb enough to make you say it.

MAGGIE. I shouldn't have said it, Jake. The truth doesn't fix anything.

JAKE. No. It just makes it clearer.

MAGGIE. It's not an affair because it stopped as soon as it started. But it happened and I'm sorry ... Jake? I don't think we should say anything more. We're just going to hurt each other.

JAKE. I thought we passed that a minute ago.

MAGGIE. (About to go, stops, turns.) Did — did you — I'm sorry. The guilt is so great, I'm trying to make it easy on myself ... Did you ever do anything? In all the years we were married? ... You don't have to answer it, but maybe I'd feel better if I knew ... Did you?

JAKE. (Sits there, thinking.) ... If I said yes, would it make any difference? About the separation?

MAGGIE. No.


JAKE. Then my answer would be meaningless, wouldn't it?

MAGGIE. Nothing we do is meaningless.

JAKE. Alright. Then I'll tell you.

MAGGIE. No ... It doesn't really matter. Exchanging guilts isn't exactly going to save the day.

(SHE turns, goes upstairs and is gone. JAKE turns to the audience.)

JAKE. I didn't even get the opportunity to lie ... which I don't think I would have ... Of all the imaginary conversations I have, ten, twenty, fifty a day, why did this have to be a real one? *(HE points upstairs.)* Up there I could have fixed all this. Turn on the machine and rewrite it ... "No, Jake. There was no affair and I never slept with anyone. Michael Jaffe is a twerp ... Don't you know you've spoiled me so, I could never let another man ever touch me" ... Click! Turn off the processor, get a beer and turn on the Knicks-Laker game. 

(MOLLY, a twelve year old girl, appears and stands there. HE doesn't see her but senses her.)

JAKE. Molly? Is that you?

MOLLY. Yes, Daddy.

JAKE. *(Turns, looks at her.)* You're so young. Eleven, twelve? Why am I thinking of you now?

MOLLY. You need someone to tell you they love you.

JAKE. That doesn't count. All little girls love their daddies.

MOLLY. Sandra Gerstein *hates* hers.

JAKE. Why?

MOLLY. I don't know. I made it up. I thought it would make you feel better.

JAKE. No, honey. *I* made it up. Not you.

MOLLY. I know. Did it make you feel better?

JAKE. Yes.

MOLLY. You fool yourself a lot, don't you?

JAKE. You got it.

MOLLY. Why are you and Maggie breaking up?

JAKE. I don't know, Molly.

MOLLY. Is it because you both had an affair?

JAKE. Jesus, I'm not going to discuss this with a twelve year old.

MOLLY. Then when?

JAKE. When you come back like you are today. All grown up.

MOLLY. Alright. I will.

(YOUNG MOLLY moves out as OLDER MOLLY, at twenty-one, appears from the opposite side.)

OLDER MOLLY. So tell me, Dad.

JAKE. *(To audience.)* Gee, time flies when you're neurotic.

OLDER MOLLY. I know what's wrong with you and Maggie. It's not about Michael Jaffe *or* your actress friend.

JAKE. It's not? Then what *is* it about?

OLDER MOLLY. It's about Mom.

JAKE. Your mother's been dead for ten years.

OLDER MOLLY. I know. Ghosts are a bummer; aren't they?

JAKE. *(Nods.)* *Life's* a bummer, kiddo.

OLDER MOLLY. I thought self-pity was a no-no.

JAKE. Only on the stage. In life it's very comforting.

OLDER MOLLY. Boy, do you need help, Dad.

JAKE. I didn't have to think *you* up to tell me that.

OLDER MOLLY. Why don't you talk to Edith? Come on, talk to her.

JAKE. Analysts don't work nights. That's when they have their *own* breakdowns.

OLDER MOLLY. I don't mean *really* talk to her. Make *up* that you talk to her.

JAKE. Some session. I make up Edith, the questions and the answers. What's the point?

OLDER MOLLY. Complete control. Your favorite thing in life.

JAKE. It isn't really. It's being at the mercy of someone else that scares me. Been that way since I was a baby. My mother was always afraid I'd fall out of my high chair so she tied me in with a rope. Couldn't move my hands, couldn't push away the baby food I hated. I had to fight her off with my nose.

OLDER MOLLY. That's awful.

JAKE. I grew up thinking that's the way life was. First time she took me to a restaurant I couldn't eat because the waiter forgot to tie me up.

OLDER MOLLY. No wonder you're in analysis.

JAKE. That was a problem too. By now I had claustrophobia. For the first year in Edith's office, I wouldn't let her close the door. Everyone in the waiting room heard my life story. I'd walk out and someone sitting there would say, "You're sounding better today" ... Then it got worse. On airplanes I was always afraid of being locked in the john. So I kept testing the door, opening it and closing it. The sign above would light up, "Occupied, Vacant, Occupied, Vacant" ... I think maybe that's why I became a writer. I could write when I wanted, where I wanted and what I wanted.

OLDER MOLLY. Maybe Maggie doesn't want to be tied up either.

JAKE. Smart observation.

OLDER MOLLY. So maybe you better talk to Edith.

JAKE. For you, anything. See you later, babe.

OLDER MOLLY. Anytime ... You're on, Edith.

(OLDER MOLLY goes off just as EDITH, a woman in her late forties, comes on.)

EDITH. Just what I need. A session *he* makes up that I don't even get paid for ... So what is it this time, Mr. Creative?

(SHE sits on chair. HE sits on sofa.)

JAKE. Please, Edith, I'm shopping for a little compassion.

EDITH. *(Like a mother to an infant.)* Ahh, wassa mawa, baby?

JAKE. *(To audience.)* She actually does that in sessions. It's the New Age analysis. Make the patient look like a schmuck.

EDITH. Is that what I'm here for, Jake? To set up straight lines for you?

JAKE. I'm lost, Edith. Confused. I had an affair with someone but I don't want to leave Maggie. She *slept* with someone and she *does* want to leave.

EDITH. So what's your point? Your affair wasn't as good as the guy she slept with?

~~JAKE~~ Forget it, Edith. You're not an analyst. You're a mother with a diploma.

EDITH. And what are you? A martyr! A self-made sufferer! Don't you know you're better than that, Jake? You're a warm, loving, giving human being with incredible sensitivity. And Maggie doesn't even appreciate that.

JAKE. You really think so?

EDITH. I don't know. They're your words, I'm just moving my lips.

JAKE. (*To audience.*) See? I'm a schmuck again. (*To Edith.*) Edith, I need help. Real help. I'm giving you temporary freedom. Make up your own words.

EDITH. Alright. Why do you like to deprive yourself so much, Jake?

JAKE. Oh, Christ, Edith. We do that question every week. I hate that question. Don't you have another question?

EDITH. Yes. Here's one. Why don't you like me to ask you why you like to deprive yourself?

JAKE. This is my last session, Edith. Real or not. And then I'm going to find another analyst to help me understand why I went to you so long.

EDITH. Can I suggest someone? My son, Arthur, just started his own practice. It's in California, but he's worth the trip.

JAKE. God, you make me so furious. Do you know what I'd like to do to you right now, Edith?

EDITH. (*Infant talk again.*) Wha, baby? Tell mawa what Jakey wanna do?

JAKE. (*To audience.*) She could lose her license for this, you know. (*To Edith.*) I'd like to either punch your face out with my fist or rip your clothes off and ~~dump~~ the life out of you.

EDITH. I know what *my* choice is ... Which do you prefer?

JAKE. Forget it. It's just wishful thinking.

EDITH. When you wish, you wish upon the child in you. Do you know who said that?

JAKE. Jiminy Cricket?

EDITH. No, Me! ... Didn't you read my book?

JAKE. *Love Yourself, Fuck Them?* Was that the title?

EDITH. You are so naughty ... How's your sex life, Jake?

JAKE. My sex life? You think Maggie and I are screwing eight hours a day while we discuss our breakup?

EDITH. Maybe if you did, you wouldn't be breaking up.

JAKE. Edith, I am so tired of your fortune cookie wisdom. I picture some patient coming to you with no arms, no legs, no eyes, no ears, no mouth and you asking him how his sex life is.

EDITH. Well, if he found a way to get to my office, why not?

JAKE. Edith, did you ever *actually* cure anyone?

EDITH. Analysis doesn't cure you, Jake. It just makes you feel better between sessions.

JAKE. You know, I should have married you instead of Maggie. Then I wouldn't be so unhappy about the marriage breaking up.

EDITH. You know what I think, Jake? And listen to this because I think I'm going to say something very profound.

JAKE. Oh, good. "60 Minutes" will be one hour late tonight in order to bring you this CBS Special, "Edith Reports." And now, Dr. Edith Hassenberg.

EDITH. (*Out front.*) Thank you, Don, and good evening. (*To Jake.*) I'll tell you what I think. I think you won't hit me so you can deprive yourself of anger and you won't hump me so you can deprive yourself of losing. And then you make fun of it so you can deprive yourself of feelings.

JAKE. How did you work that out?

EDITH. Easy. You're a Sagittarius.

JAKE. You'd better let me have your son's number ... You-are-ludicrous.

EDITH. You make Karen foolish and you make me ludicrous! Is this your way of getting back at women because Julie died and Maggie stands up to you?

JAKE. I'm handling this the best way I can ... I have one dead wife and one on the way out the door. What do you want, a tap dance?

EDITH. Why not? You're unhappy if you want to be. You're lonely if you want to be. It's your choice.

JAKE. My choice that Julie died? That Maggie's leaving?

EDITH. I didn't say your fault. I said your choice.

JAKE. I don't get it.

EDITH. If you want to suffer, you suffer. If you want to be fat, you're fat. We make our own destiny, Jake.

JAKE. Is that why you're still unmarried?

EDITH. No. Most men are **sons**.

(*HE walks away, throwing his hands up.*)

EDITH. Oh, this is pointless, Jake. Do you want the Comedy Store or do you want help? Don't mock me, use me.

JAKE. Okay. Alright. What do you want?

EDITH. Answers. *Real* answers. If you could have anything you wanted in the world, right now, this minute, this second, what would you ask for?

JAKE. Don't do this to me, Edith.

EDITH. Answer me, Jake. What would you ask for?

JAKE. You *know* what I would ask for.

EDITH. Then say it.

JAKE. Stop it. STOP IT!!!

EDITH. Ask for it, then I'll stop it ... Ask for it, Jake. Please!

JAKE. JULIE! I ... I WANT JULIE!!!

(*Suddenly, JULIE, a lovely young girl about twenty-one, in jeans and a shirt, lies on a bench with the New York Times Magazine section and a pen.*)

JAKE. (*Sees her, crosses to her.*) I want her alive, the way I remember her. I want to be twenty-four when she was twenty-one. I want to be lying on the grass in Central Park on a Sunday morning, watching her do the *Times* crossword puzzle, knowing the first true happiness I ever felt in my life.

JULIE. (*Without looking up.*) Jake? Who's the Iron Man of Baseball? Nine letters.

JAKE. Lou Gehrig.

JULIE. Right. Very good. "Ninotchka director," thirteen letters.

JAKE. Ernst Lubitsch.

JULIE. My God, you're a genius. (*We hear BELLS. SHE turns, looks.*) Hey! There's the ice cream man. I'm buying. What do you want?

JAKE. Chocolate. Seven letters.

JULIE. Seven letters is Vanilla. You pay. I'll be right back. *(SHE runs off.)*

JAKE. ... and I lay there, looking up at the sky, dreaming about what the rest of our lives would be like ... And I want the rest of our lives ... Can you get me Julie, Edith?

EDITH. No.

JAKE. Then don't play games with me.

EDITH. I don't play games, Jake. You do.

JAKE. Yes ... I do.

EDITH. Why?

JAKE. Because in games, I never lose. And what I lose, I can rewrite.

(MAGGIE comes out of the upstairs bathroom in a terry cloth robe. SHE crosses to the stairs.)

MAGGIE. Can we talk for a minute?

JAKE. *(Looks up.)* Sure ... Would you like a drink?

EDITH. No, thanks, I have to leave now.


MAGGIE. Yes, please. A vodka.

(EDITH turns and sees MAGGIE who has come down the stairs.)

EDITH. Oh. I didn't see her. *(SHE crosses closer to Maggie.)* She looks beautiful. I've always loved her face. And that wonderful skin. So English and clean. I have skin like lost luggage.

JAKE. *(JAKE has crossed to the bar to make Maggie's vodka.)* Feeling any better?

MAGGIE. No. Just cleaner.

EDITH. Listen to her, Jake. Hear her out. Don't say no to everything. You always have options. *(SHE starts to back out.)* That's what life's about ... Options ... Options ... I love how my voice trails off ... Options ... Options ... *(And SHE's gone.)* 

(JAKE hands MAGGIE her drink.)

MAGGIE. How are you feeling?

JAKE. Tired. Trauma always exhausts me.

MAGGIE. ... I'm scared, Jake. I've never been this scared in my life. Not since I left Michigan to go on my own. So here I am, seventeen years later, doing the same thing I did then and feeling the same emptiness in the pit of my stomach. I haven't made much progress, have I?

JAKE. Maybe we shouldn't have married until you stopped running.

MAGGIE. My fault, Jake. I thought you were the finish line ... This isn't going to turn ugly, is it?

JAKE. Maybe. I don't know. But at least I'm fighting with every goddamn thing I have to save this. What are you doing?

MAGGIE. Trying to save this marriage the only way I know how. By giving it up for a little while.

JAKE. You can't keep what you give up.

MAGGIE. Why not? You did it with me for eight years.

JAKE. *I did?* What did I keep?

MAGGIE. Well, Julie, for one thing. She may have died but you never let go. Wherever we moved to, wherever we travelled, we always took Julie with us. Some nights I

was tempted to put down an extra dinner plate for her, but I didn't think you'd be amused ... I had to live *your* memories for so long. It was always *your* friends, *your* family, your work, as if I were a replacement, a substitute, always trying to make the first team.

JAKE. The first team? Jesus, you devoted so much of this marriage trying to become Chairman of the Board, I never saw you for half those eight years. I don't know whose dream you were trying to fulfill, but it sure as hell wasn't mine.

MAGGIE. Well, unfortunately, it wasn't mine either. For as long as I can remember, I was molded and shaped in the form of somebody *else's* concept of a woman, never mine. The church taught it to me, parochial schools taught it to me, my mother, my father — God, you couldn't get out of the midwest without its stamp of approval. I was taught to be a good girl, a wife and a mother but never a person. You could be a carbon copy but don't mess with being an original. That's what you married eight years ago, Jake. A good girl. As good and as obedient as my mother, never suspecting, of course, that it was three martinis a day that kept her obedient ... And then one day I woke up and said to myself, "I don't want to be anyone's concept of me except me ... not even Jake's" ... You are so important to me, but you're also so consumed with creating your own images and characters, planning every detail of their life, molding them and shaping them into *your* creations, *your* concepts. And I said, "Jesus, I just left all this in Michigan, what do I want it in New York for?" ... And the minute I tried to step out on my own, to try to be someone *I* created, that *I* controlled, you made me pay so dearly for it. You made me feel like a plagiarist ... And so one day in

Chicago, I let myself become a very bad little girl. The next morning I looked in the mirror and I sure didn't like what I saw. But I saw the possibility of becoming someone who would have to be accepted on *her* terms and certainly not someone who was considered a rewrite of someone else. And until you begin to see *me*, Jake, *my* Maggie, I am getting out of this house, out of this life and out of your word processor ... I may be making the biggest mistake of my life but at least it'll be mine ... Dear Lord, Creator of the Universe, forgive me. And if not, not.

JAKE. ... You're not assuming I'm the Creator of the Universe, are you?

MAGGIE. No, Jake, but thanks for telling me ... I'm leaving. Give us both a break and don't fight it.

JAKE. Fight what? You've made up your mind.

MAGGIE. There were two of us in the ring, Jake. I'll try to move some of my things out tomorrow.

JAKE. Tomorrow? Then we still have an interesting night ahead of us.

MAGGIE. I'm not staying tonight. I thought I'd drive out to the beach house. Is that alright with you?

JAKE. It's your house too.

MAGGIE. Thank you.

JAKE. I'll keep the half facing the ocean.

MAGGIE. This is going to be hard on Molly.

JAKE. She's a strong kid. She'll be alright.

MAGGIE. Still, it's the second time she's losing a mother ... and the third time I'm losing a child. Maybe that's why she means so much to me.

JAKE. I wanted those babies as much as you, Maggie. Maybe things might have been different for us.

MAGGIE. Maybe. But as bad as those two nights in the hospital were I thought that was the closest we've ever been to each other.

JAKE. We didn't get any breaks, did we?


MAGGIE. Will you be here tomorrow?

JAKE. To watch you pack? No, thanks. I'll spare myself that. I've always hated the sight of a wife leaving.

MAGGIE. Then there isn't much left to say, is there?

JAKE. I guess not.

MAGGIE. (*SHE starts up stairs, stops at the top.*) Jake! I know nothing in life ever hurt you as much as Julie dying ... Well, tonight is the worst thing that's ever happened to me. (*SHE leaves.*)

JAKE. (*To audience.*) I haven't hung on to Julie ... I swear to you, I have tried over and over and over to get Julie out of my mind. I *never* summon her up. She just bursts in on me. 

(*JULIE, still at twenty-one, but dressed differently, bursts in on him.*)

JULIE. (*Angrily.*) Where were you?

JAKE. When?

JULIE. Last night. This morning. Right now. This minute. How could you not call me? How could you not want to know how I feel?

JAKE. About what?

JULIE. About *what*? About what happened to us?

JAKE. I don't know. What happened to us?

JULIE. Oh, my God. I don't believe this.

JAKE. Julie, I had a *very* busy day. People in and out of here. I'm sorry ... What happened to us?

JULIE. *WE MADE LOVE!!!*

JAKE. We did?

JULIE. "We did," he says. We slept together. For the first time, Jake. Not just *our* first time. It was *my* first time ... Ever!! And you don't remember it?

JAKE. Oh, *that* first time. Yes. I do. I just didn't realize you were going back twenty-nine years.

JULIE. I'm not going back twenty-nine years. I'm going back to last night.

JAKE. I know. I know.

JULIE. Well, aren't you going to ask me how I feel?

JAKE. Sure. How do you feel, Julie?

JULIE. (*Exasperated.*) Forget it. Never mind. It doesn't matter.

JAKE. No, it does, Julie. I swear. It's just that it comes at a bad time. Maggie's upstairs getting ready to leave me.

JULIE. Who's Maggie?

JAKE. My second wife.

JULIE. Well, she can be your first wife for all I care because I'm not sure you and I are ready for marriage.

JAKE. Julie, please don't mix up my time periods. It confuses me. I'm a writer, not a computer.

JULIE. You're a writer? You go to law school.

JAKE. Yes, *then*. But later I gave up law school and became a writer.

JULIE. Really? What did you write?

JAKE. Well, you wouldn't have heard of them because I didn't write them yet. I mean, I did write them but I just thought of you *now* and you're here before they would have been written. In other words, if you were here *later* —

JULIE. Alright. I get it. I got it. Okay. God!

JAKE. You *do* get it?

JULIE. I *said* I did. I get it.

JAKE. How old are you?

JULIE. Twenty-one.

JAKE. And how old am I?

JULIE. Twenty-four.

JAKE. No, you don't get it ... Look at me, Julie. Closely.

JULIE. (*SHE looks at him closer.*) Oh!

JAKE. See what I mean?

JULIE. You're in your mid-thirties.

JAKE. I wish ... Look closer, Julie. At the grey in my hair, at my skin, in my eyes.

JULIE. (*Looks him over.*) Oh, God, Jake. You're *old!* ... You're my father's age.

JAKE. (*Annoyed.*) No, I'm not. He was fifty-eight then. I'm only fifty-three.

JULIE. You're fifty-three? ... And I slept with you last night?

JAKE. It wasn't last night. It was twenty-nine years ago ... You see when I bring you back —

JULIE. Okay okay okay, I get it.

JAKE. Why? Do you think I look awful?

JULIE. No, not *awful* ... Mature! ... Look, it's okay. It happens.

JAKE. Am I that different?

JULIE. Well, you're a little — bulkier ... Is that the wrong word?

JAKE. You can't imagine.

JULIE. I do like the little wrinkles around your eyes ... and under them. It gives you — character. It's nice.

JAKE. Stick around, you'll love senility and arthritis.

JULIE. I don't care how old you are, Jake. Last night was still wonderful. God, I was scared. That I wouldn't like it. That *you* wouldn't like it. Did you know that out of all my girl friends, I'm the last one to do it? It's just that there was never a boy I wanted to get that close to. Never ... But when we walked home last night, I said to myself, if he tries, if he even puts a hand on my shoulder, he's going to know just how much love I have to give him ... And it was easier than I thought it would be, Jake ... It was wonderful. I am *so* glad we picked each other because I could never be with anyone else and neither could you. You know that, don't you?

JAKE. Julie, don't.

JULIE. Is that the wrong thing to say?

JAKE. Wrong? You make me want to hear more. To say more. To crawl in that place you're in now and stay there forever. But I can't do it. We're not *in* the same place, Julie.

JULIE. We're not? *Now* I'm confused ... Is this some sort of dream?

JAKE. Yes. For me ... It's a memory, Julie. You're the memory and I'm the present. And there's no future. Not a *real* future. Because we can never be together the way we once were. In life, I mean ... That life is gone ... Can you understand what I'm saying?

JULIE. Oh, God ... Oh, my God, Jake ... Are you dead?

JAKE. (*Exasperated.*) Jesus!

JULIE. Oh, Jake, I'm so sorry. When did it happen? Was it terrible? Well, of course, it would *have* to be terrible. No wonder you look older. They say your whole life flashes in front of you just before you die. That would age somebody, wouldn't it?

JAKE. *(To audience.)* I haven't got the heart to tell her.
(To Karen.) Karen, help me.

(KAREN rushes out.)

KAREN. *(Upstairs.)* What is it, Jake?

JAKE. She thinks I'm the one who died. What'll I tell her?

KAREN. That's not for us to do, Jake. Maybe a policeman or a rabbi.

JAKE. *(To Julie.)* It wasn't me, Julie. It was you.

JULIE. That died? Oh, I'm so relieved. I hate it when someone I love dies.

KAREN. Such a sweet girl, but a little naive, no?

JAKE. *(To Karen.)* No. She's just young.

JULIE. *(To Jake.)* Now I see why you bring me back. It's mostly when you're in trouble, isn't it?

KAREN. Join the club, honey.

JAKE. No, not exactly —

JULIE. Yes, it's true, Jake. Every time I come here, your life's in turmoil.

KAREN. Remember the heart attack?

JULIE. I remember when you had a heart attack. I was here, wasn't I?

JAKE. Well, after you left I found out it was just a bad shrimp.

JULIE. Then why didn't you get me back here and tell me?

JAKE. Well, you were so comforting, I really enjoyed it.

EDITH. *(Appears upstairs, opposite side of Karen.)* What about that tragedy in the paper?

JULIE. And I was here the night that terrible tragedy was in the paper.

JAKE. That was just a bad review in *Time* magazine ... Look, I panic sometimes. I admit it.

JULIE. And now I'm here because Maggie is leaving you.

EDITH. He uses people like Kleenex.

JAKE. *(To Julie.)* There's hardly a day in my life that I don't think of you, Julie.

JULIE. But you don't send for me unless you're in trouble. That's not fair, Jake. That's not honest. Because I come here with such expectations. You use the beginning of the best part of my life to get you through the worst part of yours. Make up your mind, Jake. Is this time for me or for her?

EDITH. *(To Karen.)* This is interesting. *This* is fascinating. I can't follow it but it's riveting.

JAKE. *(To Julie.)* Julie, would it be alright if this time was just for *me*? Because right this minute I don't think I could give either one of you what you need.

JULIE. If you need me now, that's alright. I'll do whatever I can. The thing is, I don't know if I can do it like this.

JAKE. Like what?

JULIE. Being twenty-one. I'm too young, too inexperienced. How can I help you when I don't even know what life is about yet ... Make me older, Jake. Make me — thirty-six.

JAKE. I can't do that, Julie.

JULIE. Sure, you can. I want to see what I'd look like anyway. If I'm going to be fat, I'll start dieting now.

KAREN. (To Edith.) He wants her younger. She wants to be older. Can you imagine? Only a dead woman would think like that.

JULIE. I'm doing it, Jake. I'm going out. I'll see you in fifteen years. Don't go away, otherwise I can't come back. (SHE starts out.)

JAKE. Stop it, Julie. I can't do it.

JULIE. Why not?

JAKE. Because ... you never were thirty-six.

JULIE. I wasn't? ... Oh ... How old did I get to be?

JAKE. Thirty-five.

JULIE. That's very young, isn't it?

KAREN. (To Edith.) This is the sad part. I'm going to see what else is on. (SHE leaves.)

EDITH. Don't make it too depressing, Jake. You just slept with the girl last night. (SHE goes.)

JULIE. How did it happen?

JAKE. Don't you remember?

JULIE. No.

JAKE. How can you not remember that?

JULIE. Because I'm twenty-one. It hasn't happened yet ... Tell me, Jake.

JAKE. It was an auto accident. Coming back from Vermont. The end of June.

JULIE. Were you in the car?

JAKE. No. The night before, in Vermont, I got a call my mother was sick in Florida. I got a flight out in the morning. You drove back yourself.

JULIE. What were we doing in Vermont?

JAKE. We were taking Molly up to camp.

JULIE. Molly?

JAKE. You don't know who Molly is?

JULIE. (Shakes her head "no," then realizes.) ... Oh, God ... We had a girl. (JAKE nods.) When?

JAKE. You were twenty-four. No, twenty-five.

JULIE. (Smiles.) We had a baby ... We had a little girl ... What is she like, Jake?

JAKE. Like you. Pretty. Smart. Impetuous ... She's at college now. At Amherst.

JULIE. Amherst?

JAKE. Is that alright?

JULIE. Yes. It's wonderful. Why did you pick Amherst?

JAKE. I didn't. You did. You said if we had a child, you wanted her to go to Amherst.

JULIE. No, I said Dartmouth.

JAKE. Oh. I thought you said Amherst ... She only has six months left. She could transfer.

JULIE. No, no. Too much packing to do ... So tell me about us. Were we a happy family? What did we do in the summers? Did we have a dog?

JAKE. Yes. A yellow Labrador.

JULIE. Perfect. What was his name?

JAKE. Bark.

JULIE. Bark?

JAKE. Yes. I asked him his name and he said —

JULIE. (Laughs.) Bark! Alright ... What about the summers? Where did we go?

JAKE. We rented a farmhouse in New Hampshire.

JULIE. All my dreams are coming true. Was Molly a happy baby?

JAKE. Oh, laughed all the time. Even in her sleep. She loved everything ... Only kid I knew who couldn't wait to get her shots at the doctor's.

JULIE. Are you exaggerating?

JAKE. Well, maybe embellishing.

JULIE. Oh, God. I wish we could have lived there for the rest of our lives.

JAKE. We did.

JULIE. (*Gets it.*) Oh. Right ... I got everything I wanted, Jake. Didn't I?

JAKE. Almost.

JULIE. Do you think I could see her?

JAKE. Molly? Sure. There's pictures all over here. (*HE opens a drawer.*) I took some great ones out at the beach this summer.

(*SHE looks at one.*)

JAKE. Here.

JULIE. Is that her? Oh, Jake ... She looks so grown up.

JAKE. (*Looks.*) Well, actually she's six months older than you are now.

JULIE. Not pictures, Jake. I want to see Molly.

JAKE. You mean *Molly* Molly? She's not here. She's up at school.

JULIE. Send for her.

JAKE. Send for her? You mean call her and tell her to drive down here and see what I'm thinking?

JULIE. No. Think of her too. Snap your fingers. I don't know how you do it. Just do it. I just want to see her. To talk to her.

JAKE. About what?

JULIE. None of your business. Mother and daughter things. Private stuff. Without you here.

JAKE. Julie, if I go, my thoughts go with me. They're attached to my brain.

(*The PHONE RINGS.*)

JULIE. You owe this to me, Jake.

JAKE. I do?

JULIE. For making me come only when you need me. Well, now I need you.

(*The PHONE RINGS again.*)

JAKE. (*HE picks up phone.*) Hello? ... Oh. Molly. (*To Julie.*) It's Molly. The real Molly. (*Back into phone.*) We were just thinking about you. I was.

JULIE. Can I listen? Can I hear her voice?

JAKE. Please. AT&T is having enough trouble. (*Into phone.*) Sorry, hon. I was on long distance. How are you? How's school? ... Oh, stop worrying. You always think you're going to fail your exams.

JULIE. I was the same way. Can I tell her that?

JAKE. (*Into phone.*) Molly, could you hold it one second. I want to turn down the TV. (*To Julie.*) I'll try. Another time. I promise.

JULIE. On my birthday? Can I see our daughter on my birthday?

JAKE. Your birthday?

JULIE. Instead of a present. I don't even want a cake. Just Molly. Say yes, Jake.

JAKE. Okay. Yes. I promise.

JULIE. Write it on your calendar. October 12th. Lunch with Molly and Julie.

JAKE. *Lunch??* I'm not taking you two to lunch. Julie, please. Don't turn this into Science Fiction. Just say goodbye.

JULIE. (*Backing off.*) Goodbye, Jake. I love you ... Last night was great ... Even if it was twenty-nine years ago. See you October 12th. (*SHE is gone.*)

JAKE. (*Back into phone.*) Molly? Sorry ... A little hectic today ... Listen, hon. There's a little trouble here ... No, no ... Domestic ... Can we talk about it later? ... Thanks ... Maggie's upstairs ... Listen, don't tell her I said anything ... I love you too ... Hold on. (*HE presses another button, then into phone.*) Hi. It's Molly. Do you want to talk to her? ... No, I just said there were problems but I didn't go into any details ... I think so too ... Alright. Hold on. (*HE switches buttons again, then hangs up. HE looks up at the audience. To audience.*) Molly knew what was wrong without me even telling her. She knew me better than I knew myself ... I have a theory that wisdom doesn't come with age. It comes at childhood, peaks around eighteen, then slides slowly down the scale into adulthood ... Parents express anger at a child by saying, "You ungrateful little brat. You'll never amount to anything" ... But kids are creative. They express anger by going to school and drawing a picture of you with the head of a gargoyle ... God has protected children with a purity of spirit and the ability to see things as they really are. They have an uncanny knack for speaking simple truths ... Molly, as young as she is, had the one quality I was never able to find, or worse still, never able to accept in another human being ... Trust! (*HE crosses.*) For example, on the first day that she and Maggie met eight years ago, as certain as I was about Maggie, it was Molly alone whose

stamp of approval I needed. I remember it as if it were yesterday.

(*HE snaps his fingers ...*

MAGGIE comes on. This is MAGGIE eight years ago.

Her clothes are less fashionable but her eagerness is infectious. SHE carries a gift-wrapped book and a wet floppy hat, that is crushed and dirty.)

MAGGIE. I'm late, I know. I'm sorry.

JAKE. What is it?

MAGGIE. A bus went by and blew my hat off. I chased it five blocks all the way downtown ... And then a cab ran over it and dragged it back uptown ... And by the time I got it, a dog was chewing on it. I bought it just for tonight. I wanted to look nice for your daughter. I wanted to make a good impression on her.

JAKE. Then wear it. That's the way *she* dresses.

MAGGIE. Don't make fun of me, Jake. Tonight is important ... I bought her a book. Does she like books?

JAKE. Loves books. What did you get her?

MAGGIE. I don't know.

JAKE. You don't know?

MAGGIE. No. I was rushing in the store. I didn't want to be late, so I just grabbed a book in the children's section and had them wrap it up.

JAKE. She'll love the book and she'll love you.

MAGGIE. Maybe I'm trying too hard to please her. Listen, maybe there's a chance I won't like *her*.

JAKE. That's right. Maybe you won't.

MAGGIE. What would you do?

JAKE. Well, as soon as your hat dried, I'd ask you to leave.

MAGGIE. You wouldn't.

JAKE. Of course I wouldn't. It's a joke.

MAGGIE. Don't ever kid me, Jake. I have absolutely no sense of humor.

JAKE. Don't worry. We'll get you a tutor.

MAGGIE. You will?

JAKE. No. That's a joke, too.

MAGGIE. So where's Polly?

JAKE. Molly. She's inside, trying on every outfit in her closet.

MAGGIE. Where are we going to eat?

JAKE. Sung Foo's. It's Szechuan Chinese. Her absolute favorite.

MAGGIE. Oh, God. Sung Foo's. I got sick there once.

JAKE. Okay, we'll go somewhere else.

MAGGIE. No, I don't want to disappoint her. We'll go. I'd rather get sick.

JAKE. Good. Get sick. She'd love that.

MAGGIE. Why?

JAKE. She wants to be a doctor.

MAGGIE. Okay, now *that* was a joke.

JAKE. No, it wasn't.

MAGGIE. Damn, they're so hard to spot.

JAKE. She's going to love you, Maggie. I promise.

MAGGIE. God, I hope so, Jake.

JAKE. You don't have the slightest idea of how special you are, do you?

MAGGIE. Oh, please don't say that, Jake. I have trouble taking compliments.

JAKE. Didn't your parents ever give them to you?

MAGGIE. Please. I graduated from high school second in my class and for a year my father called me "his little runner up."

JAKE. I'm sorry.

MAGGIE. Our backgrounds are so different, Jake. I wish I were born in New York, like you. Everyone's so talkative, so open here. You and Julie had so much in common, I know. Maybe that's why I'm nervous about Molly. I can picture being your wife but will she want me as a mother?

JAKE. Why don't you just start out as friends and the rest will take care of itself.

MAGGIE. You're smart, you know that? Well, of course, you know it. I have to be told. But I know we're good for each other, Jake. You and I must have come together for some important reason. And you're what I want, what I need. Someone to center my life on. Sometimes I run on supercharged batteries and if you don't watch me, I could spin right out into another galaxy.

JAKE. Perfect. Because my head is in the clouds most of the —

(Before HE can finish, SHE kisses him. HE puts his arms around her.)

MOLLY, at twelve, comes out. SHE stops when SHE sees them, embarrassed.)

MOLLY. Oh. Hi. I'm sorry.

MAGGIE. *(Nervously.)* Hi ... I must be Maggie.

JAKE. *(To Molly.)* She's got a very quick sense of humor.

MAGGIE. (*Extends hand to Molly.*) I'm real glad to meet you, Sally.

MOLLY. Molly.

(*THEY shake.*)

MAGGIE. Molly. Sorry ...

(*SHE sits, followed by MOLLY.*)

MAGGIE. So, your dad tells me you go to school at Walton.

MOLLY. Dalton.

MAGGIE. Dalton. Right ... I went to high school in East Lansing, Michigan. And then I went to Michigan State.

MOLLY. Right. What did you major in?

MAGGIE. Political science ... I wanted to become a political scientist ... or something like that ... And then I switched to pre-med ... which led to advertising.

MOLLY. Right.

JAKE. Sort of like throwing darts, wasn't it?

MAGGIE. (*Looks at Jake.*) Yes, wasn't it? (*To Molly.*) Have you thought about where you want to go to college?

MOLLY. Mm hmm. Amherst. Dad says my mother always wanted me to go to Amherst.

MAGGIE. Oh. Good school. Good sports program. Do you play sports?

MOLLY. Not well.

MAGGIE. Me neither. Although I was a cheerleader in high school. But I depressed everyone so they let me go.

MOLLY. (*Laughs.*) That's funny.

MAGGIE. It is? Oh, thank you, Molly. That means so much to me.

JAKE. Why don't you give Molly her present?

MAGGIE. I'll give it to her when I'm good and ready. (*To Molly.*) I have a present for you, Molly. (*SHE gets book and gives it to her.*) I hope you like it.

MOLLY. (*Feels it.*) It's a book, isn't it?

MAGGIE. I'm hoping it is, yes.

MOLLY. Should I open it now?

MAGGIE. Please. The suspense is killing me.

MOLLY. (*Tears off the wrapping paper and looks at the book. Reading title.*) *The 1981 World Atlas.*

(*MAGGIE looks at Jake. JAKE looks at the ceiling.*)

MAGGIE. (*To Molly.*) Did you read it?

MOLLY. No.

MAGGIE. Oh. Well, I hear it's very good.

JAKE. Universal bought the movie rights.

MAGGIE. (*To Molly.*) It's a dumb choice, isn't it? I'll be honest. I grabbed it without even looking.

MOLLY. No, I really need this for school because the names of the countries are changing all the time. (*Opens book, looks at pages.*) This is terrific.

MAGGIE. (*To Jake.*) See! She loves it.

JAKE. You certainly know how to grab a book ... Is anyone beside me hungry?

MAGGIE. So starved you wouldn't believe it. Can we go to my favorite favorite place? Sung Foo's?

MOLLY. That's my favorite favorite too.

JAKE. What a small world small world this is.

MOLLY. Oh! Sung Foo's was in the paper last week. Three men were killed there.

MAGGIE. Really? What were they eating?

MOLLY. (*Puzzled.*) ... No. They were shot.

MAGGIE. Shot?

JAKE. It's not on the menu. You have to ask for it ... Are we ready to go, guys?

MOLLY. I just have to turn off my TV. (*To Maggie.*) Is it alright if I call you Maggie?

MAGGIE. Maggie? Sure, that's the only name I got right.

MOLLY. (*Laughs.*) I love your humor. (*SHE runs off.*)

MAGGIE. Oh, Jake. We like each other. And I'm crazy about her. I want more, just like her ... What a terrific day. What a terrific opportunity for all of us ... Oh! Where's the bathroom? I forgot to go today. I am so happy.

(*JAKE points, and MAGGIE rushes off.*)

MOLLY comes back on.)

MOLLY. I'm ready.

JAKE. Come here. I want to talk to you ... The truth now. Do you like her?

MOLLY. She is the absolute best most perfect one you ever brought home. I mean *some* of them were really doozies.

JAKE. I didn't ask for an in-depth review of my social life ... What do you like about her?

MOLLY. Everything. She's fun and she's pretty and she dresses nice and she's very smart. I can tell.

JAKE. How can you tell?

MOLLY. I spoke to her.

JAKE. That's right. You did ... So do you think I should be — you know ...

MOLLY. Serious?

JAKE. Serious about her?

MOLLY. No.

JAKE. No?

MOLLY. I think you should just marry her. This week. I can't wait for her to move in.

JAKE. What's the rush?

MOLLY. She might change her mind.

JAKE. Hey! I'm the catch of the year.

MOLLY. I know. But the years go by fast.

JAKE. Oh, thanks.

(*The TELEPHONE RINGS inside.*)

MOLLY. That's my phone. I'll be right back. (*SHE starts to go.*)

JAKE. Molly? What's the absolute best thing about her?

MOLLY. That she'll make us all a good family again.

JAKE. Thank you, Molly. That's a nice thing to say.


(*Her PHONE RINGS again.*)

MOLLY. If you two elope, can I go too?

JAKE. Sure. Bring your friends. I'll get a bus.

MOLLY. Oh, great. I will.

(*SHE turns and runs off into her room. JAKE sits there a moment, happy.*)

 *There is another LIGHT CHANGE and MAGGIE comes out of the upstairs bathroom wearing a raincoat, a scarf on her head and carrying a small suitcase. SHE looks bleak, sees Jake.)*


MAGGIE. I didn't tell Molly too much, but she senses what's going on ... She's driving into town on Saturday. We'll have lunch. *(SHE's downstairs by now.)* I told the service to hold my calls. I don't think I'll go into work this week ... I'm not even sure that job is the right thing for me now anyway. *(SHE starts for the door.)* ... Can I call you from the beach?

JAKE. If you like.

MAGGIE. God, I just don't know how to get through that door.

JAKE. Would you like me to open it?

MAGGIE. No. If I can get through that, I can get through anything ... Goodbye, Jake.

JAKE. I hope not, Maggie. 

(SHE looks over at Jake, then goes. JAKE sits, looking morose ... YOUNG MOLLY and OLDER MOLLY come on together.)

OLDER MOLLY. Hi, Dad.

YOUNGER MOLLY. Hello, Daddy.

JAKE. *(Looks at them.)* Well!! I never saw the both of you together before? ... Any more Mollys coming? Like Molly at twelve months?

YOUNGER MOLLY. No. Molly couldn't talk at twelve months.

JAKE. And you figure I feel like talking now, right?

OLDER MOLLY. Or not talking. Whatever you want, Dad. We just want to stay and keep you company.

(THEY sit with him, one on either side.)

JAKE. I may be sitting here all night. Maybe all week.

OLDER MOLLY. We don't mind.

YOUNGER MOLLY. We could play games. How about Actors and Actresses?

OLDER MOLLY. He doesn't want to play games now.

JAKE. No, no. That's alright. Maybe it'll take my mind off things ... I'll go first ... M.L. English Actress.

OLDER MOLLY. Maggie Leighton.

JAKE. Right ... M.S. Another English Actress.

OLDER MOLLY. Maggie Smith.

JAKE. Right ... The lead in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*?


YOUNGER MOLLY. Maggie the Cat.

JAKE. Right ... This wasn't such a good idea, was it?

ALL THREE. No.

JAKE. No ... Maybe just sitting quietly is the best idea.

YOUNGER MOLLY. Yes, Daddy.

JAKE. *(HE holds their hands.)* Thank you, Molly ... You too, Molly ... We got through this once ... We'll get through it again ... 

(THEY sit quietly, looking at him.)

CURTAIN



ACT II

About six months later.

JAKE is sitting at his word processor. HE types, then leans back in thought.

MAGGIE enters, wearing the same clothes she left in at the end of Act I, carrying the same overnight bag.

SHE stands there looking up at him. HE sees her.

JAKE. ... Forget something?

MAGGIE. Yes ... Our marriage.

JAKE. I thought you packed it when you left.

MAGGIE. I thought so too. Apparently I was wrong ... about a lot of things.

JAKE. I thought you were pretty clear about what you wanted.

MAGGIE. I found out what I wanted wasn't out there ... I missed you, Jake. I missed the little things. The way you stare at the ceiling when you're lost in thought. The way you always find the right words to say even in the most painful situation. And I fumble through, tripping over my own tongue, trying to say to you that I was wrong. Wrong about everything. And praying to God that you haven't rented out my half of the bed or that somebody else's soap isn't sitting up there in my soap dish.

JAKE. Do you mean it, Maggie? Is that what you really want?

MAGGIE. Oh, yes, Jake, yes. Oh, God, yes. (*And suddenly SHE starts to laugh.*) I'm sorry, Jake. (*SHE*

laughs again.) I don't mean to laugh. But honestly, this is the *dumbest* scene you've ever written in your life.

JAKE. (*Angrily.*) I didn't write it. I'm just *thinking* of it.

MAGGIE. Oh, good. Then you didn't waste any paper. (*This really breaks her up.*)

JAKE. What I wasted was even *thinking* about you ... Go on. Get out of here. I have important work to do.

MAGGIE. (*Still laughing.*) Don't lose the line about somebody else's soap in my soap dish. (*SHE picks up her bag, holding her sides laughing as SHE heads out.*) Oh, God. I needed a good laugh. (*SHE is gone.*)

JAKE. (*To audience.*) What you just witnessed is a man at the end of his rope ... with nothing to hold on to because his wife took the rope with her ... I don't know, I used to fantasize lust, romance, power. Now I'm into humiliation. It was six months since Maggie left and I haven't written a single word worth processing. To tell you the truth, I miss Maggie ... Not that I haven't been dating now and then. Man does not live by abstinence alone ... But recently, here in the privacy of my home, my mind and my thoughts, I was visited by a new and fresher hell than my warped imagination could ever dream of ... No longer did I summon up the Karens and Ediths and Mollys of my life to help brighten up the endless sleepless nights ... Now they came on their own. Uninvited. Unsummoned. Unstoppable.

KAREN. (*Appears.*) Jake, could I speak to you for a minute?

JAKE. Karen, I didn't send for you. Please go away. Isn't there an Ingmar Bergman Festival somewhere?

KAREN. I just came from one. But in the middle of "Cries and Whispers," I began to worry about you.

JAKE. Everyone who sees "Cries and Whispers" gets worried. Well, stop it because I'm fine.

KAREN. You're not fine. You need rest. You're overwrought, overworked, under weight. How can you sleep, running around like a lunatic with every woman you bump into?

JAKE. I am not running around with every woman I bump into. I'm very selective.

KAREN. Sure. If they're a woman, you select them. Like that new one. That — Sheila woman.

JAKE. Don't say "That Sheila Woman." I hate that expression. It sounds like a bad television series.

KAREN. I only use that expression because I can't keep up with all your women.

JAKE. Four! Four women in six months ... Peggy, Kathy, Dana, Myra and Sheila ... Five! Five women in six months.

KAREN. Susan wasn't a woman?

JAKE. Two nights. That lasted two nights.

KAREN. So what does that make her? Half a woman?

JAKE. It makes her someone I wasn't interested in.

KAREN. You go out with women you're not interested in?

JAKE. You have to go out with them before you find out you're not interested, don't you?

KAREN. You can't tell right away? I can.

JAKE. Good. Then *you* go out with her. If you have a good time, let me know and *I'll* go out with her.

KAREN. Why is it whenever I try to help you, you push me away? You're that way with *all* women. You're so — so — standoffish.

JAKE. *I'm* standoffish with women? I'm a thousand times more comfortable with women than I ever am with a man. I love being around them. I never even *think* of a man. Watch! ... I'm thinking of Pop. Of Uncle Josh. Of my best friend, Marty ... Do you see a man in here? No! ... I happen to love women. That's my trouble. I can't seem to exist without them.

KAREN. What you love is to *love* women. You love to have women in love with you. You even love to love women who love you because you're standoffish. But intimacy, aha, *that* you're afraid of.

JAKE. (*Incredulous.*) What??

KAREN. I said, "Aha, *that* you're afraid of." I think you're afraid to lose control in a relationship with a woman. To let a woman in so close, so deep inside of you, that she'll gobble you up and you'll lose whatever you think you are. You always have to be the Master, Jake. The Master, the Conductor, the Director and the Attorney General. You don't think it's strange that you sit around here thinking about women and making up what they say to you? And then you think up that *we* make up that we come over here on our own? Come on! How much more control do you want? ... They love you, they leave you, they come back to you, they worry about you, they die, they live, they grow up, the fall down, they fight for you, they cry for you — it's a three ring circus in here and all the horses and lions and elephants are women ... You're the star of the show, Jake. You're the one they shoot out of a cannon and you fly around the tent with an American

flag in your mouth and all the women go crazy and faint and they take them away to hospitals ... The trouble is — it's very hard to get close to a man who's flying around in a tent with a flag in his mouth. That's what I call trouble with intimacy.

JAKE. I couldn't be more intimate with women. I'm an open book. I tell them everything. My feelings, my hurts, my pains, my vulnerabilities. My intimacy scares them, if you want to know the truth. And if I'm the ringmaster of the circus, how come all the acts are leaving? Mom is gone, Julie is gone, Maggie's left, Molly's on her own, Peggy, Kathy, Dana, Myra, none of those worked out. That's why you're here seven days a week. There's no one left for me. This house used to be filled with people laughing, living, loving ... and now it's just me talking to you telling me what I'm telling you to say ... You think I'm crazy, don't you?

KAREN. Well, you're in a peculiar line of work, Jake.

EDITH. (*Appears.*) He picked it because he likes to deprive himself.

JAKE. (*To Edith.*) Who asked you? If this is a session, Edith, I'm not paying for it. Charge it to Karen.

EDITH. (*To Jake.*) Have you seen Maggie since she's back from Europe? I hear she looks beautiful.

JAKE. How would I know where Maggie is? You think that's all I have on my mind? I happen to be seeing someone now, Edith.

EDITH. Who?

KAREN. That Sheila woman.

EDITH. Well, I know for a fact that you dialled Maggie's number last night, got scared and hung up on the first ring.

JAKE. *I hung up?* Jesus, even discussing a confidential thing like that in front of my sister is the most unethical goddam thing I ever heard.

KAREN. *(To Edith.)* I think he should get away. He could make believe he was in Paris for two weeks.

JAKE. *(Looks at himself in the imaginary mirror.)* My God, I can see them in the mirror. They're really here.

EDITH. *(To Karen.)* I'm just trying to point out to him that he's going to keep turning down every woman he meets until he lets go of the past.

JAKE. Excuse me, girls. I'm going to the bathroom. *(HE starts to cross.)*

KAREN. And I'm saying if he took the time to meet the right woman, he wouldn't turn her down.

EDITH. The trouble is, he wouldn't know who the right woman is if he —

(On that word, JAKE goes into the bathroom and closes the door. EDITH and KAREN stop talking. THEY don't freeze, but THEY have nothing to say without JAKE there.)

Finally, we hear the TOILET FLUSH and JAKE comes out of the bathroom.)

EDITH. — met her, for God's sake.

(JAKE crosses to the phone and starts to dial.)

EDITH. *(To Jake.)* Who are you calling?

JAKE. I'm calling you!

EDITH. *(Looks at her watch.)* At four twenty? I'm with a patient.

JAKE. I pity whoever it is. *(Into phone.)* Hello? Edith?

EDITH. That's not me. It's my answering machine. Wait for the beep.

JAKE. *(Waits, listens.)* Christ! Do I have to listen to the entire album of *Man of La Mancha*?

EDITH. *(Looks at her watch.)* ... Okay! Now!

JAKE. *(Into phone.)* Edith. It's Jake. I'm at home. I'm having one of those things we talked about. This time it's you and my sister. Could you call me on your break? Please, just call me back as soon as you can. *(HE hangs up.)*

EDITH. *(To Karen.)* By the way, Karen. I think I met a man. Very attractive, very wealthy, recently widowed. As a matter of fact, he's the patient I'm having the session with right now.

KAREN. Isn't it unethical to date your own patient?

EDITH. Yes. But if this thing gets serious, I'll tell him he's cured.

JAKE. *(Exasperated.)* Christ Almighty!

(The PHONE RINGS. HE quickly picks it up.)

JAKE. Hello? ... Yes, Edith. Thanks for calling back. Yes, they're sitting in here now. You and Karen. Dissecting me like a frog in biology ... And Karen just made a twelve minute speech about me being a ringmaster and flying around a circus tent with a flag in my mouth.

KAREN. *(To Jake.)* Tell her the whole speech. It was wonderful.

EDITH. *(To Karen.)* Shh. He's talking to me.

JAKE. *(Into phone.)* No, no. This is real. I can even see them in the mirror. In the beginning it just used to be my

thoughts. Like when I'm writing. But now I can see them. I hear them. I can smell their perfume.

KAREN. (*To Edith.*) Some crap he must have me wearing.

JAKE. (*Into phone.*) It scares me, Edith. Does it scare you?

EDITH. No, Jake. It doesn't scare me.

JAKE. (*To Edith.*) Will you let me talk to you, for God's sake? (*Back into phone.*) Excuse me, Edith ... It's driving me nuts. I have to get rid of them. My sanity is at stake here. What should I do? ... Please tell me ... Yes? ... Uh uh ... Uh huh ...

KAREN. (*To Edith.*) I hope this isn't going to be like "Ghostbusters."

JAKE. (*Into phone.*) Alright. If I have to, I have to. Thank you, Edith. Goodbye. (*HE hangs up and starts up the stairs.*)

EDITH. (*To Jake.*) Where are you going?

JAKE. Upstairs. To take a bunch of Seconals. If you won't leave, at least I can sleep you away. (*HE starts up again.*)

EDITH. Jake, no. You'll kill yourself.

JAKE. (*Points to the phone.*) It was your suggestion.

EDITH. It was?

KAREN. (*As SHE goes.*) Pills! Pills! That's all you doctors know ... Then what does he need a psychiatrist for?

EDITH. Who else is going to get him the pills?



(*THEY are both gone.*)

JAKE. (*Turns to the audience.*) You want to know how low I've sunk? (*HE points to the phone.*) I never spoke to

Edith. I called my service. I actually made a phone call pretending I was speaking to the *real* Edith to scare the Edith and Karen in my head out of here ... I tricked myself and I fell for it ... The thing about going crazy is that it makes you incredibly smart, in a stupid sort of way. (*HE starts down.*) But I do feel like I'm losing a grip on myself. As if I'm spiralling down in diminishing circles like water being drained from a bathtub, and suddenly my big toe is being sucked down into the hole and I'm screaming for my life ... No. Not my life. My mother ... Why, tell me why, it's always your mother. It's never your father or an uncle or a second cousin from Detroit ... I was five years old in a third floor apartment in the Bronx, waking up from a nap and there's no one there. My mother is on the *fourth* floor visiting a neighbor. I'm terrified. Why doesn't she hear me? Why doesn't she come? And by the time she comes, it's too late. Your basic Freudian mother abandonment trauma has set in like cement ... I never trusted her again.

(*The INTERCOM BUZZES.*)

JAKE. What was that? ... Oh, the buzzer ... God, I'm a bundle of nerves ... (*HE picks it up.*) Yes? ... Oh, Sheila ... What a surprise, Sheila ... Where are you, Sheila? ... Oh, of course. Downstairs ... Sure. Come on up, Sheila. (*To audience.*) But is Jake doomed? Not by a long shot. There's Sheila. Another woman to the rescue ... Another woman ... It's always another woman ... Stop it, Jake ... You can handle it, Jake. Get a hold of yourself, Jake ... Get a grip on yourself ...

(SHEILA appears, an attractive woman in her early thirties.)

SHEILA. Hi.

JAKE. Sheila! Oh, Sheila, it's so good to see you. God, I'm glad you're here. Where were you so long? I've been waiting all day for you.

SHEILA. You were?

JAKE. Of course I was. You look so good. So pretty. So sweet. So how are you?

SHEILA. Are you alright? ... You look — discombobulated.

JAKE. No, no. I'm bobulated. I was just working.

SHEILA. You look exhausted. Have you been sleeping?

JAKE. While I work? No. You have to be awake to work ... No, I'm just tired ... Hungry. I forgot to eat ... Oh, my God. I forgot our lunch date. Dammit, I'm sorry.

SHEILA. We didn't have a lunch date.

JAKE. We didn't?

SHEILA. Not today. You forgot *yesterday's* lunch date. I called you four times. You had your service on. Don't you check your messages?

JAKE. No. I didn't want to interrupt my train of thought.

SHEILA. Since yesterday?

JAKE. Well, it was a long train ... I'm sorry, Sheila. I know I'm not making sense. Did I say bobulated? ... I can't get my thoughts together. My mind keeps stuttering. *Sputtering* ... Skittering. What's the word I want?

SHEILA. For what?

JAKE. For when your mind makes jumps. Splintering. Scattering. Jesus, I can't think straight ... Staggering. Stammering ... *Faltering!*

SHEILA. Stop it, Jake. Give your mind a rest.

JAKE. I can't. I've been going through this thing. A writer thing.

SHEILA. A block.

JAKE. No, not a block. *Yes*, a block. Digressions. Distractions. Dissections ... No, not dissections. *Delusions!*

SHEILA. Delusions?

JAKE. Like delusions. I veer off. I wander. I stray. I roam. I fade off into other places.

SHEILA. I can see that.

JAKE. You can? Oh, no, not about you. I'm so grateful for you, Sheila. I depend on you. You comfort me, you support me, you hold me together.

SHEILA. I hardly see you.

JAKE. Well, I've been busy. But when you *are* here, you're so real, Sheila. *I love* that you're real. Nobody is real anymore.

SHEILA. *I try* to be real.

JAKE. Well, you look real. You smell real. You *feel* real. (*HE holds her.*) Oh, God! Flesh and blood. *I love* flesh and blood ... Some people don't have it, you know.

SHEILA. Flesh and blood?

JAKE. They're superficial. You can see right through them. Oh, maybe you can see their reflection in a mirror, but they're not really there.

SHEILA. I've met people like that.

JAKE. Oh, I could introduce you to a roomful. But *you*, Sheila. You're so vivid. So colorful. So dimensional.

SHEILA. What do you mean, dimensional?

JAKE. Dimensional. You have sides. You have a left side, a right side, a front side, a back side. You have form as a person. You have matter. Good, firm, solid matter.

SHEILA. Well, I work out in a gym a lot.

JAKE. No! That kind of matter doesn't matter ... Listen to me. You know how people come in and out of your life? In a door, out the door. This one's here, that one's here. You know that feeling?

SHEILA. I don't entertain as much as you.

JAKE. Exactly! Exactly! That's my point. You know what my trouble is, Sheila? I work too much. I don't want work to be my life. I want my life to be my life. I let so many things go by. So many things I don't do.

SHEILA. Like what?

JAKE. Like travel. I should travel a lot more.

SHEILA. I loved our trip to Quebec.

JAKE. Okay. There you are. But there's more than Quebec. There's Europe. There's Africa. There's the Middle East. Well, no, not the Middle East, but there's Japan. Have you ever been to Japan?

SHEILA. No.

JAKE. Oh, Japan is the greatest. I was there with Maggie once. And with Julie once. And once with another girl. I'd love to go with you.

SHEILA. They must know you very well there.

JAKE. Hey! There's Australia. Have you ever been to Australia?

SHEILA. No. Just here and Quebec. I don't fly too well.

JAKE. Okay. A ship. A slow boat to China. How does that sound? China? Hong Kong? The Orient?

SHEILA. When are you talking about?

JAKE. Next month. Next week. How about next week?

SHEILA. Go to China next week? My vacation isn't for eight months.

JAKE. You could ask them. Tell them it's an emergency.

SHEILA. An emergency vacation to China?

JAKE. Okay, forget China. Forget Hong Kong. What about India? Bombay? Calcutta?

SHEILA. I can only get a three day weekend, Jake. I could go there, but I'd have to quit my job when I got there.

JAKE. Alright. Forget Bombay. Forget Calcutta. Forget travelling ... I'll tell you what I'd really like to do. What would really shake my life up.

SHEILA. What's that, Jake?

JAKE. I want to move. It's time I moved, Sheila.

SHEILA. I thought you loved this place.

JAKE. I *did* love it. I don't love it now. I want a new place, Sheila. A new start. A new beginning for you and me. Do you understand what I'm saying, Sheila?

SHEILA. You want me to move in with you?

JAKE. Yes!!! ... Not *now*. Some day. Later on. In the future.

SHEILA. So what are you saying?

JAKE. I just said it. Move in with me. But not now. Some day. Later on.

SHEILA. Why does that sound negative to me?

JAKE. It's *not* a negative. It's a *positive* negative. It's a cautious enthusiasm.

SHEILA. Like an uncommitted commitment?

JAKE. No. That's an oxymoron. What I'm saying is, I love you and I want you to be with me ... someday, somewhere, somehow.

SHEILA. This is all new to me, Jake. You never talked like this before. I know you care for me but I never thought it was about loving.

JAKE. Didn't I just say I love you?

SHEILA. Yes, but it didn't have any immediacy to it. I feel like I have to wait for a delivery date.

JAKE. Are you saying you don't know how I feel?

SHEILA. Well, I always felt like I was needed but I never felt loved. I like being needed but being loved is better.

JAKE. So what are you saying? Have I been — what? Cold to you?

SHEILA. No. Never cold. You're warm and funny and affectionate. But you always keep your distance. An arms length away. Sort of — standoffish.

JAKE. Oh, shit.

SHEILA. Did I say something wrong? Am I the first one who ever said that?

JAKE. Standoffish? I don't know. I can't recall anyone ever saying it.

SHEILA. Maybe standoffish is too strong. Maybe a lack of intimacy.

JAKE. Can we get off this, Sheila? We're in a holding pattern here. We're not moving this along.

SHEILA. Where do you want to move it to?

JAKE. All I'm trying to do is move from here to there. I'm here now but I want to get to there. Do you understand that, Sheila?

SHEILA. Yes. You're here but you want to get to there.

JAKE. Right!! Right!! That's right!! From here to there, that's all.

SHEILA. Jake, I mean this as a constructive positive, but you seem very confused.

JAKE. I'm not confused. Well, a *little* confused. I can't keep my visions focused.

SHEILA. Is it an eye glass thing?

JAKE. No, I see fine. I see great. Why am I having trouble with this? What is it I'm trying to say?

(MAGGIE appears. SHEILA never sees her.)

MAGGIE. That you're really not interested. That you're just kidding yourself. *(SHE goes.)*

JAKE. I am *not* kidding myself.

SHEILA. About what?

JAKE. *(To Sheila.)* About us. About you and me. I think we should start seeing each other on a regular basis, Sheila.

SHEILA. You mean every night?

JAKE. Yes. Every night. Well, no, not every night. A *lot* of nights. The nights that you don't have something else to do. Or I don't. But most nights. Can we do that?


SHEILA. I was hoping we could spend more time together.

JAKE. Oh, there are so many things we can do.

SHEILA. Like what?

JAKE. I don't know. We'll make a list. A "things we can do together" list. Or *you* can make the list and I'll check off what I like.

SHEILA. Sure.

JAKE. And then I'm going to move. I really never liked this neighborhood anyway. A bunch of old remodeled factories, that's all it is. 

(MAGGIE appears on opposite side of stage.)

MAGGIE. Ah, but Jake, it has such charm.

JAKE. And it has no charm. Some people *think* it has charm but it doesn't, believe me.

MAGGIE. Why don't we ask Sheila?

JAKE. STAY OUT OF THIS!!

SHEILA. I *am*. You say it doesn't have charm, I believe you.

JAKE. (To Sheila.) Now uptown is the place. The Upper East Side. Do you like the Upper East Side?

SHEILA. Everybody likes the Upper East Side.

MAGGIE. (To Jake.) I thought you liked Brooklyn Heights.

JAKE. I *do* like Brooklyn Heights.

SHEILA. I didn't say you didn't.

JAKE. (To Sheila.) I know. I meant Brooklyn Heights is a good idea too. Great views of the river. And nobody from New York ever comes over to visit you.

MAGGIE. Of course Bedford Village is beautiful.

JAKE. I *know* Bedford Village is beautiful.

SHEILA. Yes, I hear it is too.

JAKE. (Smiles to Sheila.) Yes, isn't it? The leaves turning brown in the fall. There was a house on a lake up there I always dreamed of living in.

MAGGIE. Why don't you go and see it, Jake?

JAKE. (To Sheila.) You want to go and see it, Jake? ... Sheila? Come on, Sheila. Let's go up and see it, Sheila.

SHEILA. Now? It'll be dark by the time we get there.

MAGGIE. You could stay at the Bedford Inn.

JAKE. (To Sheila.) We could stay at the Bedford Inn. Then we could see the house first thing in the morning.

SHEILA. Jake, I wish you could listen to yourself. You want to go to China, Japan, Australia, Calcutta. Then you want to move to the Upper East Side and Brooklyn Heights and Bedford Village. *Nobody* can change their mind that fast.

MAGGIE. *He can.*

JAKE. I can.

SHEILA. Well, I can't. I'm not a writer, Jake. I'm a businesswoman. I make up my mind slowly and carefully. If I wanted to live on the Upper East Side, I would investigate the Upper East Side.

JAKE. I know.

SHEILA. And if I wanted to live in Brooklyn Heights—

JAKE. I know.

SHEILA. I would investigate —

ALL THREE. — Brooklyn Heights.

JAKE. I know.

SHEILA. Or if I wanted to live in Bedford Village —

JAKE. I know I know I know I know.

SHEILA. (Defensive.) I'm sorry. Live where you want, Jake. I just think you should investigate one place at a time.

JAKE. I will I will I will I will! ... I will! ... I'm sorry. Forgive me ... I will.

SHEILA. Can't we just go a little slower? You move in so many directions. I never know where it is you want to get to.

MAGGIE. (*Points from Sheila to herself.*) From there to here, honey.

JAKE. (*To Maggie.*) No, it's not.

SHEILA. What's not?

JAKE. (*To Sheila.*) It's not the way I am. I don't want to go in a lot of directions. I want to live in the country. In Bedford Village.

SHEILA. You sure you wouldn't get bored in the country, Jake?

MAGGIE. (*To Sheila.*) He'd kill himself.

JAKE. (*To Maggie.*) Will you butt out of this?

SHEILA. Listen, I don't have to talk at all.

MAGGIE. (*Gets up.*) Let's take her up on that, Jake. (*MAGGIE stands behind Sheila and mimics every word and gesture she utters, in complete unison.*)

SHEILA. I don't know when I'm being negative or constructive or logically positive or conventionally destructive ... You tell me I have a front side and a back side and an inside and an outside. I have form and dimension and matter that doesn't matter. You love me, you want me to move in with you but not today, later, in the future, someday, somehow, somewhere over the rainbow ... Then you want to get from here to there, from there to here, MAKE UP YOUR MIND, JAKE!! I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE. MY HAIR IS STARTING TO FALL OUT.

(*THEY finish with their arms and bodies in the same position, like the finish of a musical number.*)

JAKE. Alright. I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. Forgive me.

MAGGIE. Don't beg her, Jake.

JAKE. I'M NOT BEGGING!

SHEILA. Who asked you to? (*SHE starts to walk away.*)

JAKE. Don't leave, Sheila.

SHEILA. Where am I going? To Calcutta? Don't corner me. I get very nervous when I get cornered.

JAKE. I won't corner you. We should get out of here. We should go up to Bedford. Right now.

SHEILA. Alright. Fine. I'll go to Bedford. If you want to go to Bedford, I'll go.

MAGGIE. There's a lot of traffic now. You waited too long.

JAKE. Well, there's a lot of traffic now. We waited too long.

SHEILA. YOU ASKED ME TWO MINUTES AGO!!!
... What is wrong with you, Jake?

MAGGIE. Yes, what is wrong with you, Jake?

JAKE. (*To Maggie.*) You know goddamn well what's wrong. It's you!!

SHEILA. Oh, it's me! It's my fault. I'm the one who wants to take a slow boat to Brooklyn Heights. I'm the oxymoron who can't get her visions focused.

MAGGIE. (*To Jake.*) How'd you like to hear that voice the rest of your life?

JAKE. (*To Maggie.*) Will you shut up, goddammit!!

SHEILA. (*Nervous, backs away.*) Jake, you're making me nervous. I've never seen you like this.

JAKE. I know. I know. It's a phase. It'll go. It'll pass. It'll stop.

SHEILA. Jake, I'm calling your doctor. What's your doctor's name?

MAGGIE. Edith! Let's get Edith here. Let's have a party.

JAKE. *(To Maggie.)* I'm telling you for the last time. SHUT UP!!!

SHEILA. What's happening, Jake?

JAKE. *(To Maggie.)* Get out! I want you out of this house *now!!* Do you hear me?

SHEILA. *(Frightened.)* Yes, I hear you. *(Backing away.)*

JAKE *(To Sheila.)* Don't go, Sheila. You promised to stay. I'll get rid of her. I'll call Edith. Edith will help.

MAGGIE. *(To Sheila.)* Edith won't help, Sheila. I'm a prisoner in his head. Go for help.

JAKE. *(To Maggie.)* If you don't stop, I swear, I'll kill you.

SHEILA. *(Backs up, screams.)* Ohhhhhh!

MAGGIE. *(To Sheila.)* Run, Sheila, run. That's what I did, honey.

JAKE. *(To Maggie.)* Go on. Keep talking. You'll never leave this room alive!

SHEILA. *(Screams.)* Oh, God!!! ... Oh, my God!!! *(And SHE goes running from the apartment.)*

JAKE. Sheila ... Sheila!

MAGGIE. That was fun, Jake. Bitchy but fun.

JAKE. Why did you do that, Maggie? What was the point of it?

MAGGIE. I suppose because you didn't have the guts to tell her yourself. So you made me the hit man. To dump her would be cruel and you're not cruel, Jake. So you act

like a lunatic, Sheila thinks she's well out of it and you're off the hook. You never get your hands dirty, do you?

JAKE. You don't think much of me, do you, Maggie?

MAGGIE. See what I mean? You're so afraid to face who you really are, you leave me to pass judgement on you and then blame *me* for what you don't like about yourself.

JAKE. Well, since I'm making up what you say, I might as well take advantage of it.

MAGGIE. You're cute, Jake. Nuts but cute ... Come on, leave your work upstairs where it belongs. *(Points upstairs.)* That's writing — *(Points downstairs.)* — this is living ... If surgeons lived like you, they'd be cutting people up in elevators. *(SHE starts to go.)*

JAKE. Where are you going?

MAGGIE. Hopefully, out of your mind. Which is where I think *you're* going.

JAKE. Then help me.

MAGGIE. How?

JAKE. *(Points up to his office.)* I want to get from there to here ... Up there I trust what I do ... but down here, it's people I have to trust and that's hard.

MAGGIE. For everybody, Jake. That's why women carry mace in their pocketbooks. *(SHE starts away again.)*

JAKE. Will I see you again?

MAGGIE. I don't know. That's between you and Maggie. *(SHE leaves.)*

JAKE. *(Turns to the audience.)* I have the feeling I'm trying to put together a jigsaw puzzle that has no picture on it ... I'm a blank, waiting to fill in who I am ... How did I get to be this way? ... That's not a rhetorical question. I mean, if you know, please tell me ... Okay, Jake. Go

back to the beginning. That's what Edith always says ... Here's another Mother story ... I'm six years old, sitting in the kitchen with my mother, watching her shell peas ... And on the floor I see a roach ... My mother, faster than a speeding train, takes a newspaper and splats it against the baseboard ... "Where do roaches come from?" I ask my mother ... "From the dirt," she answers ... "You mean," I say, "the roaches like to live in the dirt and eat it?" ... "No," says Mom. "The dirt turns *into* roaches" ... And I go back into my room, lay on the bed and say to myself, "The dirt turns into roaches" ... And the realization hits me ... My mother is dumb ... And I know instinctively that six years old is too soon to find out that your mother is dumb ... Because I'm banking my whole childhood on this woman taking care of me ... And so I decided on that day, I would never depend on anyone except myself ... I loved my mother, but I never asked her anymore questions ... The trouble is, here I am today at the age of fifty-three, without any answers ... Oh my God, Julie!



(JULIE suddenly appears. This is JULIE at thirty-five. SHE wears a skirt and a brown suede bolero jacket.)

JULIE. You remembered! I didn't sleep a wink last night wondering if you were going to send for me or not.

JAKE. Of course I was.

JULIE. Maybe you heard me praying, "Please don't forget, Jake. You've *got* to think of me today" ... And you did, didn't you, Jake?

JAKE. Yes. I guess so. Sure. I mean otherwise what would you be doing here? ... The thing is, it's not a good time for me right now, Julie.

JULIE. Oh. Are you writing?

JAKE. I don't know. I can't tell *what* this is anymore.

JULIE. I read some of your books. Just the first few. I didn't get to the rest yet.

JAKE. Really? What did you think?

JULIE. I liked them.

JAKE. But you didn't love them.

JULIE. No. But I see each one getting a little better than the last.

JAKE. What was wrong with them?

JULIE. They weren't you. Just be you, Jake. And don't rush the endings. You always rush the endings as if you're anxious to get on with the next one.

JAKE. I know what you mean. I sort of do that with people too ... Julie, this has been a long day for me. Do you think we could do this tomorrow?

JULIE. Tomorrow is too late, Jake. *Today* is October 12th.

JAKE. October 12th?

JULIE. My birthday ... I'm thirty-five.

JAKE. Oh, God, Julie. Yes! ...

JULIE. So what am I wearing? Where's the mirror? I want to see how you dressed me. (*SHE sees the imaginary wall mirror, crosses and looks at herself.*) Of course. My brown suede jacket. Your favorite ... And that little chocolate stain is gone.

JAKE. I had it cleaned. Then I gave it to Molly. She asked for it.

JULIE. I'm glad. (*SHE turns around, looks at herself again.*) So this is thirty-five.

JAKE. Feel any different?

JULIE. No. I don't *look* much different either. I've hardly aged.

JAKE. I know. It's your birthday. I didn't have the heart.

JULIE. Damn you, Jake, will you stop controlling everything? If I'm thirty-five, make me *feel* thirty-five.

JAKE. Okay. Okay. You're thirty-five.

JULIE. (*Like a bolt hit her, grabs her head and stomach.*) Wow! That was a kick in the head ... What does fifty-three feel like?

JAKE. The kick gets a little lower.

JULIE. (*Stands next to him, looks in mirror.*) But this looks righter. You and me. We seem more like a couple now ... Promise me you'll live a very long time, Jake.

JAKE. Why?

JULIE. I need you to. Otherwise who'll bring me back?

JAKE. I'm not the only one who thinks of you.

JULIE. No, but you think of me the way I want to be thought of.

JAKE. Maybe I shouldn't.

JULIE. What does *that* mean?

JAKE. You're too perfect, Julie. Too beautiful, too smart, too sweet, too understanding. No other woman can hold a candle to you. They're all standing in the dark, waiting to get a compliment from me.

JULIE. Why do you do it? Was I so terrible that you don't want to see me the way I was?

JAKE. Don't you understand, Julie? When you come back, I even make *myself* better than I am. I'm charming, I'm witty, I'm romantic, I'm "cute," I'm goddamn irresistible.

JULIE. Well, don't do it to me. I don't want to be a shrine. I don't want to be a touched up photo in a family album. I want to be me because even a memory deserves some self respect. Otherwise I'll never know if you would have loved me if we were still together.

JAKE. Of course I would.

JULIE. No! That's the idealization. That's the fantasy. Every man's dream — His wife never grows old ... Well, we do, Jake. And if you keep bringing me back here looking like a young Natalie Wood and acting like Sally Field in "The Flying Nun," I'll lose respect for you. I want to be woman enough for you because if I'm not, you won't be man enough for me. If you had died before me, I would have kept you funny and loving and sexy, but I wouldn't leave out the petulant son of a bitch you can sometimes be, because I want the whole package, dammit!! ... God, it feels so good to have a little fire in me again.

JAKE. (*To audience.*) I've created Mrs. Jakenstein.

(*The PHONE RINGS. HE picks it up.*)

JULIE. Husbands and wives fight, Jake, what's wrong with that? It's normal.

JAKE. (*Into phone.*) Hello?

JULIE. It's human.

JAKE. (*Into phone.*) Maggie?

JULIE. God, we really used to go at it sometimes.

JAKE. (*Into phone.*) How are you?

JULIE. Remember the day I threw the frozen veal chop at you. Hit you right in the head and you suddenly started to —

JAKE. *(To Julie.)* Julie, could you hold it a second. It's Maggie.

JULIE. Oh. Sorry. Go ahead.

JAKE. *(Into phone.)* ... Where have you been? ... Ballooning in France? ... You don't mean getting fat, do you? ... Oh, good ... No, I'm fine ... Where are you? ... Really? That's just around the corner.

(JULIA nods to him, "Yes, let her come.")

JAKE. Well, I was just finishing some work.

(JULIE waves at him, shakes her head, "No. Tell her to come.")

JAKE. Could you hold it a second, Mag? *(HE covers phone. To Julie.)* What?

JULIE. See her, Jake. Let her come. It'll be good for you.

JAKE. With *you* here? Please! I just went through that. There's a poor girl named Sheila who's probably in Montana by now.

JULIE. I'll leave when she gets here. She's the one who called, Jake. It must be important to her.

JAKE. *(Looks at her, then into phone.)* Maggie? Yes, it's fine. Great ... I'll see you in about ten minutes ... I am too. Bye. *(HE hangs up.)* You really don't mind my seeing Maggie?

JULIE. *(Smiles.)* No. My time will come with you again.

JAKE. *(Worried.)* Why? Have you heard something? Did they mention dates or anything?

JULIE. Don't worry about it. I'm in no rush.

JAKE. Well, it was really good seeing you today. So I'll er ... call you soon, okay?

JULIE. Aren't you forgetting something?

JAKE. What?

JULIE. I'm waiting for my birthday present.

JAKE. Your present? Gee, I didn't get you anything.

JULIE. Yes, you did. You just haven't delivered it yet.

JAKE. What?

JULIE. Molly! ... You promised I could meet Molly on my birthday.

JAKE. Oh, Julie. I can't do that now.

JULIE. You promised, Jake. Suppose you die? This could be my only chance. This could be Molly's only chance to meet me. You have to do it, Jake.

JAKE. But Maggie's coming up.

JULIE. In ten minutes. We can cover a lot in ten minutes.

JAKE. I can't believe I'm having a conversation with myself and losing the argument ... Okay. Sit here ... No. Stand back. Over there. In the shadow.

JULIE. Why?

JAKE. I don't know why. Because I'm nervous. I think we're playing with fire here.

JULIE. I'll take care of it, Jake. I'll treat it with respect.

JAKE. This is going to end up a famous case history. Right up there with the Elephant Man ... Alright, here we go. *(HE turns to think, then stops.)* How old?

JULIE. Who?

JAKE. Molly. How old do you want her to be?

JULIE. Now. Today. All grown up. The way I've never seen her. The way she's never seen me ... I'm ready, Jake.
(*SHE goes back, in the shadows.*)

JAKE. ... Alright. Show time.

(*HE turns away and then MOLLY comes out. SHE is twenty-one and wearing the exact same brown suede jacket that Julie is wearing. MOLLY doesn't see Julie yet. SHE just looks at Jake.*)

MOLLY. Hi, Dad. You okay?

JAKE. Yes, honey. I'm fine.

MOLLY. So why am I here? You sure you're not sick or anything?

JAKE. No, no. I just er ... well, this may seem very weird to you, Molly.

MOLLY. What is it?

JAKE. There's somebody here.

(*HE looks at Julie. MOLLY turns and sees Julie as well. SHE seems shocked at first, SHE takes a step back, frightened.*)

JULIE. Hello, Molly.

(*MOLLY is confused.*)

JULIE. It's alright, Molly. Don't be afraid ... Jake, she's having trouble with it. It's not right this way. Help her to accept it. Oh, Molly, I didn't want to scare you.

JAKE. Okay. I didn't think it out. Let me start over ...

MOLLY. NO!! It's alright ... Now I understand. Now it's fine.

JULIE. Are you sure?

MOLLY. Yes. Positive ... Hello, Mom.

JULIE. Hello, Molly ... Would you like to sit down here with me? Would that be alright?

MOLLY. Yes. Of course. (*SHE crosses and sits on sofa next to Julie.*) I have a million things to ask you. It's like meeting someone you've always heard about. Like a movie star. Only it's my mom. I feel like asking you for your autograph.

JULIE. I love the way you look, Molly. We have a classy looking daughter, don't we, Jake?

JAKE. Yes, Julie.

JULIE. Do I seem very different from the way you remembered me?

MOLLY. You're prettier than your pictures. And you look younger than I thought you'd be.

JULIE. Your father touched me up a little.

MOLLY. I didn't even realize it. We're wearing the same jacket.

JULIE. Isn't it great? Your dad prints them out like Xerox copies. (*SHE looks at Molly's hand. SHE wears four different rings.*) These rings are beautiful. Where did you get them?

MOLLY. Well, this one was yours.

JULIE. Yes. It was my favorite.

MOLLY. This one Dad gave me for my sixteenth birthday. And this one Maggie gave me for Christmas. And this one a friend of mine gave me.

JULIE. Okay. Let's hear about the friend. This is the kind of news I came back for. Who is he?

MOLLY. Well, he's at Yale. The Drama Department. I met him at the theatre. He did a play there.

JULIE. An actor?

MOLLY. No. Set designer. Graduated with an architectural degree ...

(MOLLY and JULIE continue talking but THEY mime what they're saying, but keep up the same joy and exuberance. JAKE turns to the audience.)

JAKE. *(To audience.)* I'm standing there listening to a conversation that never existed and never could. And yet it's so real to me, and from the looks of it, so real to them ... Their joy, their laughter, the reborn intimacy and love they're sharing were created by me. And I'm thinking, if I can create *this* intimacy, why can't I experience it in my own life?

MOLLY. What was the best thing we ever did together? Just you and me.

JULIE. Oh, gosh. So many things. The first movie I ever took you to see.

MOLLY. "A 101 Dalmatians."

JULIE. Right. The first horse I ever put you on.

MOLLY. Chiquita. A palomino with a yellow mane.

JULIE. The first sleep over date you ever had.

MOLLY. Cynthia Gribble. She got sick in the night and threw up all over me.

JULIE. And you came into my room and said, "Mommy. Cynthia just hurt my feelings."

(THEY BOTH laugh at this.)

JULIE. What were *your* favorite times?

MOLLY. That's easy. When we were in a hotel in Atlantic City. And you let me call room service and order my own dinner.

JULIE. And I came out of the shower and found two chocolate sundaes and a pineapple cheesecake.

MOLLY. And I thought you were the greatest mom in the whole world because you didn't send it back.

(THEY continue their conversation in mime. JAKE turns to audience.)

JAKE. *(To audience.)* Am I the only one who's ever done this? I don't think so. There's not one of you who hasn't thought, at three o'clock in the morning staring up at a ceiling, of what it would be like to talk to your father who died five or twenty years ago. Would he look the same? Would you still be his little girl? ... Or the boy you loved in college who married someone else. What would your life be if he proposed to you instead? ... You've played that scene out. We *all* do it ... My problem is I never *stop* doing it.

MOLLY. *(To Julie.)* ... I never wanted it to end. I never wanted to grow up ... I never wanted you to grow old ... Oh ... I'm sorry.

JULIE. That's alright, sweetheart.

MOLLY. No, it was terrible of me to say.

JULIE. It was terrible of me to leave. You must have been so angry.

MOLLY. No, not angry. I just never knew where you went to. It happened so fast. I kept thinking you'd come back but all I had was your picture next to my bed. And I

would talk to it every night. Sometimes it would smile at me and sometimes I could hear your voice so clear, so comforting. Telling me what to do. Telling me not to worry. Telling me that you loved me ... Until one day I stopped hearing it. I would call out for you but there was no answer. I would shake the picture, "Talk to me. Talk to me" ... but it would just stare back at me ... and I felt so — cheated.

JULIE. I'm sorry about that, Molly. I'm sorry about all the years we didn't have together.

JAKE. (*To audience.*) And suddenly I felt this was going too far ... (*To Molly.*) It's getting late, Molly. Maggie'll be here soon.

MOLLY. No, not yet. (*To Julie.*) Tell me other things, Mom. Anything. Just keep talking.

JULIE. I can't, hon. Maggie's coming over. We should go. We've taken enough of Dad's time.

MOLLY. It's *not* Dad's time. It's *our* time. I don't want you to go.

JAKE. We'll do it again, Molly. Another time.

MOLLY. *What* other time? I've been waiting for this day since I'm ten years old. I don't want her to go.

JULIE. It's alright, baby. Your father kept his promise to me, he'll keep it to you. I'll come back, I swear.

MOLLY. NO!!! You said that to me in Vermont and you never came back. I don't trust you anymore. I don't trust him. I don't trust *anyone*.

JAKE. (*To audience.*) That sounds familiar. That word doesn't keep coming up by accident.

MOLLY. (*To Julie.*) I need those years. I need you to fill in the eleven years I never had with you. Don't leave me now when we have a chance to make them up.

JAKE. Molly, nobody can make up eleven years. Not like this. This is just a game. We can't keep playing this game forever.

MOLLY. I didn't ask to play it. You brought me here. You brought Mom. You bring us together after eleven years and you give us ten lousy minutes together. What is that? Why did you do it? It's so damn cruel.

JULIE. Because I asked for it, Molly.

MOLLY. No, you didn't. *He* did. *He* brought us here. We can't get here until he thinks of it. (*To Jake.*) So what are you going to do? It's *your* goddamn game, *you* get us out of it.

JULIE. Molly, don't.

MOLLY. (*To Jake.*) Why didn't you leave well enough alone? What is it you wanted to see?

JAKE. I wanted to see you both happy.

MOLLY. By doing the impossible?

JAKE. Not so impossible. I saw you both laughing, both together again. It made me happy to see that.

MOLLY. I think you're the one who doesn't know it's a game. So what happens to us now? Do we go back in some corner of your mind and wait till Mom's next birthday to hear the second installment of the Years That Never Happened?

JULIE. Jake, stop this. I don't want to hear anymore.

MOLLY. He can't stop it. He loves it too much. He'll never let go of it. He'll sit in this house alone, afraid to get on with his life because this *is* his life. Isn't that right, Dad?

JAKE. So everyone tells me.

MOLLY. Then please let go of this.

JAKE. I will. Eventually.

MOLLY. No, not eventually. Eventually has come. Eventually is today. I don't know what it is you're trying to work out. If it's Mom's death, that wasn't your fault. My loss wasn't your fault.

JAKE. You don't have to be at fault to feel guilty.

MOLLY. You don't have to feel guilty to make it better ... So I think Mom and I ought to go now, don't you?

JAKE. It feels like someone's taking my toys away from me.

MOLLY. Everybody gives up their toys sometime ... Come on, Mom. Let's go.

JAKE. Don't leave together.

MOLLY. Why not? The neighbors?

JAKE. It's too dramatic. Too final. Too wrapped up. I feel like Ethel Merman's going to come out and sing, "Everything's Coming Up Roses" ... Just leave, say goodnight, go back to school, say "See you next week."

MOLLY. That's still playing the game, isn't it?

JAKE. Sure. But indulge me.

MOLLY. Why not? (*Looks at her watch, grabs her books.*) My God, what am I doing here so late? I've got exams tomorrow. Goodnight, Dad. Get some sleep. You look tired. (*SHE kisses his cheek.*) Love you ... Goodnight, Mom. It was real good seeing you. You look just great.

JULIE. (*To Jake.*) Can I kiss her goodbye? I won't make an opera out of it.

JAKE. Whatever you like. I'm not playing anymore.

(*JULIE turns, looks at MOLLY, who rushes into JULIE's arms. THEY embrace.*)

JULIE. I love you, baby.

MOLLY. I love you, Mom. (*SHE turns and rushes off.*)

JULIE. Thank you for my present, Jake.

JAKE. Next time you're getting a gift certificate from Bendel's.

(*The DOORBELL RINGS.*)

JAKE. That's Maggie. You'd better go.

JULIE. Not yet. You still have one more thing to do for me.

JAKE. Don't ask to see Bark. He died when he was twelve.

JULIE. I want a proper kiss goodbye.

JAKE. Oh, I don't think we should get physical, Julie. They have a nasty word for that.

JULIE. (*Moves closer, puts her arms around his neck.*) You don't have to do a thing. This one is my fantasy.

(*THEY kiss, warmly and deeply. The DOORBELL RINGS again.*)

JULIE. Goodbye, Jake.

MAGGIE. (*Enters.*) Hi.

JAKE. Hi.

MAGGIE. It's good to see you.

JAKE. You look wonderful.

JULIE. Don't screw this up, Jake. (*SHE leaves.*)

JAKE. (*To Maggie.*) How are you feeling?

MAGGIE. Tense but relaxed ... How about you?

JAKE. I'm studiously nonchalant.



MAGGIE. The apartment looks nice. Anything new here?

JAKE. Just today's paper ... How's your apartment?

MAGGIE. Ugly. But it has a very nice view of better apartments.

JAKE. You look very fit. Still jogging?

MAGGIE. No. Treadmill. I like running in place. I don't have that same urge to get somewhere.

JAKE. You can sit down, if you like. I think that's your half of the sofa there.

MAGGIE. Oh, er, if you get a letter from my lawyer about a legal separation, you can forget about it.

JAKE. Really? Change your mind?

MAGGIE. No. He died ... I have to get a new lawyer.

JAKE. Doesn't everyone? ... Can I get you anything? A drink? Coffee?

MAGGIE. No, thanks. I'm meeting dinner for someone ... Someone for dinner ... Okay, so I *am* a little nervous.

JAKE. Yeah, well, this smile is painted on, too. So, what's this new job of yours I hear about?

MAGGIE. Yes. I'm working for Wang.

JAKE. *(Nods.)* What's he like?

MAGGIE. Well, there really isn't a Wang. It's that computer company with the oblique commercials. Five men and a woman sitting around a table with overlapping conversations and quick cuts to their shoes or scratching their earlobes. It's a very effective ad campaign except that most people still don't know what a Wang is.

JAKE. I *thought* I knew but it couldn't be the same thing.

MAGGIE. No, I don't think so ... Oh, Christ, Jake. I'm so glad we got the first part of this conversation over with.

JAKE. I know. I felt like we wandered into a Noel Coward tribute or something.

MAGGIE. You *are* funny, Jake.

JAKE. And what about you? Are you happy?

MAGGIE. Happy? ... No, not really. But at least I'm not running like mad trying to find it everywhere from here to Calcutta.

JAKE. *(Smiles.)* Calcutta! ... That reminds me of that three way conversation we had with Sheila. That was something, wasn't it?

MAGGIE. Who's Sheila?

JAKE. *(Pauses, looks at her.)* Sorry. Just having a minor lapse with my spatial concepts.

MAGGIE. Still can't keep them out, heh, Jake ... God, the irony of it.

JAKE. Of what?

MAGGIE. That I'm still attracted to the very thing about you that drove me out of here.

JAKE. That sounds promising.

MAGGIE. I didn't make any. I still don't think a marriage can run on an attraction.

JAKE. No, I don't think so either ... So what brings you here?

MAGGIE. I just wanted to see you. To talk to you.

JAKE. I sense something important is about to be said.

MAGGIE. I think the man I'm going to have dinner with tonight is going to propose to me.

JAKE. I see. Well, that qualifies as important. Probably in the same category as "My house is on fire" ... How do you feel about it?

MAGGIE. I'm scared I might say yes.

JAKE. Who isn't? ... And what's the frightening part?

MAGGIE. That it would be over with us.

JAKE. Well, it would certainly slow us down ... I don't suppose I could come along and coach you? ... No ... What does he do?

MAGGIE. He listens to me. He pays attention.

JAKE. You mean for a living?

MAGGIE. Jesus!

JAKE. What?

MAGGIE. I'm sitting here telling you that in twenty minutes I may be making the biggest decision of my life and I don't feel any concern from you or any interest in my life unless it's connected to you.

JAKE. I'm concerned. If you got sick, I would worry. If you got married, I'd be pissed ... Since I still care for you, that seems pretty reasonable to me.

MAGGIE. I still care for you too, Jake. But it doesn't depend on our getting together or not.

JAKE. Am I dense because I'm not rooting for the other guy to get the girl?

MAGGIE. No matter what we talk about, it always seems to come out like a story conference.

JAKE. Well, if it is, I never seem to get past the editor. Christ, Maggie, if we're just going to pick up where we left off six months ago, you should have gone straight to dinner.

MAGGIE. I was hoping that things might have changed since six months ago.

JAKE. (*Shrugs.*) They have. You found a guy who listens better than I do.

MAGGIE. Don't listen to the words, Jake. Listen to the feelings. There's pain going on here. Your pain and mine. And we can't get anywhere until we get in touch with those feelings. We're like two people reaching out for each other with both hands tied behind our backs.

JAKE. (*Confused.*) Why can't I understand your concept of getting in touch with pain? I don't think I just speak words. I speak feelings and emotions. I care. I love. I'm miserable. I'm angry. I'm desperate. I'm hopeful and mostly I'm confused. Am I getting close?

MAGGIE. Yes, Jake. You're getting close.

JAKE. Thank God. Tell me what I did so I can hold onto it.

MAGGIE. I think part of you is standing right there in front of me, listening and talking to me ... But there's that other part of you. The writer. The observer who's standing up there in his office, right now, watching and observing the two of us, detached as hell, and *he's* the one who's getting in our way, Jake. He's the one who's not involved in our problem. He's a voyeur. A manipulator. And unless you can let go of him and trust yourself, Jake, trust how you feel and not what he judges to be the truth, then you'll never feel safe with me or with anyone ... And that would be such a loss ...

JAKE. Jesus, Maggie, you make me feel so isolated. So inhuman.

MAGGIE. No. I think you're alone. I think you put yourself there a long time ago because it feels safe to you. All that I'm asking is that you come out of your hiding

place and join the rest of us. There's a lot of people out here who love you, Jake. Trust it.

JAKE. (*Hoping to explain.*) I don't observe because I choose to. I'm not alone because I prefer it. I'm not a writer because I'm good at it ... I write to survive. It's the only thing that doesn't reject me. My characters are the only ones I know how love me unconditionally, because I give them life. Do you love me unconditionally, Maggie?

MAGGIE. I'm not that selfless. And you didn't give me life, Jake. My mother did. And I like you much better than I like her.

JAKE. Do you? Funny, you look about ten miles away from where I sit.

MAGGIE. No, Jake. I think we're so close. I swear. I think we're only an inch or two apart.

JAKE. What's wrong with that? Most couples I know have the Grand Canyon between them and they don't even notice.

MAGGIE. I notice. But I want more than that for us.

JAKE. I mean this in all sincerity. I wish I were as smart as you.

MAGGIE. I wasn't this smart before I married you. You made me think. You made me observe.

JAKE. So why doesn't your observer run off with my observer and you and I can stay here?

MAGGIE. Okay. If you want me to stay, I'll stay. If you want me to come back, I'll come back.

JAKE. (*Smiles.*) You're tricky, you really are. You know I'd grab that in a minute. But you're also smart enough to know that I'm smart enough to know that wouldn't work. That I know you're right. That until I cross

those two inches, until I can understand the *concept* of those two inches, we'd always be in trouble.

MAGGIE. You know something, Jake. Even though we've just been pretty tough on each other, this is one of the best talks we've ever had.

JAKE. Really? I hated it. I grew up seeing movies where saying "I love you" was a happy ending.

MAGGIE. Maybe it will be. Once we both realize this isn't a movie ... I'm late for dinner.

JAKE. You're not really going to say "Yes" to him tonight, are you? I mean, is this guy only a quarter of an inch away from you or what?

MAGGIE. No, I'm not going to say yes ... I'm going to wait till I hear from you.

JAKE. Oh, you're just going to leave me walking around here all day with a tape measure? What are you hoping is going to happen?


MAGGIE. A catharsis! A bolt of lightning! A miracle!

JAKE. Jesus, now I have to be the Messiah.

MAGGIE. No, I'll just settle for Jake ... So long, Jake. (*SHE goes.*)

JAKE. (*To audience.*) Men have climbed mountains for women and crossed burning deserts for them, and I can't get to this one because I'm two lousy inches away ... Maybe if I put a little weight on around the midsection, I could squeeze across the finish line ... Okay, so I need a catharsis, a bolt of lightning and a miracle ... Where the hell do you shop for that ... Wait! Hold it! ... One last Mother story ... Make that a Mother and Father story ... I feel a connection here ... I am ten years old, walking down the street with my friend, Sal ... And coming in the opposite direction is my father with a woman half his age

... A chippie, they called them then ... He doesn't see me but Sal says to me, "Hey, Jake. There's your father" ... And I say to protect my father or my shame, "No, it's not. He just *looks* like my father" ... What prompts me later that day to tell my mother about it is still unclear to me. I want to make things right but right for who? ... When my father comes home later that night, my mother pulls him into my bedroom, turns on the lights and screams at me, "Tell him, Jake. Tell him what you told me you saw today" ... I want to run as fast as I can or die the spot, but my mother won't be denied. I tell my father what I saw ... And he looks me in the eye and says, "You're a liar. You saw someone else, not me" ... He makes me pay for his indiscretion ... I hate my father for betraying my mother, hate my mother for betraying me and hate myself for betraying them both ... It did, in time, pass and maybe was even forgotten in the forty years that eventually buried them both ... But I can't help feeling that three betrayals in one day could eventually make two inches to cross — a very long trip for someone who never learned to trust again ... So what would that be? A small catharsis? ... (*Looks off.*) What do you think, Karen? ... Karen? ... Where are you? ... Karen, I'm calling you. (*To audience.*) She's never done this before ... Karen, it's Jake. I need you ... Come on, wear anything you want, I'll pay for it. Where are you? (*To audience.*) This is scary. Don't go away. I don't feel like being alone right now ... Edith!! ... Please come out. I can't wait till our appointment on Tuesday ... I need a quick fix. A couple of laughs ... I need the jokes, the kidding around. *Love Yourself, Fuck Them*, that was funny, wasn't it? ... Molly? Julie? Not even you? ... You want to see each other again, I'll set it up. I'll order in

pizzas, you can spend the whole day gabbing and gorging yourselves, whaddya say? (*To audience.*) Jesus! I've been praying to get rid of them, *begging* for them to be gone and now that they're not here I feel empty. I feel scared, I feel stark naked ... Jesus, this is hard. My goddamn heart is palpitating ... I can hardly breathe ... what is this? ... Is this going crazy? Is this going mad? ... Or is this the miracle? ... I mean she already got her catharsis, maybe this is the freaking miracle ... (*Looks around.*) So what have we got left? A bolt of lightning ... (*HE moves away.*) Better get away from anything metal ... Rubber? Where's rubber? ... 

(*HE looks around. We suddenly hear a VOICE, a VOICE not clear as to gender or age.*)

VOICE. "Jake, are you alright?"

JAKE. (*Looks up.*) No! ... I'm not alright ... Who is that? Karen?

VOICE. (*From another speaker.*) Are you alright, Jake?

JAKE. I just said no, didn't I? ... Why, do I look alright? I'm falling to pieces here ...

VOICE. (*From another speaker.*) Jake, are you alright?

JAKE. (*To audience.*) What is this, "Field of Dreams"? "Build it and they will come"? (*To Voice.*) ... Who are you? What do you want?

VOICE. (*From another speaker.*) Don't get scared, Jake. Don't get nervous. It's me.


JAKE. (*To audience.*) Oh, my God. I think it's my mother. (*To Voice, cautiously.*) Mom? Is that you? (*To audience.*) Gee, I hope she didn't hear me tell about the dirt turning into roaches.

VOICE. (*From another speaker.*) I love you ... and I forgive you.


JAKE. You forgive me? (*Somewhat sarcastic.*) Well, that's very generous of you, Mom ... Why can't I see you? Where are you?

VOICE. (*From another speaker.*) I love you ... and I forgive you.

JAKE. What have you got, your own sound system? ... What are you doing this for, Mom? ... If you forgive me, what is it you forgive me for? (*To audience.*) Am I really hearing her or is this my imagination? ... No, this is coming from some place else ... Some deep place I've never tapped into before. Only what's the point of it? (*To Voice.*) What are you doing this for, Ma?

VOICE. (*From another speaker.*) Think about it, Jake. You'll figure it out. 

JAKE. (*To audience.*) Thank God Sheila isn't here, her hair would turn white by now ... "Think about it, Jake. You'll figure it out" ... My mother was never articulate before and suddenly she gives me the hieroglyphics to work out ... "Think about it, you'll figure it out" ... No, as I said, I loved my mother, but I didn't trust her before and I don't trust her now. (*HE starts up the steps, stops, comes back down.*) ... Wait a minute, wait a minute, hold it ... That's not my mother's voice. It didn't sound like her ... It sounded like — like me ... Jesus! It was my voice. I had it all turned around ... It was me saying to my mother, "I love you, Mom ... and I forgive you" ... (*HE stops, catches himself, moves Downstage.*) I love you, Mom ... and I forgive you. (*HE takes a second, then looks at audience.*) I think you have to forgive those you love before you can forgive yourself ... And so Maggie got her

bolt of lightning. (*HE starts up to his office.*) So what do I do now? Call the restaurant and say to the maître d', "Please tell the pretty lady in the beige suit her husband called and said, 'Just had the big three. Hurry home' "? ... (*HE sits at his desk.*) No. Nothing in life gets resolved that fast. (*HE turns, looks at the typewriter, when suddenly we hear MUSIC from downstairs. To audience.*) Did I leave the stereo on? ... Or are my imaginary conversations turning into musicals now? 

(*OLDER MOLLY, EDITH, KAREN, JULIE, SHEILA, and YOUNGER MOLLY all appear suddenly from doors, from the balconies on both sides, ALL in party dresses.*)

ALL SIX WOMEN. Surprise!

JAKE. (*To audience.*) They're back! ... Just when I thought it was safe to go back to the typewriter ... Karen, don't! Edith, Molly, Julie, please! If you love me, you'll go and never come back.

EDITH. (*Baby talk again.*) But you need us, Jakey. You called for us.

KAREN. We were getting dressed. I paid a fortune for this.

YOUNGER MOLLY. Let us stay, Daddy. I love being twelve years old.

JULIE. (*Hugs Older Molly.*) And Molly and I can be together forever, Jake.

OLDER MOLLY. Can we, Dad?

SHEILA. If you want, I'll go to Calcutta, Jake. I'll quit my job.

JAKE. No! No! NO! I don't want that.


EDITH. Then what do you want? Ask for it, Jake. Please! ASK FOR IT!

JAKE. (*Shouts.*) MAGGIE! I WANT MAGGIE!

EDITH. Oh! (*Smiles.*) Well, it's about time, Jake.

(*The DOORBELL RINGS. THEY ALL turn and look. MAGGIE comes in, in the outfit SHE was just wearing.*)

JULIE. Let's go, ladies ... I don't think we live here any more.

(*One by one, THEY quickly disappear.*) 

MAGGIE. I let myself in, Jake. Is that alright?

JAKE. No, you didn't, Maggie. I think I just let you in.

MAGGIE. I didn't go to that restaurant. I called him and explained ... I'd like to stay and work out those last two inches together, Jake. Is that alright?


JAKE. Yeah. That would be great.

(*SHE starts up toward him.*)

JAKE. NO! You stay there! I'll come down to you. (*HE starts to take that first step cautiously.*)

MAGGIE. Are you alright?

JAKE. Well, a *little nervous*. It's a ten mile drop from here to there.

(*HE starts again. HE steps down very cautiously, as HE and MAGGIE reach for each other, like God and Adam reaching out in the Sistine Chapel.*) 

FADE TO BLACK

COSTUME PLOT

JAKE

ACT I

Casual shirt, pleated twill slacks, socks, suede lace-up shoes, cashmere pullover sweater, soft, relaxed sports jacket, undershirt, watch, ring, casual shirt

ACT II

Pleated slacks, socks, shoes, soft, relaxed sports jacket, undershirt, watch, ring

MAGGIE

ACT I

Executive-type suit (jacket, skirt), slip, hose, pumps, earrings, pin, necklace, watch, briefcase, rings, bathrobe (terrycloth), slippers, long, soft skirt, soft blouse, cowl neck sweater or cardigan, shoes, earrings, necklace, bracelets, different watch, purse, raincoat, headscarf, suitcase, purse, gloves, slip-on pumps, dress

ACT II

Dress, pumps, necklace, bracelets, earrings, dinner date dress, pumps, jewelry, earrings, accessories, purse,

KAREN

ACT I

Purple dress, slip, hose, earrings, bracelets, rings, watch, purse, pumps, dress, blouse, slacks, earrings, accessories, shoes, dress (circus speech), jewelry, accessories, shoes

ACT II

Party dress (black), earrings, jewelry, accessories, shoes

EDITH

ACT I

Suit (jacket, skirt), blouse, slip, hose, earrings, rings, glasses, pumps, different skirt, blouse, slip, hose, glasses, pumps,

ACT II

3rd change of skirt, jacket, blouse, pumps jewelry, glasses, black party dress, accessories, purse

JULIE

ACT I

Shorts (70's), worn flannel shirt, cotton tank top, sneakers, socks, earrings, jewelry, hair ornament

Change to: jeans, loose, drapy shirt, jacket, sandals, purse, same jewelry

ACT II

Long, full skirt, (80's), brown suede bolero jacket, soft, full blouse, boots, earrings, jewelry, change to: party dress, pumps, earrings, jewelry, accessories, purse

MOLLY (age 12)

ACT I

School uniform blouse, uniform jacket, uniform skirt, socks, hair ribbons, shoes, accessories, jewelry, backpack, change to: 1980's funky look: blouse, pullover sweater, socks, shoes, accessories, jewelry, jacket

ACT II

Black party dress, slip, flat dress shoes, purse, jewelry, hair ribbon, gloves, necklace

MOLLY (age 21)

ACT I

College outfit, jeans, casual top, oversized sweater, oversized jacket, shoes, socks, earrings, jewelry, accessories, watch

ACT II

Jeans/slacks, brown suede bolero jacket, blouse, earrings, jewelry (pins, bracelets), accessories, purse, shoes, purse

SHEILA

ACT I

Dress/suit (short skirt), hose, pumps, earrings, slip,
accessories, jewelry (necklace, bracelets)

ACT II

Party dress, pumps, purse, earrings, accessories, jewelry

PROPERTY PLOT

ACT I PRESET

ONSTAGE — Jake's office

Swivel Chair — set facing computer table, approx. 2 ft.
away

Computer — with display on, green lights on

Keyboard, Mouse

Telephone (U.L. corner of desk)

Basket (D.R. corner of desk)

Photo envelope with 3 pics of Molly (in basket)

2 Red round boxes downstage

Box with sharp edges downstage

Notepad

Sharpened pencil

Pencil container with pencils, etc.

Pencil sharpener

Lamp

Silver box

Stapler

2 Stacked books

Coffee cup

ONSTAGE — Bar area

Bar unit

1 Small Evian bottle, top loosened, half-full of Evian, set
forward (S.L.) in the peak of the curve, on top of bar
(used every show)

4 Old-fashioned glasses set on top of bar (used every show
— 1 of these is set forward, S.L. of other 3)

10 Small paper cocktail napkins set on top (used every
show)

3 Tall glasses set on top

1 Full small Evian bottle, top loosened (set on middle
shelf — D.S. side)