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SF PERUSALS

Beyond Therapy

by Christopher Durang

A Samuel French Acting Edition



New York Hollywood London Toronto
SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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BROOKS ATKINSON THEATRE

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE MESSRS. NEDERLANDER

WARNER THEATRE PRODUCTIONS / CLAIRE NICHTERN
FDM PRODUCTIONS / FRANCOIS de MENIL and HARRIS MASLANSKY
present

JOHN LITHGOW

DIANNE WIEST

in

BEYOND THERAPY

a new comedy by

CHRISTOPHER DURANG

with

PETER MICHAEL GOETZ

JACK GILPIN **DAVID PIERCE**

and

KATE McGREGOR-STEWART

Settings by **ANDREW JACKNESS**

Costumes by **JENNIFER VON MAYRHAUSER**

Lighting by **PAUL GALLO**

Music Coordinator **JACK FELDMAN**

Directed by

JOHN MADDEN

COMMISSIONED AND ORIGINALLY PRODUCED BY THE PHOENIX THEATRE
T. EDWARD HAMBLETON, Managing Director
STEVEN ROBMAN, Artistic Director

The Producers and Theatre Management are Members of the League of New York Theatres and Producers, Inc.
The Producers wish to express their appreciation to the Theatre Development Fund for its support of the production.

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Bruce ..... JOHN LITHGOW

Prudence ..... DIANNE WIEST

Stuart ..... PETER MICHAEL GOETZ

Charlotte ..... KATE McGREGOR-STEWART

Bob ..... JACK GILPIN

Andrew ..... DAVID PIERCE

STANDBYS

Standbys never substitute for listed players unless a specific announcement is made at the time of the performance.

For Bruce and Stuart — James Eckhouse.

BEYOND THERAPY was previously presented by the Phoenix Theatre in New York City on January 1, 1981. The production was directed by Jerry Zaks; scenery by Karen Schultz; costumes by Jennifer von Mayrhauser; lighting by Richard Nelson; sound by David Rapkin. The cast was as follow:

BRUCE ..... Stephen Collins
PRUDENCE ..... Sigourney Weaver
Dr. STUART FRAMINGHAM ..... Jim Borelli
MRS. CHARLOTTE WALLACE .....
Kate McGregor-Stewart
BOB ..... Jack Gilpin
ANDREW ..... Conan McCarty
PAUL* ..... Nick Stannard

*The character of Paul, a former suitor of Prudence's, appeared in the final scene of the play at the Phoenix. This scene was changed for the Broadway version, and the character was written out.

CAST

(in order of appearance)

BRUCE ..... John Lithgow
PRUDENCE ..... Dianne Wiest
STUART ..... Peter Michael Goetz
CHARLOTTE ..... Kate McGregor-Stewart
BOB ..... Jack Gilpin
ANDREW ..... David Pierce

SETTINGS BY Andrew Jackness
COSTUMES BY Jennifer Von Mayrhauser
LIGHTING BY Paul Gallo
PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER:
Craig Jacobs
MUSIC COORDINATOR: Jack Feldman
DIRECTED BY John Madden
PRODUCED BY Warner Theatre Productions
(Claire Nichtern) and FDM/Productions
(Francois de Menil and Harris Maslansky)

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1: A Restaurant
Scene 2: Dr. Stuart Framingham's Office
Scene 3: The Office of Charlotte Wallace
Scene 4: The Restaurant Again
Scene 5: Dr. Framingham's Office
Scene 6: Bruce's Apartment

INTERMISSION

ACT II

Scene 1: Mrs. Wallace's Office
Scene 2: The Restaurant Again
Scene 3: The Restaurant Still

BEYOND THERAPY

ACT I

Scene 1

A restaurant. BRUCE *is seated, looking at his watch.* HE *is* 30-34, *fairly pleasant looking, probably wearing a blazer with an open shirt. Enter* PRUDENCE, 29-32, *attractive, semi-dressed up in a dress or nice skirt and blouse. After hesitating a moment,* SHE *crosses to* BRUCE.

PRUDENCE. Hello.

BRUCE. Hello.

PRUDENCE. (*Perhaps referring to a newspaper in her hand—The New York Review of Books*?) Are you the white male, 30 to 35, 6'2", blue eyes, who's into rock music, movies, jogging and quiet evenings at home?

BRUCE. Yes, I am. (*Stands*)

PRUDENCE. Hi, I'm Prudence.

BRUCE. I'm Bruce.

PRUDENCE. Nice to meet you.

BRUCE. Won't you sit down?

PRUDENCE. Thank you. (*Sits*) As I said in my letter, I've never answered one of these ads before.

BRUCE. Me neither. I mean, I haven't put one in before.

PRUDENCE. But this time I figured, why not?

BRUCE. Right. Me too. (*Pause*) I hope I'm not too macho for you.

PRUDENCE. No. So far you seem wonderful.

BRUCE. You have lovely breasts. That's the first thing I notice in a woman.

PRUDENCE. Thank you.

BRUCE. You have beautiful contact lenses.

PRUDENCE. Thank you. I like the timbre of your voice. Soft but firm.

BRUCE. Thanks. I like *your* voice.

PRUDENCE. Thank you. I love the smell of Brut you're wearing.

BRUCE. Thank you. My male lover Bob gave it to me.

PRUDENCE. What?

BRUCE. You remind me of him in a certain light.

PRUDENCE. What?

BRUCE. I swing both ways actually. Do you?

PRUDENCE. (*Rattled, serious*) I don't know. I always insist on the lights being out.

(*Pause*)

BRUCE. I'm afraid I've upset you now.

PRUDENCE. No, it's nothing really. It's just that I hate gay people.

BRUCE. I'm not gay. I'm bisexual. There's a difference.

PRUDENCE. I don't really know any bisexuals.

BRUCE. Children are all innately bisexual, you know. If you took a child to Plato's Retreat, he'd be attracted to both sexes.

PRUDENCE. I should imagine he'd be terrified.

BRUCE. Well, he might be, of course. I've never taken a child to Plato's Retreat.

PRUDENCE. I don't think they let you.

BRUCE. I don't really know any children. (*Pause*) You have wonderful eyes. They're so deep.

PRUDENCE. Thank you.

BRUCE. I feel like I want to take care of you.

PRUDENCE. (*Liking this tack better*) I would like that. My favorite song is "Someone to Watch over Me."

BRUCE. (*Sings softly*) "There a somebody I'm longing duh duh..."

PRUDENCE. Yes. Thank you.

BRUCE. In some ways you're like a little girl. And in some ways you're like a woman.

PRUDENCE. How am I like a woman?

BRUCE. (*Searching, romantically*) You...dress like a woman. You wear eye shadow like a woman.

PRUDENCE. You're like a man. You're tall, you have to shave. I feel you could protect me.

BRUCE. I'm deeply emotional, I like to cry.

PRUDENCE. Oh I wouldn't like that.

BRUCE. But I *like* to cry.

PRUDENCE. I don't think men should cry unless something falls on them.

BRUCE. That's a kind of sexism. Men have been programmed not to show feeling.

PRUDENCE. Don't talk to me about sexism. You're the one who talked about my breasts the minute I sat down.

BRUCE. I feel like I'm going to cry now.

PRUDENCE. Why do you want to cry?

BRUCE. I feel you don't like me enough. I think you're making eyes at the waiter.

PRUDENCE. I haven't even seen the waiter.

(BRUCE *cries*)

PRUDENCE. (*Continued*) *Please*, don't cry, please.

BRUCE. (*Stops crying after a bit*) I feel better after that. You have a lovely mouth.

PRUDENCE. Thank you.

BRUCE. I can tell you're very sensitive. I want you to have my children.

PRUDENCE. Thank you.

BRUCE. Do you feel ready to make a commitment?

PRUDENCE. I feel I need to get to know you better.

BRUCE. I feel we agree on all the issues. I feel that you like rock music, movies, jogging, and quiet evenings at home. I think you hate shallowness. I bet you never read "People" magazine.

PRUDENCE. I do read it. I write for it.

BRUCE. I write for it too. Free lance actually. I send in letters. They printed one of them.

PRUDENCE. Oh, what was it about?

BRUCE. I wanted to see Gary Gilmore executed on television.

PRUDENCE. Oh, yes, I remember that one.

BRUCE. Did you identify with Jill Clayburgh in "An Unmarried Woman"?

PRUDENCE. Uh, yes, I did.

BRUCE. Me too! We agree on everything. I want to cry again.

PRUDENCE. I don't like men to cry. I want them to be strong.

BRUCE. You'd quite like Bob then.

PRUDENCE. Who?

BRUCE. You know.

PRUDENCE. Oh.

BRUCE. I feel I'm irritating you.

PRUDENCE. No. It's just that it's hard to get to know someone. And the waiter never comes, and I'd like to order.

BRUCE. Let's start all over again. Hello. My name is Bruce.

PRUDENCE. Hello.

BRUCE. Prudence. That's a lovely name.

PRUDENCE. Thank you.

BRUCE. That's a lovely dress.

PRUDENCE. Thank you. I like your necklace. It goes nicely with your chest hair.

BRUCE. Thank you. I like your nail polish.

PRUDENCE. I have it on my toes too.

BRUCE. Let me see.

(SHE *takes shoe off, puts foot on the table*)

BRUCE. (*Continued*) I think it's wonderful you feel free enough with me to put your feet on the table.

PRUDENCE. I didn't put my feet on the table. I put one foot. I was hoping it might get the waiter's attention.

BRUCE. We agree on everything. It's amazing. I'm going to cry again. (*Weeps*)

PRUDENCE. *Please*, you're annoying me.

(HE *continues to cry*)

PRUDENCE. (*Continued*) What is the matter?

BRUCE. I feel you're too dependent. I feel you want me to put up the storm windows. I feel you should do that.

PRUDENCE. I didn't say anything about storm windows.

BRUCE. You're right. I'm wrong. We agree.

PRUDENCE. What kind of childhood did you have?

BRUCE. Nuns. I was taught by nuns. They really ruined me. I don't believe in God anymore. I believe in bran cereal. It helps prevent rectal cancer.

PRUDENCE. Yes, I like bran cereal.

BRUCE. I want to marry you. I feel ready in my life to make a long term commitment. We'll live in Connecticut. We'll have two cars. Bob will live over the garage. Everything will be wonderful.

PRUDENCE. I don't feel ready to make a long term commitment to you. I think you're insane. I'm going to go now. (*Stands*)

BRUCE. Please don't go.

PRUDENCE. I don't think I should stay.

BRUCE. Don't go. They have a salad bar here.

PRUDENCE. Well, maybe for a little longer. (SHE *sits down again*)

BRUCE. You're afraid of life, aren't you?

PRUDENCE. Well...

BRUCE. Your instinct is to run away. You're afraid of feeling of emotion. That's wrong, Prudence, because then you have no passion. Did you see "Equus"? That doctor felt it was better to blind eight horses in a stable with a metal spike than to have no passion. (*Holds his fork*) In my life I'm not going to be afraid to blind the horses, Prudence.

PRUDENCE. You ought to become a veterinarian.

BRUCE. (*Very offended*) You've missed the metaphor.

PRUDENCE. I haven't missed the metaphor. I made a joke.

BRUCE. You just totally missed the metaphor. I could never love someone who missed the metaphor.

PRUDENCE. Someone should have you committed.

BRUCE. I'm not the one afraid of commitment. You are.

PRUDENCE. Oh, dry up.

BRUCE. I was going to give you a fine dinner and then take you to see "The Tree of Wooden Clogs" and then home to my place for sexual intercourse, but now I think you should leave.

PRUDENCE. You're not rejecting me, buddy. I'm rejecting you. You're a real first-class idiot.

BRUCE. And you're a castrating, frigid-bitch!

(SHE *throws a glass of water in his face;* HE *throws water back in her face.* THEY *sit there for a moment, spent of anger, wet*)

PRUDENCE. Absolutely nothing seems to get that waiter's attention, does it?

(BRUCE *shakes his head "no".* THEY *sit there, sadly*)

LIGHTS FADE

ACT I

Scene 2

Psychologist's office. DR. STUART FRAMINGHAM. *Very masculine, a bit of a bully, wears boots, jeans, a tweed sports jacket, open sports shirt. Maybe has a beard.*

STUART. (*Speaking into intercom*) You can send the next patient in now, Betty.

(*Enter* PRUDENCE. SHE *sits*)

STUART. (*Continued. After a moment*) So, what's on your mind this week?

PRUDENCE. Oh I don't know. I had that Catherine the Great dream again.

STUART. Yeah?

PRUDENCE. Oh I don't know. Maybe it isn't Catherine the Great. It's really more like National Velvet.

STUART. What do you associate to National Velvet?

PRUDENCE. Oh I don't know. Childhood.

STUART. Yes?

PRUDENCE. I guess I miss childhood where one could look to a horse for emotional satisfaction rather than a person. I mean, a horse never disappointed me.

STUART. You feel disappointed in people?

PRUDENCE. Well, every man I try to have a rela-

tionship with turns out to be crazy. And the ones that aren't crazy are dull. But maybe it's me. Maybe I'm really looking for faults just so I won't ever have a successful relationship. Like Michael last year. Maybe he was just fine, and I made up faults that he didn't have. Maybe I do it to myself. What do you think?

STUART. What I think doesn't matter. What do you think?

PRUDENCE. But what do *you* think?

STUART. It's not my place to say.

PRUDENCE. (*Irritated*) Oh never mind. I don't want to talk about it.

STUART. I see. (*Makes a note*)

PRUDENCE. (*Noticing* HE*'s making notes; to make up*:) I did answer one of those ads.

STUART. Oh?

PRUDENCE. Yes.

STUART. How did it work out?

PRUDENCE. Very badly. The guy was a jerk. He talked about my breasts, he has a male lover, and he wept at the table. It was really ridiculous. I should have known better.

STUART. Well, you can always come back to me, babe. I'll light your fire for you anytime.

PRUDENCE. Stuart, I've told you you can't talk to me that way if I'm to stay in therapy with you.

STUART. You're mighty attractive when you're angry.

PRUDENCE. Stuart . . . Dr. Framingham, many women who have been seduced by their psychiatrists take them to court. . .

STUART. Yeah, but you wanted it, baby. . .

PRUDENCE. How could I have "wanted" it? One of our topics has been that I don't know what I want.

STUART. Yeah, but you wanted that, baby.

PRUDENCE. Stop calling me baby. Really, I must be out of my mind to keep seeing you. (*Pause*) Obviously you can't be my therapist after we've had an affair.

STUART. Two lousy nights aren't an affair.

PRUDENCE. You never said they were lousy.

STUART. They were great. You were great. I was great. Wasn't I, baby? It was the fact that it was only two nights that was lousy.

PRUDENCE. Dr. Framingham, it's the common belief that it is wrong for therapists and their patients to have sex together.

STUART. Not in California.

PRUDENCE. We are not in California.

STUART. We could move there. Buy a house, get a jacuzzi.

PRUDENCE. Stuart...Dr. Framingham, we're not right for one another. I feel you have masculinity problems. I hate your belt buckle. I didn't really even like you in bed.

STUART. I'm great in bed.

PRUDENCE. (*With some hesitation*) You have problems with premature ejaculation.

STUART. Listen, honey, there's nothing premature about it. Our society is paced quickly, we all have a lot of things to do. I ejaculate quickly on purpose.

PRUDENCE. I don't believe you.

STUART. Fuck you, cunt.

PRUDENCE. (*Stands*) Obviously I need to find a new therapist.

STUART. Okay, okay. I lost my temper. I'm sorry. But I'm human. Prudence, that's what you have to learn. People *are* human. You keep looking for perfection, you need to learn to accept imperfection. I can help you with that.

PRUDENCE. Maybe I really should sue you. I mean, I don't think you should have a license.

STUART. Prudence, you're avoiding the issue. The issue is you, not me. You're unhappy, you can't find a relationship you like, you don't like your job, you don't like the world. You *need* my help. I mean, don't get hung up on who should have a license. The issue is I can help you fit into the world. (*Very sincerely, sensitively*) Really I can. Don't run away.

PRUDENCE. (*Sits*) I don't think I believe you.

STUART. That's okay. We can work on that.

PRUDENCE. I don't know. I really don't think you're a good therapist. But the others are probably worse, I'm afraid.

STUART. They are. They're much worse. Really I'm very nice. I *like* women. Most men don't.

PRUDENCE. I'm getting one of my headaches again. (*Holds her forehead*)

STUART. Do you want me to massage your neck?

PRUDENCE. Please don't touch me.

STUART. Okay, okay. (*Pause*) Any other dreams?

PRUDENCE. No.

STUART. Perhaps we should analyze why you didn't like the man you met through the personal ad.

PRUDENCE. I...I...don't want to talk anymore today. I want to go home.

STUART. You can never go home again.

PRUDENCE. Perhaps not. But I can return to my apartment. You're making my headache worse.

STUART. I think we should finish the session. I think it's important.

PRUDENCE. I just can't talk anymore.

STUART. We don't have to talk. But we have to stay in the room.

PRUDENCE. How much longer?

STUART. (*Looks at watch*) 30 minutes.

PRUDENCE. Alright. But I'm not going to talk anymore.

STUART. Okay.

(*Pause;* THEY *stare at one another*)

STUART. (*Continued*) You're very beautiful when you're upset.

PRUDENCE. Please don't you talk either.

(THEY *stare at each other; lights dim*)

ACT I

Scene 3

The office of CHARLOTTE WALLACE. *Probably reddish hair, bright clothing; a Snoopy dog on her desk. If there are walls in the set around her, they have drawings done by children.*

CHARLOTTE. (*Into intercom*) You may send the next

patient in, Marcia. (SHE *arranges herself at her desk, smiles in anticipation*)

(*Enter* BRUCE. HE *sits*)

CHARLOTTE. (*Continued*) Hello.

BRUCE. Hello. (*Pause*) Should I just begin?

CHARLOTTE. Would you like to begin?

BRUCE. I threw a glass of water at someone in a restaurant.

CHARLOTTE. Did you?

BRUCE. Yes.

CHARLOTTE. Did they get all wet?

BRUCE. Yes.

(*Silence*)

CHARLOTTE. (*Points to child's drawing*) Did I show you this drawing?

BRUCE. I don't remember. They all look alike.

CHARLOTTE. It was drawn by an emotionally disturbed three year old. His parents beat him every morning after breakfast. Orange juice, Toast, Special K.

BRUCE. Uh huh.

CHARLOTTE. Do you see the point I'm making?

BRUCE. Yes, I do, sort of. (*Pause*) What point are you making?

CHARLOTTE. Well, the point is that when a porpoise first comes to me, it is often immediately clear... Did I say porpoise? What word do I want? Porpoise. Pompous. Pom Pom. Paparazzi. Polyester. Pollywog.

Olley olley oxen free. Patient. I'm sorry, I mean patient. Now what was I saying?

BRUCE. Something about when a patient comes to you.

CHARLOTTE. (*Slightly irritated*) Well, give me more of a clue.

BRUCE. Something about the child's drawing and when a patient comes to you?

CHARLOTTE. Yes. No, I need more. Give me more of a hint.

BRUCE. I don't know.

CHARLOTTE. Oh I hate this, when I forget what I'm saying. Oh, damn. Oh, damn damn damn. Well, we'll just have to forge on. You say something for a while, and I'll keep trying to remember what I was saying. (*She moves her lips*)

BRUCE. (*After a bit*) Do you want me to talk?

CHARLOTTE. Would you like to talk?

BRUCE. I had an answer to the ad I put in.

CHARLOTTE. Ad?

BRUCE. Personal ad.

CHARLOTTE. (*Remembering, happy*) Oh, yes. Personal ad. I told you that was how the first Mr. Wallace and I met. Oh yes. I love personal ads. They're so basic. Did it work out for you?

BRUCE. Well, I liked her, and I tried to be emotionally open with her. I even let myself cry.

CHARLOTTE. Good for you!

BRUCE. But she didn't like me. And then she threw water in my face.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, dear. Oh, I'm sorry. One has to be so brave to be emotionally open and vulnerable. Oh, you poor thing. I'm going to give you a hug. (SHE

hugs him and kisses him with her Snoopy doll) What did you do when she threw water in your face?

BRUCE. I threw it back in her face.

CHARLOTTE. Oh good for you! Bravo! (SHE *barks for Snoopy and bounces him up and down*) Ruff ruff ruff! Oh, I feel you getting so much more emotionally expressive since you've been in therapy, I'm proud of you.

BRUCE. Maybe it was my fault. I probably came on too strong.

CHARLOTTE. Uh, life is so difficult. I know when I met the second Mr. Wallace...you know, it's so strange, all my husbands have had the same surname of Wallace, this has been a theme in my own analysis...Well, when I met the second Mr. Wallace, I got a filing cabinet caught in my throat...I don't mean a filing cabinet. What do I mean? Filing cabinet, frying pan, frog's eggs, faculty wives, frankincense, fornication, follies bergère, falling falling fork, fish fork, fish bone. I got a fish bone caught in my throat. (*Smiles.*)

BRUCE. And did you get it out?

CHARLOTTE. Oh yes. Then we got married, and we had quite a wonderful relationship for a while, but then he started to see this fish wife and we broke up. I don't mean fish wife, I mean waitress. Is that a word, waitress?

BRUCE. Yes. Woman who works in a restaurant.

CHARLOTTE. No, she didn't work in a restaurant, she worked in a department store. Sales...lady. That's what she was.

BRUCE. That's too bad.

CHARLOTTE. He was buying a gift for me, and then

he ran off with the saleslady. He never even gave me the gift, he just left me a note. And then I was so very alone for a while. (*Cries. After a bit, he gives her a hug and a few kisses from the Snoopy doll. She is suitably grateful*) I'm afraid I'm taking up too much of your session. I'll knock a few dollars off the bill. You talk for a while, I'm getting tired anyway.

BRUCE. Well, so I'm sort of afraid to put another ad in the paper since seeing how this one worked out.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, don't be afraid! Never be afraid to risk, *to risk*! I've told you about "Equus", haven't I? That doctor, Doctor Dysart, with whom I greatly identify, saw that it was better to risk madness and to blind horses with a metal spike, then to be safe and conventional and dull. Ecc, ecc, equus! Naaaaaaaay! (*For Snoopy*) Ruff ruff ruff!

BRUCE. So you think I should put in another ad?

CHARLOTTE. Yes I do. But this time, we need an ad that will get someone more exceptional, someone who can appreciate your uniqueness.

BRUCE. In what ways am I unique? (*Sort of pleased*)

CHALOTTE. Oh I don't know, the usual ways. Now let's see. (*Writing on pad*) White male, 30 to 35, 6'2" no—6'5", green eyes, Pulitzer Prize-winning author, into Kierkegaard, Mahler, Joan Didion and sex, seeks similar-minded attractive female for unique encounters. Sense of humor a must. Write box whatever whatever. There, that should catch you someone excellent. Why don't you take this out to the office, and my dirigible will type it up for you. I don't mean dirigible, I mean Saskatchewan.

BRUCE. Secretary.

CHARLOTTE. Yes, that's what I mean.

BRUCE. You know we haven't mentioned how my putting these ads in the paper for women is making Bob feel. He's real hostile about it.

CHARLOTTE. Who's Bob?

BRUCE. He's the guy I've been living with for a year.

CHARLOTTE. Bob. Oh dear. I'm sorry. I thought you were someone else for this whole session. You're not Thomas Norton?

BRUCE. No, I'm Bruce Lathrop.

CHARLOTTE. Oh yes. Bruce and Bob. It all comes back now. Well I'm very sorry. But this is a good ad anyway, I think, so just bring it out to my dirigible, and then come on back in and we'll talk about something else for a while. I know, I mean secretary. Sometimes I think I should get my blood sugar checked.

BRUCE. Alright, thank you, Mrs. Wallace.

CHARLOTTE. See you next week.

BRUCE. I thought you wanted me to come right back to finish the session.

CHARLOTTE. Oh yes, see you in a few minutes.

(HE *exits*)

CHARLOTTE. (*Continued*) (*Into intercom*) Marcia, dear, send in the next porpoise please. Wait, I don't mean porpoise, I mean . . . pony, pekinese, parka, penis, no not that. I'm sorry, Marcia, I'll buzz back when I think of it. (*She moves her lips, trying to remember. Lights dim*)

ACT I

Scene 4

A restaurant again. BRUCE *waiting, looking at his watch. After a bit enter* PRUDENCE.

PRUDENCE. (*Sees Bruce*) Oh.

BRUCE. Hello again.

PRUDENCE. Hello.

BRUCE. Odd coincidence.

PRUDENCE. Yes.

BRUCE. (*Stands*) Are you answering an ad again?

PRUDENCE. Well, yes, I am.

BRUCE. Me too. I mean I put one in again.

PRUDENCE. Yes, well...I think I'll wait over here. Excuse me. (PRUDENCE *sits at another table; after a bit he comes over.*) Yes?

BRUCE. I'm afraid it's crossed my mind that you answered my ad again.

PRUDENCE. I would not be so stupid as to answer the same ad twice.

BRUCE. I changed my ad.

(SHE *stares at him*)

BRUCE. I was hoping to get a different sort of person.

PRUDENCE. Are you then the Pulitzer Prize winning

author, 6'5", who likes Kierkegaard, Mahler, and Joan Didion?

BRUCE. Yes I am. Sorry.

PRUDENCE. I see. Well that was a ludicrous list of people to like anyway, it serves me right. I feel very embarrassed.

BRUCE. Don't be embarrassed. We're all human.

PRUDENCE. I see no reason not to be embarrassed at being human.

BRUCE. You should be in therapy.

PRUDENCE. I am in therapy.

BRUCE. It hasn't worked.

PRUDENCE. Thank you very much. Do you think we're the only two people who answer these ads?

BRUCE. I doubt it. Maybe we're fated.

PRUDENCE. Jinxed seems more like it.

BRUCE. You think you're unlucky, don't you? In general, I mean. (HE *sits down*)

PRUDENCE. You're going to sit down, are you?

BRUCE. Well, what else should I do? Go home to Bob?

PRUDENCE. Oh yes. How is Bob?

BRUCE. He's kind of grumpy these days.

PRUDENCE. Perhaps he's getting his period.

BRUCE. I don't know much about menstruation. Tell me about it.

PRUDENCE. (*Stares at him*) Yes, I do think I'm unlucky.

BRUCE. What?

PRUDENCE. In answer to your question. I mean, I am attractive, aren't I? I mean, without being conceited, I know I'm *fairly* attractive. I mean, I'm not

within the world's 2 per cent mutants...

BRUCE. I don't think you're a mutant at all. I mean, I think you're very attractive.

PRUDENCE. Yes, well, I don't know if I can really credit your opinion. You're sort of a crackpot, aren't you?

BRUCE. You really don't like me, do you?

PRUDENCE. I don't know you really. Well, no, I probably don't like you.

BRUCE. Well I don't like you either.

PRUDENCE. Well, fine. It was delightful to see you again. Goodbye. (*Starts to leave.* HE *starts to cry, but tries to muffle it more than usual.*) I really hate it when you cry. You're much too *large* to cry.

BRUCE. I'm sorry, it's not you. Something was just coming up for me. Some childhood something.

PRUDENCE. Yes, I miss childhood.

BRUCE. I thought you were leaving.

PRUDENCE. (*Sits*) Alright, I want to ask you something. Why did you put that ad in the paper? I mean, if you're living with this person named Bob, why are you trying to meet a woman?

BRUCE. I want to be open to all experiences.

PRUDENCE. Well that sounds all very well, but surely you can't just turn on and off sexual preference.

BRUCE. I don't have to turn it on or off. I prefer both sexes.

PRUDENCE. I don't know, I just find that so difficult to believe.

BRUCE. But why would I be here with you if I weren't interested in you?

PRUDENCE. You might be trying to murder me. Or punish your mother.

BRUCE. Or I might just be trying to reach out and touch someone.

PRUDENCE. That's the slogan of Coke or Dr. Pepper, I think.

BRUCE. The telephone company actually. But it's a good slogan. I mean, isn't that what we're all trying to do, reach out to another person? I mean, I put an ad in a newspaper, after all, and you answered it.

PRUDENCE. I know. It's very hard to meet people. I mean I do meet people at the magazine. I met Shaun Cassidy last week. Of course, he's too young for me.

BRUCE. Bob really likes Shaun Cassidy.

PRUDENCE. Oh, I'll have to try to set them up.

BRUCE. I don't think your therapist is helping you at all.

PRUDENCE. Well I think yours must be a maniac.

BRUCE. My therapist says you have to be willing to go out on a limb, to risk, to risk!

PRUDENCE. My therapist says... (*at a loss*) I have to settle for imperfection.

BRUCE. I know it's unconventional to be bisexual. My wife Sally didn't deal with it at all well.

PRUDENCE. You were married?

BRUCE. For six years. I married this girl Sally I knew all through grammar school and everything. She was runner-up for the homecoming queen.

PRUDENCE. I didn't go to the prom. I read "Notes From The Underground" instead.

BRUCE. You should have gone to the prom.

PRUDENCE. I don't like proms. Why did you and Sally break up?

BRUCE. Well, I didn't understand about bisexuality

then. I thought the fact that I wanted to sleep with the man who came to read the gas meter meant I was queer.

PRUDENCE. I'm never home when they come to read the gas meter.

BRUCE. And so then Sally found out I was sleeping with the gas man, and she got real angry and we got a divorce.

PRUDENCE. Well I guess if you're homecoming queen runner-up you don't expect those sorts of problems.

BRUCE. You haven't been married, have you?

PRUDENCE. (*Uncomfortable*) No.

BRUCE. Has there been anyone serious?

PRUDENCE. I have two cats. Serious, let's see. Well, about a year and a half ago I lived for six months with this aging preppie named Michael.

BRUCE. (*Pleased—a connection*) I'm an aging preppie.

PRUDENCE. Yes I know. Michael was a lawyer, and...

BRUCE. I'm a lawyer.

PRUDENCE. (*Registers this fact, then goes on*) And he was very smart, and very nice; and I should've been happy with him, and I don't know why I wasn't. And he was slightly allergic to my cats, so I broke it off.

BRUCE. And you haven't gone out with anyone since?

PRUDENCE. Well I do go out with people, but it never seems to work out.

BRUCE. Maybe you're too hard on them.

PRUDENCE. Well should I pretend someone is wonderful if I think they're stupid or crazy?

BRUCE. Well no, but maybe you judge everybody too quickly.

PRUDENCE. Well perhaps. But how many nights would you give David Berkowitz?

BRUCE. You went out with David Berkowitz?

PRUDENCE. No. It was a rhetorical question.

BRUCE. You must ask yourself what you want. Do you want to be married?

PRUDENCE. I have no idea. It's so confusing. I know when I was a little girl, Million Dollar Movie showed this film called "Every Girl Should Be Married" every night for seven days. It was this dumb comedy about this infantile girl played by Betsy Drake who wants to be married to this pediatrician played by Cary Grant who she sees in a drug store. She sees him for two minutes, and she wants to move in and have babies with him. And he finds her totally obnoxious, but then at the end of the movie suddenly says, "You're right, you're adorable," and then they get married. (*Looks baffled by the stupidity of it all*)

BRUCE. Well it was a comedy.

PRUDENCE. And what confused me further was that the actress Betsy Drake did in fact marry Cary Grant in real life. Of course, it didn't last, and he married several other people, and then later Dyan Cannon said he was insane and took LSD and so maybe one wouldn't want to be married to him at all. But if it's no good being married to Cary Grant, who is it good being married to?

BRUCE. I don't know.

PRUDENCE. Neither do I.

BRUCE. Well you should give things time. First im-

pressions can be wrong. And maybe Dyan Cannon was the problem. Maybe anyone married to her would take LSD. Maybe Cary Grant is still terrific.

PRUDENCE. Well he's too old for me anyway. Shaun Cassidy's too young, and Cary Grant's too old.

BRUCE. I'm the right age.

PRUDENCE. Yes I guess you are.

BRUCE. And you haven't left. You said you were leaving but then you stayed.

PRUDENCE. Well it's not particularly meaningful. I was just curious why you put the ad in the paper.

BRUCE. Why did you answer it?

PRUDENCE. I don't wish to analyze my behavior on the issue.

BRUCE. You're so afraid of things. I feel this overwhelming urge to help you. We can look into the abyss together.

PRUDENCE. Please don't say pretentious things. I get a rash.

BRUCE. (*Depressed*) You're right. I guess I am pretentious.

PRUDENCE. Well I really am too hard on people.

BRUCE. No you're probably right to dislike me. Sally hates me. I mean, sometimes I hear myself and I understand why no one likes me.

PRUDENCE. Please don't be so hard on yourself on my account. Everyone's stupid, so you're just like everyone else.

(HE *stares at her*)

PRUDENCE. (*Continued*) I'm sorry, that sounded terrible. I'm stupid too. We're all stupid.

BRUCE. It's human to be stupid. (*Sings romantically*) There's a somebody I'm longing duh duh, Duh duh duh duh, duh duh duh duh... (*Stops singing*)

PRUDENCE. (*Sings*) Someone to watch... (*Realizes* SHE*'s singing alone*) Oh I didn't realize you were stopping.

BRUCE. Sorry. I didn't realize you were...starting.

PRUDENCE. Yes. Stupid of me to like that song.

BRUCE. It's a pretty song.

PRUDENCE. Well I guess it is.

BRUCE. I want to say something. I like you.

PRUDENCE. (*Surprised anyone could like her*) You do?

BRUCE. I like women who are independent-minded, who don't look to a man to do all their thinking for them. I like women who are persons.

PRUDENCE. Well you sound like you were coached by Betty Friedan, but otherwise that's a nice sentiment. Of course, a woman who was independent-minded wouldn't like the song "Someone To Watch Over Me."

BRUCE. We have to allow for contradictions in ourselves. Nobody is just one thing.

PRUDENCE. (*Serious*) That's very true. That wasn't a crackpot comment at all.

BRUCE. I know it wasn't. And just because I'm a crackpot on some things doesn't mean I'm a total crackpot.

PRUDENCE. Right. You're a partial crackpot.

BRUCE. You could be a crackpot too if you let yourself go.

PRUDENCE. That wasn't what I was attempting to do when I got up this morning.

BRUCE. To risk, to risk! Do you like me?

PRUDENCE. Well, I don't know. I don't really know you yet.

BRUCE. Do you want to get to know me?

PRUDENCE. Well I don't know. Maybe I shouldn't. I mean, we did meet through a personal ad, you don't have a Pulitzer Prize...

BRUCE. I have a membership in the New York Health and Racquet Club.

PRUDENCE. Well similiar, but not the same thing.

BRUCE. As a member I can get you a discount.

PRUDENCE. I don't know if I'm ready to exercise yet. I'm thinking about it, but I'm cautious still.

BRUCE. We're getting on, aren't we?

PRUDENCE. Well yes, in a way. (*Smiles warmly; he smiles back; she then looks around*) Do you think maybe they don't have waiters in this restaurant?

BRUCE. Maybe they're on strike. Why don't we go to another restaurant? I know a good Mexican one.

PRUDENCE. I don't like Mexican food, I'm afraid.

BRUCE. Japanese?

PRUDENCE. Well no.

BRUCE. Chinese?

PRUDENCE. Well more than Japanese, but not really.

BRUCE. Where do you want to go?

PRUDENCE. Well could we go to an American Restaurant? I know I'm very dull, but I didn't even like vanilla ice cream when I was a child. I was afraid of it.

BRUCE. That's a significant statement you've just made.

PRUDENCE. It does sound pathological, doesn't it?

BRUCE. Don't be afraid to sound pathological. That's what I've learned from my therapy so far.

PRUDENCE. I don't think I've learned much from mine yet.

BRUCE. Maybe I can help you. We can look into the abyss together. Oh that's right, you didn't like it when I said that before.

PRUDENCE. That's alright. I'll look into the abyss for one evening.

BRUCE. Oh you're becoming more open. Good for you. Ruff, ruff, ruff!

PRUDENCE. (*Very taken aback*) I'm sorry?

BRUCE. (*Very embarrassed*) Oh, my therapist barks. For encouragement.

PRUDENCE. Ah, of course.

BRUCE. (*Back to getting to know her*) Now tell me about your fear of vanilla ice cream.

PRUDENCE. (*As they walk out*) Well, I had gotten very used to baby food, and I also liked junket, but there was something about the *texture* of vanilla ice cream . . .

(THEY *exit*)

ACT I

Scene 5

DR. STUART FRAMINGHAM'*s office again*

STUART. (*On phone*) Hiya, babe, it's me. Whatcha doin'? Oh, I'm just waiting for my next patient. Last night was great, wasn't it? It was great. What? So quickly. What is it with you women? You read some

goddamned sex manual and then you think sex is supposed to go on for hours or something. I mean, if you're so frigid you can't get excited in a couple of minutes, that's not my problem. No it isn't. Well, fuck you too. (*Hangs up*) Jesus God. (*Into intercom*) Betty, you can send in the next patient.

(*Enter* PRUDENCE)

STUART. (*Continued*) Hello.

PRUDENCE. Hello.

STUART. What's on your mind this week?

PRUDENCE. Nothing.

STUART. (*Furious*) Goddam it. I don't feel like dragging the words out of you this week. Talk, damn it.

PRUDENCE. What?

STUART. You pay me to listen, so TALK! (*Pause*) I'm sorry, I'm on edge today. And all my patients are this way. None of them talk. Well this one guy talks, but he talks in Yiddish a lot, and I don't know what the fuck he's saying.

PRUDENCE. Well you should tell him that you don't understand.

STUART. Don't tell me how to run my business! Besides, we're here to talk about you. How was your week? Another series of lonely, loveless evenings? I'm still here, babe.

PRUDENCE. Don't call me babe. No, I've had some pleasant evenings actually.

STUART. You have?

PRUDENCE. Yes I have.

STUART. You been answering ads in the paper again?

PRUDENCE. Well, yes actually.

STUART. That's a slutty thing to do.

PRUDENCE. As a therapist you are utterly ridiculous.

STUART. I'm just kidding you. You shouldn't lose your sense of humor, babe, especially when you're in a promiscuous stage.

PRUDENCE. I am not promiscuous.

STUART. There's nothing wrong with being promiscuous. We're all human.

PRUDENCE. Yes, we are all human.

STUART. So who is this guy? Have you slept with him?

PRUDENCE. Dr. Framingham. . . .

STUART. Really, I gotta know for therapy.

PRUDENCE. Yes, we have slept together. Once. I wasn't really planning to, but. . .

STUART. Is he better than me?

PRUDENCE. Stuart. . .

STUART. No really. You liked him better? Tell me.

PRUDENCE. Yes I did. Much better.

STUART. I suppose he took his time. I suppose it lasted just hours. That's sick! Wanting sex to take a long time is sick!

PRUDENCE. Well he was attentive to how I felt, if that's what you mean.

STUART. So this fellow was a real success, huh?

PRUDENCE. Success and failure are not particularly likeable terms to describe sexual outings, but if you must, yes, it was successful. Probably his experiences with men have made him all that better as a lover.

STUART. What?

PRUDENCE. He's bisexual.

STUART. (*Starting to feel on the winning team again*) Oh yeah?

PRUDENCE. So he tells me. Masters and Johnson say that homosexuals make much more responsive sex partners anyway.

STUART. BULLSHIT! You are talking such bullshit! I understand you now. You're obviously afraid of a real man, and so you want to cuddle with some eunuch who isn't a threat to you. I understand all this now!

PRUDENCE. There's no need to call him a eunuch. A eunuch has no testicles.

STUART. I GOT BALLS, BABY!

PRUDENCE. I am so pleased for you.

STUART. You're afraid of men!

PRUDENCE. I am not afraid of men.

STUART. You're a fag hag. (*To himself*) I gotta write that down. (*Writes that down, makes further notes*)

PRUDENCE. Look, I admit I find this man's supposed bisexuality confusing and I don't quite believe it. But what are my options? A two minute roll in the hay with you, where you make no distinction between sexual intercourse and push-ups; and then a happy evening of admiring your underarm hair and your belt buckles? (*Irritated*) What are you writing?

STUART. (*Reading from his pad*) I'd like to give this patient electro-shock therapy. I'd like to put this patient in a clothes dryer until her hair falls out. I'd like to tie her to the radiator and... (*Stops, hears himself, looks stricken*)

PRUDENCE. I think this is obviously my last session.

STUART. No, no, no. You're taking me seriously. I'm

testing you. It was a test. I was just putting you on.

PRUDENCE. For what purpose?

STUART. I can't tell you. It would interfere with your therapy.

PRUDENCE. You call this therapy?

STUART. We're reaching the richest part of our therapy and already I see results. But I think you're entering a very uncharted part of your life just now, and so you must stay with your therapy. You're going out with homosexuals, God knows what you're going to do next. Now I'm very serious. I'm holding out the lifeline. Don't turn away.

PRUDENCE. Well I'll think about it, but I don't know.

STUART. You're a very sick woman, and you mustn't be without a therapist even for a day.

PRUDENCE. (*Not taken in by this; wanting to leave without a scene*) Is the session over yet?

STUART. We have 30 more minutes.

PRUDENCE. Could I go early?

STUART. I think it's important that we finish out the session.

PRUDENCE. I'd like to go.

STUART. Please, please, please, please...

PRUDENCE. Alright, alright. For God's sake.

(THEY *settle down, back in their chairs*)

STUART. When are you seeing this person again? I'm asking as your therapist.

PRUDENCE. Tonight. He's making dinner for us.

STUART. *He*'s making dinner?

PRUDENCE. He says he likes to cook.

STUART. I don't think I need say anything more.
PRUDENCE. I don't think you do either.

(THEY *stare at one another; lights dim*)

ACT I

Scene 6

BRUCE's *apartment.* BRUCE *fiddling with pillows, on couch, looking at watch, etc. Doorbell.* BRUCE *lets in* PRUDENCE.

BRUCE. Hi. Come on in.
PRUDENCE. Hello. (THEY *kiss*) I brought some wine.
BRUCE. Oh thanks.
PRUDENCE. You have a nice apartment.
BRUCE. Thanks.
PRUDENCE. It looks just like my apartment.
BRUCE. Yeah I guess it does.
PRUDENCE. And like my office at the magazine. And like the lobby at the bank. Everything looks alike.
BRUCE. Yes, I guess it does.
PRUDENCE. I'm sorry, I'm just rattling on.
BRUCE. That's alright. Sit down.

(THEY *sit*)

BRUCE. Can I get you a drink?

PRUDENCE. Ummm, I don't know.

BRUCE. Do you want one?

PRUDENCE. I don't know. Do you want one?

BRUCE. Well I thought I might have some Perrier.

PRUDENCE. Oh that sounds good.

BRUCE. Two Perriers?

PRUDENCE. Well, do you have Poland water?

BRUCE. I think I do. Wait here. I'll be right back. (BRUCE *exits. After a moment* BOB *enters.* BOB *sees* PRUDENCE, *is rattled, ill at ease*)

BOB. Oh. You're here already. I...didn't hear the bell ring.

PRUDENCE. Oh. Hello. Are you Bob?

BOB. Yes. (*At a loss, making an odd joke*) And you must be Marie of Roumania.

PRUDENCE. I'm Prudence.

BOB. Yes, I know. (*At a loss how to get out of room*) Is Bruce in the kitchen?

PRUDENCE. Yes.

BOB. Oh. (*Starts to go there; stops*) Oh, well, never mind. When he comes out would you tell him I want to see him in the other room?

PRUDENCE. Alright.

BOB. Excuse me. (*Exits back to bedroom presumably. Enter* BRUCE *with two glasses of sparkling water*)

BRUCE. Well here we are. One Perrier, and one Poland water.

PRUDENCE. I thought you said Bob was away.

BRUCE. Oh, you met Bob already? Yes, he *was* going away, but then he changed his mind and I'd already bought the lamb chops.

PRUDENCE. You mean he's going to be here all through dinner?

BRUCE. Oh I don't think so. He said he was going to his mother's for dinner. He has a very funny mother. She's sort of like Auntie Mame.

PRUDENCE. Oh yes?

BRUCE. Now don't let Bob upset you.

PRUDENCE. Well he seemed very uncomfortable. He asked me if I was Marie of Roumania.

BRUCE. Oh, he says that to everyone. Don't take it personally. (*Raising drink*) Well, cheers.

PRUDENCE. (*Remembering*) Oh. He said he wanted to see you in the other room.

BRUCE. Oh. Well, alright. I'll just be a minute. Here, why don't you read a magazine?

PRUDENCE. "People," how nice.

BRUCE. Be right back.

(*Exits.* PRUDENCE *reads magazine uncomfortably, and tastes his Perrier water to compare it with her Poland water. We and she start to hear the following offstage argument; initially it's just a buzz of voices but it grows into anger and shouting.* PRUDENCE *looks very uncomfortable*)

BRUCE. (*Offstage*) This isn't the time to talk about this, Bob.

BOB. (*Offstage*) Well, when is the time?

BRUCE. (*Offstage*) We can talk about this later.

BOB. (*Offstage*) That's obviously very convenient for you.

BRUCE. (*Offstage*) Bob, this isn't the time to talk about this.

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