

SARAH

Goodness, Robert, all the questions! Or do you just collect trivia like some old quiz show contestant? We spend half of our lives with you and now you notice Harry's on the wagon?

HARRY

A year and a half.

SARAH

No, love. Just a year.

HARRY

It was a year in February. It's a year and a half now.

SARAH

I know for a fact next month it will be a year.

HARRY

And a half.

SARAH

One year. Count it, one! Harry got arrested for being drunk and quit out of some kind of humiliation.

HARRY

I quit to see if I could is actually what happened. C'mon, I must have told you about all that.

ROBERT

Never. You never mentioned it or I never would have brought the bourbon. How were you arrested?

SARAH

Another question! Here, why don't you have one of these brownies you brought?

HARRY

I was in California on business and I really got soused one night and these guys drove me back to my hotel but instead of going in, I walked down to the corner to get something to eat to sober up.

SARAH

You said it was three blocks.

HARRY

No, just the corner.

SARAH

(Stage whisper to ROBERT)

Three blocks.

HARRY

Anyway, this patrol car stopped me and said, "You're drunk." I said, "Drunk? I'm clobbered." He said, "I'm taking you in." "Take me to my hotel, for God's sake," I said, "it's just on the corner."

SARAH

Three blocks away.

HARRY

Anyway, they mugged me and booked me for being drunk. Unbelievable. And then, Robert, the very next time I was out there, I got arrested all over again – drunk driving. I only had wine –

SARAH

Only three bottles...

HARRY

And I insisted on taking a drunk test. I flunked it by one point.

SARAH

And that is when you quit, precious. He always thinks it was the first arrest, but it was the second. We never told you that? Curious, I thought Harry had told everybody.

HARRY

Anyway, I quit to see if I really had a drinking problem, and I don't.

SARAH

Just a problem drinking.

ROBERT

Do you miss it?

SARAH

See how you talk in questions! Harry, do you miss it?

HARRY

No. No, I really don't.

SARAH

Yes. Yes, he really does. Hi, darling.

HARRY

Anyway, I stopped, haven't had a drink since.

SARAH

Whoops.

HARRY

What's whoops? I haven't had a drink since.

SCENE THREE

(PETER and SUSAN'S terrace.

ROBERT stands alone)

PETER

(OFFSTAGE)

Bob? Bob? Where the hell are you?

ROBERT

Out here.

PETER

(ENTERING, with SUSAN)

For crissake, what are you doing out here?

ROBERT

Oh, it is so great to have a terrace in this city. Wow.

SUSAN

Really? We just use it to store old sleds and stuff.

PETER

(Indicating)

Look. Hundreds of thousand of terraces in New York and never have I seen a single person out on even one of them.

SUSAN

Plus you worry about kids tracking in dirt or falling over.

PETER

And everyone can hear everything you say.

(Leans over, calls up)

Are you listening?

(To SUSAN and ROBERT)

Not to mention look at all the bird-doo.

(ROBERT quickly removes his jacket from the railing)

SUSAN

And noisy?!! You cannot even hear yourself think. And what can you see? All you can see is the building across the street.

PETER

(Leaning over)

Well, if you lean way out and look over there you can see the East River.

SUSAN

(Pulling PETER back)

Except that you really can't. Peter almost met his Maker one night trying to see that dumb ol' East River. He did.

ROBERT

You saved him?

SUSAN

Me? No. Well, I suppose, in a way.

PETER

She fainted so I got down.

SUSAN

Peter just is not afraid of anything at all. Unfortunately, I simply was not made that way. One day Peter fell off the ladder when he was putting up my curio cabinet and he split his head right open. Well, I fainted. I came to, I looked at his head and I fainted again.

PETER

Four times she fainted that night.

ROBERT

(Laughing)

Well, see now, to me that is so sweet. That is charm. Oh, you gotta be one lucky guy, Peter. I mean, hey, that kind of — Southern graciousness — there just ain't much of that around these parts. You two are — he said with envy — just beautiful together. Really a terrific pair. And Peter — if you ever decide to leave her — I want to be the first to know.

SUSAN

(Smiling at PETER)

Well...

PETER

You're the first to know.

SUSAN

(Elated)

We're getting divorced.

JENNY
Jesus!

DAVID
That's twice you said, "Jesus."

JENNY
You're kidding.

DAVID
No. You said it two times. She never swears.

JENNY
I didn't even know I said it once.

DAVID
Say "son-of-a-bitch."

JENNY
Son of a bitch.

(THEY all laugh)

DAVID
Say "Kiss my ass."

JENNY
Kiss my ass.

(THEY roar at this)

Kiss my ass, you son of a bitch.

(THEY scream with laughter)

Oh, Jesus. That's three!

(THEY laugh)

Shhh. Shhh. You'll wake the kids. Let's laugh to ourselves.

DAVID
Oh, Jenny, for God's sake.

(ROBERT laughs more and pounds the floor)

JENNY

Sshh! We'll get evicted!

ROBERT

Jenny, you're terrific. You're the girl I should have married.

JENNY

Listen, I know a darling girl in this building you'll just love.

ROBERT

What?

JENNY

When are you going to get married?

DAVID

What?

JENNY

I mean it. To me a person's not complete until he's married.

DAVID

He's complete enough.

(To ROBERT)

You're better off the way you are.

ROBERT

That's what I hear.

JENNY

(Almost hurt)

Oh, Dave. Do you mean that?

DAVID

No.

(Pause)

Well, frankly, sometimes I'd like to be single.

JENNY

(Now SHE is hurt)

Oh. That's not even funny.

DAVID

It has nothing to do with you.

JENNY

I'm your wife!

(APRIL, in an airline stewardess' uniform, APPEARS with ROBERT. MARTA observes the following scene)

APRIL

I didn't come right to New York. I went to Northwestern University for two years but it was a pitiful mistake. I was on probation the whole two years. I was getting ready to go back to Shaker Heights when I decided where I really wanted to live more than any other place was — Radio City. I thought it was a wonderful little city near New York. So I came here. I'm very dumb.

ROBERT

You're not dumb, April.

APRIL

To me I am. Even the reason I stayed in New York was because I just cannot get interested in myself — I'm so boring.

ROBERT

I find you very interesting.

APRIL

Well, I'm just not. I used to think I was so odd. But my roommate is the same way. He's also very dumb.

ROBERT

Oh, you never mentioned him. Is he — your lover?

APRIL

Oh, no. We just share this great big apartment on West End Avenue. We have our own rooms and everything. I'd show it to you but we've never had company. He's the sweetest thing actually. I think he likes the arrangement. I don't know though — we've never discussed it. He was born in New York — so nothing really interests him.

ROBERT

What would you do if either of you ever got married?

APRIL

Get a bigger place, I guess.

(Pause)

I don't have anything more to say.

(SHE exits)

MARTA

AND THEY FIND EACH OTHER IN THE CROWDED STREETS
AND THE GUARDED PARKS,

(MARTA)

BY THE RUSTY FOUNTAINS AND THE DUSTY TREES
WITH THE BATTERED BARKS,
AND THEY WALK TOGETHER PAST THE POSTERED WALLS
WITH THE CRUDE REMARKS.
AND THEY MEET AT PARTIES THROUGH THE FRIENDS OF FRIENDS
WHO THEY NEVER KNOW.
WILL YOU PICK ME UP OR DO I MEET YOU THERE
OR SHALL WE LET IT GO?
DID YOU GET MY MESSAGE, 'CAUSE I LOOKED IN VAIN?
CAN WE SEE EACH OTHER TUESDAY IF IT DOESN'T RAIN?
LOOK, I'LL CALL YOU IN THE MORNING OR MY SERVICE WILL EXPLAIN...

AND ANOTHER HUNDRED PEOPLE JUST GOT OFF OF THE TRAIN.

(ROBERT is now seen with KATHY)

ROBERT

(Putting her on)

This is really exciting, Kathy. Fascinating.

KATHY

Robert, you are awful.

ROBERT

You come here a lot, huh? Terrific. And maybe next we can go watch a haircut.

KATHY

Oh, you cannot bear that with a big party going on I talked you into coming here with me.

ROBERT

What party are you — oh, that party. I'd completely forgotten about that party. But hey, maybe we can still make it.

KATHY

Robert, try to enjoy this. Imagine being in a tiny, quiet pocket of a park right here in the middle of the busy, noisy East Fifties. A park that's simple and pretty, with that waterfall on the wall that always makes me ache to be back at the Cape.

ROBERT

(After a beat of looking at her)

You are some piece of work, lady.

KATHY

What I am is like this park here. Out of place.

ROBERT

You are like this park. Very lovely. Very.

(As ROBERT leans in to kiss her, KATHY closes her eyes; but HE only kisses her forehead in a brotherly way. SHE expected more)

KATHY

I used to dream I'd come to New York, have two terrific affairs and then get married. I always knew I was meant to be a wife.

ROBERT

Then how come we never got married? Why did you never ask me?

KATHY

(Turns. Right at him. Serious)

You wanna marry me?

ROBERT

I did. I honestly did... in the beginning. But I... I don't know. I never thought that you would.

KATHY

Oh, I would. I've never understood why you never asked me.

ROBERT

So you wanted to marry me? And I wanted to marry you. Well then, how the hell did we ever end up such good friends?

KATHY

Robert, I never let you know what a good, good man I think you are and how much you've meant. Robert, I...

(Stops. Decides not to say it. Then:)

I brought you here because I wanted to tell you alone. I'm moving back up to Cape Cod. I'm getting married.

ROBERT

Married?

KATHY

Some people still get married, you know.

ROBERT

Did you just suddenly fall in love?

(A pause. Then:)

KATHY

I'll be a good wife. I want real things now. A husband, a family. I don't want to keep running around this city like I'm having a life.

(MARTA)

LOOK, I'LL CALL YOU IN THE MORNING
OR MY SERVICE WILL EXPLAIN...

AND ANOTHER HUNDRED PEOPLE JUST GOT OFF OF THE TRAIN.

AND ANOTHER HUNDRED PEOPLE JUST GOT OFF OF THE TRAIN.
AND ANOTHER HUNDRED PEOPLE JUST GOT OFF OF THE TRAIN.
AND ANOTHER HUNDRED PEOPLE JUST GOT OFF OF THE TRAIN.
AND ANOTHER HUNDRED PEOPLE JUST GOT OFF OF THE TRAIN.

(Sitting next to ROBERT)

You wanna know why I came to New York? I came because New York is the center of the world and that's where I want to be. You know what the pulse of this city is?

ROBERT

A busy signal.

MARTA

The pulse of this city, kiddo, is me. This city is for the me's of this world. People that want to be right in the heart of it. I am like the soul of New York.

ROBERT

How 'bout that.

MARTA

See, smart remarks do not a person make. How many Puerto Ricans you know?

ROBERT

(Thinking)

Let's see... there's a guy at work... and uh...

MARTA

(Interrupting)

How many blacks?

ROBERT

Well, see, frankly I only seem to meet people like myself.

MARTA

God, talk about pathetic. Jews, Hispanics, gays, Arabs, street people, all my closest, my best friends. Listen, I don't pass people on the street, I stop and I know them. In this city every son of a bitch I meet is my new best friend. Oh, I go uptown, like to the dentist or something, and I swear, suddenly I want to cry because I think, "oh my God, I'm uptown." And Fourteenth Street. Well, I don't know why anybody talks about anyplace else, because that is the center of the universe.

ROBERT

Fourteenth Street?

MARTA

That's humanity, Fourteenth Street. That's everything. And if you don't like it there they got every subway you can name to take ya where you like it better.

ROBERT

Well, God bless Fourteenth Street.

MARTA

This city – I kiss the ground of it. Someday you know what I want to do? I want to get all dressed up in black – black dress, black shoes, hat, everything black, and go sit in some bar, at the end of the counter, and drink and cry. That is my idea of honest-to-God sophistication. I mean, that's New York.

(Pause)

You always make me feel like I got the next line. What is it with you?

ROBERT

I just never met anybody like you.

MARTA

Me neither. You know what this city is? Where a person can feel it? It's in a person's ass. If you're really part of this city, relaxed, cool and in the whole flow of it, your ass is like this.

(Makes a large round circle with her forefinger and thumb)

If you're just living here, runnin' around uptight, not really part of this city, your ass is like this.

(Tightens the circle to nothing, making a fist)

ROBERT

I... hesitate to ask.

(MARTA holds up the "tight" sign high)

That's a fascinating theory, fascinating. And at this moment, extraordinarily accurate.

(LIGHTS fade)

END OF SCENE FIVE

PAUL

What is all this about me being Jewish today? About three quarters of your friends are Jewish. Hurry.

AMY

Did I ever say I like my friends? I do not. I much prefer my Gentile enemies, at least they leave you alone. And I need to be left alone. I'm just like Robert.

ROBERT

I'm not like that! What the hell are you talking about? But don't answer, because we don't have time.

PAUL

Amy. After all these years, don't you know we fit.

AMY

The higher you go, the harder you hurt when you fall.

PAUL

I never dropped you yet.

(AMY goes to take a sip of coffee, sees a note in the saucer, then shows the saucer to ROBERT. ROBERT opens the note)

ROBERT

"Whoever reads this... I love you." Well, thank you, I love you.

AMY

Thank him. The phantom. He leaves notes like that all over the place. A person can't stand all that sweetness, Paul. Nobody human can stand all that everlasting affection.

PAUL

Amy, don't you think we should go?

AMY

I can't.

PAUL

Amy, if anybody should be married, it's you. Tell her, Robert.

AMY

Robert tell me? Who's going to tell Robert?

(Pause)

ROBERT

Paul, I can't tell anybody anything like that. I guess whatever is right will happen.

(Pause)

PAUL

I see.

ROBERT

Listen, I'm going to call and say that, ah... that... that we'll be late. That we'll be a little late. The people will be getting there, don't you think?

(EXITS)

PAUL

Amy, do you see what you're doing to yourself? Do you know if other people did to you what you do to yourself, they could be put in jail? C'mon.

(THUNDER is heard)

AMY

Oh, Paul, look... oh, look... it's starting to rain.

(ROBERT ENTERS)

ROBERT

It's starting to rain. The line's busy... Oh, guess who I ran into coming over here today. Helen Kincaid? Remember Helen Kincaid? I brought her around a few times. Well, she's married now. I almost didn't recognize her, all fat and blowsy and...

(Realizing their dismayed reactions, stops)

PAUL

Amy. C'mon. We're late.

AMY

I can't do it, Paul. I don't understand how I ever let it get this far.

(THUNDER is heard again)

Oh look, will you look at that, now it's really starting to rain... look at it... it's a flood, it's a sign; thank you God, now explain it to him!

PAUL

Amy, let's go. All our friends are waiting.

AMY

That's no reason, Paul. I just can't. I'm so afraid.

(JOANNE)

AND HERE'S TO THE GIRLS WHO JUST WATCH –
AREN'T THEY THE BEST?
WHEN THEY GET DEPRESSED, IT'S A BOTTLE OF SCOTCH
PLUS A LITTLE JEST.
ANOTHER CHANCE TO DISAPPROVE,
ANOTHER BRILLIANT ZINGER,
ANOTHER REASON NOT TO MOVE,
ANOTHER VODKA STINGER –
AAAHH – I'LL DRINK TO THAT.

(Drinks)

SO HERE'S TO THE GIRLS ON THE GO –
EVERYBODY TRIES.
LOOK INTO THEIR EYES AND YOU'LL SEE WHAT THEY KNOW:
EVERYBODY DIES.
A TOAST TO THAT INVINCIBLE BUNCH,
THE DINOSAURS SURVIVING THE CRUNCH –
LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE LADIES WHO LUNCH!
EVERYBODY RISE! RISE!
RISE! RISE! RISE! RISE! RISE! RISE!
RISE!

(The LIGHTS come back up on the nightclub)

I would like a cigarette, Larry. Remember when everyone used to smoke? How it was more – uh – festive... happier or something. Now every place is not unlike an operating room, for crissake.

(Pokes ROBERT)

Huh?

ROBERT

I never smoked.

JOANNE

Why?

ROBERT

I don't know. I meant to. Does that count?

JOANNE

Meant to! Meant to! Story of your life. Meant to! Jesus, you are lifted right out of a Krafft-Ebing case history. You were always outside, looking in the window while everybody was inside dancing at the party. Now I insist you smoke. Your first compromise.

(Rips open a pack, holds it in front of him)

Here, Rob! Smoke!

ROBERT

No, thank you.

LARRY

Joanne, honey, c'mon — he doesn't.

ROBERT

You smoke. I'll watch.

JOANNE

Watch? Did you hear yourself? Huh? Hear what you just said, kiddo? Watch. I am offering you a chance to...

ROBERT

(Interrupting)

I don't want one.

JOANNE

(Angry, throwing pack on table)

Because you're weak... I hate people who are weak!

(Lights a cigarette, inhales deep, exhales)

That's the best. Better than Prozac. Smoking may be the only thing that separates us from the lower forms.

LARRY

You wanna split?

JOANNE

Of what?

LARRY

(To ROBERT)

See, everyday Joanne tests me to see if I'll go away. Twice a year my wife here packs up to leave so I'll ask her to stay. My mother was a very difficult woman... and my old man left her... and he regretted it until the day he died. Now me, hey, I married this wildly conceited broad with no self-esteem. I got a wife who still has this hard

(LARRY)

time believing that she found a guy she daily fascinates. And, unlike my father, I'm a very happy man. She doesn't act like this when you're not around, Bobby. I hope you get to meet Joanne sometime. She's really a terrific lady. In fact, you ever decide to get married, Bobby, make sure you find someone just like Joanne.

JOANNE

Don't ever get married, Robby. Never. Why should you?

ROBERT

Oh, for company, I don't know. Like everybody else.

JOANNE

Who else?

ROBERT

Everybody that ever fell in love and got married.

JOANNE

I know both couples and they're both divorced. Oh, Larry, you interrupted me before. See what happens when you rush me. I wanted to toast my second husband.

LARRY

(Getting up)

It's late. I'm going to the john. And when I come back we'll be leaving. The holiday is ending. Okay?

(EXITS)