

AT RISE: IDA comes down the stairs into the living room. The DOORBELL rings. As SHE goes to answer the door the OVEN TIMER rings offstage in the kitchen. SHE heads for the kitchen and the DOORBELL rings again. SHE's about to turn back for the door but decides that what's in the oven is more important. SHE exits to the kitchen. The DOORBELL rings again.

IDA. (Offstage.) Coming. Coming.

(The DOORBELL rings again. IDA runs on holding her oven mitts.)

IDA. I'm coming. (Going for the door as the BELL rings again.) I'm coming!

(SHE opens the door. LUCILLE bursts in wearing a long fur coat.)

LUCILLE. Son of a bitch!

IDA. What's the matter?!

LUCILLE. A guy follows me all the way from Queens Boulevard, undressing me with his eyes, and she asks what's the matter.

IDA. Again someone was following you?

LUCILLE. Can I help it if men find me attractive?

IDA. Who was it this time?

LUCILLE. I didn't get a name. He had blond hair, six one, six two, about a hundred seventy

pounds—a very nice build—with green eyes and a cleft chin—

IDA. What were you, walking backwards?

LUCILLE. I happen to have an excellent memory ... So what do you think?

IDA. I think you should just forget the whole thing.

LUCILLE. I mean about the coat. Look at this how she doesn't even notice.

IDA. Oh Lucille, it's beautiful. New?

LUCILLE. Have you seen it on this gorgeous body before?

IDA. You should wear it in the best of health.

LUCILLE. You ready for the best part? Guess how much.

IDA. A coat like that you must have paid at least three thousand.

LUCILLE. Nope.

IDA. Less?

LUCILLE. Much.

IDA. What, twenty-five hundred?

(LUCILLE joyously shakes her head.)

IDA. Don't tell me it was under two thousand.

LUCILLE. Nineteen fifty.

IDA. I'm fainting.

LUCILLE. Is that a steal or is that a steal?

IDA. Where did you find it?

LUCILLE. Well, I was walking in Manhattan down Fifty-seventh Street when I pass the Ritz Thrift Shop. Usually, I would never even look in

the window. I mean, what could they have—garbage, right? This time I happen to look and what do you think I see?

IDA. That coat.

LUCILLE. No. I see a full length brown fox you could die from. I go in, try it on and my mazel it's a little too tight—*(She's about to say "tight" but stops herself)*—short. Then as I'm walking out, I'm looking down the rack and what do you think catches my eye?

IDA. That coat.

LUCILLE. A leopard jacket that made my heart stop. But for how often I'd get to wear it, it didn't pay.

IDA. Lucille, we're not getting any younger. Where did you find the mink?

LUCILLE. So, as I'm about to leave I see them bringing in a new rack and what do you think is the first thing I spot?

IDA. Who knows?

LUCILLE. This coat.

IDA. Thank God.

LUCILLE. There's only one thing that bothers me.

IDA. What?

LUCILLE. Knowing it was someone else's. I mean, who knows who this person is? All I know is that she's tall, terrifically slim and probably didn't look half as good in it as I do.

IDA. So what are you worried? You got a gorgeous coat at a great price.

LUCILLE. Ida, why would she give this coat up?

IDA. Who knows? Maybe she died.

LUCILLE. Oh my God. I didn't even think. This poor woman could be dead. For all I know, she could have died in this coat. The poor thing could've been wearing this coat, crossing the street and got hit by a car. It's not marked anywhere, is it? *(SHE turns around to show Ida the back of the coat.)*

IDA. It's perfect. Not a scratch on it ... except for that one tire mark down the back.

LUCILLE. Oh!

IDA. I'm only kidding. There's nothing on it. Let me try it on.

LUCILLE. My pleasure.

(LUCILLE takes off the coat and gives it to Ida. SHE puts it on.)

IDA. How do I look?

LUCILLE. Do the words "Lana Turner" mean anything?

IDA. Let me see.

(SHE runs over to the mirror and looks at herself.)

LUCILLE stands behind her.)

LUCILLE. What becomes a legend most!

IDA. *(Embarrassed.)* Oh ...

LUCILLE. I haven't paid the spring one yet. When Blue Cross pays *me* for Harry being sick I'll pay the *cemetary* for Harry being dead.

DORIS. Well, you'll probably get yours Monday. I'm not even going to tell you how high it's gone up.

IDA. Again it's gone up?

LUCILLE. And what are they going to do if we don't pay? What, they going to move them?

(*The tea KETTLE whistles.*)

DORIS. You want me to make?

IDA. Sit. I'll get it.

(*IDA exits to the kitchen. DORIS hangs up her coat then joins Lucille on the couch.*)

DORIS. So how are you?

LUCILLE. Good. You look different.

DORIS. I dropped a couple of pounds.

LUCILLE. You're losing weight?

DORIS. No, it's just moving lower. So what do you think of this day?

LUCILLE. Nice.

DORIS. Nice? A more beautiful day hasn't been invented. The leaves are just starting to fall. The colors are incredible. Abe's plot is going to look gorgeous. I just hope they kept up the care. You remember the argument I had with them last month. He's telling me they water twice a week while I'm looking down at dead ivy.

LUCILLE. I'm sure it'll look terrific.

DORIS. Funny, you know, fall was Abe's favorite time of year.... Eh, a wonderful man taken much too soon.

LUCILLE. Who could believe? *Four years ago today.*

DORIS. You remembered. I didn't think you'd remember.

LUCILLE. Of course I remembered. How could I forget? It was almost exactly a year before my Harry died.

DORIS. That's Murry.

LUCILLE. What's Murry?

DORIS. Murry. *Ida's* Murry. *He* died the year before your Harry.

LUCILLE. *Murry* died the year before Harry?

DORIS. Of course, Abe died two years before Murry.

LUCILLE. So Harry died three years after Abe.

DORIS. That's what I'm trying to tell you.

LUCILLE. So who died the year before Murry?

DORIS. No one.

LUCILLE. You sure?

DORIS. Of course I'm sure! Abe died four years ago today.

LUCILLE. That's what I said. Four years ago today. Who could forget? A wonderful man taken much too soon.

DORIS. They were all wonderful men. I wonder what the three of them are doing now?

DORIS. That's it. She says she actually talks to them. You have to put something that belonged to the deceased on the table, or a picture.

LUCILLE. I don't believe in that.

IDA. I don't know. I've heard some pretty interesting things.

DORIS. I think one day I'm going to try it. Wouldn't it be something if I could contact Abe, if I could talk with him? Even if just for a few minutes.

IDA. I don't know if I'd want to contact Murry.

DORIS. Why not?

LUCILLE. Because it unnatural. Your husband dies, that's it. The time for talking is finished.

DORIS. Unnatural is a man dying in his prime. You get married so you can spend the rest of your life with someone you love.

LUCILLE. You get married 'til "death do you part."

IDA. If I could contact Murry I'd like to ask him what he would've done, if I had gone first. I wonder if he would remarry.

DORIS. Abe, never.

IDA. I think Murry would. *(To Lucille.)* What about Harry, you think he would?

LUCILLE. I couldn't care less. The only thing I'd like to ask Harry is if maybe there's a bank account somewhere he forgot to tell me about. What difference does it make whether or not he'd remarry?

LUCILLE. Probably looking for a fourth to play cards.

(As THEY laugh, IDA enters with the tea and a plate of cookies on a tray.)

IDA. So what are we talking? *(SHE sets the tray down on the coffee table and hands out the cups.)*

LUCILLE. We're trying to figure out what the boys are doing right now.

IDA. Murry is easy. Right now he's sitting, smoking a cigar and any minute his ash is going to fall and burn a small hole in a cloud.

LUCILLE. Let's see ... Today's Sunday, so Harry'll go right for the Manhattan real estate section then yell for half an hour how thirty years ago he could've bought a brownstone on Park Avenue for twenty-five thousand dollars.

DORIS. Abe is definitely out on a walk. Sunday was his day for walking, so wherever they walk up there, that's where he is.

IDA. Here's to the boys ... wherever they are.

(THEY all raise their cups, toast, and drink.)

DORIS. Funny, you know, I was reading last week how this woman contacts the dead through a ... a what do you call it? You hold hands in a circle around a big table. Like a seder.

LUCILLE. Seance.

LUCILLE. Come here. I want you to meet—
MAN. Ida?

IDA. Sam.

LUCILLE. You two know each other?

IDA. Of course. This is Sam. The best butcher
in the whole world. How are you?

SAM. Good. And you?

IDA. Fine. You came to see Merna?

SAM. Yeah.

IDA. Doris is over at Abe's. It's the fourth
anniversary today.

DORIS. *Four years.*

SAM. You think it would be all right if I went
over?

IDA. I think she'd love it.

LUCILLE. Come, I'll walk you.

*(SHE takes his arm as the THREE of them begin
walking toward Doris.)*

IDA. Oy, wait. I forgot. *(Runs back to the
grave and picks up a small stone.)*

DORIS. How did I get his far?

IDA. I'll uh ... I'll see you when I see you.

*(SHE kisses the stone then places it on Murry's
headstone then rejoins LUCILLE and SAM as
THEY walk over to Doris.)*

DORIS. Abe, I got a pain here that hasn't gone
away in four years. So many things I miss.

*(SHE bends down as LUCILLE, IDA and SAM
approach.)*

LUCILLE. *(Running over.)* Quick! She's
going to lie down again!

IDA. *(Running over.)* Doris, don't do it! Don't
lie down!

DORIS. Do what?! Who's lying?! I was
bending to pick up a stone. You scared me half to
death. Hello, Sam.

SAM. Hello Doris.

DORIS. It's good to see you.

SAM. I wanted to pay my respects.

DORIS. Today is four years, you know.

SAM. Ida told me.

DORIS. I'd like to just stand in silence for a
few minutes to think, remember, and hopefully
get my heart rate back down.

IDA. We're right here with you, Doris.

DORIS. It's nice to have such good friends.

LUCILLE. You've got the best.

SAM. Maybe I should go.

DORIS. Don't be silly. Abe would be honored.

LUCILLE. You're not going anywhere.

*(SHE pulls him over and puts her arm through his
as THEY all stand in silence and look down at
Abe's grave. After a long moment LUCILLE
begins talking to Sam in a loud whisper.)*

LUCILLE. So what are you doing later?

SAM. *(Politely.)* Shhh.

LUCILLE. (*Pause.*) Why don't you join us for a little—

IDA. Lucille.

LUCILLE. (*Pause.*) Better yet, maybe you and I could—

DORIS. I don't believe you.

LUCILLE. I'm just trying to make Sam feel comfortable.

DORIS. Stop flirting, he'll feel comfortable.

IDA. Lucille, really.

LUCILLE. Well how much longer are we—

DORIS. I'm sorry to inconvenience you. I would just like to have a few minutes of silence for my husband who died four years ago today.

SAM. Maybe I should go.

IDA. It's not you, Sam.

LUCILLE. Stay where you are.

DORIS. Look, you want to pick up men, do it at another grave!

IDA. *Doris.*

SAM. I don't want to cause any—

LUCILLE. What am I standing here for? What, just because Abe kicked off four years ago today I have to take this kind of abuse?! (*Shouting to Abe's grave.*) Happy anniversary! (*SHE storms off.*)

IDA. Lucille!

SAM. I really—

DORIS. The whole day is ruined—

IDA. *Doris—*

DORIS. (*Grabbing her stool.*) —Shot to hell!

SAM. I think I left something—

DORIS. (*Yelling to Lucille as SHE exits.*) I hope your coat falls apart!!

IDA. *Doris!* (*SHE runs after them and exits, leaving Sam standing alone at Abe's grave.*)

SAM. (*To Abe's grave.*) And you thought you were going to rest in peace. (*HE exits as the LIGHTS fade out.*)

Scene 3

Ida's house. Late afternoon.

The door opens and IDA rushes in carrying three handbags. Leaving the door open, SHE runs into the living room and hides two of the bags under the couch. SHE returns to the door and yells outside as SHE takes off her coat.

IDA. You're not getting your bags back until you both come in here!

(SHE hangs up her coat then goes to the couch, sits down, and picks up a magazine. LUCILLE enters angrily and walks over to a chair and sits. DORIS enters shortly after, closes the door and remains standing, holding on to her stool. There is a moment of silence as IDA thumbs through the magazine.)

IDA. (*Without looking up.*) It says here that if two women who have been good friends for over

IDA. Doris, there's nothing to be shocked about. No one's going crazy. We're just talking. And I would hardly call Sam a playboy.

DORIS. No? then what was he doing at the cemetery?

IDA. What do you mean what was he doing at the cemetery? He was visiting Merna.

DORIS. Hah! He hasn't been to her grave in over a year. The only reason he goes to the cemetery is to try to meet a woman.

IDA. Don't be ridiculous.

DORIS. Ridiculous? You don't remember Rose Jacobs?

IDA. I remember Rose Jacobs. I don't remember them meeting at the cemetery.

DORIS. Less than five feet away from Mel's grave.

LUCILLE. I like his style.

DORIS. And how about Sylvia Green? Where do you think they met?

LUCILLE. He went out with Sylvia Green?

DORIS. (*To Ida.*) Am I lying?

(*IDA doesn't answer.*)

DORIS. And it all started at the unveiling of Lou's headstone. He caught her in the middle of mourning and went out with her later that night.

IDA. I'm sure it didn't happen that fast.

DORIS. So maybe my timing's a little off but the place I remember. He got her at the cemetery.

(*The BELL rings. IDA opens the door and SAM enters carrying a brown paper bag.*)

IDA. Sam.

SAM. Ida.

LUCILLE. Hi, Sam.

SAM. (*Not expecting her.*) Oh, hello Lonnie.

LUCILLE. Lucille.

SAM. Lucille. I'm sorry. I've got no memory for names. (*Spotting Doris.*) Hello Doris.

DORIS. (*Knowingly, slightly disdainful.*) Hello, Sam.

SAM. I uh ... I didn't realize you would all be here. Maybe I should come back some other time.

IDA. No, please come in.

SAM. (*Awkwardly.*) I uh ... I remembered the chicken livers you wanted so I put some aside on Friday and I figured since I'm in the neighborhood I'd ... I'd drop them off.

IDA. That was very nice.

SAM. Maybe I should just leave it and go.

IDA. Don't be silly. (*Closing the door and taking the bag.*) I was just going to put some tea on. You'll have a cup. (*SHE exits to the kitchen.*)

LUCILLE. (*Taking off his coat and hanging it in the closet.*) So, a butcher that delivers. What more could a girl want?

SAM. (*To Doris.*) I'm sorry about what happened at the cemetery. I shouldn't have been there.

LUCILLE. Don't be silly. It was nice having a new face. Come, sit. (*Escorts Sam to the couch and sits beside him.*)

SAM. I feel like I ruined a very special moment for the three of you.

LUCILLE. What special? We go every month.

SAM. Every month?

LUCILLE. I understand that you also enjoy going to the cemetery.

SAM. Sometimes I feel a need.

DORIS. I'm sure you do.

IDA. (*Enters carrying a plate of cookies.*) So what are we talking?

LUCILLE. Sam and I were just discussing how sometimes one feels a need to go to the cemetery.

IDA. (*Surprised.*) I see.

LUCILLE. (*Suddenly.*) I think I have a terrific idea.

IDA. What's that?

LUCILLE. Well, since Sam here goes to the same cemetery to visit his lovely wife, uh ...

SAM. Merna.

LUCILLE. Merna. Why don't the four of us go together next month?

SAM. I—

IDA. I thought we decided not to go.

SAM. I—

DORIS. It's supposed to be the three of us.

SAM. I—

LUCILLE. (*To Doris.*) Who put you in charge of the rule book?

SAM. Look, I really don't know when I'll want to go again. But I'm flattered you should ask.

IDA. Actually, we might not even be going next month.

DORIS. *You* might not be going.

IDA. We were just discussing the fact that it might be time to stop.

LUCILLE. We were saying that there comes a time you have to leave the cemetery and play the field.

SAM. What field?

DORIS. (*To Sam.*) Thank you.

LUCILLE. I mean, there comes a time you have to stop going to the cemetery and start dating again. Before you came we were having a little discussion about it. What are your feelings?

(*All three WOMEN turn to Sam. The weight of his response is apparent.*)

SAM. (*Nervously. Diplomatically.*) I uh ... I think that ... that you have to do what's right for you. (*To Doris.*) For some people dating might be out of the question ... (*To Lucille.*) and for others it might be right. (*Quickly changing the subject.*) Those cookies look irresistible.

IDA. Please, help yourself.

(*HE takes a cookie and eats it.*)

LUCILLE. (*Pressing on.*) And which category do you fall into?

IDA. Lucille.

SAM. No, that's okay. For me ... I think it's time to move on. Sure I go pay my respects when I feel the need to but I also think I'm ready to start a new chapter. After all, what is life if not one chapter after another waiting to be written?

LUCILLE. Well put.

DORIS. (*To Sam.*) Before you take your pen out, Sam—don't you think there comes a time when you stop writing, when you find other things in life to enjoy, when you sit back and read?

SAM. As I said, I think you have to do what's right for you.

LUCILLE. Exactly. Some people are readers and some people are writers. (*To Sam.*) Me, I'm like you—a writer.

DORIS. (*Giving Lucille a look. Disgusted.*) I'm going to the bathroom.

(*SHE gets up and exits upstairs to the bathroom. There is a moment as the three are left not knowing where to take the conversation.*)

SAM. (*To Ida.*) You know, I'm looking at you and I swear you haven't aged a day since I know you.

IDA. Oh.

LUCILLE. Funny how time passes some people right by. Now you take *me*. I don't look

like I used to. People tell me I actually look younger now than I did five years ago.

(*The tea KETTLE whistles. Pause.*)

IDA. (*To Lucille.*) Why don't you go make the tea this time?

LUCILLE. And leave Sam here all by himself?

(*IDA gives her a look.*)

LUCILLE. I'll go make. (*SHE walks to the kitchen and then turns back. Playfully.*) Now behave yourselves you two. (*Exits.*)

SAM. She's quite a woman.

IDA. You think so?

SAM. I mean different, not shy.

IDA. No, Lucille never knew from shy.

SAM. It's strange but I keep thinking I've met her before.

IDA. Could be. She makes friends very easily. (*Pause.*) Funny running into you today.

SAM. And of all places.

IDA. Go figure.

SAM. (*Pause.*) So, I uh ... I hear Selma's getting married again.

IDA. Yeah.

SAM. You going to the wedding?

IDA. Wouldn't miss it for the world. How about you?

SAM. Sure. (*Pause. Nervously.*) Listen, maybe since uh ... you're going and ... I'm going

... maybe you would ... you would want to take one car ... You could ... go with me. I could uh... drive you ... take you ... there ... to Selma's wedding.

(DORIS has entered unseen on the end of Sam's line and has overheard this.)

IDA. Sam, are you—? (SHE sees Doris and stops herself.)

DORIS. Did I interrupt something?

IDA. (Flustered.) Sam and I were just talking about Selma's wedding.

SAM. (To Doris.) You going to go?

DORIS. (Sitting back down.) I haven't decided.

IDA. Of course she's going.

DORIS. (Indifferently.) Of course I'm going.

LUCILLE. (Enters with the tea.) Tea time. (Setting the tray down.) So what did I miss?

DORIS. I'll let Ida tell you.

IDA. We were just discussing Selma's wedding.

LUCILLE. Well I, for one, am looking forward. (Pouring the tea. To Sam.) Milk?

SAM. Please. No sugar.

LUCILLE. (To Sam.) You going?

SAM. Yeah. I like Selma's weddings, they're like reunions. Wait a minute. That's where I've seen you before. Weren't you at Selma's last wedding?

LUCILLE. I've been to all of them.

SAM. I thought you looked familiar. How do you like that. All this time and I didn't even recognize you.

LUCILLE. I looked different then. I was married.

DORIS. (To Sam.) Did you know Harry?

SAM. No.

DORIS. He died about a year and a half ago. Not long after Lou Green's unveiling. You remember Lou's unveiling don't you, Ida?

IDA. Yes.

DORIS. How upset Sylvia was.

IDA. Doris.

DORIS. How vulnerable.

IDA. Anyone for another cookie?

LUCILLE. (To Doris. Fed up.) I've had my limit for today.

SAM. I don't know how you could resist. They're absolutely wonderful, delicious. (To Ida.) I haven't tasted cookies this good since I don't know when.

IDA. It's nothing really. They're easy to make.

SAM. For you.

IDA. If you like I'll give you some you can take home.

SAM. I couldn't.

IDA. Please. I got plenty. I made to send to the kids but they still haven't sent the tin back from last time. Before you go I'll put some in a bag.

DORIS. What about the tea? Maybe you could put some in a container.

SAM. Tea is about the only thing I can make.

LUCILLE. No?

DORIS. No. Long flowing hair was all he wanted. You remember how long my hair used to be.

LUCILLE. Sure.

DORIS. Those were the days, ey Lucille? You in the Paris hats, me with the long red curls and Ida with the clips.

LUCILLE. (*Smiling, remembering.*) Clips.

DORIS. She was always crazy about hair clips.

LUCILLE. We were quite a threesome.

DORIS. Yeah.

(*THEY exit as the curtain comes down on the cemetery.*)

ACT II

Scene 1

IDA's living room.

A suitcase lays open on one of the chairs, a makeup mirror has been set up on a table, and an ironing board stands off to the side. Murry's pipe rack is gone.

AT RISE: DORIS is ironing her dress. IDA enters holding a scarf around her hair.

IDA. What do you think? (*SHE pulls off the scarf revealing a new hair cut.*)

DORIS. Looks fine.

IDA. I don't want fine.

DORIS. What's wrong with fine?

IDA. Fine is fine. It's not sensational.

DORIS. What's so important you have to look *sensational?*

IDA. It's Selma's wedding.

DORIS. I would hardly call that a special occasion.

IDA. There has to be a reason for me to want to look good?

DORIS. Good, no. Sensational, yes.

IDA. There's no reason.

DORIS. There's no reason. You've been running around here like a schoolgirl before a prom and there's no reason.

IDA. All right, all right ... I just wanted to look good—

DORIS. *Sensational.*

IDA. *Sensational ... so I could ... for Sam.*

DORIS. *(Disappointed.)* For Sam.

IDA. Yes. I didn't want to tell you 'cause I didn't think you would understand.

DORIS. *(Pause.)* So the two of you have still been seeing a lot of each other.

IDA. Well, we were. We were going to the movies on Friday nights—

DORIS. Canasta night.

IDA. You're still not upset about that.

DORIS. Don't be silly.

IDA. But lately I haven't got to see him much. He said he had a cold last week and this week he's been very tired from work. He's been having trouble with the help.

DORIS. I see.

IDA. But I keep wondering if maybe something's wrong.

DORIS. Has he said something's wrong?

IDA. No, but he just doesn't seem the same when I talk to him. I don't know. Maybe it's me. Maybe I'm just not used to this whole thing.

DORIS. Look how upset you're getting. Tell me, is it worth it ...? Listen, tomorrow we'll go to the cemetery. You'll forget all about Sam. Supposed to be a beautiful day tomorrow. And

maybe after, we'll go for a little lunch. My treat. What do you think?

IDA. You don't understand.

(SHE runs upstairs to the bedroom. The DOORBELL rings. DORIS opens the door. LUCILLE enters, wearing her fur coat and hat, carrying a valise, hat box and shoulder bag.)

LUCILLE. Hello.

DORIS. Hello.

(LUCILLE puts down her things. THEY kiss cheek to cheek.)

LUCILLE. I like your hair. Looks good.

DORIS. Thank you. I thought I'd try something a little different.

LUCILLE. Where's Ida?

DORIS. In the bedroom.

LUCILLE. *(Calling upstairs.)* Hello, Ida.

IDA. *(Offstage.)* Hello, Lucille.

LUCILLE. *(To Doris.)* Has she said anything about us going with her?

DORIS. No.

LUCILLE. It'll be fun to all stay here tonight. Like a slumber party.

DORIS. I like being in my own bed.

LUCILLE. Why, what happens there?

DORIS. I wouldn't expect you to understand.

(LUCILLE pulls out a fur hand muff from under valise. SHE puts her hands in the muff and strikes a pose.)

LUCILLE. (*Proudly, re the muff.*) So what do you think?

DORIS. Nice.

LUCILLE. Who would believe I'd be able to find such a perfect match? Exact same color as the hat and coat.

DORIS. All you need now is mink shoes.

LUCILLE. (*Defiantly.*) All right ... *Guess how much.*

DORIS. What's the difference?

LUCILLE. No, I want you to guess. Come on.

DORIS. For something like that, if it was on sale and you got a good price, with a little haggling you should've paid maybe what, a hundred twenty-five?

LUCILLE. (*Beaming! Savoring the moment.*) *Forty-five dollars.*

DORIS. (*Stunned.*) You're kidding.

LUCILLE. I got the receipt!

DORIS. (*Impressed.*) That's some buy. (*Feeling the muff.*) It's not real.

LUCILLE. What are you talking about?

DORIS. I thought it was real. If you told me it wasn't real I would have said about forty-five dollars.

LUCILLE. Of course it's real!

DORIS. I know mink. That's not real. Real you can pull out the fur. (*Pulling the fur.*) This doesn't come out.

LUCILLE. It's well made.

DORIS. I don't care how well made it is, it's not real.

(IDA enters carrying her bridesmaid's dress and a pair of matching shoes.)

LUCILLE. (*To Doris.*) You keep quiet. (*Going over to Ida.*) Ida, what do you think of the muff?

IDA. (*Lays her dress over a chair and puts the shoes on the floor.*) Beautiful. (*Feeling it.*) Nice, soft, well made. If I didn't know I'd think it was real.

DORIS. Thank you.

(LUCILLE marches off and hangs her furs in the closet.)

IDA. What's with her?

DORIS. She thought it was real.

LUCILLE. (*Testily.*) I didn't think it was real. I was just testing. (*Pointing to the coffee table.*) I'll set up over there.

(SHE takes out her make-up and arranges an area for herself on the coffee table. SHE then sits on the couch and begins putting on her face. IDA puts in her new contact lenses.)

IDA. Selma called me yesterday and said this affair's going to be the best yet.

LUCILLE. I think the affairs get better each time. The marriages get worse but the affairs get better.

IDA. You remember the second one?

LUCILLE. Sure. The bakery guy.

IDA. Nat Stein, from Nat's noshery.

DORIS. What an affair that was. An eight course dinner and seven of them were desserts.

LUCILLE. It took me two months to lose the weight I gained that night.

DORIS. To this day I can't look at a canoli without getting sick to my stomach.

IDA. Well we won't have to worry about that this time. This Ed fella is in the fruit business.

LUCILLE. Fruit?

DORIS. Oy, am I going to have gas.

LUCILLE. She went from cakes to fruit? What kind of advancement is that?

IDA. *(To Lucille, indicating make-up.)* Can I use a little?

LUCILLE. Of course.

IDA. *(Holding some eye shadow up to her face.)* The green eye shadow?

DORIS. Sure.

IDA. You don't think it's too much?

LUCILLE. You'll knock 'em dead.

IDA. Dead, I got.

(DORIS makes a fist then releases it. SHE does this a few times.)

LUCILLE. You okay?

DORIS. It's nothing. Every once in a while I get a pain, shoots through the arm.

IDA. I get it in the fingers sometimes in the morning. I find if I wear the copper bracelet it helps.

DORIS. I've tried. Doesn't do anything except maybe I get a little better reception on my TV.

LUCILLE. Harry used to get it bad when it was going to rain. Never failed. The weather man could say tomorrow was going to be nice and sunny. If Harry's hand hurt I took an umbrella.

DORIS. ... Funny, last time we were at Selma's wedding we all had husbands. I hope she's paying by the head.

IDA. Every affair there's fewer and fewer people. I wonder who'll be missing from this one.

LUCILLE. Hopefully, some wives.

IDA. Lucille.

LUCILLE. *(To Ida.)* So what time is Sam coming to pick us up?

IDA. ... I don't know.

LUCILLE. What do you mean you don't know?

IDA. Last time we spoke he said five o'clock but we haven't seen each other for a while. He could have forgotten.

LUCILLE. Well haven't you spoken to him recently?

IDA. No.

Murry over there. Just as I was coming in. I could have sworn I saw him sitting in his chair.

LUCILLE. (*Enters with a glass. Handing it to Doris.*) Here's the milk.

DORIS. Thank you.

IDA. Funny thing was I saw him the way he looked when we first started dating, just before he went off to the war. With thick, wavy black hair. Back then he had some head of hair. Dubrow's restaurant. That was where we met. A mutual friend, Ruth Cutler, set us up. She was with her boyfriend, I forgot his name, and they brought Murry along. Murry and her boyfriend went to school together. The whole meal I couldn't take my eyes off him. I don't know how I didn't poke myself in the face with my fork. And I remember thinking he didn't have any interest in me. Murry was like that back then. Very cool. The next day I get a call from Ruth. Murry had given her his number and told her to have *me* call *him*. What nerve, I thought. So I called. I said "Hello, this is Ida. My number is Rivington 7-6207. If you want to talk to me, call me." I hung up and prayed. Sure enough, he called back. And the rest, as they say, is history.

DORIS. First time I saw Abe was in my father's store. I was nineteen, working behind the counter. He was in the second aisle over. I couldn't see his face but I see through the bottom shelf that he's wearing an old pair of pants and there's a big hole in the top of his right shoe. This was definitely not a boy with money so I keep a

careful watch. All of a sudden he bends down, grabs a loaf of bread, and I see he's putting it inside his jacket. I run over and stand behind him. He gets up, looks me straight in the eyes ... I felt my heart pound. I don't know what came over me. As he started to walk out I yelled at the top of my lungs "Crook! Crook!" It was the only way I could think of keeping him there. And it worked. My father ran out and grabbed him. A month and a half later we were married ... My father always used to joke "This is my son-in-law the crook. First he stole my bread ..." (*SHE smiles.*)

IDA. (*To Lucille.*) How about you? You ever see Harry?

LUCILLE. I didn't see him that much when he was alive. Why should I see him when he's dead?

IDA. What about when you're with other men?

LUCILLE. What do you mean?

IDA. You know, when you're in bed, having... you know, sex with another man. Do you ever see Harry ... in your mind?

LUCILLE. No.

IDA. Not even once it didn't happen?

LUCILLE. (*Getting up.*) No. (*Shutting off the record player.*) Who's having some more wine?

DORIS. I don't believe you.

LUCILLE. Why, were you there?

DORIS. I couldn't *dance* with another man without thinking of Abe.

LUCILLE. First of all, you couldn't do *anything* without thinking of Abe—

DORIS. Not true.

IDA. (Stopping, suddenly.) How could you think I wouldn't understand what you were going through over Harry?

(LUCILLE looks at her, unable to respond. IDA takes her in her arms and strokes her face. SHE then goes back to cleaning up. SHE picks up the mirror she used last night to do her make-up and looks at herself.)

IDA. Oh my God.

LUCILLE. What?

IDA. I'm looking into the future. Right now I can see exactly what I'll look like three years after I die.

(THEY laugh.)

IDA. Maybe I should put on some of the green eye shadow to highlight the color in my cheeks.

(As THEY laugh the DOORBELL rings.)

IDA. Who could that be?

LUCILLE. Probably Selma to tell us she's getting divorced.

IDA. (Looking out of the window.) Oh God!

LUCILLE. Who is it?

IDA. Sam.

(LUCILLE straightens herself up as best she can. IDA opens the door. SAM enters. HE looks anxious and nervous.)

SAM. Hello, Ida.

IDA. Hello, Sam.

SAM. Hello, Lucille.

LUCILLE. Hi, Sam.

SAM. Where's Doris?

LUCILLE. Asleep. We stayed up late after we got back. You know women.

SAM. Could I talk to Ida alone for a minute?

LUCILLE. Oh sure. I'll uh ... I'll go make some tea. (SHE walks to the kitchen, holding on to each piece of furniture along the way for balance. SHE exits.)

SAM. (Gathering up his nerve.) I uh ... I uh ... I'm not sure what I came here to say. I just knew that I had to come over to see you. I guess ... I guess what I want to say is ... is that I don't want to stop seeing you.

IDA. (Firmly.) You already did.

SAM. Only because ... because I started to realize that there was the possibility that ... that maybe something was going to happen ... I mean, that something was developing between us that ... that—

IDA. I wasn't ready for.

SAM. That I wasn't ready for. When I think back, I was talking like such a big shot—ready to start a new chapter. Who was I kidding? I was terrified. All I needed was a door to run out of and

Lucille and Doris gave me one. We started talking about Selma's wedding and what it meant to take you and—

IDA. (*Angrily.*) So you asked Mildred.

SAM. Not because I had any real feelings for her. But because I *didn't* ... It felt safe ... It wasn't a nice thing to do to you or to her.

IDA. No.

SAM. Ida, that afternoon I spent here with you was one of the nicest afternoons I had since Merna died. And the nights we went out together felt wonderful. Each time I was with you I thought about Merna less and less. And that's what started to get to me. For the first time I wasn't comparing someone to Merna. I was enjoying you for just being you and ... and that frightened me.

IDA. (*Pause.*) I just want to know one thing. These last two weeks ... did you miss me?

SAM. Oh yes. (*Almost fearful.*) And you?

IDA. (*Nonchalantly.*) You were on my mind.
SAM. (*Pause.*) I've lost one woman in my life because there was nothing I could do to stop it. I don't want to lose you if there's still anything I can do to hold on.

(*IDA looks at him with tears in her eyes as SHE starts crying and laughing.*)

SAM. What?

IDA. I think somewhere right now Murry and Merna are having one hell of a laugh.

SAM. You think so?
IDA. Yeah.

(*LUCILLE enters with the tea and carefully sets the tray down on the table.*)

SAM. (*To Lucille.*) How about we forget the tea and go out for something to eat?

LUCILLE. (*Her mouth drops open as SHE becomes nauseous just at the thought.*) ... Food?

SAM. (*Excitedly.*) And then maybe we'll all go for some ice cream. I feel like a kid again.

IDA. Ice cream?

LUCILLE. We'd love to. We haven't eaten a thing.

IDA. Not a thing.

SAM. (*To Ida.*) So go get dressed and wake up Doris.

LUCILLE. (*To Ida.*) Yeah, go ahead. I'm sure she'll be famished.

IDA. I'm sure. (*Exits upstairs to the bedroom.*)

LUCILLE. (*Going over to Sam.*) I'm sorry, Sam. Doris and I should never have interfered.

SAM. (*Smiling, taking her hands.*) So where should we go to eat?

LUCILLE. Where ever you want.

SAM. There's a great kosher Chinese place over on Linden.

LUCILLE. Klein's?

SAM. No. You're thinking of Klein's Korean Kitchen on Union Turnpike. I'm talking Manny Peking.

IDA. I'll call you.

LUCILLE. *(To Sam.)* Be careful driving.

SAM. *(To Lucille.)* You take care of yourself.

(HE kisses her on the cheek, then exits with Ida, arm in arm. LUCILLE looks after them for a long while as tears fill her eyes. SHE looks back at the grave and sits on the stool.)

LUCILLE. They look good together, don't you think? Ten to one says they'll be married before the year's out ... That'll be some affair, huh? Gotta have good meat ... You could've made some haul on that one ... Me and Selma'll probably be bridesmaids ... There's a switch. Selma at somebody else's wedding. *(SHE laughs, then stops.)* They'll make a good couple. *(Pause.)* Probably won't see much of her. *(Fighting back tears.)* Look at this place. *(SHE begins picking out some leaves from the ivy. Her movements quicken and become more careless.)* A person shouldn't have to be picking leaves out of ivy. A person shouldn't have to spend the rest of their life taking care of a grave! I shouldn't have to come here very goddamn month to— *(SHE begins sobbing as SHE grabs leaves, rocks, anything and smashes them against the grave. Finally, SHE stops and stands up. Softly, sadly.)* I'm gonna miss you, Doris. *(SHE pulls herself together and regains her composure.)* But I'm telling you now ... I'm not coming here every month. I don't care how much time we've spent

here, I'm not going to remember you and me in this place! I'm going to remember you dancing. I'm going to remember you arguing. I'm going to remember you pulling chicken wings out of your purse. *(SHE bends down, picks up a small stone and holds it to her heart as SHE looks at the grave. SHE then places the stone beside the marker.)* So ... I'll see you ... when I see you. *(SHE picks up the folding stool to take with her then changes her mind. SHE sets it back down beside the grave. SHE wraps her coat around herself, picks up her muff and is about to leave when SHE turns back to the grave.)* And listen ... If you see Harry, tell him ... Tell him I said goodbye. *(SHE walks slowly but steadily and exits as the LIGHTS fade out on the cemetery and Doris's grave.)*

End of Play