

A MAZE OF LOVE

Playwright: Jim Cullinane

Premise of play: Main character, Colin has many affairs, often with women in a relationship – so he need make no commitment. The idea of illicit sex turns him on and turns him into a passionate lover. He explores the idea of a permanent relationship, even marriage but is unable to bring the same passion to a proper relationship with a ‘good’ woman.

Colin: Late thirties. Philanderer.

Mike: Mid thirties. Colin’s best friend, married with one child.

Jenny: Early thirties. Mike’s wife.

Lucy: Early to mid-thirties. Woman who Colin thinks may be the one.

Marie: One of Colin’s sexual liaisons.

Act 1, Scene 1.

Colin pacing about in bedroom, checking himself in mirror, fixing his hair, checking his skin - he dims lights, pulls some candles from a bag, lights them, surveys room.

Doorbell rings. Attractive woman enters. They go to each other, embrace, and disrobe quickly, impatiently. He carries her to bed. Lights fade, sounds of passionate lovemaking are heard, final sounds of sexual release, then fade out.

Scene 2

Colin's apartment. Colin and Mike sit around.

Colin: Hey, hey, hey, this man is good...not just good - great, incredible. Listen, (he reads) If she's plain, tell her she's beautiful. If she's fat, tell her no, no way. She's just right. You like big-boned, substantial women... Compliment, compliment, compliment. No matter what -

Mike: Makes sense.

Colin: If she has an enormous proboscis, tell her you like it, it's different, attractive to you. Tell her you're tired of small noses - that all the famous people in history had large probosci... proboscises...

Mike: Did they?

Colin: Who knows. Who cares? (continues to read from book) Nobody, but nobody dislikes a compliment. They may pretend they do - dislike - a compliment. They don't.

Mike: So - compliment?

Colin: No matter what. (reads) She knows her nose – hey, I like that, she knows her nose – she knows her nose is big, too big, probably obsesses over it but she wants to believe it's not. She sees it every day in the mirror, but in an instant, a mini second, she'll suspend belief, because – because she wants so much to suspend belief, to believe that her nose is normal. And that need to believe overcomes the reality of what she sees in the mirror.

Mike: I dunno.

Colin: You dunno what? Listen and learn, okay? (reads) 'Compliments are like drops of cool water on a parched tongue.' Wow, that's very poetic, very descriptive. This guy is incredible.

Mike: Could I ...?

Colin: Listen to this (reads)...so it goes for any of the perceived deficiencies that women may think they have – breasts too big or too small, hips too wide, legs too fat, too skinny, lips too thin. In fact, it may not be true – that they have this perceived deficiency – but if they think they have it – emphasis, *if they think they have it* – for them they have it and its cause for concern. Ha-

Mike: Could I ask a question?

Colin: Sure.

Mike: Why is a thirty-eight-year-old, yes, mature and intelligent male – yes?

Colin: Thirty-eight, no, thirty six, yes, mature and intelligent, yes, male, yes.

Mike: ...still reading a book entitled 'What A Man Must Say and Do to Get Laid.'

Why?

Colin: Why not?

Mike: Why?

Colin: Because.

Mike: You're closing in on the big four o, right?

Colin: Whoa, a long way from forty. Thirty-six.

Mike: When's your birthday? March - second, right?

Colin: Sixth. March sixth.

Mike: Five weeks away. In five weeks, you're going to be the big three seven.

Colin: So?

Mike: So?

Colin: This book is my bible, man, my guide to living.

Mike: Your bible?

Colin: Yes, my bible, my guide, in good times and bad – and believe me, a lot of good times. I sleep with this under my pillow.

Mike: You sleep with it under your pillow? You are one sick puppy. (pause) Okay, sleep with it under your pillow and continue to get laid – if that's all you want.

Colin: Why wouldn't I want to get laid? Why wouldn't any red-blooded male want to get laid, and - this book, my guide and teacher, me, its faithful disciple. We're a team, yes - a success rate probably 'round eighty percent.

Mike: It's been a destructive relationship, for God's sake. You prey on women in bad relationships, vulnerable, questing, and sometimes married women.

Colin: (indignant) I **see** women who need kind words and sure hands – a gentle reassurance. I never...impose myself...

Mike: You prey on these fragile souls, vulnerable women, women in deteriorating relationships, women in distress.

Colin: Women who need kind words, who need to be told how beautiful they are, women who are coming off a bad relationship, yes, bruised, yes, fragile, yes.

Mike: So, what happens after a week or a month? (pause) It ends. You end it. (pause) And you've got another notch in your belt. Right? (pause) Then you disappear – your good deed accomplished.

Colin: So?

Mike: But is it a good thing you have done?

Colin: Yes.

Mike: Is it a good deed accomplished?

Colin: Yes, or I wouldn't do it.

Mike: Is that woman better off for your intervention?

Colin: That's why I do it.

Mike: Don't you know women are vulnerable in these situations – often men too. These relationships often can be repaired.

Colin: Some are...beyond repair. I know it, they know it. Some I ...repair.

Mike: ...Bullshit.

Colin: (animated) Listen, many women in or out of a bad – or good – relationship, just want to get laid, a good sweaty ride, no strings attached. And coming off a bad relationship, it clears out the toxic elements. Coming off a good relationship, yes, even marriage...

Mike: Wait. Are you saying what I think you're saying? That women in a good marriage look to hook up with you?

Colin: That's exactly what I'm saying. I'm not boasting and I'm not bullshitting. Not all women but more than you'll ever know. Many women, even in good marriages - they need this timeout. It resets the commitment, spices up what may be otherwise, a solid but dull partnership. It's like a seven-year-itch that gets scratched. And after ...they're relieved, they put on their panties – sometimes thongs, mmm, I love thongs - they adjust their bras, they check their makeup, and they go home. They're relaxed, satisfied, tired, yes, but nice tired - and ready to resume the wife role.

Mike: (emphatic) That is bullshit.

Colin: Do you really believe that we're meant to stay with one woman all the days of our lives, or for that matter, woman with one man? It's against human nature. Do you know how many women have thanked me? They know I'm not interested long term. To be honest, neither are they. But I've brought romance and passion back to their lives and after - they demand it, they won't settle for less.

Mike: I don't believe it.

Colin: Believe me, I've passed them on the street. They smile, blow me a kiss, shake that little ass, all discreetly of course. Her old man knows something happened - she's different, sexier, less inhibited. It is not all bad - no way, no how.

Mike: Are you shitting me?

Colin: I kid you not.

Mike: (quiet) Wow, I never looked at it from that angle.

Colin: After I light that fuse, baby, they are not inclined to settle for...mediocre. They want more, much more, lights, action, eruption.

Mike: Eruption, my ass?

Colin: You remember Jessica?

Mike: Yeah, small, good body - from Islip?

Colin: Right. She hated sex, told me she would count the ceiling tiles over and over and over.

Mike: Before she met you?

Colin: Before she met me, exactly. She swore to me she never had an orgasm.

Mike: And you, pushed the button, flipped the switch.

Colin: I'm not boasting but I'm good at what I do. Yeah, I pushed her buttons. Yeah, Jessica never did. Now Jessica does.

Mike: Not even when she was alone?

Colin: Before, not even when she was alone. But when they got back together again, it was different. She knew what she wanted. She knew exactly what she wanted. She demanded and she got.

Mike: She told you?

Colin: Yes, she told me. I wouldn't lie. We still talk – as friends.

Mike: You trying to tell me these are all good deeds?

Colin: I'm not a bad guy. I love what I do, I admit, but, in my own quiet way, I've been a catalyst for good. You must look at it in a certain way and in a perverse sort of way it is they who take advantage of me.

Mike: Really?

Colin: That's also why I'm reluctant to quit. I could never treat a woman badly. I couldn't live with being a total cad, you know.

Mike: Cad? Where'd you get that word?

Colin: From my bible.

Mike: Educate me. What is a cad?

Colin: (opens book and reads) An ill-bred man - someone who behaves in a dishonorable or irresponsible manner towards women.

Mike: So, you're not a cad?

Colin: (expansive) No, no way, more of a sacrificial lamb. I give myself; I expend resources...that their emotional, their emotional state is... is... relieved...strengthened. (Long pause) But I love what I do. It's not all one-sided.

Mike: They have to do this?

Colin: That's what I've been trying to tell you. Yes, it's a rocky, confusing time in their lives...relationship. They're rebelling or they're dissatisfied, they're confused, unhappy. They know something is not quite right. They know something is askew. They want it to be right and this want, this need is so strong. We connect. I'm in the right place at the right time - no complications, no falling in love bull shit. It's what's called mutually beneficial.

Mike: So, it's not really bad?

Colin: (slowly) Look, everybody's way too uptight about a little nooky on the side. In Europe it's very accepted. If it benefits both parties, isn't that a good thing? If nobody's jealous, where's the problem? Like I said, it's a cleansing experience. After, their lives are better. They make more rational decisions.

Mike: Less emotional?

Colin: Exactly.

Mike: I guess it makes some kind of sense.

Colin: Look, they're not so different from us. Men feel constricted in relationships, women feel constricted in relationships. Over the last years - how long I can't even remember - I've accumulated quite a lot of knowledge, of insight, experience, instinct into the sexual dynamic. If I do say so, myself.

Mike: Sexual dynamic, wow. So, you're just going to continue with life as is, with your bible tucked under your pillow?

Colin: Why change?

Mike: You know there's a deeper purpose to life?

Colin: Guess what? Believe it or not, lately I've been thinking about that.

Mike: (surprised) You have?

Colin: Yep, mortality, offspring, progeny, tissue of my loins.

Mike: You mean issue of your loins?

Colin: Yeah, issue and tissue. Well, all that.

Mike: As well as getting laid?

Colin: (Long pause). Remember my friend, Jerry. He went out to L.A. three, four years ago.

Mike: I remember. He got married, has a kid, right?

Colin: Had a kid. His wife called two days ago. He dropped dead.

Mike: What?

Colin: Just dropped dead, a heart attack. Said she meant to call me. He's buried a month and a half already. It's spooky, man. Right now, he's rotting in his grave.

Mike: Probably- after six weeks.

Colin: Unless he was cremated. (pause) He was forty-two – imagine forty two – and he went to the gym two, three days a week – had regular checkups – ate the right foods. I talked to him a couple of times a month and it was always you gotta take this supplement, this herb, turmeric, kombucha, kefir, yoga or whatever, everything until....Makes you think. How long are we for this gig?

Mike: Shook you up?

Colin: Yeah. We're vulnerable, y'know. We never know when, or how. Some live to be a hundred, some live to be forty-two.

Mike: So...

Colin: So, like I said, I've been thinking, man.

Mike: (enthusiastic) Listen, this is what I've been telling you. Life's too short. Throw that book in the garbage. Dedicate yourself to finding a good woman, a life partner and then dedicate yourself to that woman. Build a good life together.

Colin: That's a lot of dedicating.

Mike: So, what's your plan?

Colin: My plan was to keep on doing what I'm doing.

Mike: Listen to me – it's time to settle down.

Colin: How's Jenny?

Mike: She's good, she's - okay. (Pause) Hey, marriage is a work in progress. You have to work out the rough patches...tensions.

Colin: Rough patches, tensions?

Mike: Hey, it's not love and affection all the time. It's life, man, good days and bad days. You must compromise, sometimes– even when you feel you're right.

Colin: This is what you're recommending for me, compromise even if you feel you're right and she's wrong? I would *not* want to be part of something like that. No way.

Mike: No, no, it's not like that. Much, much good times, too. Like having a glass of wine together, planning the future, hopes and dreams about Mikey. Just snuggling sometimes. Nice to know you got a woman waiting when you get home, y'know. Man, like when little Mikey was born, and I saw him for the first time. (pause) The little bugger was sucking so hard. He's a breast man.

Colin: A chip off the old block.

Mike: (pause) Magic moments. To watch him when he laughs, when he cries, they're all magic moments. (long pause) They sure are.

Colin: Y'know, we haven't been out together in ages – since before Jenny was pregnant.

Mike: Is it that long?

Colin: Why don't I take you guys out, a little Chinese? We could do that All-You-Can-Eat-Buffer?

Mike: God, no, no buffet. We've been on a strict diet.

Colin: Why? You look great?

Mike: I put on a few pounds, but Jenny put on a lot of weight – with the baby. She's trying to lose. So, I do it – to help her. We try to eat all the right stuff – tastes like shit.

Colin: She'll lose it.

Mike: It's a gene thing. Her mother's overweight. Ever meet her? She's got an ass like a baby elephant.

Colin: Whoa, don't let Jenny hear you say that.

Mike: God forbid, but she has. That's my nightmare, in thirty years I wake up next to her mother.

Colin: Jenny's beautiful.

Mike: You think?

Colin: She's got great skin.

Mike: She hates being overweight. She spends hours looking in the mirror. I feel like telling her, "It's still there, honey."

Colin: So, it's an issue?

Mike: Well, it is. She knows it, I know it. If it bothers her so much, why can't she lose it?

Colin: Hey, what's a few pounds.

Mike: But why can't she lose the weight?

Colin: Is there one woman in the entire universe who likes being overweight? I doubt it.

Mike: So why doesn't she....?

Colin: Look, Mike, women rationalize weight. Yeah, I put on a few pounds, but I carry it well and it's only a temporary situation and – food comforts.

Mike: But...

Colin: The solution is simple. Stop eating, *she-has-to-stop-eating*, as simple as that.

Mike: So, what do I say to Carol?

Colin: You look wonderful, darling.

Mike: She'll know I'm lying.

Colin: Compliment, compliment, compliment. That's what my book says.

SCENE 3

Colin in apartment. Knock at door. Marie (from first scene) enters. She's disheveled.

Colin: Marie, what are you doing here? You know you're not supposed to... (looks closer) What's wrong? You look all shook up. What happened?

Marie: No Colin, I'm not okay. Do I look okay?

Colin: What happened? You and your husband, right? God.

Marie: I hate him, he's crazy.

Colin: So, what happened? You told him – about us? Tell me you didn't, please. Say you didn't?

Marie: We were lying in bed. We started arguing...

Colin: Wait, wait. You guys are split up?

Marie: No, we're still together.

Colin: Whoa now, hold it right there. You told me you were split up?

Marie: No, I didn't.

Colin: Yes, you did.

Marie: Separated – or on the verge of.

Colin: This was two months ago?

Marie: Yes.

Colin: You said you were separated? You told him you wanted out?

Marie: I did, but he asked for more time.

Colin: But you led me to... you said you were separated.

Marie: Look, I don't know what exactly I said or didn't say, okay. Can't you see – I'm stressed. I'm very, very stressed. I'm going out of my mind.

Colin: Yes, but...

Marie: Look, look at me. What do you see? A woman in distress. A woman needing some love and understanding – like you promised – and delivered when we first met.

Oh, boy, did you deliver. And I'll always be grateful. (pause) Only for you...

Colin: I know it's been tough, and I tried to...to bring comfort... So, how'd he find out – about us?

Marie: Oh, but you did, darling, bring comfort. But we argued, he pissed me off, and I told him.

Colin: To piss him off, right?

Marie: I guess.

Colin: Oh God. So, what exactly did you tell him?

Marie: That you were a kind and passionate lover and knew how to treat a woman.

Colin: So, you tell me he's crazy. Then you tell him about us. Then you tell him I'm a kind and passionate lover. Then you tell him I know how to treat a woman and he doesn't. Have I got it right?

Marie: Right.

Colin: Now you're going to tell me he's got guns?

Marie: He has.

Colin: Are you shitting me?

Marie: No.

Colin: He carries a gun, really?

Marie: He works for the State.

Colin: (falls to his knees) Oh God, tell me he's not a State Trooper.

Marie: He is.

Colin: A State Trooper? He wears one of those hats – and carries a gun?

Marie: He's crazy about guns. He owns fifteen guns.

Colin: Fifteen guns?

Marie: Sleeps with a shotgun by his bed and a Glock semi-automatic in the drawer.

Colin: Oh, God.

Marie: It's unhealthy. He spends hours polishing and playing with them.

Colin: That's unhealthy.

Marie: He took four on our honeymoon. He loves them, spends more time with them than with me.

Colin: You're jealous - of the guns?

Marie: Yes, I am. I'm jealous when I see him handling and fondling those damn guns.

Why wouldn't I be? I broke one, told him it was an accident.

Colin: Houston, we have a problem.

Marie: I don't want to be with him anymore. He's changed so much.

Colin: You loved him once.

Marie: I did. I thought it was forever.

Colin: Marie, Marie. There's no one beyond redemption, beyond change. We have to...

Marie: Oh, Colin we're so good together.

Colin: I don't do marriage. Yes, what we had was special. It was good for you and good for me.

Marie: I'm not looking to marry you. You're not the marrying kind. That I do know.

Colin: But you told me you were separated. You're married and you're still with him.

Marie: But, for a while. What's wrong with that? We're so good together. Nothing's changed, (different tone) has it?

Colin: Marie, when we first met? We talked, right? I told you - right from the beginning.

Marie: I know, I know. But I need you, really need you right now, and the sex is so amazing. I feel so, so - liberated. We're just beginning-

Colin: What did I say when we met? That I would help you recover your...

womanhood, sense of self-worth, your power as a sexual being.

Marie: And you did, you did, darling. I've haven't felt this, this sexual, yes sexual, for a long time, for many, many moons and I looove, I just love feeling this way.

Colin: Yes, but...

Marie: ...I want to shout it from the rooftops. I am a sexual being and I love sex.

Colin: Yes, but...

Marie: Thank you, my darling, for what you've done.

Colin: But we can't be selfish. There are some very serious issues here.

Marie: But you said we must forge our own life, follow our own path, that we cannot live other people's dreams or expectations. That was so profound.

Colin: I know, I know. But we must also work to make our present situation better.

You loved this man once. Can this love be re-ignited? You promised to love, honor and obey and he did likewise.

Marie: We haven't had sex for weeks.

Colin: Right about the time our affair began, correct?

Marie: Yes, but...

Colin: Don't you see. You've shifted focus, blocked him out. He sensed it – men are very sensitive to what their woman feels. He becomes angry, a fairly predictable reaction.

Marie: We just haven't been getting along. He ignores me, I ignore him. We're leading separate lives.

Colin: There are very serious issues at stake here and we have to give it long and serious thought.

Marie: Don't you think I have? What happened was inevitable.

Colin: What happened was a warning. I can't have it on my conscience – to tear a marriage apart. No, no, I could not do that. That's bad karma.

Marie: But he hit me. He doesn't respect me.

Colin: He didn't hit you, did he? You attacked him and he defended himself. Be truthful.

Marie: Well, yeah, maybe.

Colin: You struck the first blow. If he hit you first, I'd tell you to walk away.

Marie: He knows how to piss me off.

Colin: Marie, he's angry and humiliated and lost and desperate. He's a tortured soul and he loves you. Has he ever used his gun?

Marie: He shot a guy once, a robbery suspect.

Colin: Where?

Marie: In a shopping mall...

Colin: No. Where did he shoot him? Where did the bullet...enter...the... body – of the robbery suspect?

Marie: Bullets - three, on account of the adrenaline, he said - and it was in the butt or the thigh, or both.

Colin: The butt or the thigh, wow – three bullets.

Marie: Yeah. He was pretty messed up, I heard.

Colin: The robber – or your husband?

Marie: (laughs) Both, I guess.

Colin: Oh, God. Was this after your marital problems?

Marie: Yeah.

Colin: (decisively) You have to give him another chance, Marie.

Marie: He's started drinking, spends all his time at the shooting range. He stares at me, like he wants to do something bad to me. Or like he doesn't understand me.

Colin: Marie, he's one very stressed-out state trooper right now. He doesn't understand – comprehend – what's happening to his marriage. Was he always a drinker?

Marie: No. Guns and alcohol don't mix, he always said. Now he's drinking and playing with his guns. (pause) He must hate me.

Colin: (slowly, professorial) No, that's the paradox. He loves you very much. He hates that he loves you so much, but there is no doubt he-loves-you-very-much. He's terrified at the prospect of losing you. He wishes he didn't, but he does. This is a classic case of, of...isolating love – Isolating Love Syndrome, very common, actually.

Marie: Isolating Love Syndrome?

Colin: Yes, he projects the opposite of what he feels. He loves you too much.

Marie: And he feels I'm rejecting him, rejecting his love. That's why he's freaking out?

Colin: Exactly. He's a tortured soul (emphasis) *because he cannot stop loving you*. If he didn't love you, there wouldn't be a problem. You guys would divorce and go on with your lives.

Marie: True, I guess, but he said he'd never divorce me.

Colin: (jubilant) See, there you go, exactly what I was saying. The idea of divorce freaks him out. Marie, what if I told you ...what we had... you could have – with Ed.

Marie: I'd say you were crazy.

Colin: Well, you can and maybe even better.

Marie: Now I know you're crazy.

Colin: Hear me out. Remember how I...coached you when we first made love, gentle and patient, very patient in the beginning, baby steps?

Marie: Yes, you were so gentle.

Colin: It was a slow, steady process, right? But how did that turn out?

Marie: Incredible. It was worth the wait.

Colin: What if...you become the teacher and Ed the pupil?

Marie: I couldn't.

Colin: Yes, you could. You were a wonderful pupil and would make an outstanding teacher.

Marie: No way. (pause) You think?

Colin: I know, one hundred percent. Exactly as we did, slow and gentle and patient – and you'd be in control.

Marie: I could teach him exactly how I like...things done.

Colin: (triumphant) Exactly. You could initiate him into the joys of unselfish sexual copulation.

Marie: Unselfish sexual copulation, (sighs) Makes me hot just to think about it.

Colin: (quickly) You must go to him, put your arms around him, tell him you love him – and slowly, gently, firmly turn him into the lover you want him to be. Now he doesn't know how but - *he wants to be what you want him to be*. He wants to be the man that totally satisfies you in every way. But he doesn't know how. *You want him to be the lover who satisfies you in every way*. Make him the lover you want him to be, tailored to satisfy all your special desires.

Marie: Exactly what I want.

Colin: Exactly what you want. Remember, like I did? You can do it. You must teach him, initiate him, build him up ...to be the man you want him to be. You can do it. I know you can do it. But he has to stop drinking and you will not tolerate violence, ever. If he ever as much as raises his hand, you are gone, forever. And stress the 'forever.'

Marie: He'll take me back?

Colin: Of course, he will, but begin the teaching immediately.

Marie: What about the guns?

Colin: Tell him exactly how you feel - you're jealous of his guns.

Marie: Really? Should I give him an ultimatum... like getting rid of the guns?

Colin: Yeah, but later, much later. You must be patient – in the beginning.

Marie: Do you really think it will work?

Colin: I have no doubt whatsoever. You were such a quick study, so enthusiastic. I know you will be a superb teacher.

Marie: If this works, if I can change Ed into....

Colin: Yes, you can and you will. Banish all doubt. Go, my darling. I have so much respect for you, for this work you're undertaking. Keep me in the loop.

Marie: If I need advice?

Colin: I'm at your service.

Marie: I'll be brave, but my heart will ache for you.

Colin: My prayers are with you. You are incredibly brave.

Marie leaves. Colin wipes brow and sighs a sigh of relief.

Scene 4

Colin meets Lucy in a restaurant. They've met through a dating service and Colin is exploring the idea of settling down.

Colin: Well, very nice to meet you in person.

Lucy: Likewise. Believe it or not, it's a first for me.

Colin: Utilizing a dating service?

Lucy: You got it.

Colin: Believe it or not, me too. Why, why not before?

Lucy: Well, I had been in a long-term relationship...

Colin: So, your bio said. But not anymore?

Lucy: Not anymore.

Colin: It happens. We gotta keep looking.

Lucy: I'm not settling for seconds. It's gotta be right, all of it.

Colin: Totally agree.

Lucy: Nice place.

Colin: I come here a lot. The food is usually very good.

Lucy: This lamb is excellent.

Colin: I've always liked this place. Never gets too noisy.

Lucy: Quiet, not too big. I don't like big or noisy.

Colin: I had a feeling you'd like it. You eat out a lot?

Lucy: Sometimes a lot, sometimes not so much.

Colin: With friends?

Lucy: Alone, a lot. I have no problem sitting in a restaurant, eating alone.

Colin: Some women do.

Lucy: True. Some women do. I get looks sometimes. Oh look. She doesn't have boyfriend.

Colin: Or girlfriend?

Lucy: Or girlfriend. You're in sales, right?

Colin: Right, regional manager for the Northeast.

Lucy: Wow.

Colin: Zippers, yeah good old zippers.

Lucy: Zippers?

Colin: Most people have no idea how they've changed the world. Think of buttons on your fly.

Lucy: Buttons on my fly?

Colin: I mean, buttons on my fly. They were such a pain. Before zippers, that's all we had. Now we ship all over the world, Russia, India, China, the Far East. Zippers are everywhere, not just clothes. Astronauts use 'em, deep sea divers, hot air balloons, on and on. It's really amazing. Zippers changed the world.

Lucy: Never even gave it a thought.

Colin: That's what everybody says.

Lucy: Listen. If you don't mind, could I ask you some personal questions.

Colin: Sure, no problem.

Lucy: Married before?

Colin: No. Why'd you ask?

Lucy: Lately I've been thinking.

Colin: Lately, I've been thinking too.

Lucy: Why, what happened?

Colin: Well, one thing – a friend of mine dropped dead at forty-two.

Lucy: Wow.

Colin: That's what I said. Wow. He worked out, didn't smoke, no drugs, ate all the right stuff, drank socially only and moderately – a big, strong dude.

Lucy: Heart attack?

Colin: Massive coronary.

Lucy: Makes you think.

Colin: Yeah, I'm feeling like I should be reassessing my life.

Lucy: So, you're thirty-six – on the verge of thirty seven?

Colin: Yes, you?

Lucy: Just celebrated my thirty fifth – which was the trigger, I guess.

Colin: Maybe it's something that alerts us to the passing of time. (loud, deep voice) If you wish progeny, your window of opportunity is closing.

Lucy: Which really doesn't apply to men.

Colin: Old men shouldn't have children. That's my view.

Lucy: So, you've been dating?

Colin: Oh yeah – but nothing steady.

Lucy: You haven't found the right one?

Colin: Exactly. You know you are beautiful. (Leans over to kiss her but she rejects it)

Lucy: Okay, cowboy, let's take it slow and easy.

Colin: Sorry. Y'know sometimes I feel like that's what's expected of me – that's what I'm supposed to do.

Lucy: To make a pass?

Colin: Right.

Lucy: It's flattering, but...

Colin: Understood, totally.

Lucy: (Pause) Oh, God.

Colin: What?

Lucy: I can't believe it.

Colin: What? What happened?

Lucy: Why did I come here?

Colin: I invited you. You're not enjoying it?

Lucy: Remember that long-term relationship I talked about?

Colin: Yeah.

Lucy: He's here.

Colin: (turns to look) Where?

Lucy: No, no, don't look.

Colin: You okay?

Lucy: Would you mind if we switched seats?

Colin: No, of course not. (they switch seats)

Lucy: Thanks.

Colin: The one in the blue suit?

Lucy: No, he's four tables over – with the day-old beard and the ridiculous scarf. I just don't want to deal with him.

Colin: Immaculately groomed hair? That's him?

Lucy: A total jerk. I can't believe how long it took me to find out. I stayed away from dating for a long time after.

Colin: I'm sorry.

Lucy: I got over it. But I never want to listen to his bullshit again – especially not tonight.

Colin: You enjoying yourself?

Marie: Yep.

Colin: We having a nice time?

Lucy: Yep, again.

Colin: When I saw your picture, I just had to meet you. I felt like - compelled.

Lucy: You liked my picture?

Colin: Not just your picture. I just felt compelled.... how you looked, yes, but a sense of being vulnerable yet defiant. It was weird.

Lucy: How...weird? I mean in what way?

Colin: Like maybe a glimpse of the future. I liked what I saw and didn't want to not know you.

Lucy: That is weird.

Colin: It can be so random, how two people meet...sometimes just a glance across a room.

Lucy: Yeah, now it's all changed. Online dating – for better or for worse. Too much choice. How can anyone tell from just a photo? And sometimes the reality is so... different.

Colin: I thought of that, but your photo grabbed me. Like I said, I felt this great desire, I felt impelled to know you.

Lucy: Your picture was different. You looked like...like you hadn't got that much sleep.

Colin: I hadn't.

Lucy: You have trouble sleeping?

Colin: No.

Lucy: But that night, the night that picture was taken?

Colin: Right, that night I couldn't sleep, took the picture and sent it in. Wasn't in a great place, unhappy with my life. Totally not me.

Lucy: When you have trouble sleeping, try counting sheep, though it doesn't have to be sheep. It sounds crazy but it works for me.

Colin: Guess what? The guy with the hair and the clingy blonde is preparing to leave.

He's the one, right?

Lucy: He's the one. Is he moving her chair as she rises?

Colin: Yeah.

Lucy: Brushing her neck with a kiss?

Colin: Yeah.

Lucy: Then he holds her right elbow as they exit?

Colin: (surprised) Yes?

Lucy: He's like programmed, like this is what you have to do. He's such a fake.

Colin: You over him.

Lucy: Yes, yes. I am so over him.

Colin: There he goes. Well, enough about him. Hey, you religious?

Lucy: Nah. You?

Colin: No. But sometimes I'll walk into an empty church and spend some time there.

There's something out there, I'm convinced there's something out there, something, a presence but I haven't been able to connect.

Lucy: My parents dragged me to every house of worship in a twenty-mile radius, alight and move on - like butterflies, I guess.

Colin: I 'd say I'm more spiritual than religious.

Lucy: I like deserted beaches, a little yoga, time alone.

Colin: Yeah, and leave this place a little better for our being here.

Lucy: (Surprised) That's right. We have a lot in common.

Colin: Like I said, I just had to ask you out - and I'm glad you accepted.

Lucy: I'm glad I accepted.

Colin: I felt like...drawn to you - like we had known each other before. Is that crazy?

Lucy: Maybe we did?

Colin: Well, I guess it's time. Lemme get the check and we'll be on our way.

Lucy: Could we split it?

Colin: No, no, it's my pleasure.

Lucy: I'd prefer if we did.

Colin: You sure?

Lucy: I'm sure.

Colin: You want to do it again?

Lucy: You're asking for another date?

Colin: (exaggerating) I'm begging a beautiful woman sitting opposite me, if she would honor me with her presence one more time.

Lucy: (playing along) Only one more time?

Colin: Hoping that the next time will be the first of many more.

Lucy: I accept. You're not seeing anyone at present?

Colin: (hesitates) No.

Lucy: Why the hesitation?

Colin: At present, no.

Lucy: Recently?

Colin: Recently, yes, short term affairs.

Lucy: They didn't work out?

Colin: A question of compatibility.

Lucy: I see, theirs or yours?

Colin: Both. It was both.

Lucy: Well, till we meet again.

Colin: Till we meet again.

Scene 5

Colin and Lucy have dinner at Mike and Jenny's house.

Mike: (to Jenny, whispering) The vegetables...

Jenny: Oh, honey, I burned the creamed onions. Uh oh, he's going to be mad. I'm going to get a beating tonight.

Mike: Honey, come on. Don't say that, even in jest.

Jenny: The baby needed something and voila, burned, creamed whole onions. I'm a lousy cook. I tried; God knows I tried but...

Mike: You don't have a.... substitute vegetable?

Jenny: I 'm just not interested.

Mike: It's okay (but it's not).

Jenny: Now don't sulk, honey. (to Colin and Lucy) I hate cooking, consider it one of the burdens of marriage. I wish I could. Mike's mother is a fabulous cook, another burden. That's why we rarely see her. When she visits, we go to a restaurant – couldn't stand seeing her disapproving looks.

Mike: (trying to be nice) You have many other admirable qualities, honey.

Jenny: I had hoped to discover Mike took after his mother – insisted on taking over all cooking duties, perfectly happy in the kitchen rustling up delectable creations for his admiring bride – alas.

Colin: Yeah, Mike, what's wrong with you? Take some cooking classes and relieve the burden on your beautiful bride?

Mike: You brown-nosing son of a...

Lucy: Like Colin would if I asked him.

Colin: I would? Let me give that some thought, my sweet.

Jenny: Yeah, I've forgotten to turn on the oven and forgotten to turn it off. One day we had company– his boss and some of his co-workers – I forgot the lamb. So, we had no meat.

Mike: Yeah, we went vegetarian.

Jenny: So, I kept pushing the wine and they had a great time. His boss was a darling. But Mike was so embarrassed. I told him, look honey, these things happen. Who'll remember in six months or a year. Know what he said, (in Mike's voice) 'I will.' I told

him, don't be ridiculous - priorities, it's all about priorities and no lamb for dinner is not a priority, not in my book anyway.

Mike: It was embarrassing...

Jenny: And I told him, I'm not doing the guilt trip or begging his forgiveness - told him that right from the start.

Mike: How is everything?

Colin: Great, right, Lucy?

Lucy: Things are good right now, I have to say.

Mike: I meant the food.

(Lucy and Colin together) Oh, it's great.

Lucy: You went to a lot of trouble.

Jenny: No trouble. I'd do the same for a stranger. I really would. We should help others.

Mike: Right. I came home tired and hungry one night to find a houseful of strangers eating my dinner.

Jenny: (laughs) Our neighbors next door - just moved in that evening. They were exhausted and so grateful.

Mike: Then they came three nights in a row.

Jenny: Well, Rose - and Frank, Rose was disorganized, a kindred soul. I felt sorry for her.

Mike: A little more encouragement and they would have become permanent residents. Jenny: Well, they did invite us back.

Mike: Yeah, a buffet Rose told us. There were bagels – three kinds, cream cheese – three kinds, pretzels, potato chips, cookies, oh and some raw, sliced onions – and a choice of Pepsi or Seven-Up. No wine.

Jenny: Plus - three kinds of Jell-O for dessert. I think they were vegan.

Mike: They were weird.

Jenny: People are different. Should we all be the same? Wouldn't it be boring?

Colin: True.

Jenny: So, what's going on with you two? Everything good?

Colin: Everything's good. Going steady is the term, I believe.

Lucy: No. We're in a committed relationship. It's a better way of saying it.

Colin: It is? Yeah, it is. Going steady – what does that really mean?

Mike: A committed relationship, huh? Never thought I'd see the day.

Lucy: (smiles) We like each other.

Mike: See, opposites attract – weird (points to Colin) not weird (points to Lucy), wonderful (to Lucy), not wonderful (to Colin).

Jenny: Oh, I don't think he's weird, just – unsettled for a long time. Misplaced priorities, I'd say.

Mike: I'll say.

Lucy: How so?

Colin: (quickly) Like the song, I was looking for love in all the wrong places. I was looking for the one, and not finding her – so – I kept moving on.

Lucy: It's universal – and very human.

Colin: Exactly.

Jenny: I honestly think he was just afraid of commitment.

Colin: Enough about me. Tell Lucy how you guys met.

Mike: College. Across a crowded room I saw this beautiful woman.

Jenny: Through a severe alcoholic haze.

Mike: It was a frat house party, and they were making me drink. Peer pressure - it was horrible.

Jenny: He came up to me but was unable to speak. All I heard was a gurgling noise, like a bathtub emptying. (pause) I was intrigued.

Mike: I was having a severe reaction to whatever I ate. (indignant) I wasn't drunk.

Jenny: So, I marched him into the bathroom and told him to come out when the gurgling ceased. It did and he was better. There was a vulnerability about him.

Mike: You told me you liked my take-charge persona.

Jenny: That's what I told you?

Lucy: So that was the beginning?

Mike: I laid siege and she was unable to resist. The rest is history.

Jenny: (Baby starts to cry) Could you give him his bottle, Mike.

Mike: Sure. (Embarrassed he has to give bottle in front of Colin.) Can't you give it to him?

Jenny: (shouts) Mike.

Mike: Okay, okay.

Lucy: How is the baby?

Jenny: He's great – has some of my husband's tendencies, stubbornness, inappropriate behavior at inopportune times – like in the middle of the night he wakes up and wants to play, or screams his head off - till I rub his belly. Typical male. Other than that, he's great.

Colin: So that's how you placate Mike?

Jenny: (laughs) Now you know.

Colin: Was it a difficult... birth.?

Jenny: No, I told them, give me all the medication you got, don't hold back.

Lucy: So, it wasn't difficult?

Jenny: I was heavily sedated. It was just distant sounds, people doing things to my body. I was in this cocoon-like state. I felt comfortable, being taken care of. My husband said I was screaming my head off. Liar.

Mike: (from room) He won't stop. What should I do?

Colin: (shouts) Rub his belly.

Jenny: God, the alpha male. Where did that myth ever get started?

Mike: (baby stops crying.) Thanks, it worked. (pause) How'd you know?

Lucy: I guess marriage is like everything else in life, you give a little, you get a little, you compromise, you work things out.

Jenny: (emphatic) It's a lot of work.

Colin: See, that's what I'm talking about – two people dealing with life and raising a beautiful baby. What could be better?

Lucy: Like Jenny says, it's a lot of work.

Colin: But what's the alternative? Being alone and getting old. I want someone to carry on my name.

Lucy: That's a male hang-up – and I'm not giving up my name - if I ever get married.

Colin: What?

Lucy: That's right.

Colin: Do I have to start compromising so early?

Lucy: Who said it was going to be you, darling?

Colin: There's someone else? Say it aint so, please, please?

Lucy: Funny how seemingly random events shape our lives, like you and Mike meeting at that party.

Jenny: Yeah, and if he hadn't been in that vulnerable condition, I would have kept on going.

Lucy: I wonder? Are they random? Colin and I have talked about this.

Jenny: Random or, what?

Lucy: Meant to be – as in this is the person/ relationship that will...advance me.

Mike: (comes back) Advance where?

Colin: Advance as a person in your spirituality – to being a more complete person.

God, Mike, I've talked to you about this till I'm blue in the face and you ask the same inane questions.

Mike: Guess I'm not interested.

Colin: You should be. It's about being a better person, husband, father.

Jenny: He's right, Mike. You're a work in progress – and much work to be done.

Mike: Why is everybody picking on me?

Jenny: Because you're not listening.

Mike: I'm not listening to him. What he says and what he does are two diff...

Colin: ...I'm not perfect but I'm working towards a goal.

Mike: I'm working towards a goal too. Why do you think I go to school nights? For promotion, more money, a bigger home, who knows, maybe a vacation home someday.

Colin: Oh, you're hopeless. It's not about material things. It never is.

Mike: Hey, it's a beginning.

Lucy: I guess we'll mosey on. Thanks so much. I really enjoyed it – and M.J.'s beautiful.

Jenny: Thanks. No prob. Anytime.

Colin: Take care of this guy, Jen and talk some sense into him.

Jenny: Little by little the task will be accomplished.

Mike: What task?

Jenny: Never mind. Better that you do not know.

Colin and Lucy together: (kiss and say goodbye) Bye, thanks.

Colin and Lucy have been together five weeks but maintain separate apartments.

Colin: Want to eat out?

Lucy: Any suggestions?

Colin: Afghani, maybe or...Tibetan?

Lucy: We've done 'em all - Indian, Pakistani, Chinese regional, Italian regional, Thai. We've done 'em all. I'm tired of going out – and it's expensive.

Colin: We could take in a movie?

Lucy: I don't feel like going out. What if...we stay in, a bottle of wine, easy listening music? Maybe....?

Colin: What?

Lucy: You know, to bed together.

Colin: Now? Is it too soon?

Lucy: We've been dating for like...five weeks.

Colin: I know but remember what we talked about when we first met and not attaching too much importance to sex, copulation.

Lucy: Copulation, wow. Where'd you get that word?

Colin: It's in a book I've been reading.

Lucy: What book?

Colin: Ahhh, what *is* the name of that book? Can't remember.

Lucy: Author?

Colin: Ahhh, not sure. It's one of those how-to books.

Lucy: Educational?

Colin: Yes, educational, a guide for living.

Lucy: Are you at ease with your sexuality? You've had intercourse before? You must have?

Colin: Don't be ridiculous. Of course, I've had.

Lucy: And you've enjoyed it? You like women in general, I mean.

Colin: Of course, I do, like women in general. I enjoy women very much.

Lucy: But I sense maybe, a lack of – desire? Do you find me attractive? Am I your type? Please be frank.

Colin: Of course, I find you attractive. You're a beautiful woman, the woman of my dreams and yes, you're my type...definitely my type.

Lucy: The woman of your dreams but you don't seem to want to...copulate?

Colin: No, no darling. I want to, I do. I really do. But I want even more that we have a strong and lasting relationship. I'm serious about you, Lucy, very serious. There's

something about you that, that...moves me like no other lover. (laughs) I might have stolen that line.

Lucy: You're serious, great. But I want a little fun, too.

Colin: No, no, yes, yes. What I mean...

Lucy: I know what you mean, darling and I'm flattered. It's just that...

Colin: Remember when we talked at the beginning of our relationship about not attaching too much importance to...

Lucy: The act of copulation?

Colin: Well, yes.

Lucy: Could we just say 'fucking'?

Colin: Of course, if it's okay with you?

Lucy: The act of copulation. Sounds like a lecture in medical school (Deep tone) The act of copulation occurs primarily between male and female – though not exclusively and is begun when the female releases pheromones which attract and stimulate the male. The female uses various techniques...

Colin: Okay, okay. As I was saying - *fucking* (emphasis) is just one part of a relationship but an important one. Compatibility, attraction...

Lucy: As in opposites attract.

Colin: That too. A lot of intangibles - points of view, outlook on life, sense of humor.

Lucy: So, there's a definite attraction?

Colin: Yes, oh God, yes.

Lucy: You're right. We shouldn't rush into the sexual part of it – fucking. I'd just like to be asked and maybe have the opportunity to say 'No, not yet.' As it is, it seems like I'm asking and you're demurring. You like that one 'demurring.' But yes, you're the reluctant one.

Colin: Okay, let's consummate – I mean set a date - to fuck. How about next week?

Lucy: Just like that?

Colin: Just like that. Why not? It's time.

Lucy: You sure? You're not doing it to please me?

Colin: No, no, no.

Lucy: Okay. When?

Colin: Friday?

Lucy: One week from tonight?

Colin: Right.

Lucy: Sure darling?

Colin: Of course. It's just that...

Lucy: I know, but it's time. You've respected me enough.

Colin: Okay.

Lucy: Okay.

Scene 6

Colin and Mike meet. Mike's apartment.

Mike: So? What's up? Want a beer?

Colin: Man, it's been a tough week. You got something stronger?

Mike: Whiskey, Scotch, Irish?

Colin: Jameson, with a little water.

Mike: No prob. (they both have the same) So, how's the romance?

Colin: It's good, really good.

Mike: Do I detect unbridled enthusiasm? Tell me you've been getting laid?

Colin: No, I haven't. It's not about getting laid. That life is behind me. We talked about this already.

Mike: You like her?

Colin: A lot. I like her a lot, and Friday's the big night, the night we copulate – fuck. And I'm petrified.

Mike: Where'd you get that word, copulate? Oh, okay, I know, the bible, right?

Colin: Can you help me here, or should I just get up and leave?

Mike: Relax. Don't worry, it'll be okay. When she's lying next to you, that fine butt....

Colin: What do you mean, fine butt?

Mike: Fine, big – nice big.

Colin: She has *not* got a big butt.

Mike: She's got a great ass and it is not small.

Colin: What are you talking about? It's perfectly proportioned.

Mike: No comment.

Colin: If you think she's got a big butt then you got no sense of beauty. She's just about perfect.

Mike: You think she's perfect?

Colin: You really believe...

Mike: Let me take another look, okay?

Colin: And telling me it'll be okay is not comforting. I want it to be more than okay. I want it to be earth-shattering, phenomenal, mind-blowing.

Mike: That statement calls for another whiskey. You?

Colin: Sure. (refills both glasses)

Mike: So, you want it to be earth-shattering, phenomenal and mind-blowing? You're setting the bar awful high. Why don't you work on satisfying first? It's the first time for both of you. I mean with each other. So, there may be some initial fumbling...bumbling.

Colin: Fumbling, bumbling, what are you talking about? There can't be any damn fumbling or bumbling. I could lose her. (pause) God, if only she were married – or even divorced.

Mike: That life is behind you – your own words.

Colin: But if I just visualize her as married, in the beginning, till I hit my stride and get it going.

Mike: *Do- not- do- it. Do- not- think- like- that.* You have to start over, clean, not even visualizing her as married. That tarnishes the whole relationship, really.

Colin: I know. You're right. Oh God.

Mike: Wow, wow. (pause) You're afraid... you won't be able to...

Colin: This is a scary situation for me. I haven't dated a 'good' woman for it seems like forever. This whole system is crazy. So much depends on the man...on the man's penis. It's not fair. Women can fake it. Men can't. It's as simple as that and it's not fair. I may want her. I may want very badly to have sex with her but...for some reason my penis doesn't... doesn't respond. I have no clue why. I wish I did. That's how it goes with penises. It's like, they have a mind, minds of...their own. It's not fair.

Mike: *You're afraid... you... won't... get...it... up.*

Colin: I don't know what's going to happen ...when I'm with her..., when we're both naked, you know, naked. That's the scary part. This is like my first date.

Mike: Oh, virtuous woman, I am unworthy of you. (Different tone) What's wrong with you? Pull yourself together. She's not unlike the women you've been screwing...dating. They were good women, too, in bad situations.

Colin: No, no it's different with Lucy.

Mike: Do not put her on a pedestal.

Colin: I wish it was over.

Mike: That's one problem. You got two.

Colin: I know, I know...if she finds out.

Mike: If she discovers your unsavory past.

Colin: Don't call it that. Whose side are you on?

Mike: Okay, okay - less than stellar past? Y'know, it might not be a bad idea....mm
mm, maybe not?

Colin: What, what?

Mike: Well, it's a gamble but...

Colin: What?

Mike: Well....

Colin: Say it, you Goddamn moron.

Mike: You just called me a Goddamn moron? I'm outta here. (He gets up to leave)

Wait, it's my apartment.

Colin: Sorry, man.

Mike: Okay, okay. So... why not come clean, tell her of your attraction to married
women.

Colin: They were not all married. What if she...

Mike: Look, it's going to be okay. You're attracted to her, right?

Colin: Of course, I'm very attracted to her. That's why everything has to be right.

Mike: Okay, you're attracted to her, mentally and physically, right?

Colin: Right.

Mike: Sexually?

Colin: Of course, but - I have this block. I just can't...can't...visualize her in a provocative pose, or in sexy underwear. Because I view her as a good woman, maybe too good for me. If she finds out about my previous life, well, she might be - repulsed.

Mike: Are you forgetting how women are attracted to you?

Colin: No, but...

Mike: She-will-not. She-will-not-be-repulsed-by-you. Okay?

Colin: Sure?

Mike: I am sure, no way. I discussed it with Jenny and...

Colin: You told Jenny?

Mike: Yeah. I thought a woman's perspective would be useful.

Colin: You told Jenny?

Mike: Yeah, why not?

Colin: Oh, my God. Why didn't you go on radio, TV even? My life is disintegrating.

Mike: She's discreet. She would never gossip.

Colin: Women gossip. They're as bad as men. Don't you know that?

Mike: Jenny is not a gossip. She would never disclose.

Colin: I'm losing control. My life is spiraling out of control. Look at my hands (hands shaking).

Mike: Relax.

Colin: I can't do it. I can't go on.

Mike: You can, and you will.

Colin: I'm petrified. It's like I felt when I was on my first date.

Mike: Take a deep breath. Okay, now another. Now let's recap. You like her a lot.

Colin: Please, give me a little time. I'm hyperventilating.

Mike: Breathe, breathe deep. (pause) Now say, I will perform magnificently...

Colin: It's not about performing, you jerk...

Mike: Whoa now, another uncalled-for remark.

Colin: Sorry. I'm just so stressed out.

Mike: How about if you pretend, she's a client and you're selling zippers to her?

Colin: What's that got to do with copulating...damn, damn that word...making love to her?

Mike: Just relax, okay? So...you like her a lot?

Colin: It's more than that. It's like she was meant for me. I like her outlook on life, her spirituality.

Mike: Her spirituality?

Colin: Yes, it's kind of like how I feel – my spirituality.

Mike: Your spirituality? Oh my God. (Jumps up, unable to stop laughing, then composes himself, assumes a serious demeanor)

Colin: Yes, my spirituality. That's right. It's not a laughing matter. You may not know it, but I have a very strong spiritual core.

Mike: You do?

Colin: Yes, I do.

Mike: Are you the same person who sleeps with a 'Getting Laid' book under your pillow?

Colin: Yes, and that's probably incompatible with my spiritual side. I admit that.

Mike: So, can you (mock serious) reconcile these two opposite sides?

Colin: That's what I'm working on. I admit the sexual side has been in the ascendant.

Mike: In the ascendant?

Colin: More dominant. I have a spiritual core that's been dormant, that hasn't exerted itself forcefully enough. But I feel different now since I've met Lucy. She's made me realize...stuff. I need to reorder my, my... influences, priorities.

Mike: More dominant, in the ascendant, his spiritual core has been dormant - interesting.

Colin: (quickly) Not that I want to be disinterested in sex. Sex is an important part of a loving relationship between two people.

Mike: You sound like my therapist.

Colin: You have a therapist?

Mike: I did for a while.

Colin: Why, what for?

Mike: I had a lot of frustration in my life ...drifting, didn't know if I wanted to go to college, my parents yak, yakking about how I was wasting my life, I wasn't focused,

I'd end up a bum, I had to go to college, college grads make so much more— all of which I knew but I didn't want to fucking hear it from them. Sorry. (pause) Then I went to college and met the woman of my dreams. She was incredible

Colin: Jenny?

Mike: Not Jenny.

Colin: Not Jenny? You met the woman of your dreams, who was not Jenny and...?

Mike: We split. It wouldn't have worked. But there were some things about her...damn.

Colin: Like what?

Mike: She was...incredible.

Colin: How?

Mike: I can't talk about it.

Colin: Why not? She was a vampire?

Mike: It's private, really private shit.

Colin: You can't talk to your best friend? If you can't talk to me, you can't talk to anybody.

Mike: I can't. We had some really crazy times.

Colin: You got a problem talking to me? That hurts, man.

Mike: Some things you can't discuss even with your best friend? You know how it is.

Colin: No, I don't.

Mike: Look, man, I'd like to, but...

Colin: Did you tell Jenny?

Mike: (Up and rapidly walking back and forth) Are you kidding me? Women are extremely jealous of the women you met before you met them. You never, ever tell your wife - or girlfriend - about your first love, or other women, or great sex you had – before you met them - never, ever, no matter how much she begs. They'll do everything they can to drag it out of you. They want that information, and they want it bad – so they can compare and evaluate and someday, as sure as God made little green apples, someday (pause) they'll throw it in your face. (takeoff on woman's voice) You said that was the most incredible sexual experience you ever had – with her. Yes, you did. I remember. So, what about us? It's a chore, isn't it, a marital obligation? You come – and you go to sleep. What about tenderness, holding, stroking? I don't mean that kind of stroking, you chauvinistic low life. (Colin is interested) Tell them nothing about your first love – or regret it for the rest of your life.

Colin: So, what was it about her?

Mike: Everything, man.

Colin: What?

Mike: She was just crazy, unconventional. You know some women, they want you to take them out to dinner, send them cards 'Thinking about you' 'You are always on my mind' bullshit – before they drop the panties. I'd go to her apartment, and she'd answer the door naked.

Colin: Really? Naked?

Mike: Yeah, man, fabulous body and pussy hair so soft I couldn't find the grain. I could never tell. I never stopped trying.

Colin: Tryin' what?

Mike: To find the f..ing grain.

Colin: Oh. (pause) Good sex?

Mike: Good? I still dream about it. This is between us, okay? Promise?

Colin: Promise.

Mike: Between us?

Colin: Yeah, between us – God.

Mike: Gimme another drink. (gets drink) She knew what to do and when to do it.

Once, when we both had more than one drink – your lips are sealed, right?

Colin: I'm your best friend, man. A promise is a promise. My lips are sealed.

Mike: She gave me a blow job - seemed like it lasted forever. Like I said, she had an instinct, and just when I was on the verge, she took her finger and (rammed it up my ass...God.) (This can be whispered.)

Colin: (disbelieving) *You* walked away from her? That's one in a million. A woman with that kind of instinct, that knew how to...

Mike: ...It wasn't meant to be.

Colin: Ever try to contact her?

Mike: Nah. But sometimes - when I'm alone, I remember and I... (simulates masturbating) choke the chicken. Your lips are sealed, right?

Colin: This conversation is sealed, never to see the light of day. I feel like I know you better, now. Thanks for sharing that, good buddy.

Mike: It feels good to share it. I could never share it with Jenny.

Colin: So, what happened with the therapist?

Mike: Nothing.

Colin: Nothing?

Mike: Once in a while he'd ask, 'So how did that make you feel.' But mostly he just repeated what I said. So, if I said, I split up with Abby again, he said you split up with Abby again. If I said we may be getting back together again, he said you may be getting back together again. If I said we had great sex last night...

Colin: He said you had great sex last night.

Mike: Except when I said it, it was a statement, when he said it, it was a question. Asshole.

Colin: So, you quit?

Mike: Of course, I quit. I knew exactly what he was going to say before he said it.

Colin: Never needed those guys.

Mike: No?

Colin: Relationships, I understand.

Mike: You do?

Colin: I've had a lot of experience. With women, it's like I can read their soul. It's something' some men are born with. This, you cannot acquire.

Mike: Relationships you understand? You can read a woman's soul? How about the state trooper's wife? Did you read her soul? You could have been killed? How about your present dilemma? On the subject of women, you are one of the most, confused people I've ever met. You can make convincing arguments for a half-dozen different viewpoints – in a matter of minutes – and believe them all.

Colin: I'm crystal clear on my situation and what I need to do. I don't understand why you're confused.

Mike: Okay, okay. You believe Lucy could be the one, the one you've been waiting for, with the possibility of marriage and children and growing old together.

Colin: Exactly. See, that wasn't so hard, was it?

Mike: So, no more affairs?

Colin: No, no. That part of my life is over. I just need to strengthen the spiritual dimension...

Mike: Okay, okay. I got all that. You want to be more spiritual and the other bad side less dominant etc., etc.

Colin: No, not bad. Sex in itself is not bad. Your blow job was not bad. It was a mutually beneficial act between two consenting adults.

Mike: My man, it was more, so much more than that– and definitely not bad.

Colin: There you go.

Mike: So, what are you going to do – about this non-spiritual past?

Colin: I don't know. Should I bury it, let it fade away and carry on?

Mike: Maybe.

Colin: Or should I expose it, come clean.

Mike: Those women – you've been with - it's in their best interests to not reveal their affair, even though they may have – warm, is that the right word - memories.

Colin: Yes, warm. But if I don't, I feel like somehow, I'm tainting the relationship, before it's even begun.

Mike: That's a tough one.

Colin: It might destroy what's beginning to grow - love, respect...

Mike: Are you willing to take that chance?

Colin: I don't know. I don't know. I'm afraid to.

Mike: So, don't.

Colin: But what if somewhere, sometime she finds out. What if she asks: "Why not tell me right from the beginning, give me a chance to deal with it, make up my own mind on how serious a problem it is or was." What if she says, "If you had only told me, if you had only trusted me, if you had only believed our love was strong enough to overcome this.... this revelation."

Mike: That is a real possibility.

Colin: But if I tell her now, I can explain about my dominant and non-dominant side, how for many years my spiritual side was neglected and because of this, I was prone to inappropriate sexual liaisons.

Mike: I'd keep it simple. Tell her you had a fear of commitment and you want to change.

Colin: That's it? But...

Mike: That's it. No buts.

Colin: I should tell her?

Mike: Your decision.

Colin: You think I should?

Mike: I think...it's your call.

Colin: She may walk away.

Mike: You really think she will?

Colin: She won't like it.

Mike: But she'll understand – I think.

Intermission

Act 2 Scene 1

Colin and Lucy meet.

Colin: So.

Lucy: So, right back at you.

Colin: Everything good?

Lucy: Everything's good.

Colin: How is the job, not too stressful, I hope?

Lucy: Never, I don't allow it. Maybe once but not anymore.

Colin: You mean, there was a time...

Lucy: Oh, yes, God yes, I used to worry so much. When I first started in advertising, I was a nervous wreck.

Colin: Really?

Lucy: I was actually nauseous going to work on the verge of throwing up.

Colin: That bad?

Lucy: Oh, yeah. I had a boss, Mikel, M-I-K-E-L, one K, one L - a pretentious little prick.

Colin: Strange name.

Lucy: Strange little prick. He was so obnoxious. 'People, are we ready to do some work today? Computers only for company business. Do your nails at home. You do know we are trying to run a business here. Are you a positive contributor to and for this company – or a negative, a detriment? Make up your minds.'

Colin: What? He said all that.

Lucy: Oh, yeah and worse. 'When the company prospers, we all prosper. Is that so difficult to understand? Do I make myself clear? I can't hear. Do I make myself clear?'

And we'd all have to answer, 'Yes Mikel.'

Colin: You're right, a prick.

Lucy: Totally.

Colin: So, what happened?

Lucy: I was ready to quit. Besides being a prick, Mikel fancied himself a lady's man.

Colin: Was he good-looking?

Lucy: Anything but. He was actually pretty ugly.

Colin: So, he got nowhere?

Lucy: Sad to say he did. He liked to hit on the more vulnerable women, using his power as boss to intimidate. He'd maneuver 'em into this supply closet, his private fuck chamber, which was away from most of the main offices.

Colin: And they went along with his crap?

Lucy: People get intimidated, insecure, afraid to lose their jobs. Maybe some enjoyed it, I don't know but most hated him.

Colin: So, what happened? Why not his own office?

Lucy: His office was connected to Mr. King, his boss so he couldn't take that chance.

Colin: So, the supply closet was his private seduction chamber.

Lucy: Yeah, and he had the only key besides Mr. King.

Colin: Hard to believe, in this day and age.

Lucy: Harassment, sexual or otherwise never gets old.

Colin: So, what happened?

Lucy: There was a woman, and she was tough – Maxine. They went at it every day, Maxine and Mikel. We called it the M and M show. She was one strong woman.

Colin: She wouldn't give up?

Lucy: She had Mikel up to here and she wasn't going to take it anymore. She hatched a plan, and the plan was that Maxine would capitulate, admit defeat.

Colin: But... not really?

Lucy: Exactly. Pretend that whatever he wanted he could have. I can still see the look on his face. *I won, I'm the fucking king.*

Colin: He had a superiority complex.

Lucy: He knew if he broke Maxine, the others would fall in line. So, he took her in to his... As soon as he closed the door, one of the women went to the boss, Mr. King. She said she heard noises in Supplies, that it seemed like someone was being attacked. As soon as Maxine sees the doorknob turning, she starts to sob, 'No, no, stop it, stop it. What are you doing? Don't, please, don't. Mikel's got his back to the door. He's saying, 'It's okay baby, you're going to love it. It's going to be great. I aim to please. Believe me. (See how big my hands are? Well...)

Mr. King is standing in the door. He's horrified, bug-eyed. He shouts, 'Mr. Carson, cease and desist at once, at once, do you hear?' Maxine shrieks, 'Get him away from me, please, please,' crying her eyes out, jumping up and down. She was incredible.

Colin: And the strange little prick?

Lucy: Fired on the spot. He was in shock, could not believe what was happening. We all went out after work and got drunk.

Colin: Things changed after?

Lucy: Oh, yes. From that day on, I grew to love my work and found that I was good at it - new boss, new attitude. Maxine did me a big favor.

Colin: She still there?

Lucy: You know, you're not going to believe it. She caught the acting bug, quit the job, moved to the West Coast. She's done pretty good. I see her often in movies, has a good career going. We lost touch but I hear she loves it out there.

Colin: So, Mikel in a perverse way did both you and Maxine a good deed.

Lucy: She had such courage and I owe her.

Colin: So...

Lucy: So, what's on the menu? Isn't tonight the night we were going to...

Colin: Yes, it is. (deep breath) Before we begin, I have something I want to tell you.

Lucy: Okay. Can't it wait?

Colin: No. I want things to be honest and upfront between us. I want us to start off on the right foot.

Lucy: You have a skeleton in your closet? Are you sure you don't want to leave it there?

Colin: No, I want to get it off my chest.

Lucy: Okay, you sure? Sometimes closets are better left unopened.

Colin: No, I've given this a lot of thought. This is the only way.

Lucy: To expose and thus diminish it.

Colin: Exactly.

Lucy: Okay, let it rip.

Colin: I've been having a series of - sexual encounters with women.

Lucy: Okay. (pause) You've been having a series of sexual encounters with women.

That's the skeleton in your closet? (Moments silence) I'm sorry but I don't see anything wrong with that. As a matter of fact, I'm relieved - that you're heterosexually active, I mean. I've had sexual encounters, too, with men.

Colin: Well, you see, often the woman is tied up in another relationship, a relationship that's going bad - sometimes a marriage that's...breaking up.

Lucy: Wait - marriage. Did I hear you correctly? You're having affairs with married women?

Colin: Well, not exactly.

Lucy: You are, or you aren't?

Colin: The fact that it's illicit... I don't seek out specifically married women. But I'm attracted to a situation which I know is short-term, where I don't have to commit.

Lucy: You're boffing married women. Correct?

Colin: Well, in the interests of honesty...some are, yes. But the relationship is in trouble before I come on the scene.

Lucy: Come on the scene. I like that. Come on the scene. Like in a movie? You're the knight in shining armor that rescues the fair damsel in distress – except you don't live happily ever after?

Colin: It's not like that.

Lucy: You're Mister Big Dick, is that it?

Colin: You're misinterpreting.

Lucy: (Angry) I thought I knew you. You said you cared for people – and things, the environment. And now you tell me you're taking advantage of vulnerable women – at a time when they're most vulnerable, when personal relationships are breaking down. It's like kicking somebody when they're down.

Colin: It's not that black and white...

Lucy: (Indignant) Of course it is. It's just that black and white. You're hitting on vulnerable women. How could you do it? How could you be like that?

Colin: Lucy, please, this is difficult for me. I'm drawn to this situation, and I don't know why. I don't want to be, not anymore anyway – since I met you. I don't want to have this weird compulsion.

Lucy: But you enjoyed this weird compulsion – banging someone else's woman – wife.

Colin: I admit it had its moments. It was abrupt and very physical, stolen trysts in shabby hotels, candles burning....

Lucy: Stolen trysts in shabby hotels. You loved it, didn't you?

Colin: I'm trying to be honest.

Lucy: And candles? Wow. Background music too, I bet. I'll say you're being honest.

So, what has all this got to do with me?

Colin: You're repulsed and disgusted. You are. I can see it in your face.

Lucy: Honestly - yes, I am.

Colin: But don't you see? After I met you, I didn't want to be that person anymore. I didn't want to have these abrupt, explosive affairs...

Lucy: You're looking for one long, boring affair.

Colin: No, no, I know this is different, with you and me. But I had to get this - stuff off my chest. I had to tell you. I had to take the risk. I knew it was a risk.

Lucy: I don't - know - what to say. Am I supposed to pat you on the back, say you did something very brave, that I'm impressed?

Colin: Lucy, look, this is painful to admit but I don't know how to act in a normal relationship, two people getting to know each other. I'm terrified I'll do something wrong or not do something I should. I don't know how to act - anymore - with someone I care for. That's why I held off going to bed with you.

Lucy: You're afraid I won't turn you on.

Colin: I'm afraid I won't be aroused - not because of anything you do or don't do but because I've been (pause) hooked on these clandestine affairs. Maybe there's an element of danger, too. It's been so long since I've dated.

Lucy: How long have you been carrying on these...affairs?

Colin: A while. It's been a while.

Lucy: How long?

Colin: I'm not sure.

Lucy: How long? Weeks, months, years?

Colin: Years.

Lucy: Years? How many?

Colin: (Pause) I don't know, two maybe, going on three?

Lucy: Oh my God.

Colin: It doesn't seem that long.

Lucy: That's because you were having such a wonderful time. So now you want to turn over a new leaf?

Colin: Everything's changed since I met you.

Lucy: So, you're over your abrupt physical encounters?

Colin: Yes, yes. That time is behind me. I'm thirty-seven. Things change as we get older, likes, dislikes, triggers.

Lucy: Triggers?

Colin: Well, what I mean is.... Well, you know....

Lucy: Yeah, I guess I know. (pause) So what happens now?

Colin: I guess that's up to you.

Lucy: I guess it is.

Colin: Look, I'm admitting wrong. I'm bringing this out in the open.

Lucy: I misjudged you – and that makes me afraid.

Colin: You didn't. I'm not like your old boyfriend. I'm trying to be honest and up front.

Lucy: I know.

Colin: Do you think you could love me, despite...

Lucy: I don't know. My head is spinning.

Colin: I'm sorry. I really am.

Lucy: I can't give you a straight answer right now. I have to digest what I've been told, figure out if I want to be with somebody who... This skeleton of yours has... I'm shocked, disappointed. (pause) I'm just dazed right now.

Colin: I'm sorry, Lucy, but I had to.

Lucy: I guess you had to.

Colin: Is there a chance... for me?

Lucy: I find it difficult to reconcile what I thought I knew about you and this, this...

Colin: Nobody's perfect.

Lucy: So, is it over?

Colin: Yes, yes, it's over. It is so over.

Lucy: You sure, you positive? I can't change your behavior, wouldn't even want to try. This has to come from within you.

Colin: Lucy, are you listening? It's over.

Act 2 Scene 2

Scene is as in the beginning, candles lit, Colin pacing the floor.

Woman rushes in. They embrace, make passionate love.

Lucy: (disguised) God, that was good.

Colin: The best, but we can't delay.

Lucy: Not even for a little while, to hold each other?

Colin: Yeah, a little while but not too long.

Lucy: This is weird, you know.

Colin: I know, but I feel it'll work out.

Lucy: How long will it take?

Colin: I don't really know, weeks, months maybe.

Lucy: Weeks, months! What if it never works?

Colin: Have faith, darling, I'm sure it will.

Lucy: And if it doesn't?

Colin: I want a normal relationship as much if not more than you. But we agreed to try it this way and hope and trust it subsides into...

Lucy: (Goes and switches on light) Subsides. I don't like that word. What if our attraction subsides until there's nothing left. What if we both subside into boredom, disinterest, passivity. What if?

Colin: It won't, darling, I promise.

Lucy: How can you promise, how can you know?

Colin: We love each other, don't we? I love you and you love me, don't you?

Lucy: Yes, of course, otherwise I wouldn't be taking part in this ridiculous charade

Colin: Look, it's the nature of modern relationships. We're dealing with problems our ancestors never even dreamed of.

Lucy: Pray, tell me.

Colin: Well, once upon a time it was about surviving, just surviving - inhospitable climes, aggressive tribes, and deadly diseases – sustenance and shelter. How many children survived then? Go and walk through any old graveyard. Walk among the gravestones; see how many died of scarlet fever, typhoid fever, even strep throat.

Their lives were a constant struggle against disease and the elements.

Lucy: So...

Colin: Now we're disease free, mostly, we have more leisure time than we've ever had. Are we happier?

Lucy: Probably not.

Colin: Now we agonize over where to go on vacation and how often. Now divorce is a much easier option. If one or other gets bored or dissatisfied...

Lucy: Yeah, there's some Mr. Big Dick waiting in the wings to comfort and console.

Colin: Be kind, please. Or...they're not compatible or they've matured in different ways, or they've become sexually liberated... (He stops) You see?

Lucy: Not really.

Colin: What I'm trying to say is, each generation has a different set of circumstances to deal with and - in the future there will be even more unusual obstacles and challenges.

Lucy: Like who gets the spaceship today.

Colin: Exactly, exactly. Our problems will seem positively quaint, maybe even endearing – in another decade or so – on looking back.

Lucy: Our problem? It seems to me like it's all your problem. It's my problem because I've elected to be with you, so I'm trying to help though unconvinced of your solution.

Colin: We can only try, my darling, but we must away.

Lucy prepares to leave.

Colin: Darling, darling, the dark glasses. Remember it's an illicit tryst.

Lucy leaves. Colin puts on hat, pulled low over face, douses candles, leaves. Minutes later, Lucy returns as herself, to be followed by Colin.

Colin: Hi hon, how was your day?

Lucy: Oh, this is ridiculous. We just spent an hour in bed and you're asking me how was my day?

Colin: You spent an hour in bed? With whom?

Lucy: An idiot, but I'm attracted to him.

Colin: Honey, we have to maintain the illusion. We have to give it a chance. It's important. It's about our relationship.

Lucy: I can't do this anymore.

Colin: Lucy!

Lucy: It's dumb, it's stupid. Go to a psychiatrist, see if you'll work it out.

Colin: A psychiatrist suggested this solution.

Lucy: It was? You did?

Colin: A book I read.

Lucy: And the psychiatrist – in the book – said exactly what?

Colin: Discussed different options.

Lucy: And the psychiatrist recommended you should boff married women?

Colin: No, no, he said it was okay to role play. I didn't choose married women. They chose me and...

Lucy: So, you bear no responsibility?

Colin: I was drawn to a certain kind of woman.

Lucy: Vulnerable women.

Colin: I admit... I'm not entirely blameless.

Lucy: Short-term, explosive affairs?

Colin: Short-term, yes.

Lucy: And hence our problem.

Colin: (sigh) And hence our problem. (long silence)

Lucy: Maybe...

Colin: Maybe what?

Lucy: I'm beginning to despair.

Colin: Please darling.

Lucy: We should – I don't know, maybe disengage – for a while.

Colin: Disengage?

Lucy: Yes.

Colin: For a while?

Lucy: Yes.

Colin: How long?

Lucy: I don't know.

Colin: You mean split for an indefinite period?

Lucy: I prefer 'disengage for a while.'

Colin: Oh, no.

Lucy: Sometimes, if one steps back and analyses the situation/problem from a distance, one gets a better grasp of the issues and hopefully, a solution.

Colin: You don't mean this?

Lucy: I do. (Lucy is concentrating on something. She begins to pace back and forth frenziedly, clearly agitated) Maybe this...

Colin: What?

Lucy: ...has to be. Yes, yes, this has to be.

Colin: What has to be?

Lucy: This pain, for you and through you to me.

Colin: I'm not understanding.

Lucy: Don't you see – it's the way of the universe.

Colin: That we can't work it out?

Lucy: No. Your actions.... causing pain to others.

Colin: I was helping someone in need. Some I set on the right path.

Lucy: Bullshit, bullshit, bullshit.

Colin: I resent the implication...

Lucy: Implication, implication? This is the problem – that you won't face.

You were taking advantage of women at their most vulnerable – when they were in danger of losing the man, they had chosen for their life partner, and all that entailed, raising children, facing life and getting old together.

Colin: But I've changed.

Lucy: Maybe the marriage or relationship was beyond repair, past saving. I don't know the particular circumstances of each and every.... liaison you participated in.

Colin: That's all past, Lucy.

Lucy: Really? But you see, that's the problem. It isn't and cannot be.

Colin: What are you saying? I don't understand.

Lucy: Remember what we talked about, when we first met – do no harm, leave the world a better place because of our being here?

Colin: Yes, I believe that.

Lucy: Don't you see? You've created bad karma.

Colin: But now I want to make good...karma.

Lucy: Just like that? Today I'll make good karma, yesterday bad...karma.

Colin: We're allowed to change.

Lucy: But there are consequences. I've given this a lot of thought. I looked up the definition of karma. I've thought long and hard about...our relationship, how it might be fixed...

Colin: How?

Lucy: You must suffer, Colin. You must feel some of the pain – you caused to others.

Colin: But...

Lucy: And – you must accept that you caused pain. Do you know what karma is?

Colin: Not exactly.

Lucy: Bringing upon oneself inevitable results, good or bad, either in this life or in a reincarnation.

Colin: So, this was inevitable.

Lucy: Yes, yes it was and our relationship will not be stabilized until retribution is visited upon you – in other words, it's payback time. This life or wait for a reincarnation... Your call, darling?

Colin: Don't make fun of me please. The thought of losing you scares me beyond anything I've ever encountered before. Whatever I must do, I'll do – but please don't give up on me. I'm begging you, Lucy, and I've never begged before.

Lucy: That's a good beginning.

Colin: Anything. Just don't leave me and never come back.

Lucy: Okay. (pause) We stop seeing each other. I will contact you. Do not try to contact me in any shape or form, e-mails, texts, nothing. Understood?

Colin: How long?

Lucy: I don't know.

Colin: But you must give me some idea...

Lucy: No, I don't. This is how it must be.

Colin: Are we talking about weeks...months ...

Lucy: You cannot know. I cannot tell you. I honestly don't know - now. But I will. I feel like I will...know...when it's time. Don't you see what I'm doing? The more you suffer, the more successful it will be...and then what happens? Remember, every action has a reaction, every action.

Colin: And then what happens?

Lucy: I believe you know.

Colin: I dissipate the bad karma.

Lucy: Dissipate. I like that word. Dissipate, banish, destroy the bad karma you created by your actions. And we can't take chances with this. We can't have even a smidgen

of...bad karma hanging over our relationship, not even one tiny wisp. Do you understand?

Colin: What if we don't...ever?

Lucy: What is meant to be...will...be.

Colin: Oh, God. Will you be dating?

Lucy: I can't answer that.

Colin: Should I?

Lucy: I can't answer that. That's your decision.

Colin: I don't want to.

Lucy: Up to you.

Colin: Oh, God.

Lucy: I must leave. (leaves)

Colin: Wait, wait... (he sinks into a chair, dejected)

Fadeout

Act 2 Scene 3

Colin meets with Mike. Colin is despondent.

Mike: So, you've split up.

Colin: We've disengaged - for a while.

Mike: To split up is to disengage, you pathetic fool.

Colin: It's not like that. We've agreed to not see each other for a time.

Mike: What time, how long?

Colin: I...don't know. It's just something that must be.

Mike: You don't know. She won't tell you. She is one cruel bitch. Women are fucked.

(pause) So this could be it, the end?

Colin: No way. We mean a lot to each other.

Mike: She's thrown you overboard and she's sailing away.

Colin: It's not like that. We agreed to step back and take a time out.

Mike: Okay - to step back and take a time out? How long is eternity?

Colin: Shut the fuck up, okay?

Mike: Wow, you haven't used that word in ages. Stress, baby, stress.

Colin: It's going to be okay.

Mike: Another beer? (Long silence)

Colin: How you guys doing?

Mike: Great, great. Everything's A okay.

Colin: Getting on better?

Mike: Everything's fine.

Colin: Okay.

Mike: So, are you going to date?

Colin: No, of course not.

Mike: Going to rescue any damsels in distress?

Colin: No, definitely not. I want this to work out. I love Lucy.

Mike: The stud is going to remain celibate?

Colin: Don't call me stud, but yes. I intend to remain celibate.

Mike: (sighs) I don't blame you. She's beautiful.

Colin: You really think so?

Mike: I really do.

Colin: God, I miss her already.

Mike's wife, Jenny comes in.

Jenny: Hey, so nice to see you. It's been a while. Hi hon, how's the baby?

Mike: He's fine. I just checked.

Colin: How are you, Jenny? How's work?

Jenny: Fine, fine, okay, same ole same ole. How's Lucy?

Colin: She's...okay.

Mike: They split...sorry, disengaged.

Jenny: No, say it's not true? I am so sorry, Colin.

Colin: For a while - only for a while.

Jenny: You guys were so much in love. How could this have happened?

Mike: I told you about that weird compulsion of his.

Jenny: Yeah, but...

Colin: I wish you hadn't told her. That was private.

Mike: She threatened to pull out my toenails. What could I do?

Jenny: It's okay, Colin, we all have our dark sides. Want to know what Mike is in to?

Colin: Tell me, tell me.

Mike: Jenny, stop it. That's not funny.

Colin: It's kinky, right? I knew it.

Jenny: Can't tell. It's a secret- for now.

Mike: Look, I have to go. I got class tonight.

Colin: How is that going?

Mike: Good. I got nine months left and I get my MBA.

Colin: I should go back to school.

Jenny: You're doing fine without it.

Colin: Yeah, I guess so, but I wonder. Sometimes I feel unfinished – like I should be reading more, Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Barbara Cartland-

Jenny: Barbara Cartland?

Colin: Yeah, she's popular, isn't she?

Jenny: Popular, yeah, but-

Colin: Well, you know what I mean. There's a list out, the one hundred best books of all times. I'm going to sign up and read every damn one of them.

Mike: That's a good start.

Colin: Lucy says I'm deficient in certain areas...

Mike: ...You are.

Jenny: Mike.

Colin: She was going to help me...

Jenny: ...She will.

Colin: I should travel more. I've wasted so much time.

Mike: Tell me about it.

Jenny: (Angry) Mike.

Colin: He's right – for once.

Jenny: Now you realize it and you'll do things different.

Colin: I've been just...two-stepping through life. Selling is so easy for me that there's no real challenge. I was living this superficial life, not setting the bar too high, not setting any bar – until I met Lucy. Change has begun.

Jenny: Change is good.

Mike: You've been fortunate. Don't knock it. The money's good and you don't get your hands dirty.

Colin: I know, I know.

Mike: Your job entails bullshit and you're good at that.

Jenny: That's unfair, Mike.

Colin: Mike's right. I'm good at bullshit, I admit – and it's taken me far, but it's like I haven't changed, progressed in a decade, thinking the same, doing the same. (pause)

Mike: I talked to you about that.

Jenny: Mike?

Colin: Know what's scary? I was content. I was reasonably content. Isn't that fucked up? (looks at Jenny) Sorry.

Jenny: It's okay.

Mike: Nothing wrong with content.

Colin: Now I realize – what I've missed. I wish...

Jenny: You and Lucy will travel, and it'll be such fun together.

Colin: If - we get back together.

Jenny: You will.

Colin: It's been six months and ten days. I'm beginning to despair.

Jenny: You guys were meant for each other. Don't worry.

Colin: I got to go.

Mike: Stay a while. Keep Jenny company. You got nowhere to go, no one to see. You are one lost little puppy.

Jenny: You can be very thoughtless.

Mike: He knows. It's true.

Colin: Knock 'em dead, big guy.

Mike exits.

Jenny: So, what happened with you and Lucy?

Colin: I told her. I didn't want any skeletons.

Jenny: A fresh start. That's commendable.

Colin: Yeah, I wanted to clean house, as it were, a new beginning. I wanted to be open and up front.

Jenny: Of course – because she means so much to you.

Colin: Exactly. Right from the beginning I wanted this to be right.

Jenny: Honorable intentions.

Colin: Exactly, honorable intentions.

Jenny: (She brings two glasses of wine) Wine? White okay?

Colin: Yeah, white's good.

Jenny: This is a real nice Chilean Sauvignon.

Colin: Nice.

Jenny; Gee, I'm sorry, Colin. You guys will make up.

Colin: I hope so. I can't visualize not having her in my life.

Jenny: That's so...honest. Mike would never say that – about me.

Colin: He would.

Jenny: Nope.

Colin: You guys are doing okay, right?

Jenny: Okay. But okay doesn't seem good enough anymore.

Colin: He told me everything is great.

Jenny: No, it isn't.

Colin: No?

Jenny: No - and that's the problem, he doesn't face reality.

Colin: But ...nothing...serious?

Jenny: We have issues. Mike thinks if we ignore them, they'll go away.

Colin: Every relationship has its ups and downs. Look at the situation Lucy and I are in.

Jenny: Yes, and you brought them out in the open and discussed them.

Colin: And see where it got us.

Jenny: No, no, it'll get better. That's the beginning of the healing.

Colin: You think so?

Jenny: I know so. She'll realize how lucky she is.

Colin: I know how lucky I am.

Jenny: You're a good guy.

Colin: And you're a pretty terrific person yourself.

Jenny: I wish Mike would say things like that.

Colin: But you are. You're beautiful

Jenny: I'm not too... I know I put on some weight.

Colin: No, no, you didn't, well, maybe a little. So what? Our bodies change as we mature. So, what if you did? What's the big deal about a few pounds? It doesn't make one lick of difference.

Jenny: Really?

Colin: All bodies change as we grow older. It doesn't mean we're less attractive. You're an active woman with a career and a new baby – and weight fluctuates. It's normal, a few pounds on, a few pounds off. In winter, we put on a little weight. It's nature's way, you see, to keep us from getting sick. In summer, when it's hot, we shed it, right?

Jenny: Right.

Colin: Take for instance John Travolta or Robert De Niro. Their whole body – and face has changed from when they first broke into movies. Remember De Niro in 'Taxidriver' and Travolta in the dancing movie?

Jenny: I remember, both so slim.

Colin: Yeah, now they're totally changed. Are they less attractive? I don't think so.

Jenny: You're right. They did put on weight, but if anything, they're even more attractive today.

Colin: It's just that there are different degrees of what constitutes 'attractive.'

Jenny: How so?

Colin: Well, (Pause) at twenty we can't look like we did at fifteen. No, we can't. At thirty we can't look like we did at twenty, pretty close to, maybe - but never exactly

like. Our bodies are undergoing constant change, dying, rejuvenating all through our lives.

Jenny: Changing, but not necessarily less attractive.

Colin: Exactly, attractive, but attractive in a different way.

Jenny: Right. We don't wear the same clothes at fifteen as we do at twenty-five.

Colin: So, we adapt – to our body changes, our changing status in life, financial and otherwise.

Jenny: We dress differently, too – and when I look back on some of the crazy hairstyles I had, years ago, my God.

Colin: Me too. Now we dress differently, think differently. Check out Damon or Leonardo - even Clooney in, say, ten years – how they look, how they move. It's going to be different. No less attractive, I'd say, but different, definitely different.

Jenny: Hang on. (She refills the glasses) You're right. What you say makes so much sense – and I'm relieved – somehow – to know De Niro, Travolta, Damon, Leonardo and Clooney are no different than I am.

Colin: We're all in the same boat...

Jenny: ...dealing with the aging process. It's kind of leveling – and reassuring.

Colin: We're changing every minute, every day, atoms, molecules. Life is about change, change is inevitable, change does not have to be bad.

Jenny: I must remember that. How does that go; Life is about change, change is... inevitable, change does not have to be bad. That's beautiful.

Colin: It's our outlook on life, how we look at life – and living.

Jenny: You have a wonderfully optimistic outlook. I feel very drawn to it.

Colin: And I feel equally drawn to your – quest for learning.

Jenny: I like your mind, how you look at life. You're basically a very optimistic person.

Colin: I try to be. It's the secret to a long and healthy life.

Jenny: I believe that, too, I really do.

Colin: Do you know that even unrealistically optimistic people – in other words, where, in fact, there's no basis for their optimism – live longer, happier and healthier lives than people who deal in black and white facts and live their lives accordingly.

Jenny: That is so interesting.

Colin: Yeah, and these real people - those who deal in facts - are held up as models as to how we should live our lives. So... Travolta's attractive, De Niro's attractive, you're attractive and I'm attractive.

Jenny: That is so... insightful. I can't even begin to tell you how much I've learned tonight and it's all good. You've opened my eyes to... another way... of living my life.

From now on, I promise, I will be more optimistic, and I am attractive.

Colin: We're both attractive people who find each other mutually attractive

(suddenly) Oh God, what am I doing?

Jenny: What? What are we doing? Nothing.

Colin: I'm reverting to type.

Jenny: No, you're not. You're giving...life...lessons to a...friend...a woman who finds it very appealing. Drink up.

Colin: Oh God, Jenny, I'm seducing my best friend's wife – a married woman who's having issues in her marriage – and I'm riding to the rescue.

Jenny: What if, what if - she wants to be rescued?

Colin: They all do/did. That was the problem. And I wanted to help – and they wanted to be helped. I have this...psychic ability to sense their need, and I can't help responding to it. Jenny, I must go.

Jenny: Can't you stay a little longer?

Colin: Not even the teeniest smidgen longer. I must leave now. I can't wait. I can't afford to linger. Thank you for the wine. Goodbye Jenny, don't kiss me. Oh, by the way, when you're making love, you and Mike (he whispers in her ear)

Jenny: Really.

Colin: He will love it. Trust me.

Colin flees.

Act 2 Scene 4

Colin and Lucy finally meet.

Colin: Well?

Lucy: How are you?

Colin: I'm okay.

Lucy: You sure?

Colin: It's okay for us...to meet?

Lucy: It's okay.

Colin: Yeah, I'm okay. I feel kind of cleansed, actually.

Lucy: Cleansed? How? In what way?

Colin: Well, I've had a lot of time to think - caught up on a lot of reading. I'm reading all the great books - meditating too.

Lucy: Meditating? Really?

Colin: Yeah, meditating and reading - just because they're there and I want to. I need to be better, more well-read, more...well...everything.

Lucy: That's commendable.

Colin: Could I ask you a question? Do you like to travel?

Lucy: Haven't, but always wanted to.

Colin: Oh, me too. I've done a lot of research, have a whole list of great places would be fun to visit - with someone special, Macchu Picchu, Taj Mahal, Angkor Wat, Bethlehem, the temples of Southeast Asia - so many places.

Lucy: I've always wanted to see Asia.

Colin: How's the job?

Lucy: Great. I will probably get a promotion within the year.

Colin: Hey, that's fabulous. Congrats.

Lucy: I don't know if I'm going to take it.

Colin: Why not? Why wouldn't you?

Lucy: It's added responsibility, will entail more travel, maybe staying late more. I don't know.

Colin: Well, why wouldn't you? It's more money, added prestige...

Lucy: I have enough money; thank you and I don't need the prestige.

Colin: But you like what you're doing.

Lucy: I do. I like my job, like my boss, like my co-workers. I like my office, I like the view, like its location. I like the coffee guy. I like the yearend bonuses. I like everything.

Colin: Hey, that's great.

Lucy: Maybe not.

Colin: Why? You just said you like everything.

Lucy: I just don't know how long I want to keep doing it. I like it but it's like static, somehow. I've been there so long. Tastes change as we get older, as we mature, tastes in music, movies, the books we read.

Colin: You know you're so right. I was telling Jenny the same – how everything about us changes as we grow older.

Lucy: How is she? How are they?

Colin: Great. Just talked to Mike. He said things are good lately.

Lucy: How? In what way?

Colin: He didn't really say but... I think they're more compatible... than they were.

Lucy: Interesting.

Colin: He's my good buddy. We confide.

Lucy: About what?

Colin: Everything – but my lips are sealed.

Lucy: Men!!

Colin: So, your tastes are changing – men too?

Lucy: Well, yeah. I have different tastes now than when I was nineteen or twenty, the guys I had a crush on, the inane movies I couldn't wait to see.

Colin: Y'know. I saw every beach movie ever made back to Beach Blanket Bingo.

Was that the name - something like that? Now when I look at them...

Lucy: I guess we mature, so we identify with more mature topics, ideas, people.

Colin: That's exactly what happened when I met you and wanted to begin a different life with you, Luce.

Lucy: You've been dating?

Colin: Nope. I can't stop thinking about you though. You?

Lucy: Colin (long pause).

Colin: What, what?

Lucy: I must tell you something-

Colin: Oh no, no. I knew it. Please don't say what you're going to say, please.

Lucy: What?

Colin: You've met somebody. You have, haven't you? We shouldn't have separated.

You have. I knew it.

Lucy: (long silence) Yes.

Colin: Oh God. I was afraid – all the time we were apart. I imagined you with somebody – and liking him. It was my worst nightmare. (pause) You like him?

Lucy: I do (sighs). He's such a nice guy – easy to talk to, good company. He has a good mind. I was able to process a lot of issues I was wrestling with. He was helpful.

Colin: (slumped, bereft) I had a bad feeling for weeks – what if she meets someone, what if he's nice, what if he's a good listener, what if she likes him, really likes him?

Lucy: He's exactly as you've described. He's a co-worker.

Colin: Have you been out – together?

Lucy: Yes, restaurants, movies, long walks - went out to Fire Island for a weekend.

Colin: Together?

Lucy: He's got a friend, has a place there for the summer season.

Colin: How was it?

Lucy: I loved it. It was so relaxing, really relaxing. I read a lot, walked on the beach.

We ate out one night. The last night, we had a barbecue on the beach, steaks, chilled wine, shrimp, marshmallows and home-baked oatmeal cookies.

Colin: And he baked the cookies, right?

Lucy: I've had a lot of time to think about...where I am and where I want to be.

Colin: And?

Lucy: I want to have a good life and be with someone special, a good person and have good friends, optimistic, fun friends.

Colin: I'm not a good person?

Lucy: You're a good person - with issues.

Colin: Not anymore. That's all past. I haven't even dated. I've changed, Luce. I've changed a lot. I can feel it. I want a better life, a more substantial life. I want to be a better neighbor, friend, citizen. Life's too short to be otherwise.

Lucy: This friend, he's helped me a lot.

Colin: You haven't heard a word I've said. You like him?

Lucy: I have, and I do.

Colin: So, (Colin gets up and begins to exit) that's it. Why prolong it. I tried. What more can I do?

Lucy: You leaving?

Colin: No reason to stick around.

Lucy: Why not? What did I say?

Colin: You said you like someone else. That's what you said?

Lucy: I did, and I do.

Colin; He's in and I'm out.

Lucy: You want to be out?

Colin: Don't play games, Lucy. Right now, my heart is in pieces.

Lucy: Because?

Colin: For God's sake, because you have a boyfriend. Why are you tormenting me?

Lucy: No, not a boyfriend. Just a friend. Am I tormenting you?

Colin: You are, and you know it.

Lucy: Who happens to be in a committed relationship.

Colin: (can't quite make out what she's said) Who?

Lucy: Steve.

Colin: Who's Steve?

Lucy: Steve's my good friend who's in a relationship with Dave.

Colin: Who's Dave?

Lucy: My friend Steve's boyfriend.

Colin: Steve is...?

Lucy: Steve and Dave both are.

Colin: So, so, you're not in a relationship with Steve?

Lucy: Never said I was.

Colin: He's gay. So, you're not together?

Lucy: What do you think?

Colin: Why didn't you say so?

Lucy: The last vestige of bad karma has been eliminated.

Colin: Oh, Lucy, Lucy. So, you...weren't...dating?

Lucy: I didn't say we were. We hung out together. I talked, he listened. He talked, I listened.

Colin: You talked about me?

Lucy: Sure did – about you and me.

Colin: And?

Lucy: He finds you interesting.

Colin: He does?

Lucy: Yeah, complex he called you.

Colin: Complex? Is that good?

Lucy: Better than dull, I guess.

Colin: So, does that mean...

Lucy: Could be.

Colin: Oh, Luce, these last few months have made me even surer...

Lucy: About what?

Colin: If I lose you, I'll go crazy.

Lucy: That's kind of flattering.

Colin: I'll do anything...

Lucy: Anything?

Colin: Look, I know we can work out our problems. We're mature, intelligent. We have something special.

Lucy: Yeah, nothing mature about that last caper you talked me into.

Colin: That was stupid, I realize now, but I was desperate, wasn't thinking straight...

Lucy: And idiot me, I thought it sounded reasonable, the way you described it to me.

You have a way with words.

Colin: I appreciated you giving it a try. I really did. It showed me that you wanted our relationship to work – like I did. I would have tried anything. I was so desperate to straighten out my, my...

Lucy: Let's not talk about that, please?

Colin: No, no, that's over, over, so over.

Lucy: You think we should resume?

Colin: Yes, yes. You?

Lucy: I think we should. You've paid your debt.

Colin: I want to marry you, have kids, buy a house...

Lucy: Whoa, cowboy, slow down.

Colin: Sorry, sorry.

Lucy: Any more skeletons?

Colin: No, God, no - gone forever.

Lucy: So, what if I have... skeletons?

Colin: You, skeletons, no way?

Lucy: Me, skeletons? Why not?

Colin: You have? (pause) Do you want to...

Lucy: No.

Colin: But I revealed mine. I mean, shouldn't we, both...?

Lucy: No.

Colin: But...

Lucy: You revealed yours because you wanted to. I never asked you to.

Colin: But because I did, shouldn't you?

Lucy: No.

Colin: How many?

Lucy: A lot.

Colin: A lot?

Lucy: You heard me right.

Colin: But that's not fair.

Lucy: Mine are mine to do with as I wish, as were yours.

Colin: Not even one? Can you reveal just one – for now?

Lucy: Why should I?

Colin: Come on, Lucy. Please?

Lucy: Why should I? Okay, maybe – one.

Colin: Yeah?

Lucy: So, what if it upsets you? Shouldn't we just let it go?

Colin: No. I want to know everything about you. Please tell me.

Lucy: You sure?

Colin: Sure.

Lucy: Okay. You sure?

Colin: Yes, yes, I'm sure.

Lucy: I like...

Colin: Yeah?

Lucy: ...to...

Colin: Go on, go on.

Lucy: ...walk around with no underwear.

Colin: You do?

Lucy: Yep.

Colin: When you're home?

Lucy: At home and sometimes when I'm out.

Colin: When you're out in the street, at work?

Lucy: Yep. Even dressed up, going to parties.

Colin: When we had our first date, were you, did you...?

Lucy: Yep.

Colin: Wow, that's....kind of cool.

Lucy: You're intrigued?

Colin: Yeah. You go to parties with no panties? Why?

Lucy: Cos I like to.

Colin: So, if we go to parties, you won't be wearing panties?

Lucy: Nope.

Colin: Wow. (Colin has an erection. Lucy notices.)

Lucy: (in burlesque voice) Is that a banana in your pocket or are you just glad to see me?

Colin: And you got other... skeletons?

Lucy: Yep.

Colin: And you'll reveal them – as time passes?

Lucy: But slow, real slow.

Colin: Like, how often?

Lucy: As needed.

Colin: Wow.

Lucy: Come, my imperfect man. We have much work to do.

Colin: should we...begin now?

Lucy: The task is formidable and yes, we must begin at once.

Colin: It could take...years?

Lucy: It will take years.

Colin: Years, wow, yes.

They link arms, he rubs her butt (wondering panties or no panties) walk in direction of bedroom. Scene fades.