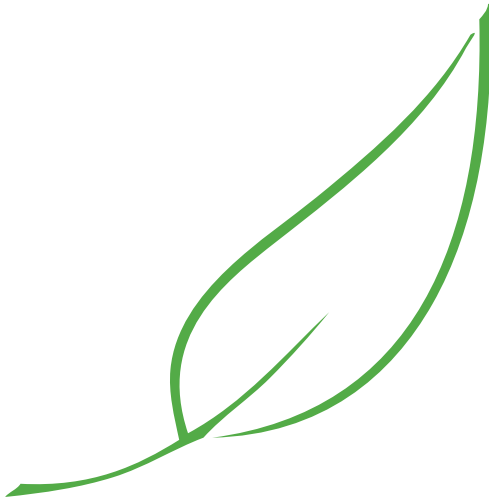


Virtually In Love

By Bradford Owen



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SYNOPSIS: In this 2009 McClaren Comedy award-winning play, Tom Lazio, a lonely broker living with his widowed Italian mother, rolls the digital dating dice by logging into the soul-mate-finding website, “LovetoMeetYou.com”. Ellen Cantrell, a fellow broker, though the perfect woman for Tom dives into the e-dating game for a man she’s sure is nothing like her colleague. Honesty on their personal profiles nearly ruins their chances for love, causing best friends and website love gurus to convince them to over-enhance themselves beyond recognition. Tom’s mother, Nellie, meddles in their electronic and real lives throughout the story to keep them even farther apart. However, the story routes these incompatible people across the worldwide web and parks them in an authentic love only an office space apart.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 male, 4-5 female, 0-2 extras; doubling possible)

TOM LAZIO (m)32; Securities analyst and investment advisor for *Reinhart Securities*. He's single, lives in a condo in Chicago with his mother. He has just enough of a business look to get by, and mixes in casual attire. He's somewhat unshaven, disorganized, but an effective stock analyst because he is creative, outspoken but kind hearted, and bends the rules in favor of his clients. *(489 lines)*

- ELLEN CANTRELL (f)32; Securities analyst and investment advisor for *Reinhart Securities*. She's a transplanted Southerner living in a one-bedroom apartment in Chicago. She is single, and lives alone. She dresses exactly as a woman who memorized *Dressed For Success*. She is meticulous about her office and apartment, highly intelligent, and follows the rules to the nth degree. At home, she doesn't want coworkers to know she is a country girl at heart. (438 lines)
- NELLIE LAZIO (f).....60s; Widowed mother of Tom, she lives with Tom in his condo. She's old-world Italian and is self-centered, feisty, opinionated, dramatic, loving, crafty, and loud. (212 lines)
- MR. REINHART (m).....58; President and Chief Executive Officer of *Reinhart Securities*. He is divorced. He dresses impeccably, has a dark, foreboding wood paneled heart. He is sarcastic, controlling, and sees employees as intelligent worker bees serving in his hive. People perform or they're fired. However, he gives people the tools and opportunity to impress him and make the company billions. (55 lines)

- RANDY HARDING (m)45; Securities analyst and investment advisor for *Reinhart Securities*. He's moderately successful on the job, but works just enough to play. He's Tom's office buddy. He is funny, playful, and is in his third marriage. He dresses business casual with lots of mid-life-crisis flair. Though bombing out in two marriages due to his terminal immaturity, he loves to give male-female relationship advice. (60 lines)
- AMANDA FELDEN (f)31; Securities analyst and investment advisor for *Reinhart Securities*. She is marginally successful, and dresses provocatively. She works just enough to hit the town and play around Chicago's dance clubs. She's Ellen's best friend, and looks at her as her project to loosen up. Though she pushes her friend to be more daring, when it counts, she helps Ellen risk loving without all the flash. (132 lines)
- COP (f)Vice squad plain-clothed officer who poses as a hooker in *Bon Giorno*, the Italian restaurant frequented by Tom and Nellie. (18 lines)
- FRANCO (m).....Owner, operator, and often Maître d', at *Bon Giorno*, a mid-scale, hometown Chicago Italian restaurant and bar. (13 lines)
- MANAGER (f)She is the Regional Produce Manager of the Chicago area *Mason's Supermarkets*. Can double as COP. (14 lines)
- DELIVERY MAN (m).....Can be doubled with Waiter and Produce Clerk. (6 lines)

EXTRAS:

WAITER (m)Can be doubled with Delivery Guy and
Produce Clerk. (*Non-Speaking*)

PRODUCE CLERK (m/f).....Can be doubled with Delivery Guy and
Waiter. (*Non-Speaking*)

DURATION: 120 minutes

TIME: The turn of the twenty-first century

COSTUME CHANGES

ACT 1 SCENE 4-5: TOM

ACT 2 SCENE 3-4: ELLEN

ACT 2 SCENE 4-5: TOM, NELLIE, ELLEN

STAGING

The stage has four cells. The bottom two are TOM and ELLEN's offices open to the audience with desk facing each other but separated by an office area boardroom-type table and chairs separating the lower two offices. Above this area are two adjoining cells that are TOM and ELLEN's bedrooms of their respective apartments. The scene in the grocery store can either be in front of the curtain or in the main aisle in the audience. Garage scenes can occur offstage with echoing audio. The boardroom area can double as the restaurant or be set downstage as a series of tables, a bar, and a Maître d' stand. Much of the office or bedroom dialogue is a rapid succession of character(s) on one side finishing the other side's line.

SOUND EFFECTS

Voive Over: "Welcome to
Mason's Supermarkets"

Voice Over: Reinhart Meeting
Call

Voice Over: Amanda Phone
Message

Angry Osaka Voice

IM Beep

Windows Ready Sound

Computer Error Beeps

Ellen's Cell Ring

Tom's Cell Ring

SPECIAL NEEDS FOR SOUND EFFECTS

- ☐ Key press on one computer produces beep on another.
- ☐ Phone in conference room needs to have a hold button.
- ☐ A line needs to light solid and switch to flashes with each press of the button
- ☐ Osaka voice needs to start and stop with button press as well.
- ☐

PROPS**FOR TOM**

- ☐ Briefcase File Folders
- ☐ Electric Razor
- ☐ 5 Sets of File Folders on Table
- ☐ PJ's
- ☐ Cell Phone
- ☐ Small Football
- ☐ Marco's Dossier
- ☐ Greasy Brown Bag
- ☐ Money and Billfold
- ☐ Termination Notice
- ☐ Pic of Brother

FOR NELLIE

- ☐ Tomato to Sniff
- ☐ Cloth Shopping Bag
- ☐ Small Notepad
- ☐ Computer Power Cord

FOR AMANDA

- ☐ Sexy Dress
- ☐ Purse
- ☐ Compact
- ☐ Lipstick
- ☐ Tabloid Newspaper

FOR PRODUCE MANAGER

- ☐ Name Badge
- ☐ Business Card
- ☐ Pen
- ☐ Clipboard

FOR PRODUCE CLERK

- ☐ Box of Oranges

FOR ELLEN

- ☐ Pointer
- ☐ Easel and Chart
- ☐ Sexy Dress
- ☐ Love to Meet You Brochure
- ☐ Cell Phone
- ☐ Helen's Dossier
- ☐ Greasy Brown Bag
- ☐ Pic of Sister
- ☐ Bowl of Ice Cream
- ☐ Answering Machine
- ☐ Leopard-print Scarf
- ☐ Hand-Held Mirror
- ☐ Cotton Pad
- ☐ Flannel Pajamas
- ☐ Fuzzy Slippers

FOR REINHART

- ☐ Watch
- ☐ Overcoat
- ☐ Leather Gloves
- ☐ Pencil to Break
- ☐ 4 Files
- ☐ Four Stacks of Fanfold Paper. (Two about 6 inches thick. Two about 2 inches thick.)

FOR COP

- ☐ Cuffs
- ☐ Tight Leopard-print Pants/Leggings
- ☐ Police Badge in Holder

FOR FRANCO

- ☐ Bottle of Wine
- ☐ Two Glasses

FOR WAITER

- ☐ Tray with Bread

FOR DELIVERY MAN

- ☐ Two White Paperbags
- ☐ Two Sandwiches inside paperbags

AWARDS AND PRODUCTION HISTORY

Virtually in Love won the 2009 McClaren Award for full-length comedy (www.mctmidland.org) among 46 full-length plays submitted by playwrights from all over the world. In May of 2010, it was fully produced and debuted at the Midland Community Theatre in Midland, Texas. All three weeks were sold out. It was given a one-week-only extension and again, sold out.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SETTING: *Downtown Chicago where Reinhart Securities Inc. headquarters occupies the forty-fourth floor. Characters live, shop, and eat in the city.*

AT RISE: *It's morning, and REINHART, ELLEN, RANDY, and AMANDA are seated around an oval boardroom table. ELLEN stands near a screen finishing a computer-projected presentation. EVERYONE has folders and note pads in front of them except REINHART.*

TOM hurriedly enters using an electric razor, rushes to his office, puts down his things, straightens his collar, and jacket, puts the electric razor in his pocket, rushes to the boardroom for the staff meeting and tries to look natural. The only available seat is next to REINHART.

TOM: Sorry sir.

REINHART politely smiles, points to a spot HE missed on his face, and motions for TOM to listen to ELLEN's presentation. RANDY's trying to get TOM's attention, but TOM doesn't understand his signals. ELLEN begins to talk, but is interrupted by TOM bringing out his electric razor and trying to buzz off the last patch of whiskers. EVERYONE turns. HE clicks it off embarrassed, and motions for ELLEN to continue.

ELLEN: That's pretty much it sir.

REINHART: Excellent, Ms. Cantrell! But 28% growth without Asian markets will seem inconceivable to the Osakas with a small portion of assets in start-up companies.

ELLEN: Yes sir, at first...

TOM: Osaka? Not *the* Osakas... *My* Osakas!

RANDY: I tried to tell you.

TOM: Tell me what? You're waving your arms like I'm gonna be hit by a bus.

AMANDA: Bingo!

REINHART: Please, let Ms. Cantrell explain.

ELLEN: Thank you sir. The Osakas were scared that the Asian

markets may turn down sharply with trade barriers...

TOM: But those rules don't apply to Japan or Taiwan with start-up investments, which was my idea to begin with!

ELLEN: But that affects China who dominates the Asian market.

TOM: Who cares! Sir that's my account, what's she...

REINHART: Aren't you a little late to be saying things like *my* account not even knowing what *my* company's plan is?

RANDY: (*Waves arms, noise like truck backing up.*) Beep, beep, beep!

TOM: *What?*

REINHART: Please finish Ms. Cantrell.

ELLEN: The Osakas retirement accounts are currently managed in...

TOM: Retirement?

AMANDA: Yes Tom, they're looking to us to manage their family's few trillion Yen.

TOM: They told me they spread out their private finances...

ELLEN: Emiko said they lost their collective family shirts in European start-ups...

TOM: You called Mrs. Osaka! That's *my* account!

REINHART: Ah, that short but offensive pronoun, "my." (*Picks up paper on table.*) Let me check the company letterhead. Is it the "My Group" or the "Reinhart Group?" Let's see...

TOM: Sir, I get the point but...

REINHART: Excellent! Ms. Cantrell?

ELLEN: Yes sir?

REINHART: You've got the account.

ELLEN: Thank you sir. I won't let you down.

REINHART: No one still working here has.

AMANDA: She'll need an assistant, and I...

REINHART: Superb idea! Mr. Lazio go over all your Osaka files, and map out a strategy.

TOM and ELLEN: With Him? With Her?

RANDY makes screeching tires and crashing sound.

REINHART: Tom knows this account inside and out, and you have the new angle. Is there a problem with anything your employer has just mandated without any discussion or vote?

TOM and ELLEN: No sir.

REINHART: That's the spirit! Adjourned! *(Exits.)*

RANDY: *(Exiting.)* Sorry buddy.

TOM: Huh? Yeah.

AMANDA: *(Exiting.)* See ya Ellie!... Tom?.

TOM: Yeah, see ya.

ELLEN gathers her computer and papers, begins to exit, and stops at the dazed TOM.

ELLEN: Tom, I'd like to look over your stuff whenever you have the time today?

TOM: Today?

ELLEN: Yes, today.

TOM: Can I get you some coffee too?

ELLEN: No, just the Osaka file and an adult attitude.

TOM: I'm sure you'd just open your office to anyone who snaked you out of an account.

ELLEN: Since when is getting business for the firm being *snaked*?

TOM: You could have told me you were working on this.

ELLEN: Reinhart told me to look into it.

TOM: Calling Mrs. Osaka is more than...

ELLEN: She wears the financial kimono in that family since *her* family's money propped up their accounts when *her* husband nearly blew all their private assets!

TOM: Mr. Osaka never said anything...

ELLEN: He didn't want to lose face.

TOM: But you knew this was my account.

ELLEN: Their son called Reinhart and hooked it up with me since I'm a woman and could talk to Mrs. Osaka.

TOM: Then why not tell me all this sooner.

ELLEN: I am about to drown in the ocean of ego here Tom. What I really need is either the files or an explanation to Reinhart.

TOM: Don't threaten me.

ELLEN: Don't back me into a corner, and expect me to wait there until your feelings catch up with the brain that knows we can make a lot of money here... today!

TOM: I'll get back to you. *(Exits.)*

ELLEN: *Today? Fade black.*

END OF SCENE

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT RISE: *Later that evening, lights up then TOM and NELLIE enter pushing a grocery cart in the produce section. They stop by a pile of tomatoes. In the background unaware is a PRODUCE CLERK, and a professionally dressed PRODUCE MANAGER with a clipboard talking to each other, pointing to the produce, and writing.*

TOM: This is the fourth store today!

NELLIE: Mason's has *the* best produce... and the prices!

TOM: We've wasted thirty gallons of gas, and a whole day saving ten cents a pound?

NELLIE: Now I'm a waste of time.

TOM: Did I say that?

NELLIE: And where do you have to go so badly big shot?

TOM: Nowhere ma. Trust me I'm going nowhere.

NELLIE: You want to go out with your friends, and get fresh.

TOM: Fresh ma? What *is* fresh? I've heard that all my life, and you say it's bad but what is it?

NELLIE: You and that Robbie, all the time getting fresh. He's the one you want to spend time with instead of your waste of a mother.

TOM: Robbie? Robbie Jacobs?

NELLIE: *That's* the fresh one!

TOM: *That* was sixth grade! Give it a rest.

NELLIE: That's when it starts! *(Picks up a tomato and smells it.)* Very nice, very nice!

TOM: Don't put your nose on the tomato!

NELLIE: It isn't *on* the tomato!

TOM: Stop and look for yourself!

NELLIE: It's in front of my nose! Don't tell me about *my* nose!

TOM: (*Embarrassed.*) Okay, okay Ma please, just put it the bag.

NELLIE: You want me to buy a rotten tomato and get sick?

TOM: If it was really rotten you wouldn't have to drape your nose over it to tell!

NELLIE: The fruit's in front of my nose. How else can I smell it?

TOM: (*Grabs the tomato.*) This is in front. (*Puts under nostrils.*) This is what you do!

MANAGER: Excuse me is there something wrong with our tomatoes?

TOM: Nose! I mean no, my mother worries about rotten tomatoes.

MANAGER: I can assure you my buyers and staff put out only the best produce.

NELLIE: So you run this little fruit stand?

TOM: Ma?

MANAGER: Not just for this store, but for all the Mason's Markets in this region. They don't call me "The Fruit Woman" for nothing.

NELLIE: (*Cackles.*) "The Fruit Woman"... You're a funny girl.

TOM: It's on.

NELLIE: Tell me (*Looks at name badge.*) Kristen...

MANAGER: It's Kirsten.

NELLIE: Whatever.

TOM: Ma!

NELLIE: What if I told you last month I bought ten pounds of Mason's oranges that were dry as wood.

TOM: Oh lord, the wooden oranges again!

MANAGER: You bought them here?

TOM: It doesn't matter. Let's go home.

NELLIE: Why would I lie about wooden oranges?

MANAGER: Ma'am I would never think you're lying.

NELLIE: Don't you get fresh young lady.

TOM: Ma, let's just pay for the Geritol and go home.

MANAGER: So your mother's visiting?

TOM: I'm into the third year of "The Visit."

MANAGER: So, you live with your mom?

TOM: No, she lives with me.

MANAGER: That's so...

TOM: ...please don't say anything like "nice" or "sweet" so that I don't drop dead of embarrassment in the produce section.

NELLIE: I will not be insulted by this "Fruit Woman!"

TOM: (*Grabs NELLIE's arm.*) Ma, let's go *now*!

NELLIE: They should call you "The Wooden Fruit Woman!"

MANAGER: Please wait!

MANAGER calls over a PRODUCE CLERK, and whispers in his ear.

TOM: Great Ma, you got us arrested!

NELLIE: They're not going to arrest an old woman... maybe you, but...

TOM walks to the MANAGER as the PRODUCE CLERK exits.

TOM: Look, Kristen...

MANAGER: It's Kirsten.

TOM: Whatev... ever you want, I'd like to apologize...

PRODUCE CLERK enters carrying a box of oranges.

MANAGER: Please, misses?

NELLIE: Lazio.

MANAGER: Mrs. Lazio, on behalf of the 135 Mason's Markets, please accept this box of premium oranges with our apology.

TOM: You don't have to...

NELLIE: Take the box from the "Fruit Girl."

PRODUCE CLERK hands TOM the box.

MANAGER: (*Writing on business card.*) And if there's any trouble with any of Mason's produce, here's my personal cell number (*Stares at TOM.*) where you can reach me if anything here isn't (*Hands card.*)... fresh.

TOM and NELLIE: That's fresh.

TOM: Thanks.

NELLIE: Give me the card.

TOM: Not on what's left of your life.

NELLIE: She's not your type.

TOM: You thought Gina Polini was my type.

NELLIE: That was sixth grade. Give it a rest!

TOM: It's just a phone number.

NELLIE: She's has you already.

TOM: Ma, no one *has* me. That's the problem.

NELLIE: And that's my fault.

TOM: Why is everything eventually your fault in every conversation?

NELLIE: I'm just staying until your brother returns from wherever he's working. Then I'll stay with him.

TOM: I don't mind you living with me, but I thought you were happy in the condominium.

NELLIE: I was a prisoner in that "Golden Ghetto." Everyone wants old people gated like zoo animals.

TOM: It was an exclusive gated community.

NELLIE: Even a gilded cage...

TOM and NELLIE: Is still a cage.

NELLIE: I would have stayed, but those Community Association Nazis voted me out for no reason!

TOM: Six grease fires, and an evacuation had a lot to do with it.

NELLIE: (*Italian mafia accent.*) Nevah convicted... nevah!

TOM: Come on Ma!

NELLIE: Am I such a bother?

TOM: (*Pause.*) Just stay until you're ready.

NELLIE: You mean that?

TOM: Yes.

NELLIE: You're not just saying that to stay in the will?

TOM: No.

NELLIE: Oh, that's so nice! (*Grabs cheeks.*) You're my sweetie boy (*Sings.*) ...sweetie little boy-boy, sweetie little boy-boy...

TOM: Keep the cheeks but not the "Sweetie Boy Song."

NELLIE: Let's go to the meat department, and I'll tell the butcher about the bad chicken I bought last year.

Exit together, fade black.

END OF SCENE

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT RISE: *Some time later that day at ELLEN's apartment. Lights up on AMANDA holding up a spaghetti-strapped sexy dress placing it up against herself then ELLEN. ELLEN's in her flannel pajamas and fuzzy slippers, in her well organized bedroom that doubles as a computer room.*

AMANDA: You're scared!

ELLEN: No, I'm not!

AMANDA: You're scared you'll look good.

ELLEN: To who?

AMANDA: Anybody who takes a good look.

ELLEN: Does that not summarize your sex life?

AMANDA: *(Shakes skimpy dress in ELLEN's face.)* You're chicken.
My friend's a big fat chicken.

ELLEN: Better than being a big fat half naked chicken. *(Mock jive.)*
And who you callin' fat, girl?

AMANDA: If the beak fits? *(Clucking noise, holds up dress.)*

ELLEN: *(Throws outfit.)* You wear it!

AMANDA: *(Pulls out identical dress.)* I already got one. People'll think we're twins... from a distance.

ELLEN: I can't even fit what I *do* have in that.

AMANDA: *(Fake Southern accent.)* Come on Little Ellie. Put this on and come out and play with the boys.

ELLEN: I think Little Amanda has to wait for the little divorce papers to be final to play with the boys.

AMANDA: Dennis and I have...

ELLEN: Yes, yes, *(Mocking.)* an understanding. *(Loudly laughs.)*

AMANDA: Okay, okay. Just, put on whatever you want and let's go.

ELLEN: *(Pause.)* I have stuff to do around here.

AMANDA: *Stuff?* Like what stuff?

ELLEN: Plenty of stuff. Computer stuff.

AMANDA: Geez Ellen, leave work at work, and live your life with somebody beside yourself for a change!

ELLEN: I'm not always alone.

AMANDA: You and a *Hagen Das* working late every evening is hardly a social outing.

ELLEN: Is every single woman not trolling for cheesecake boring?

AMANDA: No, just you.

ELLEN: I'm not boring.

AMANDA: Prove it.

ELLEN: To you? Never!

AMANDA: (*Walks away carrying packages.*) Kiss Hagen goodnight for me.

ELLEN: I'm not working on work tonight!

AMANDA: Nice try, but I know you Ellie-girl.

ELLEN: If I tell you what I'm doing, you'll think I'm stupid.

AMANDA: That'll be a step up from boring.

ELLEN: Goodnight Amanda!

AMANDA: I'm kidding, I'm kidding, but you're not giving me much to go on, and it's cruel to deprive the men of this world much longer.

ELLEN: Promise you won't laugh?

AMANDA: You said that when you introduced me to my nearly ex-husband.

ELLEN: Yeah well, speaking of introducing people... (*Searches for and hands AMANDA brochure.*)

AMANDA: Ellie! "Love To Meet You."

ELLEN: Okay, okay, now I know that it sounds stupid.

AMANDA: (*Gasp.*) They don't just send you this stuff in the mail?

ELLEN: Yeah, well I saw their ad pop up on my screen at work.

AMANDA: You sent for this from work!

ELLEN: Amanda, I know it's not right.

AMANDA: Whoa, whoa, whoa. This stuff is more than not right.

ELLEN: I know, I know. It's a bad idea. I'll just trash it (*Grabs brochure.*) right now...

AMANDA: (*Grabs brochure back.*) You don't understand what you did. They have you in a database. Soon, there'll be hundreds, maybe thousands of men you don't even know hounding you with email proposals. It could get dangerous.

ELLEN: I know, I know, I told you it was stupid.

AMANDA: Desperate men instant-messaging their sordid desires. How could you Ellie!

ELLEN: You're right. This can get out of control.

ELLEN snatches brochure and tries to throw it in the trash and AMANDA snatches it back.

AMANDA: Damn it Ellie!

ELLEN: I'm sorry, I'll just...

AMANDA: I can't believe you thought of this before me!

ELLEN: Stop... what?

AMANDA: I pride myself in being on the cutting edge in the love department.

ELLEN: You're definitely on the edge.

AMANDA: And way ahead of you babe.

ELLEN: Way ahead?

AMANDA: And you of all people to beat me to it. I'm shocked... hurt.

ELLEN: So I'm not stupid?

AMANDA: Depends, what did you tell them on the Personal Profile?

ELLEN: What "Personal Profile?"

AMANDA: Did you fill out some kind of on-line questionnaire?

ELLEN: Yeah, that's what I'm finishing tonight.

AMANDA: Without *me*!

ELLEN: What happened to depriving the guys.

AMANDA: Makes the heart grow fonder. Let's see what you got!

ELLEN: *(Types on the computer.)* It's not much. I just went through my history, and likes and dislikes. Okay, here. Log on... *there*!

AMANDA: *(Pause.)* Wow! This is big.

ELLEN: They're thorough. It's not like hit or miss. They really try and match you to the right...

AMANDA: *(Staring at screen.)* Oh no! I can't believe you did that!

ELLEN: What? Did what?

AMANDA: Right there! Ellie how could you?

ELLEN: How could I what?

AMANDA: *(Staring at screen.)* You didn't really send this in like this... *Oh no*!

ELLEN: No, not yet. What are you saying, "Oh no, about?"

AMANDA: Here! Read it!

ELLEN: Ah... favorite movie, *Return of the Jedi*.

AMANDA: Argh! Yuck! Ahh!

ELLEN: What is wrong with you?

AMANDA: *Me?* Wrong with *me*? You put *that* as your favorite movie?

ELLEN: So what?

AMANDA: So plenty. It's... it's... stupid!

ELLEN: It's a great movie. I loved it. What's stupid?

AMANDA: Okay, look there.

ELLEN: "Worst day of my life... When the Challenger exploded."

What's wrong with that? It's the truth I...

AMANDA: Okay! There's the problem!

ELLEN: There where?

AMANDA: This is not about the truth.

ELLEN: It says to truthfully answer the questions...

AMANDA: Do you think *Return of the Jedi* is remotely sexy?

ELLEN: I'm trying to be honest.

AMANDA: It's called, "Love to Meet You" not "Love to Get Honest with You."

ELLEN: I'm not afraid to be honest about myself.

AMANDA: But every guy who reads this might be.

ELLEN: So, I get some other honest guy. Isn't *that* the point?

AMANDA: Honesty killed every great relationship you or I ever had.

ELLEN: Maybe yours, but not mine.

AMANDA: Jerry Thompson.

ELLEN: That's not the same. He just didn't like how totally wrong he was about...

AMANDA: Ken Fitzsimmons?

ELLEN: It didn't work because he found out I made more money than he...

AMANDA: Jim Callahan?

ELLEN: He... he started dating you!

AMANDA: *And*, when he found out I was married, he dumped me.

ELLEN: Moralistic jerk!

AMANDA: Exactly. Ellie, these sites want the flavor of you not the whole meal.

ELLEN: Flavor?

AMANDA: Okay, here. "What I want most out of life." You put, "Sense of purpose." That flavor is like mashed potatoes. They taste good but... *(Takes keyboard.)* what if you said, "To feel the Earth move when we're alone." That takes you from mashed potatoes to hot chocolate baby!

ELLEN: Come on Amanda, I'm not going to say that.

AMANDA: Okay, okay, try this, "What animal best describes me?" You put, "Otter." *(Roaring laughter.)*

ELLEN: Otters are fun and intelligent!

AMANDA: Yeah, I can hear him in the office with the guys whispering, "You know? I met this great girl. She's a real otter in bed." *(Roars more.)*

ELLEN: What do you want me to say!

AMANDA: Pick a predator, something sleek..., *ah!* *(Types.)* "Love Leopard!"

ELLEN: I'm not a "Love Leopard."

AMANDA: *(Typing.)* You are now!

ELLEN: *(Takes keyboard, deletes.)* No I'm not.

AMANDA: Here! At the end. Question, "What phrase sums up who you are?"

ELLEN: That's simple.

AMANDA: What?

ELLEN: "What you see is what you get."

AMANDA: *(Looks at watch, digs in purse to reapply lipstick in compact mirror.)* Face the facts Ellie. What *they* see is what *you* get.

AMANDA hands compact mirror to ELLEN.

And what if they don't like what they see?

ELLEN: *(Looks in mirror, pause.)* Then they don't get.

AMANDA: Suit yourself Ellie, but I can't watch while you honestly commit character suicide, spend three hundred dollars, and get hooked up with a near-sighted otter lover.

ELLEN: I'm gonna be me.

AMANDA: Well, you *otter!* *(Roaring laughter.)*

ELLEN: Take your broom with you as you leave!

AMANDA: Later days babe! *(Exit.)*

ELLEN: *(Staring sadly in mirror.)* "Love Leopard." I'll do this my way.

What you see is what you... (*Throws compact down on desk.*)
...what you get. (*Angrily typing.*) There!

Fades silhouette then to black.

END OF SCENE

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

AT RISE: *Later that night in TOM's apartment, TOM's in his bedroom/computer room. Desk is cluttered. TOM's dressed in a T-shirt and shorts sorting through email. Lights up, and HE's talking to NELLIE offstage.*

TOM: Ma you know I hate pajamas!

NELLIE: (*Offstage.*) You'll hate the pneumonia more?

TOM: In which medical journal did you read that not wearing six layers of flannel is the leading cause of pneumonia. Gosh, I thought it was bacteria or a virus.

NELLIE: (*Enters.*) Shows what you know.

TOM: It's a medical fact!

NELLIE: Doctors know nothing.

TOM: Yeah, I don't even know why they bother going to twelve years of medical school when mothers have the cure for everything.

NELLIE: Listen Mr. Big Shot, doctors are well-paid pill pushers *after* you get sick. Mothers devote themselves to helping wise-guy children like you not get sick in the first place. (*Shoves pajamas into TOM's chest.*)

TOM: (*Holds up huge, ugly flannel pajamas.*) Geez Ma, they got everything but the little footies!

NELLIE: They were out of your size, so I got them big.

TOM: Thanks, but no thanks.

NELLIE: Fine. Don't come crawling to me with pneumonia begging for chicken soup.

TOM: (*Logs on to computer.*) Why don't you go to bed? It's one in the morning.

NELLIE: I can't sleep.

TOM: Make yourself some warm milk.

NELLIE: Maybe. What are you doing up so late?

TOM: Ah... just checking email. (*Looks at screen.*) Blah, blah, blah...
Man! Nothing!

NELLIE: What nothing?

TOM: Ah nothing, I mean, there's no mail.

NELLIE: (*Moves closer to the screen.*) Looks like plenty.

TOM: Huh? Oh yeah. I mean nothing exciting.

NELLIE: There's one there from Tony!

TOM: Where?

NELLIE: (*Sits beside TOM.*) There.

TOM: Oh yeah. (*Clicks mouse.*) "Dear Bro and Ma. Enjoying the sun and the waves on the new *Down Under* campaign. We finished on the second day out, and we're ahead of schedule shooting the layout in Australia. Wish you were here, but enjoy the pics. Love, Tony." *Down Under*? I thought he was doing the milk ads?

NELLIE: I thought so too.

TOM: There are attachments.

NELLIE: Attached to what?

TOM: Email attachments. See this here. Double-click this clip here with your left finger. (*Takes her hand and clicks her hand on mouse.*) Just like that. (*Deep breath.*) Whoa!

NELLIE: My baby!

TOM: *Down Under*? He meant *Down Under Underwear*!

NELLIE: He looks so cold... but such a nice boy. What a smile.

TOM: That's about all he's wearing.

NELLIE: Why can't you be happy for your brother? He looks up to you.

TOM: I haven't seen Tony in underwear since we played pirate ship in the bathtub.

NELLIE: Well, you can at least send him a note back telling him we're proud of him. Oh, and tell him he looks too tan, and will get skin cancer.

TOM: Another timely diagnosis.

NELLIE: Don't get fresh!

TOM: Goodnight Ma!

NELLIE: Goodnight. (*Holds face and moves it back and forth as SHE sings.*) Sweet little boy, boy; sweet little boy, boy.

Exits then lights up in ELLEN's bedroom.

TOM: *(Gets up and looks to see if NELLIE's gone.)* Okay, let's see.

TOM types, clicks mouse. Lights up on ELLEN's room/side of the stage.

I can't believe it! Two weeks, and nothing. *(More surfing.)* Where's my file name, and all my "Love Me" profile information? Three hundred dollars, and I'm not even... here's the tech support number! *(Grabs phone, dials and waits.)* Hello... I need to talk... *(Mimic electronic attendant's words.)* We'd "Love to Meet Ya" in a minute as soon as one of our love technicians is free." Please don't put me on ho... *(Listens.)* Oh no, seventies light rock! *(Frowns, hums to self, kinda gets into it.)*

ELLEN: *(Lights up on ELLEN's bedroom.)* How honest should I be on this thing? Question "How can a man light your fire?" *(Types.)* Never use the idiotic expression "light my fire" to me. *(Hits "return".)* Unable to process!... AGH! Here's a tech support number. *(Grabs phone, dials, waits, and automated attendant answers.)* Why can't I talk to a real per... *(Looks up, and reluctantly sings.)* "I need to know that you will always be..."

TOM: "The same old someone that I knew. *(Loudly singing.)* What will it take for you believe in me! The way that I believe in you... hello? Oh no, I don't believe in you... *(Pause, angry.)* Yeah, I got a problem... with the whole thing here.

ELLEN: *(Loudly singing.)* I don't want clever, co-o-on-ver-sa-tion! Hello? No! Don't hang up!

TOM: The whole thing's gone! I waited two weeks, then I checked, and I can't even log on.

ELLEN: Please don't take this wrong, but this is all so personal and... well... I wondered if I could speak with a woman. *(Pause.)* Really? You must sing low alto, *(Mimicking low voice.)* "I love you just the way..." Sure... *(Regular voice.)* I mean sure I'll get to it.

TOM: Rejected by the server! How can I be rejected by "Love to Meet You" dot-com?

ELLEN: Well, some of the questions seem... ah... you want me to be frank? Okay, they seem like excerpts from the bathroom walls in junior high. What? You said be frank!

TOM: No buddy, I want on the server, now! What do you mean I have to go to the next level of love technicians! You sound like a competent... jerk!

ELLEN: Complex? How would some deep throat of a woman like you know if I have a complex? *(Pause.)* No, I don't need another love techni... jerk!

TOM: After six rounds of seventies love songs, this customer needs some service. I told the first technician I'm lost somewhere in your system. *(Listens.)* Gone! I spent three hours filling out that psychological mumbo jumbo, and... ah-huh... ah-huh... what do you mean that's the problem?

ELLEN: So you want me to just, "let go." Let go of what, my senses? Yes, yes, I'm breathing! *(Deep breaths.)*

TOM: Yes I want the truth! *(Listens.)* You did what? Why!

ELLEN: I'm trying to be truthful about myself, and it keeps saying unable to process. Like when I answered this question here.

TOM: You said boring, I heard you plain as day. I may not have risen to the heights of third level love guru, but I'm not boring! *(Listens.)* What? Of course computers make mistakes!

ELLEN: Question fifty-eight "What are the conditions the man you'd love to meet must meet." I put, "He has to spend less time on his hair than I do."

TOM: Do you have this psycho-love-test in front of you? Okay, read on page one of the directions, second paragraph, first sentence, and I quote, "Honesty is love's best policy," right?

ELLEN: Why would I want a man who couldn't handle the truth? *(Pause.)* What shades of gray?

TOM: No, I *don't* tell people everything. Huh? *(Listens.)* Okay fine, just put "lie like a rug" in the instructions.

ELLEN: I most certainly do not pad my resume, or anything else for that matter and I don't ... the stakes are higher? Why? *(Pause.)* That's none of your business how long it's been!

TOM: (*Looking up, reminiscing.*) Year and a half maybe two. She was wonderful. I met her on a flight to San Fran... no I'm sorry, that's the plot of a movie I just saw last weekend with my mother. Ah-uh, (*Pause.*) That is *not* the problem "Dr. Love To Lie To Ya!"

ELLEN: Actually, I'm a... well, I just don't want to admit it to a total stranger. I'm a... yes that's it, just don't make me say it.

TOM: I could spruce it up a bit. Yes a *bit*... what's so funny?

ELLEN: Does getting lip-locked in my boyfriend's braces on a band trip count? No? Well ah... a professor in college kissed me on the neck after final exams... happened next? I sued him for sexual harassment. (*Listens.*) Stop groaning!

TOM: Okay, okay, I *could* sound more interesting. Truth be told, I don't know if a woman *could* handle the naked truth about a guy like me. Might feel like she's biting off more... hello?... hello?

ELLEN: No, I'm not crying... *much*. Yeah, I'm fine. I know what you're looking for... huh? Right, right. I need to know what they're looking for... Thanks. (*Goes over to mirror and begins taking off her makeup with a cotton pad.*)

TOM: (*Staring at screen, instant messaging 'bleep' sound.*) "Dear Mr. Lazio. Our conversation was to say the least, memorable. I've re-activated your account, but you'll have to re-enter your profile information. It's your choice how much truth is the truth about you, but remember, *What they see is what you get*. Great! Just forget it. (*Turns out light, exits right.*)

ELLEN looks at face, sobs, turns out light, and exits left.

END OF SCENE

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

AT RISE: *Time is Friday, minutes before 5pm. Lights up on the entire office area. RANDY has sleeves rolled up, TOM offstage ready to throw RANDY a small soft football. RANDY's running around desks and around an apathetic AMANDA who's reading what looks like a newspaper. ELLEN's working in her barely lit office.*

TOM: *(Offstage.)* Blue thirty-two!... Blue thirty-two!... Hut-hut! Hike!
Pick up the linebacker!

RANDY: *(Enters dodging back and forth around AMANDA.)* Heavy defense, but...

RANDY fakes a seated AMANDA, and TOM enters to pass small football to RANDY.

I'm open!

TOM: Pocket's collapsing, looks like a sack, he rolls out! *(Darts back and forth, throws.)*

RANDY: *(Catches pass, runs across office and pretends to dance in the end zone making fake crowd roaring noises.)* The crowd goes wild.

AMANDA: There's nothing remotely cute about this.

RANDY: Game winning touchdown!

REINHART enters and stands beside a football spiking RANDY who slams it on desk, and triumphantly raises his hands.

REINHART: Bravo Mr. Harding.

RANDY: Mr. Reinhart!

REINHART: Oh, if you could only find the end zone for our client's.

AMANDA: And with anyone else for that matter.

RANDY: Sir, I apologize. This was a shameless display...

REINHART: *(Seizes football.)* This pales in comparative shame to the "Name that Backside Photo Contest" circulated to our Board of Directors.

RANDY: That was a... fundraiser.

AMANDA: Mrs. Reinhart was more than generous in several ways.

RANDY: Shut up!

REINHART: (*Shoves football into RANDY's stomach.*) What is it about five o'clock on a Friday that transforms hard working men into juvenile delinquents.

AMANDA: Marriage has the same effect on them.

REINHART: Ah, and then there's Miss Felden.

A frightened AMANDA slams her tabloid newspaper down behind her.

Huddled at her desk, pouring over the latest information.

AMANDA: Yes Sir.

REINHART: (*Reaches around AMANDA, grabs tabloid magazine, and looks at cover.*) Such an inquiring mind! I'm sure there were some rare investment finds in here. (*Opens tabloid.*) let's see...

AMANDA: I really don't read...

REINHART: "Colorado woman gives birth to a goat." Now *that* could blossom into a pharmaceutical investment.

AMANDA: I'm so sorry, Sir. I'll put this back in the lady's room. (*Exits.*)

REINHART: This has been one of the sorriest weeks of trading this company's seen since 1929! Why I ask? Does anyone here know?

RANDY: The market's a bit unpredictable.

TOM: Oh Randy.

REINHART: The market's unpredictable! That's the sort of riveting analysis that ranks up there with money doesn't grow on trees, and buy low sell high!

RANDY: What I meant to say was, by this time tomorrow...

REINHART: Oh please, let me finish that one. The sun will come out tomorrow? Bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow, there'll be sun!

TOM: I saw that twice on Broadway.

RANDY: Shut up!

REINHART: Spare me the limp excuses and clichés.

RANDY: Understood.

REINHART: Good. (*Looks at watch.*) I'm late to meet Mrs. Reinhart for dinner with... Well now, since you two have very little to do for this company, why doesn't one of you round out our dinner party at *The Brookfield*...

RANDY: (*Moving in on TOM, and hugging him side-by-side.*) I'm honored, but torn since Mr. Lazio and I made (*Staring at TOM.*) plans to... visit our mothers tonight!

TOM: What?... a nice thing to do for us... *them*!

REINHART: It's a shame since Mrs. Reinhart's granddaughter is celebrating her qualifying for the US Ski Team.

TOM: Our moms would be so disappointed...

RANDY: ...is that the abundantly attractive blonde girl, woman, *person* in the picture in your office?

REINHART: The same.

TOM: Randy and I...

RANDY: (*Slowly sliding his arm from around TOM's shoulder.*) ...are just friends. (*Quickly exiting.*) Tell mom hi for me!

REINHART: You're still quite welcome to join us.

TOM: Thank you sir, but I still have paperwork to finish.

RANDY: (*Enters in coat, holding out MR. REINHART's coat.*) Meet you out front Mr. Reinhart? (*Quickly exiting.*)

REINHART: (*Smiling, pulling gloves out of pocket, and putting them on.*) Very well. I'll see you early Monday morning?

TOM: How do you take your coffee?

REINHART: Surprise me. (*Exits.*)

TOM: Yes sir.

ELLEN: (*Lights up in ELLEN's office who is typing at her keyboard.*) Name... Ellen, no (*Delete.*) Helen. Twenty-eight, ...height, height?, five-sixish, one twenty-five, (*Delete.*) one fifteen, yeah. Blonde at least for the next three weeks, born four, twenty-one, seventy-five... what's this, "Time you were born matches the stars with your future soul-mate?" Come on! Who knows what time they're born! I can't call Helen... *Mom*!

ELLEN dials, AMANDA enters office.

AMANDA: Old Swinehart's gone, it's Friday after five! What are you doing?

ELLEN: I've got some stuff to do.

AMANDA: You mean we've got stuff.

ELLEN: No, I got stuff... hello momma?

AMANDA: It's Friday night, and you're talkin' to your *mother*?

ELLEN: No momma, I've never felt better. (*To AMANDA.*) I'll call you when I'm done.

AMANDA: I'll wait.

ELLEN: Just go. No momma, not you. I was talking to Amanda. (*Listens.*) Oh Momma, she's not a hussy!

AMANDA: Who's she callin' a hussy?

ELLEN: *You*, now just go and I'll call you later.

AMANDA: I'll try to save you a man or two and "Studio Z". Call me! (*Exits.*)

ELLEN: Momma? Are you still there? Sure, great. I'm at work... Sometimes I have to finish up a few... yes on a Friday ni... what is it with everyone?... Dad's career wasn't always a nine to five thing... Huh?... Kyle?... I don't remember a Kyle... I don't care if Helen said he's cute. Oh, speaking of "Wonder Woman," what time was Helen born?... No, I know she was born on the twenty-first, but what time?... Ah huh, so like 9 30ish?... Great thanks... Huh?... I was ah, planning a thirtieth party for her... So it's two years away... I'm organized. It's part of my "nice personality" you tell everyone I'm blessed with... No, I don't have a Yankee accent... Well I don't want to sound like a *Beverly Hillbilly* either. And momma... keep the party for Helen a secret... Sure you can.... You kept the real color of your hair from us as kids for years. Oh Momma everyone knows! But I'll let you go... I love ya momma... say that a lot to daddy too. Okay, bye Momma. (*Quickly enters profile data.*)

TOM: (*TOM enters office, pulls out brother's resume and logs on to "Love To Meet You".*) Okay Tony, now it's time to do your little brother proud. (*Reading and typing.*) Date of birth. Time of birth? What kind of a question is... match me up with the stars, I could ask ma... what am I thinking!... When's a perfect time for "Mr. Perfect" to be born?

ELLEN: (*Reads notes.*) Okay, time, time... time born. Nine-thirtyish... how about...

TOM and ELLEN: Nine thirty-five!

ELLEN: Favorite Authors? (*Types.*) The steamier the better. Why am

I doing this?

TOM: Books on improving my love life. What are the worst words you can hear from your lover?

TOM and ELLEN: Call me!

TOM: (*Reading.*) "If stuck on a deserted island, what's the one thing would you have to have to survive?"

ELLEN: (*Looks at sister's picture.*) Hair dryer,

TOM: (*Types.*) Picture of you baby.

BOTH furiously look at notes and resume and type.

ELLEN: Most embarrassing moment? Ah, she didn't have any.

TOM: When I wrecked my brother's car on prom night, pinning the blame solely on my brother causing him to get grounded through graduation not caring about anyone else except myself because...

ELLEN: Alias used to "get to know you."

TOM: Alias?

ELLEN: Something catchy...

TOM: ...provocative...

ELLEN: What did Amanda say? *Love Leopard!*

TOM: Okay Bro, come on, what's an alias for an underwear model? Flyguy! Flyguy, that's it!

ELLEN: Submit entry after accepting the following agreement...

TOM: Information contained accurate, blah, blah, blah...

ELLEN: ...true representation of the inner and outer person, blah, blah, blah...

TOM: ...not responsible for any discrepancies in actual appearance, blah, blah, ...

ELLEN: Once you've submitted...

TOM: ...you're committed. Okay, working, working...

ELLEN: Minutes away from a match.

TOM: Let's go! Let's go. Tommy needs a new life!

ELLEN: (*Reads.*) "The perfect match takes time, please wait."

TOM: (*Reads.*) "You've waited all your life for the perfect match. Please wait."

TOM and ELLEN: Arg!

BOTH hear triumphant computer music and sit back down.

TOM and ELLEN: Perfect!

TOM: (*Amazed.*) Love Leopard?

ELLEN: Flyguy? Sounds better than no guy.

TOM: (*Growling noise as TOM types, and sends.*) Where have you been all my electronic...

ELLEN: (*Bleeps.*) ...all my electronic life? That's so cute! (*Types.*)

TOM: (*Bleeps, reads.*) Waiting to virtually meet you... so cute. (*Types.*) Where do you live? "The Midwest."

ELLEN reads and types in her office.

(*Bleeps, reads.*) Chicago? (*Types.*) Where?

ELLEN: (*Bleeps, reads.*) Lives west and commutes in... (*Types.*) I'm on the North Shore and commute downtown.

TOM: (*Bleeps, reads.*) Downtown? No way! That's amazing! (*Looks up, and gulps.*) Tommy, Tommy, Tommy, just do it! (*Closes eyes, types, sends it and holds arm over eyes fearing response.*)

ELLEN: (*Bleeps, reads.*) Tonight! Ah... Ellen, do something! Ah, (*Types.*) but... *Love To Meet You: Rules of The Game: Number 12* says, "Seeing is believing... exchange a picture." (*Types.*) Aw hell! (*Deletes then types.*) Love to. How about tonight... What? Illegal operation? Close window!

TOM waits.

Come on! Come on! No, don't shut down!

TOM: (*Types.*) Are you there?

ELLEN: *Argh!!!* (*Storms out of office, sees no one and goes into TOM's office*) Tom, you got a minute? My computer's down!

TOM: Ah... yeah ok.

BOTH enter ELLEN's office.

What's it doing?

ELLEN: Nothing! It just locked up. It said I was doing some kinda illegal operation. I was just typing!

TOM: (*Smiles to himself, but looks intensely at screen and typing and*

talking.) Mine does that too.

ELLEN: Why?

TOM: It's jealous.

ELLEN: What?

TOM: Oh yeah. Do you have a computer at home?

ELLEN: *(Smiles.)* Yeah so...

TOM: ...so, it can tell you've been with another.

ELLEN: That's stupid.

TOM: It can feel it when you type. The keyboard of another computer leaves a strange radiation signature.

ELLEN: You're full of it.

TOM: Say you're sorry.

ELLEN: To you? Forget it!

TOM: Not to me. *(Leans into ELLEN, whispers.)* To him or her. What'd you name it?

ELLEN: I don't name my computers.

TOM: You spend hours and hours together, and you don't know its name? No wonder it shutdown.

DELIVERY MAN enters carrying two sandwich bags, thinking HE's barging in.

ELLEN: Come on.

TOM: Maybe it's jealous since you've been spending time at the copier.

ELLEN: Oh really.

DELIVERY MAN: *(Clears throat.)* Excuse me.

TOM and ELLEN: Oh hi.

BOTH are embarrassed THEY said the same thing.

TOM: Hello.

ELLEN: Hey... *(Corrects her Southern accent.)* Heyllo

DELIVERY MAN: Yeah... ah, I got a Pastrami and provolone on seedless rye, extra brown mustard, and extra, extra pickles?

TOM: That's me!

DELIVERY MAN: (*Hands TOM his bag, opens ELLEN's, skittish.*) And a shredded something on a Kaiser roll with barbeque sauce and... cole slaw? Did they get that right from your phone call?

ELLEN: (*Hurriedly unwraps.*) Close enough. Thanks.

DELIVERY MAN: Go figya.

TOM: How much?

DELIVERY MAN: (*Looks at ticket.*) Yours is eight seventy-three. And hers is... (*Looks at ticket.*) The same.

ELLEN exits for her wallet and money.

Go figya.

TOM: (*Digs for wallet, pays for both, gives good tip.*) This cover it?

DELIVERY MAN: You betcha. Thanks! (*Exiting.*) So you and her...?

TOM: I'm fixing her computer.

DELIVERY MAN: Right. (*Exits.*)

ELLEN: (*Enters with money.*) Where'd he go?

TOM: I got it.

ELLEN: I went to get some money...

TOM: I got it.

ELLEN: Do you have a receipt?

TOM: No.

ELLEN: How will I pay you back?

TOM: Take me out to an incredibly expensive sushi dinner when we make millions on the Osaka account.

ELLEN: (*Smiling.*) Now it's *we*?

TOM: Like you said, we could make millions.

Smiling up at ELLEN, TOM catches himself when computer beeps like it's booting up.

There! Felicia's up and running.

ELLEN: Great... Felicia?

TOM: Yup.

ELLEN: So it's a woman?

TOM: Yup. Mine's a girl too... Patty.

ELLEN: Won't Patty get jealous you've been on another machine?

TOM: She trusts me. We've known each other since installation. *(Looks at screen.)* There's some backed up messages from someone coming through on instant mail. *(Remembers his instant mail, and gets up to exit ELLEN's office.)*

ELLEN: *(Rushing TOM out.)* Great, thanks! Let's do lunch! Later!

TOM runs out while ELLEN furiously types enough to send a message waiting on TOM's computer.

TOM: *(Reads.)* Sorry. Computer problems. *(Types.)* A lot of that going around. You last typed "next." Next what?

ELLEN: Next week. *(Types, bleep.)*

TOM: *(Types, bleep.)* Let's email about what day, later.

ELLEN: *(Types, bleep.)* Sure.

TOM: She said sure! *(Types, says aloud.)* Sounds perfect! Night LL.

ELLEN: *(Bleeps, reads.)* LL? Oh! Night Flyguy!

TOM and ELLEN excitedly turning off equipment, and heading out office at same time. Run into each other as THEY turn the corner.

Sorry... Tom!

TOM: Oh gosh, sorry. I was distracted...

ELLEN: Me too.

TOM: My mind was off... I was off my mind... I mean, so how's your computer working?

ELLEN: *(Pause.)* Perfect. Thanks for the rescue.

TOM: No problem. *(Exiting.)*

ELLEN: About the Osaka files, I sounded like I was ordering you...

TOM: No, no, it was me. Money is money, and I acted...

ELLEN: Monday's fine.

TOM: I'm heading out. Are you?

ELLEN: Yeah.

TOM: Can I walk you to your car?

ELLEN: You don't have to.

TOM: Company policy.

ELLEN smiles and exits with TOM.

ELLEN: There's no escort to the parking lot policy.

BOTH enter an elevator off stage, bell sounds, and door closes.

TOM: Sure it's right there next to the no dating policy among co-workers.

ELLEN: Have you ever broken that one?

Elevator bell sounds, door opens, voices echoing in parking garage, sounds of steps in concrete floor underneath voices.

TOM: Never had a reason to. And you?

ELLEN: Not as far as you know.

TOM: This way ma'am

ELLEN: No, seriously you don't have to walk all that way and then all the way back to your car.

TOM: It's no big deal really since it's right beside your car in eighteen.

ELLEN: Eighteen?

TOM: Yeah, eighteen.

ELLEN: That's not possible because my assigned space is eighteen.

TOM: It is possible because you're in nineteen.

ELLEN: HR told me eighteen.

TOM: It's been my space since way before you got here.

ELLEN: And it drove me crazy that someone keeps parking in my space forcing me into nineteen.

TOM: So the fact that nineteen was open each and every day you've worked didn't trigger the thought, "Maybe I'm *supposed* to be in nineteen?"

ELLEN: Actually, the thought I had this morning was, "I think I'll have that selfish idiot towed."

TOM: That's my blue convertible!

ELLEN: You mean the blue convertible without a parking permit?

TOM: I can't *believe* this!

ELLEN: I came in after lunch, and it was parked halfway in my space with no parking permit...

TOM: It was brand new! I forgot to transfer the sticker!

ELLEN: Policy states you have to reregister...

TOM: Is there a policy about coworkers covering each other's butts

when they make a simple mistake?

ELLEN: Ah... no.

TOM: Geez *Ellen*! You're like a rule book in heels!

ELLEN: I asked around.

TOM: But you overlooked asking the car's owner!

ELLEN: How was I supposed to know?

TOM: I've talked about my blue convertible around the office for months!

ELLEN: You did?

TOM: Everyone here knows that's my car! How can "Princess Details" suspiciously forget towing *my car*!

ELLEN: (*Southern accent.*) I plum forgot to hang on your every word!

TOM: (*Mocking Southern accent.*) All you had to remember Miz Ellie Mae were the two words, 'blue' and 'convertible'!

ELLEN: Do you need a ride to the impounding lot!

TOM: Let's be sure correcting your stupidity doesn't break another company policy! (*Hands his sandwich bag to ELLEN and storms out.*)

Fade black.

END OF SCENE

ACT ONE, SCENE 6

AT RISE: *Lights up in TOM's bedroom. It's later that night, and NELLIE, in her flannel nightgown pokes her head into TOM's room.*

NELLIE: Thomas? Thomas? Are you there? The light's on! Thomas Lazio if you're in there and ignoring... *(Enters TOM's bedroom.)* ...your mother. *(Walks to computer and reads screen.)* Oh, this is his email contraption. Mail from Tony Lazio... Ah! *(Runs out of room apparently scared but returns with small notepad with email instructions. Runs in looks around, shuts door, and sits at computer chair. Reads and types mumbling to self.)* Thomas you can teach an old dog new... Bingo! *(Reading.)* Oh, Tony wrote back. There he is! Staying a few more days in Australia, and flying home to see you both soon. Love Tony. What a nice little boy. There's more mail. From work, from... Love Leopard? What is this! Love to meet you soon? How does *this* work... *(Starts typing and working the mouse.)*

Lights in ELLEN's bedroom. SHE enters her bedroom, and turns on her computer.

Who's this. A girl? A fresh girl! Who does she think she is emailing my Thomas with her little hearts next to her name... *Love Leopard* my foot!

ELLEN: Oh, Flyguy's on. Did he get my email?

NELLIE: *(Reads.)* I'd love to meet at my place, but they're shampooing the rugs. *(To herself.)* And she's filthy too!

ELLEN: No return email, but he's on-line. Should I instant mail him? He'll think I'm pushy, overconfident... Come on "Love Leopard!" *(Types.)*

NELLIE: Lives in *(Gestures air quotes.)* "Chicago Area". Probably homeless because she ruined her carpets! *(Hits a button to instant mail, bleep.)* Ahhhh! *(Drops back under desk.)*

ELLEN: *(Types and reads aloud.)* Hey there Flyguy.

NELLIE: Oh my God, it's typing by itself! Get thee behind me Satan!

ELLEN: Hey Flyguy, ya there?

NELLIE: Flyguy? “Love To Meet You” computer dating program. This is a... woman after him?

ELLEN: (*Types and reads aloud.*) Flyguy, are ya there or is this a bad time.

NELLIE: Maybe I can find out... no this is even too wrong for me.

ELLEN: (*Types and reads aloud.*) Maybe not a good time. I'll instant you tomorrow.

Return makes a bleep noise overhead for BOTH characters.

NELLIE: Hit “enter” when done. Okay, let's see this leopard's spots. (*Types.*)

ELLEN: (*Bleeps, reads.*) Hi Ms. Big Shot Leopard! That's cute! Hello Flyguy. (*Types and reads aloud.*) What are you up to?

NELLIE: Now what? Ah-ha! (*Types and reads aloud.*) What does your mother think about you acting like an animal?

ELLEN: (*Bleeps, reads.*) What does your mother... (*Types and reads aloud.*) Huh?

NELLIE: That's *stupid*. Come on, think younger! Okay... (*Types and reads aloud.*) Does your groovy mamma know we meet through this groovy contraption?

ELLEN: (*Bleeps, reads, types, reading aloud.*) Are you watching the “Brady Bunch” right now?

NELLIE: (*Types and reads aloud.*) No.

ELLEN: (*Types and reads aloud.*) What are you doing?

NELLIE: (*Types and reads aloud.*) I was a... writing, yes! That's it.

ELLEN: (*Types and reads aloud.*) Writing what?

NELLIE: (*Aloud.*) Ah... perfect! (*Types and reads aloud.*) I was writing my mother.

ELLEN: That's sweet. What's your mom like?

NELLIE: (*Reads aloud.*) What's your mother like? (*Smiles.*) Let's see. (*Types and reads aloud.*) An amazing woman. Doesn't look a day over forty.

ELLEN reads aloud.

(*Types and reads aloud.*) I owe my very life to this woman!

ELLEN: *(Tries to type, but gets a bleep and reads more.)* That's wonderful.

NELLIE: *(Types and reads aloud.)* Twenty-eight hours of labor he... I caused her, and did she complain?

ELLEN: *(Reads aloud.)* Twenty-eight!

NELLIE: *(Types and reads aloud.)* Never once did she even bring it up!

ELLEN reads and snickers.

NELLIE: *(Types and reads aloud.)* Ah, so tell me about your family.

ELLEN: *(Types and reads aloud.)* Not much to tell.

NELLIE: *(Reads.)* Something to hide. *(Types and reads aloud.)* What about your mother and father?

ELLEN: Dad's a retired plumber. Sold his business. And Mom? I love her to death, but she sometimes tries to run my life.

NELLIE: *(Types and reads aloud.)* She has no right.

ELLEN: *(Types and reads aloud.)* She won't stop with the questions about what I'm doing with my life, why aren't I married, did I sleep with anyone... Oh, was that too personal.

NELLIE: *(Types and reads aloud in crafty voice.)* Hummmm, no, no, go on.

ELLEN: *(Types and reads aloud.)* She never asks me what I think, or what's really going on with *me*.

NELLIE: *(Types and reads aloud.)* You have to understand the wisdom of age.

ELLEN: *(Types and reads aloud.)* You sound ancient!

NELLIE: *(Types and reads aloud.)* Don't get fresh. *(Deletes.)* How bad can she be? She had you right?

ELLEN: *(Types and reads aloud.)* You're so funny.

NELLIE: *(Types and reads aloud.)* You can't imagine. *(Aloud.)* How can I get rid of her? *(Pause, types and reads aloud.)* So, why don't you and I meet somewhere?

ELLEN: But the *Love To Meet You: Rules of The Game Number Ten* says we should exchange pictures first, and then phone numbers.

NELLIE: *(Types and reads aloud.)* Come on "Love Leopard." Get wild!

ELLEN: *(Aloud.)* Love Leopard... Come on Ellie *(Pause, types.)*

NELLIE: *(Reads.)* Good girl! *(Types.)*

ELLEN: (*Reads.*) How about "Bon Giorno" Thursday at seven?
(*Types and reads aloud.*) Italian food makes me smell like garlic.

NELLIE: (*Types and reads aloud.*) Better than McNugget
breath...(*Deletes, retypes.*)

ELLEN: (*Reads.*) So if both of us eat who'll know? Yeah... amazing,
a flexible guy with a sense of humor! (*Types and reads aloud.*) How
will I know it's you?

NELLIE: I'll be in a red shirt, and gray slacks. And you?

ELLEN: How I'm I supposed to know what I'll wear that far... (*Thinks
then types.*)

NELLIE: (*Reads.*) I'll wear something "leopardy"...big boy. Gotta go.
Bye. "Big Boy?"

ELLEN dialing phone.

No fresh little girl's going to take advantage of my "Sweetie Boy!"

TOM: (*Offstage.*) Ma! I'm home!

NELLIE: (*Clutches her heart.*) Oh my god! (*Starts to exit.*) No! The
computer. All the buttons, where's the off!

TOM: Ma! Are you up there!

NELLIE: Ah-ha! (*Drops to the floor.*)

TOM: (*Enters bedroom.*) Ma, are you... Ma! *What's going on!*

NELLIE: (*Comes up with power cord in hand.*) Thomas Lazio, this
thing nearly killed us all!

TOM: Tell me you didn't unplug my computer!

NELLIE: What was I supposed to do? There was burning smell!

TOM: What smell? There's no smell.

NELLIE: Thanks to me!

TOM: What were you doing on my computer?

NELLIE: I'm trying to send Tony an e-letter through this TV screen.

TOM: (*Comes over and tries to reboot.*) Email Ma, it's eeee-mail.

NELLIE: Yes, yes, eeemail, whatever.

TOM: (*Bleep warnings.*) Geez Ma, now the directory's messed up. All
the recent work is gone?

NELLIE: Thank God... I mean good riddance!

TOM: Good riddance?

NELLIE: Huh? Yes, good riddance to that contraption! You need to get away from that. All day at work then you come home, and you're in your room talking to this thing.

TOM: I don't talk to this *thing* at home. I do my own stuff.

NELLIE: Like what Mr. Bigshot?

TOM: Ah... stuff Ma. Just stuff.

NELLIE: Yes well, you need to get out more... Starting Thursday!

TOM: What Thursday?

NELLIE: Take me out to dinner.

TOM: Taking *you* out to dinner counts as *me* getting out?

NELLIE: Your father and I took you and your brother to the best restaurants.

TOM: And spent the first hour criticizing the waiters, the chefs, the food, and the bathrooms.

NELLIE: So you're embarrassed to spend an evening with your mother?

TOM: I spend every evening with my mother. I'm immune to embarrassment at this point.

NELLIE: Good. Take me to *Bon Giorno* Thursday night.

TOM: *Italian?* No! Never!

NELLIE: Why? I love Italian. *We're Italian!*

TOM: But they'll never be *Italian* enough for you.

NELLIE: I swear on your father's grave not one peep of criticism. Just a nice night out with my son. My *Big Boy*. (*Pinches cheeks.*)

TOM: (*With cheeks pinched.*) You mean *Sweetie Boy*?

NELLIE: We'll see. (*Hands plug to TOM.*)

Fade black.

END OF ACT ONE



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