

## **Characters**

- Ben Bratter (M) – Thirty-something tightly wound
- Mrs. Krakowski (F) – His pocket-sized neighbor in her mid-sixties
- Birdie May (F) – An eccentric stranger
- Lindy (F) – Friend of Birdie
- Oscar (M) – Another friend of Birdie

## Scene 1 – Apartment

(New York, the 1960's. The apartment of Benjamin Bratter. The apartment is annoyingly neat. There is a place for everything and everything in its place. There's a coffee table CS, a couch with a quilt placed on the back, and perfectly fluffed pillows on the front. Across from the couch is a little arm chair with another perfectly placed blanket across the back. At the back of the room is a wet bar, a record player, and a cabinet full of knick-knacks and records. Above the record player is a mirror, and on the other side of the record player is a door which leads to Ben's kitchen. A phone hangs on the wall by the door. Ben a handsome man in his early thirties enters from the back hallway. He is wearing tan dress pants, a white button up shirt and a black tie. His clothes are stiff. He fluffs each pillow, straightens the quilt on the back of the couch, then checks his reflection. SFX. Telephone Rings.)

**Ben:** Hello...Mr. Abner hello... yes, yes I am just getting ready and... uh huh... I won't be late sir I don't have to be there until... yes and it's only... okay... yes sir... no sir I am not using sass...no sir...yes sir... okay. Yes, I'll see you in a few minutes. Goodbye.

(Ben exits to the kitchen SL. He returns with a bottle of antacids and eats them by the handful. He goes back and fluffs the pillow, straightens the quilt on the back of the couch, and checks his reflection again. SFX. Knock on the door. Ben opens the door SR. Mrs Krakowski She is wearing a long, pink fluffy robe, fluffy slippers, and curlers in her hair)

**Krakowski:** Ben it's doing it. It's making that noise again.

**Ben:** I've told you your radiator is supposed to make that noise. It's fine.

**Krakowski:** This time it's different. I swear.

**Ben:** I wish I could help I really do, but I'm going to be late for work.

**Krakowski:** Oh and if you're late one more time Mr. Abner will fire you....

**Ben:** What?

**Krakowski:** What....

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**Ben:** What have I said about listening in on my party line?

**Krakowski:** **(together)** Don't listen on your party line.

**Ben:** **(together)** Don't listen on my party line. It's my one rule.

**Krakowski:** Speaking of which I wish you would stop being so damn polite to that man.

**Ben:** He's my boss.

**Krakowski:** He's a jerk.

**Ben:** You want me to be a jerk to my boss?

**Krakowski:** No, but I'd like you to stick up for yourself. You're a bit of a pushover.

**Ben:** I am not!

**Krakowski:** Oh yeah? Go get me some coffee.

**Ben:** Okay.

**Krakowski:** Ben!

**Ben:** I am not a pushover **(Aside)** You're just bossy.

**Krakowski:** I heard that.

**(Ben pops a couple more antacids into his mouth, straightens his tie, and fixes his hair in the mirror. Mrs. Krakowski watches)**

**Krakowski:** Ben.

**Ben:** **(Still fixing his hair in the mirror)** Yes.

**Krakowski:** Ben.

**Ben:** Uh-huh

**Krakowski:** Ben!

**Ben:** What?

**(She walks over to him and places her hands on his shoulders)**

**Krakowski:** Relax, it's just a job.

**Ben:** I know.

**Krakowski:** And you're just a man.

**Ben:** I Know.

**Krakowski:** And you're such a nice man.

**(She plants a motherly kiss on his cheek leaving a bright red lip stain)**

**Krakowski:** Oopsy. **(She licks her thumb and tries to rub it off.)** Oh nuts, here let's try this

**(She takes a hankie out of her pocket, licks it and uses it to wipe the kiss off of his cheek.)**

**Ben:** Why are you wearing lipstick?

**Krakowski:** There we go. Alright off I go!**(She makes her way to the door SR , but stops abruptly and turns around.)** You know my friend Mildred has a granddaughter about your age. She's just darling she's got a Bette Davis face on an Orson Welles body, you don't have a problem with close talkers do you?

**Ben:** Not interested.

**Krakowski:** You always say that.

**Ben:** Well.

**Krakowski:** Okay, okay fine.

**Ben:** Goodbye.

**Krakowski:** Okay, okay. Goodbye dear!

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**(Exits. SFX. Telephone rings. He stares at the phone, pinches the bridge of his nose, looks back at the phone, pops another antacid before answering.)**

**Ben:** Hello? Mr. Abner I'm on my way! My neighbor she's a little paranoid and likes to... I know that's not an excuse...I'm sorry. I am. I'm on my way now. Bye.

**(He straightens the living room one last time, checks his reflection. He rushes out the door SR. SFX. Telephone rings. Lights Fade.)**

## Scene 2- Apartment

**(Lights Come up. It is later that evening Ben returns after work. He comes back and fluffs the pillows again, straightens the quilt on the back of the couch. He goes over to the bar and makes himself a drink. He sits down. SFX. Knock on the door.)**

**Ben:** Come in, Agnes, it's open.

**Krakowski:** **(Enters)** Benjamin, how was your day?

**(He holds up his glass of whiskey.)**

**Krakowski:** That bad, huh?

**Ben:** **(He nods)** Can I get you a cup of tea?

**Krakowski:** I'd hate to impose, so just one cup.

**(He begins to get up)**

**Krakowski:** Don't be silly, allow me.

**(She exits to the kitchen SL.)**

**Krakowski:** I came here to tell you that a young lady was here earlier looking for you.

**Ben:** Wow. There hasn't been one of those here for a long time. No offense.

**Krakowski:** **(Entering)** None taken.

**Krakowski:** In fact, I said the same thing.

**Ben:** Well, it was probably a mistake.

**Krakowski:** I don't think so. She said, excuse me miss do you know when Benjamin Bratter will be home?

**Ben:** There could be a million Benjamin Bratters in this city.

**Krakowski:** A million who live in this apartment? I don't think so. She was a lovely girl. Very Jane Fonda.

**(Ben perks up a little)**

**Krakowski:** Oh, now I have his attention.

**(Ben smiles)**

**Krakowski:** Anyway, I asked if I could take a message, but she said she would stop by another time.

**Ben:** Well, whoever she was I'm not interested. Probably trying to sell me something.

**Krakowski:** **(Aside)** Hey, if you can't get it...buy it.

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**Ben:** What?

**Krakowski:** Nothing.

**(There's a brief moment of silence. Ben sips on his drink. Mrs. Krakowski sips on her drink. After a long pause she slams her tea cup down on the coffee table, leans forward, and places a hand on Ben's knee.)**

**Krakowski:** Ben.

**Ben:** **(Distracted by her hand on his knee)**What?

**Krakowski:** Look at me. Now, Listen to me very carefully.

**Ben:** Okay...

**Krakowski:** You. Are. Boring.

**Ben:** Hey!

**Krakowski:** Well, it's the truth. I love you like my own son, and you know that, but my goodness your life makes me sad. Honestly, it's time you got out and moved on...

**(Ben holds up his hands)**

**Krakowski:** All I'm saying is how do you ever expect to go out and meet anyone if you spend every waking moment either here or at work?

**Ben:** I don't want to meet anyone.

**Krakowski:** Now, I don't mean in a strictly romantic sense. I mean getting out and making some friends.

**Ben:** I have friends.

**Krakowski:** Oh really? I don't think I have seen anyone come or go from this apartment in six years.

**Ben:** They come when you're not watching.

**Krakowski:** I'm always watching.

**Ben:** If your life is so exciting what are you doing spending your time with me.

**Krakowski:** If you must know I've just come from my weekly Bingo tournament, and in a half an hour my friend Mildred is coming over and we're going to eat exotic food and not talk about our grandchildren.

**Ben:** Well, I'll be. I stand corrected.

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**Krakowski:** Speaking of which I better get going.

**(They both get up. Ben walks her to the door)**

**Krakowski:** Think about what I said.

**Ben:** I will.

**Krakowski:** Good.

**(Almost out the door)**

**Krakowski:** You know my friend Mildred has another granddaughter about your age and...

**Ben:** Good night!

**Krakowski:** Okay, okay. Good night. Love you, kid.



**Ben:** Love you too.

**(She exits. Ben checks his watch, goes and pours himself another drink, goes back to the couch, and sits down. SFX. Telephone rings. Ben lets out a deep breath then gets up and answers the phone.)**

**Ben:** Mr. Abner... lucky guess. Yes, I got that report done and it is sitting on your desk. You will see it first thing tomorrow morning. I checked it twice just like you always tell me to. I plan on being at work at the same time tomorrow I... I wasn't late this morning I was there at eight o' clock. Oh, I see. You watched me clock in at eight o' one. I apologize I could have sworn my watch said...Okay, no I promise I won't be late tomorrow. Yes-sir. Goodbye.  
**(He drinks the last of his drink, places his hand on his stomach, makes his way to the kitchen and comes back with the antacids. SFX. Knock on the door.)**

**Ben:** Agnes, I thought you were headed with your friend Mildred to have exotic food.

**(Opens the door. BIRDIE stands on the other side of the door. She's wearing high top green pants, a pink turtleneck tucked in, a colorful scarf, and a small purse. Her hair is high on the top of her head. She has a pink suitcase. Mascara is streaming down her face)**

**Ben:** Whoa hello...

**Birdie:** May I come in?

**Ben:** Uhhhh....

**Birdie:** **(Crying hysterically)** Oh thank you. I'm Birdie.

**(She lets herself right in. She throws her scarf down on a chair, leaves her shoes on, and throws herself and her purse right down on the couch. Ben notices as she tracks mud and other city particles in on her shoes)**

**Ben:** Uhhhhh...

**Birdie:** I just couldn't live there anymore. My landlord is a real son-of-a-bitch. Pardon my French. But that's not French, I believe it's a very American saying. Oh I don't know.

**(She pops a cigarette in her mouth and waits for Ben to light it. Picking up the cue he runs to the kitchen and returns with a pack of matches and simulates lighting her cigarette.)**

**Birdie:** Thank you. Anyway, I just couldn't stay anymore. I'd had enough. I said to him I said, if you hand me that eviction notice I'm leaving. And he did, **(takes a drag)** so I did.

**(Ben picks up the ashtray and pathetically holds it under her cigarette to catch every single piece of ash.)**

**Ben:** Excuse me, I don't mean to be rude but... who are you? **Birdie:** I told you my name is Birdie.

**(She has stopped crying. She stamps her cigarette out in the ashtray, pulls a compact out of her purse, wipes mascara away from her eyes, and pushes her hair around.)**

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**Ben:** Okay...

**Birdie:** Think of me as a Holly GoLightly. **(Snapping her compact shut.)** Capote not Hepburn.

**(She puts her compact back in her purse then begins to dig around mindlessly.)**

**Ben:** Do I know you?

**Birdie:** Ha! Typical. Of course you know me. Well, sorta. I guess. Well, no, not really. I've been coming to your bank for almost a year.

**Ben:** Am I your banker?

**Birdie:** Of course not. Don't be ridiculous do I look like someone with an account? No, I'm friends with a gal there **(snapping her fingers looking for the words)** Libby, Liddy...

**Ben:** Leslie?

**Birdie:** That's it. Anyway, you and I've exchanged pleasantries. How do you not remember?

**Ben:** I'm so sorry. I just-

**Birdie:** Anyway, I had nowhere else to turn and you've always been so nice I thought I'd come and stay with you for a while.

**(Birdie gets up and makes her way to the kitchen. Ben fluffs the pillows she was just sitting on, tries to straighten the quilt on the back of the couch. Birdie returns, sits back down and plops her feet on the coffee table.)**

**Birdie:** So what do ya say? Can I stay here or what? **(Before he can answer.)** Oooh peanuts!

**(She takes the bowl of peanuts off of the coffee table, she opens the shells, then throws them on the floor.)**

**Ben:** I mean... I don't know...

**Birdie:** Come on it will be fun!

**Ben:** Will it? **(Watching in horror as she throws the peanut shells on the ground.)** I mean I don't know you. You could be here to rob me.

**Birdie:** Rest assured **(looks around)** I'm not. Drink? I am parched!

**Ben:** **(He points stage left to the kitchen)** In there.

**(She gets up taking the peanuts with her and makes her way to the kitchen. Ben re-fluffs the pillows she was just sitting on and re-straightens the quilt. From the kitchen.)**

**Birdie:** Benny! Do you have any wine glasses.

**Ben:** **(To himself)** Benny? **(To her)** Top cupboard.

**Birdie:** Found them!

**(She returns with the bottle of wine and an empty glass)**

**Ben:** Wait a second. You were here looking for me earlier today.

**Birdie:** Yes! That was me.

**(Forgetting she has the glass she takes a large drink from the wine bottle)**

**Ben:** Why?

**Birdie:** **(Again snapping her fingers)** Keep up man. I was evicted and I'd like to stay with you.

**(She is swinging the wine bottle around in one hand and holding a bowl of peanuts and a wine glass in the other. Wine and peanuts are spilling everywhere)**

**Ben:** **(Grabbing the bottle)** Alright! I think you ought to be leaving.

**(Swaying her towards the door)**

**Birdie:** You said I could stay.

**Ben:** I said no such thing. Now, if you'll excuse me I have to go to bed.

**Birdie:** It's eight-thirty.

**Ben:** Good night!

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**Birdie:** But-

**(He slams the door in her face)**

**Ben:** That was rude. That felt rude.

**(He opens the door, but she has already left. He notices she has dropped her business card.)**

**Ben:** Birdie May since 1962... huh...

**(Black out.)**

### Scene 3 – Apartment

**(The next day. The mess made by Birdie has been cleaned up. SFX Telephone rings.)**

**Ben:** Mr Abner! Yes, I remembered what we talked about yesterday. I'll be there I promise. Okay goodb... Mr. Abner?

**(Hangs up. SFX. Knock on the door.)**

**Ben:** Agnes, I really can't do this today.

**(Opens the door)**

**Birdie:** Hello!

**Ben:** Oh no.

**Birdie:** I know you said I can't stay, but I was here last night and you didn't even notice.

**Ben:** What?

**Birdie:** Yeah, I slept right outside your door.

**(Ben checks his watch)**

**Ben:** I don't have time for this, not today!

**Birdie:** Maybe we should discuss this over a glass of wine.

**Ben:** It's seven-fifty am.

**Birdie:** Oh fine get me grape juice, **(He goes to the kitchen)** but put it in a wine glass, and make it wine.

**(She lets herself in and beelines right for the couch. He comes back out with a glass of wine. Hands it to her. She gulps it down)**

**Birdie:** Another?

**(He goes to the kitchen and returns with another glass of wine)**

**Birdie:** Oh no, thank you dear, it's far too early for that.

**(Ben looks back at his watch)**

**Ben:** Okay, you've had your wine time to go.

**Birdie:** You go. I'll stay.

**(Pinches his nose and begins to nervously stamp his foot)**

**Ben:** I'm beginning to lose my patience.

**Birdie:** And a little bit of hair in the back...

**Ben:** What?

**(He rushes to the mirror and checks his hair)**

**Birdie:** My goodness man lighten up!

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**(She has picked up the peanuts and is tossing them in the air and catching them in her mouth)**

**Birdie:** Shouldn't you be at work?

**Ben:** Yes, yes I should. And today it's particularly important that I'm there on time!

**Birdie:** So, why aren't you?

**(Ben makes a low growl, rubs his eyes then checks his watch)**

**Ben:** There is time. I still have time. You know what? Fine stay. Stay here don't steal anything, or do, at this point I don't really care. I'll be right back.

**(He rushes for the door)**

**Birdie:** **(Getting up)** Oh thank you! **(She goes to give him a hug but instead knocks the wine glass out of his hand spilling on his nice white shirt)**

**Ben:** Look what you've done!

**Birdie:** I'm so sorry I'll clean it up. **(She starts to rub the stain with the bottom of her shirt)**

**Ben:** No, no, no that will never work you need club soda and to pat not rub and... what am I saying? I don't have time for this....

**(He looks at the stain. Then at his watch)**

**Ben:** Great. Great! I'm late.

**Birdie:** No. **(Staring at her watch)** It's seven-fifty nine you're not late. **(Stares at her watch a moment longer)** eight o'clock. Now you're late.

**Ben:** Wonderful!

**Birdie:** Well, since you're already late you might as well go change your shirt. You can't go to work looking like that.

**(SFX. Telephone rings. Ben and Birdie look at the phone, then at each other, then back to the phone. It continues to ring.)**

**Birdie:** You going to answer that?

**(Ben looks at her. Phone stops ringing)**

**Ben:** Thank God.

**(SFX. Telephone rings again. Ben rushes over to the phone)**

**Ben:** Hello? Yes I know.... I'm really sorry I was on my way and then I got distracted. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Okay. I understand. I... ummm..well, oh okay... Thank you.

**Birdie:** Well?

**Ben:** I'm not fired.

**Birdie:** You sound disappointed.

**Ben:** Ummm, no I'm not, I'm... huh.

**Birdie:** Yes?

**Ben:** Well, I better be going. I need to go get Mr. Abner's dry cleaning.

**Birdie:** Are you kidding?

**(Ben pulls the antacids out of his pocket and dumps the entire container into his mouth)**

**Ben:** Be back soon!

**Birdie:** Now to get to work.

**(Lights fade to black.)**



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**Scene 4-Apartment**

**(A few days later. Lights up. Birdie has transformed the home. There are beads hanging in the doorway to the kitchen, an orange shag rug has been placed under the coffee table, the stiff pillows have been replaced with brightly colored velvet pillows. The little dish of peanuts has been replaced with a large vase with multi colored flowers in it. Ben enters)**

**Ben:** Whoa.

**Birdie:** Welcome home!

**Ben:** What have you done with the place?

**Birdie:** Do you like it?

**Ben:** It's different.

**Birdie:** You don't like.

**Ben:** No, it's not that. It's just very...

**Birdie:** I'm sorry Ben if you don't like it just say so.

**Ben:** I like it! I do.

**Birdie:** **(Fixing him a drink)** Good. **(Hands him drink)** How was work?

**Ben:** Ummmm. It was fine.

**(Ben sits on the couch. Birdie stands behind him and starts to rub his shoulders)**

**Birdie:** Just fine?

**Ben:** No, it wasn't just fine. It was... just okay.

**Birdie:** Tell me Ben when you were a little boy did you dream of growing up and working at a just okay job?

**(Shrugs her hands off his shoulders and stands up)**

**Ben:** You did all of this today?

**Birdie:** Well, I wanted it to be ready for our party.

**Ben:** Party?

**Birdie:** Yes, I thought it would be fun to host a party. Sort of like a house warming.

**Ben:** Oh.

**Birdie:** Do you like that idea?

**Ben:** **(a moment)** That sounds great.

**Birdie:** I'm glad, because people will be arriving any moment!

**(SFX. Knock on the door.)**

**Birdie:** Right on time.

**(She answers the door. OSCAR and LINDY enter)**

**Oscar:** I am Oscar! **(He enters in a very dramatic fashion. To Birdie)** Friend, **(To Lindy)** Confidant **(To Ben)** and Lover. **(Holding out his hand to Ben)** Hello.

**Lindy:** And I am Lindy.

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**Oscar:** Why do you do that?

**Lindy:** What?

**Oscar:** I had a whole thing going and then you just ruin it with your-

**Birdie:** Oscar, Lindy I'd like you to meet Ben.

**Oscar:** A pleasure.

**Lindy:** Nice to meet you. Have you two known each other long?

**Birdie:** Yes hours!

**Ben:** Can I grab you anything to drink?

**Birdie:** Wine.

**Lindy:** Wine

**Oscar:** Whiskey sour! Here Benjamin I'll give you a hand.

**(Ben and Oscar leave)**

**Lindy:** So, who is he?

**Birdie:** I'm not quite sure yet. But I tell you this couldn't have been better timing. I was evicted yesterday.

**Lindy:** That happens when you don't pay rent.

**Birdie:** I was paying.

**Lindy:** In money?

**(Birdie turns away)**

**Birdie:** Anyway, Ben's a nice guy and has offered to let me stay here.

**Lindy:** I'm sure very willingly with little convincing.

**Birdie:** Of course.

**(Ben and Oscar return)**

**Oscar:** A toast! To roommates?

**Lindy:** To landlords!

**Birdie:** To fresh starts!

**Ben:** To strangers.

**Birdie:** I like them all. Cheers!

**Oscar:** Birdie dear show me around your new digs.

**Birdie:** Don't mind if I do.

**(They leave)**

**Ben:** I think we need music.

**Lindy:** Good idea.

**(Ben goes to the record player and puts on a record)**

**Ben:** Better?

**Lindy:** Much.

**Lindy:** Oh I can't stand it any longer!

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**(Lindy Reaches over and loosens Ben's tie)**

**Lindy:** There that's much better.

**Ben:** Oh ha I can breathe again.

**Lindy:** Sorry, it just looked so uncomfortable.

**Ben:** I guess it is a little.

**Lindy:** You don't have to let her stay here, you know. You could say no.

**Ben:** I know.

**Lindy:** So, why let her stay?

**Ben:** I don't know.

**Lindy:** You're kind of a sad man aren't you?

**Ben:** Excuse me?

**Lindy:** I didn't mean to be rude, but you just have a sadness about you.

**Ben:** This apartment is not that big what could Oscar and Birdie possibly be doing?

**Lindy:** Rummaging through your drawers.

**Ben:** Probably my bathroom cabinet.

**Lindy:** Yeah, probably. I'm sorry if I upset you with what I said.

**Ben:** It's fine. You're not wrong. **(Takes a sip of his drink)** So what do you do?

**(Birdie and Oscar have returned.)**

**Birdie:** She works at the jewelry counter in Macy's. That's her day job.

**Ben:** What's your night job?

**Lindy:** Well –

**Birdie:** Lindy is a phenomenal writer.

**Lindy:** Birdie!

**Ben:** Are you really?

**Lindy:** I don't know if I'd say phenomenal, but yes I'm a writer. Nothing too fancy.

**Birdie:** She's being modest. Her short stories have been published in several magazines.

**Ben:** I'm a writer too. Or I used to be.

**Birdie:** Really?

**Ben:** Yes. That's why I moved to New York.

**Lindy:** Used to be a writer? You're not anymore?

**Ben:** I haven't written in years.

**Lindy:** Why?

**Ben:** I'm a sad man.

**Oscar:** Are you kidding they make the best writers!

**Birdie:** You should keep writing.

**Ben:** No, I couldn't.

**Birdie:** Why?

**Ben:** I have a day job.

**Birdie:** That you hate. Besides, Lindy has a job and she still writes. You know what I think you should do. I think you should quit your job.

**Ben:** What?

**Oscar:** Oooh yes I agree. What is your job?

**Birdie:** He's a banker.

**Ben:** I am not going to quit my job!

**(Through the door)**

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**Krakowski:** I think you should.

**Ben:** Mrs. Krakowski what are you doing? Come in here. **(She enters)** Why were you listening at the door?

**Krakowski:** I'm always listening at the door. Anyway, Ben I think it's a fantastic idea. You hate your job, your job hates you, you should quit.

**(He looks from face to face)**

**Ben:** Alright, yes I'm going to do it. **(Walks over to phone)** I'm going to quit. **(Picks up phone and dials)** Uhhh yes Mr. Abner this is Ben... Ben Bratter **(lowers his voice)** I've worked for you for six years.... I picked up your dry cleaning this morning. Yes that Benjamin Bratter. Anyway, I've called to tell you I quit! **(He slams the phone down)** I did it!...I did it... Oh what have I done Quit. I've... I've been... I can't... what have I...**(Faints on the couch)**

**Krakowski:** Ben! (She slaps his cheeks, sticks her fingers in Birdie's wine glass, then flicks the wine on his face. He wakes.)

**Birdie:** (Hands him the glass of wine) Here you go.

**Krakowski:** It was the right thing to do Ben. I've been telling him for years to quit. That job did not appreciate you.

**Ben:** I have no job. How am I going to pay for anything? I'll lose my home, I'll be homeless, and I'll be one of those people you see on the street with a shopping cart and a brown paper bag full of booze. I'll-

(Mrs. Krakowski slaps him)

**Oscar:** You read my mind.

**Krakowski:** Ben, listen to me, this is a good thing. This will give you a chance to continue writing while looking for a day job you care about and that cares about you.

**Ben:** You're right. Besides I have some money saved up that will get me by for a little while.

**Birdie:** That's the spirit!

**Ben:** This is a good thing... Yes this is a good thing.

(Lights down.)

### Scene 5 – Apartment

(2 days later Lights come back up. Ben is sitting on the couch. His hair is sticking up, his tie is hanging loosely around his neck, noose like. Birdie is talking on the phone.)

**Birdie:** Lindy, this is not good. He has not moved from the couch in almost 2 days. His hair is a mess, he's a mess, plus I lost an earring in the couch and I believe he's sitting on it. Oh would you darling that would be wonderful. Thank you. (Hangs up).

**Ben:** Who was that?

**Birdie:** Lindy she's going to come over for a bit.

**Ben:** Huh.

**Birdie:** Say, Ben, what you say we go for a walk. It's a gorgeous day.

**Ben:** Oh, no thanks I'm not a fan of Doris Day.

**(SFX. Knock on the door. Birdie answers it. Mrs. Krakowski enters)**

**Krakowski:** Any signs of movement?

**Birdie:** Not much.

**Krakowski:** Benny, hunny, I think maybe you've gone to a bad place. **(To Birdie)** Telling him to quit may have been a bad idea.

**Birdie:** No! We can't back down now.

**(SFX. Another knock on the door. Birdie answers and Lindy enters)**

**Ben:** Lindy? What are you doing here?

**Lindy:** Birdie needed reinforcements.

**Ben:** If I'd known you were coming I would've-

**Lindy:** Tidied up? I know. **(She sits next to him on the couch)** Okay, come on Hemingway, don't you think you're being just a little dramatic?

**Ben:** I'm not dramatic. I'm definitely not Hemingway.

**Lindy:** That's true. This is nothing compared to what he did when he quit his job. Now, you're looking at this all wrong. You've been given, nay, you took a second chance. You could be spending all day writing or out shopping for new jobs. And would you lose this damn tie already? **(She takes his tie off and throws it behind the couch)**

**Ben:** You're right. **(He looks around at Birdie, Mrs. Krakowski and Lindy)** Can I get anyone some coffee?

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**Lindy:** I'd love a cup.

**(Ben exits to the kitchen stage left)**



**Krakowski:** Thank you Lindy. I've seen him like that only one other time, and it took months for him to snap out of it. Hey Birdie I have something for you over at my place. Do you want to come over real quick and grab it?

**Birdie:** Sure!

**(They exit. Ben returns with a tray with 5 coffee cups and a pot of coffee)**

**Ben:** Where did they go?

**Lindy:** Over to Mrs. Krakowski's. She said she has something for Birdie.

**Ben:** Well, more for us.

**Lindy:** Thank you.

**(Sip coffee)**

**Ben:** I feel so embarrassed.

**Lindy:** Please don't. Change is scary, and it really wasn't fair for us all to talk you into quitting your job. I do believe it will work out in the end.

**Ben:** How can you be so sure?

**Lindy:** Because it always does.

**(Sip coffee. Lindy gets up and looks at all the tchotchkes above the record player.)**

**Lindy:** Where did you get all of these?

**Ben:** Gifts.

**(She begins to push around some of the items to get a better look. She finds a picture of a young woman.)**

**Lindy:** Who is this?

**Ben:** That's Julia.

**Lindy:** She's beautiful. Sister?

**Ben:** Wife.

**(Birdie enters holding a fluffy bathrobe)**

**Birdie:** That Agnes is a kick. She sees me naked from the street one time and has to go out and get me a bathrobe. Everything okay?

**Ben:** You know I think I could use some sugar. Anyone else?

**(Ben exits)**

**Lindy:** Birdie, can I talk to you for a moment?

**Birdie:** Of course, darling, what is it?

**Lindy:** This thing with Ben... I don't know if it's a good idea.

**Birdie:** Lindy come on we're making progress.

**Lindy:** Know you don't understand.

**Birdie:** Understand what?

**Lindy:** Well he's –

**(SFX. Knock on the door.)**

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**Oscar:** Love birds let us in! I've brought libations.

**(Birdie opens the door. Oscar dressed in 1920s party gear)**

**Oscar:** Well ring a ding swing a ding look who decided to let me in! I've come from a Great Gatsby party.

**Lindy:** And what brought you here?

**Oscar:** Well would you believe it this Truman Capote lookin' mother fella would not keep his hands off of me-I'm not convinced that it wasn't in fact Truman himself. Anyway, I finally had just about as much as I could stand and I said, good God man please I am married. Then he gets all huffy and says, I thought you were hip I said I am baby but I'm not blind and for whatever reason he took offense to that and got me kicked out. Anyway, now I'm here.

**(Ben returns)**

**Ben:** Oscar hi. Coffee?

**Oscar:** Dear no darling it's bad for your buzz **(He pulls out a flask from his pocket and takes a drink)** Oh lawdy we need some music.

**Birdie:** I noticed some records in the cupboard over there.

**(Oscar gets up and begins searching through the records listing each name off as he reads them.)**

**Oscar:** Dean, Frank, Sammy gangs all here!**(Pulls out and brandishes a Cole Porter record)** Ooooh! Cole Porter...**(Aside)** interesting.

**Ben:** Please put that back.

**Birdie:** I love Cole Porter.

**Ben:** I'm just not in the mood for him right now. **(Grabs the record from Oscar)** Thank you.

**Birdie:** Well, that was kind of rude.

**Lindy:** Birdie!

**Birdie:** It was!

**Ben:** Rude? Oh excuse me. I'm sorry was that rude? Maybe I should be more polite and just barge into your home, and throw parties, and smoke cigarettes. Would that be the more polite thing to do?

**Birdie:** I'm sorry we upset you. It's just a record.

**Ben:** That's what everything is to you, right? It's just a job. He's just my landlord. It's just a record. Maybe you should just get out.

**Birdie:** **(Silence)** Is that really what you want?

**Ben:** **(Looks at her. Looks at Oscar and Lindy)** Yes.

**Birdie:** Fine.

**(She exits as Mrs. Krakowski enters)**

**Krakowski:** Where are you going?

**Birdie:** It's over.

**Krakowski:** What?

**Birdie:** He's kicking me out. Don't worry you'll get your money back.

**Ben:** What?

**Krakowski:** What?

**Oscar:** (Takes a big swig from his flask. Lindy looks at him) What?

**Ben:** Agnes, what does she mean you'll get your money back?

**Krakowski:** Well...ummm... you see...I...hmmmmmm

**Oscar:** She's a companion!

**Lindy:** Oscar! No, she's not a companion she's-

**Ben:** Why don't you two let Birdie explain?

**Birdie:** Fine. People hire me to help their loved ones. Yes, Mrs. Krakowski hired me to fix you.

**Ben:** Fix me?

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**Krakowski:** Ben, it's been six years.

**Ben:** I don't want fixing. For once in your life why don't you just mind your own business? You know what, I think you should all leave. I need to be alone.

**Lindy:** All of us?

**Ben:** All of you. (Exits stage left. Oscar and Lindy begin to leave)

**Krakowski:** Oh no. Oh no. I've really done it this time.

**(Oscar heads to the door)**

**Oscar:** You coming?

**Lindy:** I'll be along in a minute.

**(Oscar exits. Lindy sits next to Mrs. Krakowski and puts her arm around her)**

**Krakowski:** My friend Mildred told me about her granddaughter and how she has created a business of finding broken people and making them come to life again. I thought I was helping. He may never forgive me.

**Lindy:** You didn't mean for things to happen like this.

**Krakowski:** You don't understand. Ben is fragile. He wasn't ready. I knew he wasn't ready.

**Lindy:** Mrs. Krakowski, can you tell me about Ben's wife?

**Krakowski:** There's something you need to understand. The Ben we know today is completely different from the Ben I met seven years ago. Seven years ago two young writers moved into this apartment; Ben and Julia. They were both free spirited, full of life, didn't care one bit about crumpled pillows.

**Lindy:** What happened?

**Krakowski:** Well, Julia... had a problem. One day Ben came home to find Julia cold on the couch with a needle in her arm. Her favorite Cole Porter record was playing in the background. After that Ben was a completely different man.

**Lindy:** Poor Ben.

**Krakowski:** I thought by hiring Birdie Ben would see that there is still life to be lived. He wasn't ready. I should've known he wasn't ready.

**Lindy:** You really care about him.

**Krakowski:** Like my own son. **(Looking at Lindy)** And you?

**Lindy:** Yeah.

**Krakowski:** I suppose we had better respect his wishes and leave.

**Lindy:** You're right. Goodnight Mrs. Krakowski **(Exits)**

**(Ben enters)**

**Ben:** What are you still doing here?

**Krakowski:** Ben.

**Ben:** I asked you to leave.

**Krakowski:** **(Stands)** Ben.

**Ben:** I want to be alone.

**Krakowski:** Ben! **(They look at each other. A long moment of silence passes. Ben crumples into her arms and begins to cry.)**

**Ben:** It still hurts so bad.

**Krakowski:** It will for awhile. And then that pain will turn into a memory.

**Ben:** How do you know that?

**Krakowski:** **(Smiling)** I know everything.

**(Ben pulls away)**

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**Ben:** I really do want to be alone right now.

**Krakowski:** Of course, I love you kid.

**(Ben nods. Mrs. Krakowski squeezes his hand and exits. He sees the empty room. He moves over to the couch and begins to fluff the pillow then decides not to. He moves over to the cabinet and finds Julia's picture. He sets it on the coffee table. He exits to the bedroom then returns with his typewriter. He sets the typewriter on the coffee table next to Julia's picture and begins to type. Lights fade to black.)**

## Scene 6- Apartment

**(A few months later. Lights up. The living room has a much more lived in feel. There's a wine glass on the coffee table from the night before, an ashtray with a few cigarette butts, and a typewriter. Julia's picture is now front and center of the record cabinet. The quilt that usually lives on the back of the couch is now casually flung over the arm, however, the pillows are still perfectly fluffed. SFX. Knock on the door.)**

**Ben:** (From kitchen) It's open.

**(Mrs. Krakowski enters. She stops at the picture of Julia)**

**Krakowski:** There she is.

**(Ben enters with a cup of coffee)**

**Ben:** Morning! **(He sits down to his typewriter and begins to type. Mrs. Krakowski sits.)**

**Krakowski:** Good morning! At it again I see! Good for you.

**Ben:** I was up until three this morning.

**Krakowski:** I haven't seen this side of you in a long time. I've missed it.

**Ben:** I did too.

**Krakowski:** Julia would like to see you like this.

**Ben:** You know I always thought that if I didn't talk about Julia it meant her death didn't happen. As if she is just off on a long trip.

**Krakowski:** I think we fear bringing up our loved ones because it will be too painful. However, talking about them shouldn't remind us that they're gone, but instead remind us that they lived.

**(Ben stops writing and looks at Mrs. Krakowski. She reaches across the coffee table and grabs his hand. They stay like this for a moment.)**

**Ben:** There's coffee would you like a cup?

**Krakowski:** I'd love one.

**(Ben starts to stand up)**

**Krakowski:** Oh no. Let me get it.

**(From the kitchen)**

**Krakowski:** So, it's been a month. Has she stopped by?

**(Ben continues to type. Mrs. Krakowski enters.)**

**Krakowski:** And I take it she hasn't called either.

**(Ben keeps typing)**

**Krakowski:** Well, maybe you should call her.

**Ben:** If she wanted to talk to me, she would have called.

**Krakowski:** Maybe she's scared. After all you were awfully angry last time she saw you.

**Ben:** I had the right to be.

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**Krakowski:** Yes, I know. We've been over this. It's just very clear you miss her.

**(She finishes her coffee)**

**Krakowski:** Well, I better be going. Mildred and I are going to go try on fancy clothes and not talk about our grandchildren.

**(She goes over and plants a kiss on Ben's forehead)**

**Krakowski:** I love you kid.

**Ben:** I love you too.

**Krakowski:** Good-bye.

**(Exits. Ben continues to type. He takes a sip of his coffee, realizes it's empty, goes to the kitchen for a refill, returns and goes right back to typing. SFX. Knock on the door.)**



**Ben:** Mrs. Krakowski I thought you and Mildred were going to try on fancy clothes and not talk about your grandchildren.

**(SFX. Knock continues. Ben answers the door. Lindy is on the other side)**

**Ben:** Lindy.

**Lindy:** May I come in?

**Ben:** Yes, please.

**(Ben looks around. He doesn't try to tidy up)**

**Lindy:** I like what you've done with the place.

**(She walks over to his typewriter)**

**Lindy:** You're writing again!

**Ben:** Yes, a little.

**Lindy:** What are you writing?

**Ben:** A novel.

**Lindy:** About?

**Ben:** What are you doing here?

**Lindy:** Birdie thought maybe she had left some things here and she asked if I would come and grab them.

**Ben:** **(Disappointed)** Oh. Can I get you a cup of coffee?

**Lindy:** Yes, please.

**(Goes to kitchen. From kitchen)**

**Ben:** I'm sorry to disappoint you, but there's nothing of Birdie's here. I checked.

**(Returns with cup of coffee)**

**Lindy:** Okay, well I'm sure she'll find what she's missing.

**(Silence. Lindy sips her coffee. Ben sips his.)**

**Ben:** (together) I've been meaning to call-

**Lindy:** (together) I wanted to call but-

**Ben:** You go ahead.

**Lindy:** Oh sorry you go.

(Silence.)

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**Ben:** What were you going to say?

**Lindy:** I wanted to call, but I didn't know if you'd want to hear from me.

**Ben:** I wanted to call you too, but I felt so foolish after that night.

(Lindy goes to take a drink of her coffee and notices it is empty.)

**Ben:** Oh, let me get you more.

(He grabs her cup and races to the kitchen)

**Ben:** Damn.

**Lindy:** What?

(Returns)

**Ben:** I'm out of coffee.

**Lindy:** Oh.

**Ben:** Don't leave I'll get some Mrs. Krakowski's apartment.

**Lindy:** Ben.

**Ben:** Yes?

**Lindy:** I don't like coffee.

**Ben:** Oh...

**Lindy:** The truth is I missed you.

**Ben:** **(Rushes over and grabs her hands)** I missed you too. I really did want to call, but well... I had no idea how to reach you.

**(Lindy laughs.)**

**Ben:** I need to ask the people who come in to my life more questions! I'd really like to get to know you better.

**Lindy:** I'd like that.

**(Lindy moves over to the typewriter)**

**Lindy:** What are you writing?

**(Ben takes her hand and they walk over to the couch)**

**Ben:** Well, it's sort of an autobiography.

**Lindy:** Really?

**Ben:** Yes, I could really use another writer's input.

**Lindy:** Mine?

**Ben:** Yes!

**Lindy:** I'd be honored.

**(The two sit on the couch together. Shy at first then Lindy drapes her legs over Ben's lap. He continues to hold her hand as he's telling her about his novel. Dialogue fades to stage whisper as the lights fade to black.)**

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