

PLAIN AS JANE

an old-meets-new comedy by

by Leon Kaye

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PLAIN AS JANE

ACT I

(Holding a pad of paper and pen, BRIE ENTERS SR, smiles blissfully as she writes)

BRIE

Though Lady Jablinovich was not rich, she was very thrifty.

(LADY J ENTERS from the book, walks regally to CENTERSTAGE. Four SERVANTS follow, o-o-o and ah-h-h, clasping their hands together in abject adulation)

BRIE (Continued)

With only shreds of her dead mother's great ball gown, and some odd remnants, she managed to sew together the most beautiful dress in all of England!

SERVANT-1

You are a vision, miss.

SERVANT-2

Oh, Lady Jablinovich!

SERVANT-3

How beautiful! Is she not beautiful?

SERVANT-4

Every gentleman at the ball will want to dance with you, miss.

(LADY J smiles, takes in the compliments)

LADY J

Surely the Baron will overlook my lack of great wealth --

BRIE

-- thought Lady Jablinovich. But alas, little did she know of the Baron's gambling debts.

MAN'S VOICE (Offstage)

Miss Jablinovich?

(BRIE stops. Fearful, LADY J and the SERVANTS race back into the book)

MAN'S VOICE (Continued)

Miss Jablinovich? Are you listening?

(Brie's eyes scan left and right. She suddenly develops a look of horror. Meanwhile, a TEACHER (THE VOICE) ENTERS SL along with STUDENTS quickly wheeling a chalkboard. HE strides toward Brie. OTHER STUDENTS wheel "student-desks" out from SR, head toward BRIE. The first desk, empty, quickly approaches Brie, almost runs into her. She sits on it. All quickly close in on her. NOTE: There is a bookbag bearing Brie's supplies on the dolly)

TEACHER

An answer, Miss Jablinovich?

(SHE pulls books from under the desk, fumbles with them, opens one)

BRIE

If it's about the interest rate... and the reduction if we paid down the national debt, then I --

TEACHER

It's not about the national debt. Any other guesses?

BRIE

(weakly)

... No, that was it.

TEACHER

Are you writing your romance stories again, Miss Jablinovich?

(STUDENTS CHORTLE, circle BRIE)

BRIE

No, I'm not. As much as I'd like to, I just don't have the time.

(The STUDENTS turn the platform on which BRIE sits, address her one at a time)

STUDENT 1

(picks up a novel from beside BRIE, from the floor)

Who's this Jane Austen?

BRIE

Give me that.

STUDENT 2

Mansfield Park? What is that, a baseball romance?

STUDENT 3

Jane Austen's dead, isn't she?

BRIE

A writer like Jane never dies. She lives forever in our hearts.

(ALL bellow with LAUGHTER)

TEACHER

Miss Jablinovich, if you want to be taken seriously as an economics major, you're going to have to give up these foolish stories.

(BRIE stands, grabs the books away from the STUDENTS)

BRIE

I know that. It's just a hobby, that's all. And who needs romance when you have the Dow Jones and the S and P index.

TEACHER

Very well put. Now then...

(HE writes on the chalkboard as STUDENTS push it SL. ALL EXIT besides BRIE, who sits alone on the wooden dolly -- in front of the student-desk, head in hands)

BRIE

Dad, I'm gonna be an English major, simple as that.

(SHE shakes her head, unsatisfied)

BRIE (Continued)

You know I wouldn't have been good in insurance. I'm too left-brained.

(pause -- a new thought)

BRIE (Continued)

Dad, you really should have had more than one child.

(beat, then somberly)

Like he hears anything I say.

(SHE takes one of the books from beside her, opens it, searches)

BRIE (Continued)

I'd have better luck talking to the book. If Jane Austen were here, she'd figure something out. Everything always works out in the end. The young woman gets her prince charming even though she sticks to her guns.

(SHE slams the book shut, CALLS out to the great beyond...)

BRIE (Continued)

Come on, Jane. You can give me a hint, can't you? What should I do?

(pause... nothing. She opens a novel)

It's all here -- domineering father, extremely beautiful but troubled daughter. Okay, the father's dead in this one.

(picks up another)

He's funny and nice in this one.

(looks up)

You're some help.

(picks up another, glances through it, throws it across the stage, SHOUTS angrily)

Come on Jane, you're my only hope! I'm desperate!

(gets down on her knees)

I pray to you, Jane Austen. If a person is allowed to pray to someone that isn't an official saint, I pray to you. Jane, help?

(A LIGHT shines on BRIE. Startled, SHE stands. LIGHTS FLICKER. Out of the book ENTERS a middle-aged Victorian WOMAN, JANE. Brie's jaw drops.)

JANE

There is work to be done, child.

BRIE

Work? Aren't you like... retired?

(SHE grabs her book bag, follows JANE into the AUDIENCE. JANE walks up the AISLE)

Meanwhile, STUDENTS fill the STAGE, cart off the dolly. Two throw a frisbee back and forth. A GIRL brings a towel, opens it and lays down with two friends. A GUY tries to "make time" with her) (A ROLLER BLADER skates around, as well as a SKATEBOARDER... all as quietly as possible)

JANE

I am here only for a brief time. We must mend your tattered life.

BRIE

Oh. That's good. I really appreciate that.

(beat)

Are you going outside? There's a lot of people on campus now. They'll see you.

(JANE heads back toward the stage, using a different route if possible)

JANE

Only you can see me. So, it is best you keep your voice down. Otherwise, your next address will be at the sanitarium.

(JANE and BRIE ENTER. A YOUNG WOMAN with a tank top and hot pants also ENTERS from the other side of the stage, dances as she approaches JANE. Jane's eyebrows rise with distaste.

JANE (Continued)

Insufferable.

BRIE

If no one can see you, how are you gonna talk to my dad?

JANE

I am not speaking to your father. You are.

BRIE

I am? If that's the case, how are you mending my tattered life?

(STUDENTS overhear BRIE, looks strangely at her. Brie's voice trails off as she realizes how she must look)

BRIE (Continued)

Oh... Don't worry. I'm under psychiatric supervision.

(THE STUDENTS blankly nod. STUDENTS EXIT)

JANE

He compels you to learn economics when you have no mind for such matters.

BRIE

It's true. I don't. And Jane, oh, can I call you Jane?

JANE

May I call you Jane?

BRIE

If you want, but won't that be confusing?

JANE

What I am saying is you must say may I, not can I.

BRIE

Right, Jane, I guess it's important to have good grammar, but the bigger problem is how I'm gonna sell my Dad on changing majors.

JANE

Changing majors?

BRIE

Right. To English Literature, or maybe the classics.

JANE

Oh no, child. That will not do. You must drop out of college

altogether.

BRIE

What?! Drop out of college? I can't drop out of college

JANE

I never attended college and I wrote "Pride and Prejudice" when I was twenty-one.

BRIE

You did? Twenty-one?

JANE

If I attended college in those days, I would not have begun my first novel. Just think, you would be deprived of some of the finest literary works.

BRIE

Drop out?

JANE

If you wish to write well, you do not need school. Immerse yourself in people and new situations. Observe everything.

BRIE

I don't know.

JANE

Yes. You do not know. But you will learn. You will learn to write and write well.

BRIE

How can I with no classes? Without formal education --

JANE

You will have the best education in the world.

BRIE

You, Jane? You'll teach me?

JANE

Yes. We will begin tomorrow morning. Perhaps you will become another Jackie Collins.

(BRIE beams. PAMELA, fifties, wearing

a house dress, ENTERS from SR. When
JANE notices, she steps back)

PAMELA

Brie, are you heading to school?

BRIE

College, yes. See, here's my books.

(holds them up)

Heading to classes -- good ol' economics.

PAMELA

Can you swing by the drug store on your way home? The druggist
has something for my mold spores.

BRIE

Sure. Did dad leave yet?

PAMELA

It's been quiet, so then yes. He must have.

BRIE

(smiles widely)

Okay. Bye.

(PAMELA EXITS SL. JANE approaches)

JANE

I take it that is your mother.

BRIE

Yes.

JANE

You were not adopted.

BRIE

No.

JANE

This may be more difficult that I had imagined.

BRIE

(BRIE pulls out a notebook, pencils,
and a pencil sharpener)

Well then... pencils, notebook, pencil sharpener... I'm very
prepared.

(JANE nods, watches patiently as BRIE sharpens a pencil, pulls out another, twists it into the sharpener)

JANE

Now then...

BRIE

Just a second.

(JANE frowns as BRIE finishes her pencil)

BRIE (Continued)

There.

JANE

The first rule of literature -- write what you know.

BRIE

... But I don't know anything.

(JANE nods patiently, concealing unfathomable vexation)

BRIE (Continued)

But I want to write a romance. It has to be a romance.

JANE

Good -- a romance. Have you thought about your protagonist?

BRIE

A beautiful young heroine, that has almost no money, but her rich, handsome suitor doesn't care. He loves her for what she is.

JANE

Which is what?

(BRIE shrugs)

JANE (Continued)

My suggestion is... for believability, you base your heroine on yourself.

BRIE

Really?

JANE

You want her emotions to ring true with your reader. If you conjure up your own emotions, your character will come alive in the mind of your reader.

(LADY J ENTERS from the book, smiles blissfully)

BRIE

What if she were smarter than all the men around her? Only she plays dumb so they won't get intimidated by her beauty or her brains?

(LADY J hits her head with hand -- signifying she's a ditz. JANE frowns)

JANE

I don't know if acting stupidly sends a good message to your audience, namely young women.

(BRIE nods)

Besides, smarter than all the men around -- that is not you at all.

(BRIE and LADY J sadly nod)

BRIE

Right. How can I write a novel? I know so little about the world.

JANE

Then do research.

BRIE

Research? All right. I'll go to the library and I'll --

JANE

No, no. You are writing about life... Live! Don't hide away in some dusty library. Live and observe.

BRIE

Right. I'll do some observing before I write anything.

(Head lowered, LADY J EXITS into the book)

JANE

I will check up on you in a few days. Good luck, my dear.

BRIE

Thanks, Jane.

(JANE EXITS SR. Brie's beautiful friend,
DANA, ENTERS SL. Dressed in short, white
tennis attire, she holds two racquetball
rackets)

DANA

Brie? I heard you dropped out of school. Is that true?

BRIE

Well, yeah, but it's so I can grow as a writer.

DANA

Can't you grow as a writer and get your MBA at the same time?

BRIE

I think there's laws against that.

(DANA hands BRIE a racquet, they fake-
play racquetball against the back wall)

DANA

You sure this isn't the death instinct surfacing? Thanatos
revisited?

BRIE

What is that? Freudian mumbo jumbo?

DANA

We're all layers of unconscious turmoil, Pickle. It all comes
out in the wash sometime.

BRIE

Wanting to become a writer has nothing to do with a death
instinct.

DANA

When you tell your father, it will be.

(BRIE stops, lets the fake ball go by,
loses the point)

DANA (Continued)

Do it in a public place.

BRIE

Why?

DANA

He won't make a scene. I do that when I break up with somebody
-- a restaurant, library, a movie... someplace where he won't
yell at you.

BRIE

(nods as she ponders this)

Or throw things. Or break things.

(A puppy-dog-faced young man, TREVOR,
ENTERS SL, racquet in hand)

TREVOR

So... who's winning?

BRIE

(to herself)

Definitely not me.

DANA

Actually, Trevor, you're late. And I only have a short time
before I've gotta go back to do evaluations.

TREVOR

Sorry.

DANA

Right. You're always sorry.

TREVOR

That's good, isn't it? To be able to admit when you're wrong?
Psychologically healthy?

DANA

No, it's pathetic. A person who habitually apologizes needs
help.

BRIE

(Lost in thought, she only hears the
last few words from DANA)

I shouldn't apologize. This time, I should stand my ground and
tell him... Dad, I don't want to run an insurance brokerage.

DANA

Brie, I was talking to Trevor.

BRIE

Oh.

DANA

But I like your fire. Use it. Anyway, I gotta run.

TREVOR

(looks at his watch)

Even if I was here on time, that's eleven minutes of racquetball.

DANA

Long enough for me to wipe the floors with your sorry bottom.

TREVOR

You mean my pathetic sorry bottom, don't you?

DANA

What, you think a cute little joke is gonna smooth things over?

TREVOR

Dana, I was ten minutes late. It's not like I killed your cat or
anything like that.

DANA

Time is life. You robbed ten minutes of my life.

(to BRIE)

I'll call you later. Good luck.

(SHE EXITS SL)

TREVOR

Robbing time from her life... guess that's worse than killing
pets.

BRIE

I'm sorry, Trevor. I'm a little preoccupied. Can we take a rain

check? I have something I need to do.

TREVOR

Yeah, sure. I'm not much in a racquetball mood anyway.

(TREVOR takes Brie's racquet, EXITS SL.
STUDENTS ROLL no- nonsense NATHAN, fifties,
in. He sits at a desk with a phone, types
on a computer)

NATHAN

Hey, pickle.

(Nathan's eyes never leave the
computer screen. STUDENTS EXIT)

BRIE

I was thinking, maybe we can have lunch... together... at a
restaurant.

(NATHAN remains silent, types)

BRIE (Continued)

Not a fast food, no. I wouldn't think of --

NATHAN

Fine.

BRIE

Fine?

NATHAN

Yeah. What's the occasion?

BRIE

Occasion?

(JANE ENTERS SR)

JANE

The occasion is a party.

(BRIE GASPS with surprise. NATHAN looks
up)

NATHAN

What's the matter?

BRIE

Nothing. A party.

NATHAN

A party? For what?

JANE

Your mother.

BRIE

Your mother.

NATHAN

My mother's dead.

BRIE

I mean my mother. Your wife. Mom.

JANE

Is your mother's birthday upcoming?
(BRIE quickly shakes her head)

NATHAN

(frowns)

Let me save you some time. You want to tell me you dropped out of school, right?

BRIE

(Brie's jaw drops)

Oh.

NATHAN

Yeah, the bursar's office called me yesterday. You've been out for ten days.

BRIE

Actually eight days. You can't count weekends.

NATHAN

Whatever. I told him you'll return to class tomorrow morning. I'll write you some kind of letter. And you will make up all the work you've missed. Is that clear?

BRIE

Yes, very. Thank you.

(JANE GASPS)

NATHAN

Good night.

JANE

And that's it?

(SHE approaches Nathan's desk. NATHAN doesn't hear anything, goes back to his computer)

BRIE

(feebly)

Good night.

JANE

(to Brie)

No! This is your life, my dear! You cannot stand idly by, and have your father decide who you will become.

BRIE

(quietly)

Not here.

NATHAN

(looks up)

What?

JANE

Tell him!

NATHAN

You'd better get cracking, Pickle. You've got a lot of work to make up.

BRIE

Actually... I don't think I'm gonna do... all of it.

JANE

Any of it.

BRIE

Right. I'm not... I'm not...

(NATHAN stands. BRIE takes a step back, lets out a terrified little squeal)

NATHAN

You're not going to what?

JANE

She is not going back to school.

BRIE

Right.

JANE

Say it!

BRIE

I'm not going back to school! And... and I don't like insurance!
I never liked insurance! And you're gaining weight!

(rushes away, stands SL. NATHAN looks down at his stomach. THE LIGHTS GO DOWN on him. JANE approaches BRIE. NATHAN stands, EXITS SR)

BRIE (Continued)

I did it, Jane. I did it. And the world didn't explode, and he didn't hit me, or yell, and I didn't vomit!

JANE

How fortuitous.

BRIE

I feel great. Let's start right now!

JANE

Start what?

BRIE

My novel. My romance.

(rushes to Nathan's desk)

Okay, maybe I haven't observed so much. But I'm all charged up. I'm ready to begin, Jane. The creative juices are flowing in me.

JANE

Good heavens.

BRIE

Right. So how do I start? Do I come up with a great ending and work backwards? Okay, we have a huge double wedding at the end. And right before, a huge obstacle that the two lead characters must overcome. And surprises, and... and...

JANE

Stop.

BRIE

What is it, Jane?

JANE

You do not begin a story with the ending. Stories grow... just like a garden grows. The seeds are good characters.

BRIE

Good characters? But I'm not that good creating characters. They always come across as shallow and one dimensional.

JANE

Then base them on people you know -- your friend, Dana, and her boyfriend for example.

(LORD ADAM AND LADY J, dressed in eighteenth century garb, stride out of the book)

BRIE

I don't want to use my friends.

JANE

It's a tremendous compliment.

BRIE

No. Besides, Trevor is hardly a lead character in a romance. He's this nerdy rock collector. He's so pathetic. I don't know what Dana sees in him.

JANE

Ah, pathetic -- good word choice, my dear.

(A tall, handsome young man, ADAM DAWES ENTERS SR. Dressed in a navy suit and tie, he looks much like a

male model. As Adam enters, LADY J
and LORD ADAM race back into the book)

ADAM

Excuse me.

BRIE

(stands quickly)

Hello.

ADAM

Hello. Mr. Jablinovich went upstairs about fifteen minutes ago
and he left me in the living room. I overheard you talking to
yourself. I didn't want to surprise you.

JANE

Surprise, surprise.

BRIE

(shoots JANE a quick glance)

Yes. I was writing. I talk outloud when I write.

JANE

Good save.

BRIE

I'm Brie.

ADAM

I'm Adam Dawes. I work for your father.

BRIE

You... you work for my father?

(smiles)

That's... that is extremely wonderful.

ADAM

So you're a professional writer?

JANE

(LAUGHS as if she heard the funniest
joke ever)

Professional... writer!

BRIE

(shoots JANE a icy stare)

Not yet. But I'm working on it.

ADAM

That's good. Always nice to have a hobby.

BRIE

Hobby? No, I'm going to write full time... day and night. I'm going to be prolific.

ADAM

Well, good luck.

JANE

My thoughts exactly.

BRIE

Thank you, Adam. You're very kind. Extremely very kind.

ADAM

Can you do me a favor, Brie?

BRIE

Anything.

ADAM

When your dad comes down, tell him I had to leave.

BRIE

Leave?

ADAM

Yes. I have an appointment in twenty minutes and it's important.

BRIE

(sadly)

All right.

ADAM

Thanks.

(HE kisses her hand, EXITS. BRIE stares down at her hand with warm fuzzy thoughts)

JANE

Be sure not to wash that hand for months.

(BRIE drops her hand to her side, stares

at JANE. NATHAN ENTERS)

NATHAN

Oh? Adam left?

BRIE

Right. He had an appointment.

NATHAN

Nice guy, don't you think?

BRIE

Yeah. He seems very... nice. What has that got to do with me?

NATHAN

(smiles with thoughts of Adam)

Nothing. It's just that I'm having lunch with him tomorrow.

(EXITS)

BRIE

Oh. Well, have a nice time.

JANE

So, this Adam seems to be Mr. Willoughby, Mr. D'arcy and Henry Tilney all rolled into one.

BRIE

What?

JANE

Your dashing leading man.

BRIE

Oh? Yeah, but I may not run into him for a while.

JANE

Run into him? You need not run, walking will be acceptable.

BRIE

What are you saying? I should... you want me to...

JANE

Oh, grow up. You find an excuse to visit your father, and then walk into Adam's office, and explain that your horse went lame and if he would be so gallant as to lend you his carriage.

BRIE

A carriage?

JANE

Yes, yes. A flat tire. You understand my meaning.

BRIE

And this will make me a better writer?

JANE

Yes! You write of love and romance as if it were this ethereal state.

BRIE

Right.

JANE

Child, you have never been in love, have you?

BRIE

Me? Well, not exactly, but I've imagined it, and how it should be. I've watched movies and read --

JANE

How can you purport to be a romance novelist when you have never had a romance?

BRIE

I'm good at imagining things.

JANE

This is why you have left school. You must live, child. Not imagine. Not dream. You must FEEL in order to write!

(JANE EXITS SL. NATHAN ENTERS, sits at his desk, picks up a phone)

NATHAN

It's not a question of his price against my price. Go with him and you won't be covered.

(BRIE looks around as if searching someone out)

NATHAN (Continued)

Yes, for your equipment, but not for damages.

(pause)

If you cause damage to the premises, the pipes, or...

(pause)

I know you're careful!

(pause)

No, I'm not jinxing you. That's idiotic!

(slams down the phone -- still annoyed)

So, what d'you need?

BRIE

Need? Do I have to need something to see my father?

(NATHAN stares at her. His intensity makes Brie step back, look away)

BRIE (Continued)

And I am hungry.

NATHAN

I told you last night I'm having lunch with Adam.

BRIE

You did? Well, I have no recollection of that.

NATHAN

No recollection?

BRIE

Nope. My mind is a blank.

(NATHAN smiles, nods. ADAM ENTERS from behind BRIE)

ADAM

Almost ready?

(BRIE lets out a gasp)

BRIE

(turns)

Oh, there you are. I mean, hello.

ADAM

Hello, Brie. How's the writing?

BRIE

Great. Finished a whole chapter.

ADAM

Good for you.

NATHAN

I'm sorry, Adam. Apparently, there's been a misunderstanding. I'm taking Brie to lunch today.

ADAM

All right.

BRIE

No, no. You have lunch with my dad... Nathan. You have lunch.

ADAM

No, it's all right.

BRIE

Please. It was my mistake.

ADAM

Well, we can all have lunch together.

(to Nathan)

Can't we?

(NATHAN shrugs)

BRIE

That's what I thought -- just now! Not all of last night and this morning.

(NATHAN stares at her, shakes his head in disbelief. ADAM smiles, charmed by the bubbly Brie)

BRIE (Continued)

None of this was planned.

STUDENTS push a set dining table out to CENTERSTAGE. ADAM pulls a chair out for BRIE. She sits)

BRIE (Continued)

Thank you, Adam.

(THE MEN sit)

ADAM

So, Brie, your father tells me you dropped out of college.

(JANE ENTERS, saunters toward the table)

BRIE

(fumbling with her words as she watches
JANE near)

Yes. I've decided that if I want to become a romance writer,
I should spend time writing -- not learning about other writers
and... how they...

(Her voice trails off as Jane sits
on the empty chair at their table)

NATHAN

Brie thinks insurance is boring.

(ADAM GIGGLES. BRIE watches JANE who
removes her napkin, places it on her lap)

ADAM

Is that true? Boring?

(BRIE turns to ADAM, smiles as she
nonchalantly removes her napkin,
dropping her utensils onto the floor)

BRIE

O-o-o.

(SHE and ADAM bend to retrieve them)

ADAM

Here. I got the knife.

(JANE closes her eyes, shakes her head
in disbelief)

BRIE

I got my fork. Thanks.

JANE

Let him do it. Sit up straight.

(BRIE sits up. ADAM retrieves the
salad fork and spoon)

ADAM

Here.

BRIE

Thanks.

JANE

Thank you.

BRIE

Thank you.

JANE

Insufferable.

BRIE

Insuf... Thank you.

(A BEEPER goes off)

ADAM

Oh, that's me. I've gotta go.

(Brie's smile fades)

JANE

What is that?

BRIE

You're coming back, aren't you?

JANE

Is there a fire?

ADAM

I don't think so. I'm really sorry.

(to NATHAN)

Briggs Construction.

(NATHAN nods)

NATHAN

Right. We'll see you later then.

(ADAM stands. BRIE too stands)

JANE

Stay seated.

(BRIE quickly sits back down)

ADAM

Brie, I'm real sorry.

BRIE

It's all right.

ADAM

Bye.

(ADAM smiles fondly at Brie, stands SL,
hands his keys to an ATTENDANT who rushes
off SL. BRIE seems troubled)

NATHAN

He's a nice guy, don't you think?

BRIE

I'm gonna go after him.

JANE

What?

BRIE

I can't leave it like this.

NATHAN

Invite him to the house.

JANE

That would be totally inappropriate!

BRIE

In your day maybe.

(BRIE leaps to her feet, rushes off toward ADAM. JANE rushes after her. STUDENTS ENTER SR and push NATHAN, the table, and desk, off SR)

JANE

Child, wait!

BRIE

Adam. wait.

(HE turns, smiles)

BRIE (Continued)

You forgot... I forgot to invite you to... to...

JANE

A ball.

BRIE

A ball.

(to JANE)

What?

ADAM

Really? A ball? Like in the movies? That's so cool.

(BRIE turns back to ADAM)

BRIE

It is?

ADAM

Yeah. I get to dress up... and dance with the host's beautiful daughter.

(BRIE smiles)

ADAM (Continued)

That would be you.

BRIE

I got that.

JANE

Such a salesman.

ADAM

What's the occasion?

BRIE

Occasion?

JANE

Your parent's anniversary

BRIE

Of course. What she said. (correcting herself) I mean, my parent's anniversary.

ADAM

Great. Tell me when.
(EXITS)

BRIE

I'll be there too.

(turns quickly to JANE)

Why a ball? Why not a simple dinner party? Or a movie?

JANE

You desire to write a romance novel set in the eighteen-hundreds, do you not?

BRIE

Well, yeah but --

JANE

What better way to learn of all the preparations, the nuance, the je ne c'est quois?

BRIE

You lost me at nuance.

JANE

I will teach you all there is to know about throwing a ball... the food, server's etiquette, how one should dress, the dancing, the orchestra --

BRIE

Orchestra?!

JANE

Well, a quartet if that is all you can afford.
(dances an eighteenth century box step
type of dance while one hand holds
up the bottom of her dress to avoid
tripping)
One bows to one's partner, bows to one's neighbor...

BRIE

Just like square dancing.

JANE

Bite your tongue, my dear.
(beat)
And one and two and step and four. And one and kick and step and
four and make a bridge.
(holds BRIE'S hands high. Hands
sway back and forth)

BRIE

Next do we take the keys and lock her up?

JANE

(pulls her hands away, annoyed)
Do not make light of such dances, my dear. This is the way it is
done.

(STUDENTS push out a dressing screen)

BRIE

But Jane, people don't dance like this anymore. They wanna
boogey. They wanna get down and shake their groove thing.

(BRIE goes behind the screen, pulls off
her top as she speaks, slips on a ball
gown, then pulls off her jeans from
underneath. SHE changes shoes as she
continues speaking...)

JANE

Please. I have seen that infernal MTV video countdown once.
Such a base, horrible influence on young women, especially for
those interested in the clergy.

(beat)

I can think of one profession for which that channel prepares.

Dancing?
BRIE

JANE
All right -- two professions.

(A string quartet ENTERS with chairs and instruments, plays a slow classical piece SR -- miming as a CD is played)
(SERVANTS ENTER at the back of the theatre, carry trays up the aisle, then across the stage with; food, china, liquor, glasses. Also flowers in vases. The SERVANTS dance and twirl as they traverse the stage)

BRIE
Is that my quartet?

JANE
Yes. Everything is coming along quite swimmingly. Even the servants are dancing and twirling around as if they were on amphetamines.

(BRIE emerges from the screen. She looks very nice in her full length gown)

JANE (Continued)
Very nice. Very nice indeed.

BRIE
It's not too formal?

JANE
For me nothing is too formal.

BRIE
The dress suits me, right?

JANE
It brings out your... with your skin and hair... your particular hair cut anyway, it flatters your... well, what does it matter? You are a writer, not a model.

(GUESTS ENTER. BRIE gives JANE a last look, then begins mingling. Hello's and small talk are exchanged. Wearing a tight, short, black dress, DANA ENTERS)

DANA

(referring to BRIE)

Why it's Scarlet O'Hara.

BRIE

Sh-h-h.

(BRIE looks upset with Dana's attire)

BRIE (Continued)

(trying to speak calmly)

Why are you wearing that?

DANA

It's formal.

BRIE

No! This is an elegant ball! Not "Girls Drink Free Night" at Joey's Bar!

DANA

Girls really drink free?

BRIE

Stop it! I'm serious!

(In a tuxedo, TREVOR approaches, smiles)

TREVOR

Brie, don't you look nice. I told Dana she should wear something frilly and lacy -- you know, like Scarlet O'Hara.

(Another group of GUESTS ENTER. ADAM PAMELA, and NATHAN are among them)

DANA

That must be Adam.

(BRIE turns, sees ADAM speaking to NATHAN. Brie smiles, seems in a blissful trance.)

BRIE

That's him.

DANA

Good choice, pickle.

(A servant passes, DANA takes an hors
d'oeuvre. The MUSIC stops as the
QUARTET changes sheet music)

(ADAM approaches)

ADAM

Hello, Brie.

BRIE

Hi. This is my friend, Dana.

DANA

Hello. I've heard a lot about you, all of it true.

ADAM

Thank you... I think.

(THEY shake, laugh)

BRIE

(quietly to ADAM)

So, how do you like my ball?

ADAM

It's very regal and beautiful -- as you are.

(BRIE swoons)

ADAM (Continued)

I would like to dance with you, if I'm not being presumptuous.

BRIE

Not at all. I would too.

(JANE stands SR, motions for Brie
to come. BRIE frowns)

BRIE (Continued)

I'll be right back.

ADAM

I'll be here.

(BRIE forces a smile, hurries off)

(TREVOR approaches ADAM, both watch BRIE as she SILENTLY "mime-speaks" to a few people as she makes her way toward JANE)

TREVOR

Brie is a very sweet girl.

ADAM

Sweet, pretty, rich -- she's got it all.

(TREVOR scowls. The QUARTET begins a quick-tempo classical piece)

PAMELA

They are serving shellfish. I distinctly said, no shellfish.

BRIE

Just don't eat it.

PAMELA

Easier said than done.

(PAMELA walks away. BRIE approaches JANE)

BRIE

What?

JANE

This is not what we agreed upon. Conversation and dancing should not take place in the same room.

BRIE

I don't have other rooms.

(DANA watches from across the room, speaks to TREVOR)

DANA

Who is she talking to?

TREVOR

Don't know.

(DANA walks toward BRIE)

BRIE

I don't care about the pump room in Bath! I'm sick of hearing about the pump room in Bath! I just want to get back to Adam, and dance with him all night.

(turns, sees DANA)

Oh, Dana. I didn't see you.

DANA

Then who were you talking to?

BRIE

Oh. Just myself. Stress, you know?

JANE

Insufferable girl.

BRIE

No, you're insufferable.

DANA

What did I do?

BRIE

No, no, Dana. I was talking to myself again. I wasn't finished before.

(playing two parts in jest)

You're an insufferable girl.

(playing the other part)

No, you are.

(smiles at DANA who seems too shocked to speak. A roll of the eyes and JANE EXITS SR. TREVOR approaches)

DANA

Are you okay?

BRIE

Yeah.

TREVOR

Brie, your Mom's dancing with Adam.

BRIE

She is?

TREVOR

You can practice on me if you want. I promise not to step on both your feet at the same time.

(BRIE smiles. She and TREVOR begin dancing. Brie's eyes never leave Adam)

(ADAM glances toward BRIE. He smiles, bobs his shoulder in jest)

(BRIE smiles. HE bobs some more)

(TREVOR eyes ADAM strangely)

TREVOR (Continued)

Your friend seems to be suffering some kind of spasm.

BRIE

Isn't he cute?

TREVOR

Oh yes. I've always found head bobbing to be adorable.

(The music stops. TREVOR smiles broadly at BRIE. She gives him a quick smile, turns, searches for ADAM)

PAMELA

Brie? Oh, Brie?

(Her smile fading, BRIE approaches ADAM. PAMELA catches BRIE from behind, holds her arm)

PAMELA (Continued)

Brie, where are you running off to?

(Miserable, BRIE turns to her)

BRIE

Yes, yes, yes. What food group is alluring you now?

PAMELA

I was only going to say that Adam told me that he wants to dance with you and you've been avoiding him.

BRIE

What?! Avoiding him?! I'm thinking about throwing myself at him!

(The MUSIC begins and ADAM begins dancing with DANA)

BRIE (Continued)

Oh no!

(SHE rushes toward them)

BRIE (Continued)

I'm sorry, Adam. I was just so busy.

ADAM

Save me the next dance?

(BRIE seems disappointed)

BRIE

Oh... okay. Next dance is fine.

(BRIE rushes away, storms back and forth in the foreground. A frown and DANA silently excuses herself from ADAM, joins BRIE)

DANA

Hey, Pickle, what's wrong? You don't seem yourself.

BRIE

(off-centered)

I just don't understand why all night long you're not dancing with Trevor. And here you are dancing with Adam.

DANA

Trevor and I broke up last week.

BRIE

Oh. And when were you gonna lay this chestnut on me?

(In the background, NATHAN stumbles

on his feet, clutches at his chest.
OTHERS help him to a chair)

DANA

Do I have to report everything to you?

BRIE

Yes. When it's my party and I haven't danced even one dance with Adam, yes, you do.

(ALL stop dancing, congregate around NATHAN)

DANA

Wow. You really have an inferiority complex, don't you?

BRIE

Maybe if your dress wasn't above the knee by maybe twelve inches!

DANA

This has nothing to do with my dress. It's about the way you see yourself, and you don't think you're very attractive.

BRIE

Oh yes I do!

DANA

You don't, or you wouldn't care what I was wearing!

BRIE

Insufferable!

DANA

What?

BRIE

Never mind.

(TREVOR approaches)

TREVOR

Brie? Your dad needs an ambulance. I think he's having a heart attack.

(BRIE looks stunned, turns to DANA)

DANA

What, you're gonna blame the dress?

(BRIE hurries upstage where a gurney is wheeled out by STUDENTS. GUESTS lift NATHAN and place him on the gurney)

Dad? Dad?

BRIE

M-m-m-ah-ah, Ar-r-ragh.

NATHAN

Don't talk, Dad. It's okay. We'll follow the ambulance to the hospital.

BRIE

(crying)
I told him to take vitamins. I told him to stop eating dairy.

PAMELA

Mom, please.

BRIE

Don't worry, Brie. Your father is indestructible.

GUEST

Thank you.

BRIE

I know cause I tried to destroy him.

GUEST

(NATHAN'S gurney is pushed, disappears behind the changing screen. Wretched with worry, PAMELA pulls BRIE aside. Meanwhile, the GUESTS break up into groups, chatter, take props, EXIT.)

PAMELA

(quietly)
I don't know anything about your father's business. If he were to die, what would we do?

BRIE

He's not going to die!

(The DOCTOR ENTERS from behind the screen, approaches)

DOCTOR

Mrs. Jablinovich?

PAMELA

Yes.

DOCTOR

Your husband suffered a mild heart attack.

(PAMELA gasps)

DOCTOR (Continued)

We can't know the extent of the damage for a few days, but we did an E-K-G and the results seem promising.

PAMELA

Then he's not going to die?

DOCTOR

No.

PAMELA

Thank heavens. Thank you, God.

DOCTOR

You're wel... You're not talking to me, are you?

PAMELA

Doctor, could this have been brought on by shellfish?

DOCTOR

I doubt it.

(The NURSE ENTERS from behind the screen)

NURSE

He's asking for his son.

PAMELA

Son?

NURSE

Adam.

(ALL turn to ADAM. Even ADAM seems surprised. He heads in to NATHAN.
NURSE EXITS through screen)

DOCTOR

(to TREVOR)

It was fortunate you understood the situation and called an ambulance. Otherwise, things could have been worse.

BRIE

(to DOCTOR)

What about recovery?

DOCTOR

(writes on a medical chart)

Well, he needs to change his lifestyle -- medication, exercise, reduction of stress. But that's something you as a family should discuss. Any questions?

PAMELA

(eagerly)

Oh yes.

(takes the DOCTOR'S arm, leads him away. THEY EXIT)

I've been taking raw honey and bee pollen for my allergies for over a year now...

(ADAM emerges from the screen,
heads to BRIE)

ADAM

Your father wanted to tell me things regarding tomorrow's business. Now maybe he can rest.

(BRIE nods)

ADAM (Continued)

He's falling asleep. I think they gave him a sedative.

DANA

Brie, can I give you a ride home?

BRIE

No, I wanna stay.

ADAM

Oh? I could stay too -- if you want.

BRIE

No, you have to work early. Go home.

ADAM

Are you sure?

BRIE

Yeah. I want to be alone with my father.

(ADAM And DANA EXIT together. TREVOR
faces BRIE)

BRIE (Continued)

Thank you for saving my father's life.

TREVOR

Hey, anytime.

(pause)

Listen, I could stay and then drive you home later. It's no
trouble.

BRIE

No. But thanks for asking.

(TREVOR nods, walks away, pulls the
changing screen away. NATHAN lays
on the gurney. BRIE approaches)

(OFFSTAGE - the SOUND of a HEART
MONITOR BLIPS normally)

NATHAN

Hey, pickle.

BRIE

(squeezes his hand)

You scared me. I never thought anything could ever happen to
you. You're so...

(Her voice breaks up into a sob)
 I did this, didn't I? Me and my selfishness. I caused you to
 worry, over-worry.

(pause)
 I could go back to college, if that's what you want.

(NATHAN WHISPERS)

BRIE (Continued)
 What?

(bends her head toward his)

NATHAN
 Marry Adam.

(BRIE'S head lurches back, a stunned
 expression on her. She nods, ponders,
 nods again)

BRIE
 I can't marry Adam. Yeah, I like him. I like him a lot, but I'm
 only twenty-one. And I'm not gonna get married for years.

(Nathan's heart monitor BLIPS faster)

BRIE (Continued)
 Dad?!
 (It blips faster)
 Dad?! I'll try! Okay, Dad?! I'll definitely give it my best
 shot!

(walks DOWNSTAGE, away from NATHAN,
 seems lost in thought)

(LADY J and LORD ADAM ENTER from
 the book. HE holds a bouquet of roses
 in his hand)

BRIE
 Oh, not now.

(THEY turn to BRIE, seem confused)

BRIE (Continued)
 You're not getting married now. Back in the book. Go ahead.
 Back!

LADY J

But when do we speak to one another?

BRIE

When I'm good and ready.

LORD ADAM

(to LADY J)

Have you ever experienced romance in which you have not spoken?

LADY J

I am fictitious, sir. Perhaps you have another type of young woman in mind.

BRIE

You'll talk later. Bye. Go ahead!

(THE TWO CHARACTERS EXIT back into the
book. JANE ENTERS SR)

JANE

Good choice, my dear. It is only the first act. Although they should be on speaking terms, you cannot have the two main characters wed so soon.

BRIE

Right. They're too young.

JANE

No. They are of teenagers of marrying age. That is not the problem.

BRIE

Well... then don't have enough money to buy a house.

JANE

No. It is just that you have presented no conflict and no danger. And with no danger, there is no story.

BRIE

Danger?

JANE

Yes. The two lead characters go here and there, happily profess their love for one another, give each other roses --

BRIE

So? That's good, isn't it? This IS a romance.

JANE

No. That is not good. You must have an obstacle, a contentious antagonist, a great misunderstanding. You must have conflict!

BRIE

I've caused enough conflict.

JANE

You need another suitor.

BRIE

What's wrong with Adam?

JANE

I mean in your story.

BRIE

Oh.

JANE

A story needs an insurmountable obstacle for the heroine to overcome. It needs to sustain our interest.

BRIE

I know. I just don't wanna think about my novel right now. There's too much going on.

JANE

That is just the time you should be thinking about your story. You want to capture the swirl of emotions inside of you.

(NATHAN sits up, pulls off the sheet
that covered him. He's fully dressed)

BRIE

Dad? How are you feeling?

NATHAN

Does it matter? I've gotta go back to work.

BRIE

No. Take a few days off.

NATHAN

How can I do that? The place'll go to beans.

BRIE

Adam can hold the fort, can't he?

NATHAN

(smiles)

I'm hoping he can, pickle. Then maybe I can take it easy.

BRIE

But you can't leave. The doctor's coming to check on you in the morning.

NATHAN

Oh, I'll be back before then.

(HE bears down, pushes the gurney,
EXITS SR)

JANE

Your life is easy. Writing is difficult.

BRIE

What d'you mean?

JANE

I mean Adam is your father's savior. Plus he's very affable, charming, and good looking.

BRIE

Right. So why am I... why do I have... I feel like I'm being pushed. I don't like that.

JANE

If you marry Adam, your life will become such that you may write whenever you please.

BRIE

I know.

JANE

Yet still you're not certain?

BRIE

...No.

JANE

(stares at BRIE, then...)

Good instincts, my dear!

(EXITS. From behind BRIE, ADAM
ENTERS SR)

ADAM

Hi.

(Startled, BRIE leaps)

ADAM (Continued)

Didn't mean to scare you.

BRIE

I'm not scared. I just don't wanna get married right now.

ADAM

Okay...

BRIE

Not that you asked.

ADAM

I didn't.

BRIE

Right. I just don't wanna get married. That's all.

ADAM

Well, how about going out somewhere with me?

BRIE

(nervously)

... Yeah, okay. To a nice, conservative, friendly place. I have no objection. No strong objection. Unless, of course, we were on some dating tv show, in which case my objection would be quite strong.

ADAM

Are you okay?

BRIE

Fine. How are you?

ADAM

The doctors say your dad will be fine.

BRIE

He's cut down on his dairy. Mom's influence.

ADAM

Right.

(beat)

I was thinking maybe we could go to the car show.

BRIE

Car show?

ADAM

Yeah. Maybe you could help me pick something out.

BRIE

A new car?

ADAM

Yeah.

BRIE

Expecting a windfall?

ADAM

No. I'm driving a beat up wreck and I was thinking maybe to buy a new car for the first time in my life.

BRIE

Sorry.

ADAM

If you don't wanna look at cars, what about jazz?

BRIE

The movie?

ADAM

No. Do you like the music?

BRIE

Yes, theoretically.

ADAM

Or maybe we can check out some of the clubs.

BRIE

Just how many clubs are there?

ADAM

What are you interested in?

BRIE

Me? Oh. We can go to the library.

(immediately)

No, that's lame, right?

ADAM

Not if we were twelve.

(beat)

Oh! There's this mutual fund seminar I'm going to tomorrow night.

BRIE

(enthusiastically)

Oh. Wow. Let's not go to that.

(ADAM smiles)

ADAM

Okay. So pick something.

BRIE

Craft fair?

ADAM

(a big smile)

You've really got a vicious streak in you, don't you?

BRIE

You don't like hand-woven wool Christmas ornaments? Or pressed-flower wall frames? Or macrame-glue gunned-beaded-amethyst-sun-dried-terra-cotta book covers?

ADAM

(miming a knife to his chest)

Oh, it's like a stiletto in my heart!

(HE and BRIE laugh)

Seriously, if it's with you, Brie, anything would be great.

(SHE smiles warmly)

BRIE

Do you really mean that?

ADAM

Yeah. Unless you make me take you to a Meg Ryan movie. Or figure skating.

BRIE

Sounds reasonable.

ADAM

I'm gonna call home and tell my Mom about you.

(EXITS. JANE ENTERS, pushing the computer desk)

BRIE

I think I just swooned.

JANE

I didn't understand a word in that entire conversation. My dear, you must begin speaking English. That's always a good first step to writing a novel IN English.

(BRIE sits at the computer desk)

BRIE

Lady Jablinovich scarce could breathe let alone think.

(LADY J peeks out from the book)

BRIE (Continued)

Yeah, yeah. Come on out.

(LADY J ENTERS, strides across the stage as a dress model would)

BRIE (Continued)

Lord Adam turned out to be everything she ever wanted, and much much more.

JANE

Show us, do not tell us.

BRIE

I am showing you.

JANE

You say Lord Adam is everything she wanted. Show us. Do not just parrot the words.

BRIE

Oh. I'm not sure how.

(LADY J seems concerned)

LADY J

Perhaps when I was a young girl, I was brutally attacked by wild dogs. And In Lord Adam, I sense a feeling of safety?

(BRIE turns to JANE for guidance)

JANE

(To LADY J)

Perhaps you should not speak.

(to BRIE)

Would you mind if your lead character was mute?

BRIE

No, she can't be.

JANE

(frowning)

Very well.

BRIE

Jane, one thing I like about Adam is he's very responsible. It's one thing to be sensitive, but it doesn't put meat on the table. He's kind, and charming, and he takes his job very seriously.

JANE

He is a salesman, Brie. Watch out for your purse.

BRIE

What?

JANE

Stepping into ownership of a lucrative business is quite an incentive.

BRIE

(stands)

Oh, come on, Jane. Adam isn't like that.

JANE

What do you know about him? What do you know about his past relationships? Perhaps Adam is like Mr. Wickham in PRIDE AND PREJUDICE.

BRIE

No. That isn't possible. You're just playing devil's advocate, right?

JANE

The truth is I do not know. Now if I were writing this story, I would introduce Adam in act one only to reveal his ulterior motives in act two.

(LORD ADAM ENTERS, smug, smiling broadly. The three WOMEN stare daggers at him. BRIE types)

LADY J

Lord Adam, do you love me?

BRIE

Asked Lady Jablinovich, eager for any iota of emotion.

LORD ADAM

(on the spot, his smile fades)

Of course I love you. What kind of question is that?

LADY J

You did not marry me solely to add to your fortune?

LORD ADAM

Of course not. Such a ridiculous notion.

BRIE

Wait, wait, wait.

(SHE types, then points to LADY J)

LADY J

I want you to describe your feelings at the moment you realized that you loved me.

(LORD ADAM searches the faces of the three women, as if he were interrogated)

LORD ADAM

Well... I felt happiness.

(pause, then frustrated)

`Tis difficult to put the feeling into words.

(to BRIE)

You are the writer, you do it.

BRIE

You want me to tell you how you feel?

ADAM

I am just a character. You should know how I feel. Besides, I do not understand why you are asking me this question!

(HE storms away, EXITS back into the book)

LADY J

Is he allowed to do that?

BRIE

I don't know. I'm new at this. Jane?

JANE

You should let your characters be who they are. You create them, then let them go.

BRIE

I created that?

JANE

You will be surprised the choices your characters make.

(quietly to BRIE -- referring to LADY J)

This one seems to me very jealous and judgmental. Keep a close eye on her.

(JANE and BRIE stare at LADY J. Unnerved, SHE rushes off, EXITS into the book.)

JANE (Continued)

Anyway, I'm off. High tea with Thomas Hardy. Just one time I wish that man would clean under his fingernails.

(SHE EXITS SL. NATHAN ENTERS SR, pushing his gurney)

NATHAN

Doctor here yet?

BRIE

No. Ya know, Dad, if the insurance companies knew that you left the hospital while you were still a patient, they may not cover you.

NATHAN

They pull something like that and I'll pull all my accounts from them and go somewhere else.

BRIE

You can't do that. You'd have to get every one of your customers to sign over.

NATHAN

Brie, your ol' Dad is an expert forger.

(BRIE'S mouth opens in shock)

NATHAN (Continued)

Just kidding... kind of.

(TREVOR ENTERS SL, a balloon in hand)

TREVOR

Hi.

BRIE

(a big smile)

Hi, Trevor.

NATHAN

Hi, Trevor. Brie says you kind of saved my life. Thanks a million, and not dollars.

TREVOR

When I took that first aid course, I never thought I'd actually have to do the mouth to mouth thing.

NATHAN

(frowns)
She didn't tell me that part.

(TREVOR smiles, hands the balloon
to BRIE)

BRIE

Thanks. Is this for me?

TREVOR

Actually, it's for Nathan.

BRIE

Oh.

(TREVOR reaches into his pocket,
pulls out a shiny black rock)

TREVOR

This is for you.

(BRIE smiles as she takes it,
examines it)

TREVOR (Continued)

It's obsidian.

BRIE

Really? It's so shiny.

TREVOR

It's volcanic.

BRIE

Wow. Where do you buy stuff like this? A science store?

TREVOR

No. Actually I got it from a volcano.

BRIE

Really?

TREVOR

Well, the slope of a volcano. I didn't actually go in.

BRIE

Oh no. I didn't think you went into a volcano. At least, not the lava part.

TREVOR

I got the rock in Alaska last year.

BRIE

Wow. Must've been some trip.

TREVOR

It was beautiful. I couldn't afford to go on the cruise, so I took a summer job as a waiter on the cruise ship.

BRIE

Yeah?

TREVOR

It was awesome. A life-altering experience. I woke up every morning at five, just when the sun was rising and I'd watch the whales swim beside the boat.

BRIE

Whales?! Really?

TREVOR

Yeah. The wildlife you see up there is staggering. And the icebergs! You can't put it into words what you... it's just so...

NATHAN

Ah. don't mean to interrupt there, but you're boring me to tears.

BRIE

Dad?!

TREVOR

No, it's okay.

BRIE

Dad, you're being so rude! Trevor just saved your life.

TREVOR

I know, and I'd like to enjoy what's left of it.

BRIE

I'm sorry, Trevor. Dad is an uncultured swine.

TREVOR

It's okay.

BRIE

Dad doesn't appreciate nature in all its beauty.

NATHAN

I do as long as there's eighteen holes involved. That's plenty beautiful for me.

TREVOR

(quietly)

Maybe we could go rockhounding one weekend.

BRIE

What's that?

TREVOR

I just thought... never mind.

BRIE

No, what was that -- rock--

TREVOR

Rockhounding. Going out in nature, looking for rocks. Dana never wanted to go so I haven't been out in months. And you seemed so enthusiastic about getting into nature and, I thought... but maybe it's not such a good idea.

NATHAN

It isn't a good idea.

BRIE

Yes it is. It's a good idea. Why don't we go this weekend?

NATHAN

Didn't you have that party you and Adam were going to?

BRIE

(sadly)

That's true. And next Saturday I have the christening... How

about next Sunday?

TREVOR

Next Sunday isn't good for me. Going home to see my parents. Sorry.

NATHAN

Why don't you take Adam along? All three of you can go.

TREVOR

Yeah... I guess we could.

BRIE

Call me. We'll think of something.

TREVOR

Sure.

(HE backs away)

BRIE

Do I need hiking boots?

TREVOR

If you're planning to hike.

BRIE

I guess that's a yes then.

(TREVOR trips over his own feet, falls back)

BRIE

Are you okay?

TREVOR

Fine. Bye.

(stands, EXITS)

NATHAN

What's with you? You and Adam are a couple now. You don't go gallivanting off with bachelor number two!

BRIE

A couple? We've only been out once.

NATHAN

You're gonna marry the guy. That's a couple in my book.

BRIE
Please, Dad, don't get upset. Your heart.

NATHAN
Then don't make me upset.

BRIE
Fine.

NATHAN
(sits on his gurney)
Everything's going smoothly. Let's just stay the course.

BRIE
(pushes his gurney SR. NATHAN EXITS)
You make it sound like a prison sentence.

(JANE ENTERS SL, reads from a stack
of about twenty written pages)

JANE
My dear, I must say... your last foray at fiction... is quite tolerable.

BRIE
Adam reports to my father where we're going, what we're doing!

JANE
How do you know this?

BRIE
Dad mentioned a party Adam and I are attending this weekend. I didn't tell my father about any party!

(DANA ENTERS SR. After seeing Brie seemingly speaking to no one, DANA hides by the entry as she watches the scene, becomes more and more concerned)

JANE
I am sensing all is not well in paradise.

BRIE
No. All is not well. I've spent maybe eight hours with Adam and already he's getting on my nerves.

JANE

I know that feeling.

BRIE

The other night, he was watching the nightly business report on tv. I mean, right in front of me.

JANE

Such unmitigated gall!

BRIE

I know! And then after it was over and he went off to get some potato chips, I changed the channel. I put on Turandot.

JANE

Puccini.

BRIE

Right. And then he comes in and he stops walking when he sees the opera on and he says, "oh, you changed the channel." And I say, "yeah, I thought maybe we could watch something I like for a change." And he kinda frowns and sits next to me.

JANE

At least he did not leave.

BRIE

But then he starts making fishy faces and fart noises with his mouth!

JANE

These are but small faults, my dear.

BRIE

Then he has the nerve to say, "I'm sorry, Brie. I just don't get opera." Then I say to him, "Adam, if you don't get opera, maybe you don't get life either."

JANE

Not the best retort but continue...

BRIE

Then you know what he does? He burps. A real burp. Can you believe that?

JANE

All I can say is perhaps your conflicted feelings toward Adam are a blessing to you. Your writing is infinitely better. When reading the last chapter, I could really feel the heroine's frustration, the feeling of being trapped into a promise made to her dying father.

BRIE

Not dying! Steadily improving!
(rushes off, toward DANA)