

# Karen, Gabe, Beth

but they ... *Next* time you and Tom have got to come with us.  
 BETTI. Uh huh.  
 KAREN. We'd have a blast, don't you think?  
 BETTI. Oh, yeah.  
 KAREN. Just the four of us?! You would *love* Italy. The art...!  
 BETTI. I know; I can't believe I've never been there.  
 KAREN. Leave the kids with Tom's sister or something. They'll survive. Believe me, with Danny and Isaac, we came home and it was like, "Oh, hello; *you* again?" *(They smile. Silence.)* Too bad about Tommy.  
 BETTI. What do you mean?  
 KAREN. I having to fly to Washington on a night like this.  
 BETTI. Oh, yeah.  
 KAREN. *His* loss. Oh, well, more food for us. *(They smile. A beat.)* Are you okay?  
 BETTI. Oh, yeah; I think I may have a migraine coming on, that's all.  
 KAREN. Oh! *(That explains Beth's behavior.)* Well, lay off the wine.  
 BETTI. I am; I have been.  
 KAREN. You want some Morrin?  
 BETTI. Yeah, good idea, thanks. *(Karen gets pills from a cabinet.)*  
 KAREN. I almost forgot: We got you guys something.  
 BETTI. Oh, really? How nice.  
 KAREN. Just a little something. For the house. *You* know. *(Karen gives Beth a wrapped bundle.)*  
 BETTI. Thanks. Should I open it now?  
 KAREN. Whatever. *(Beth unwraps the bundle: place mats. They somehow sadden her, but she tries not to let it show.)*  
 BETTI. Oh, Karen, thank you so much.  
 KAREN. They're place mats.  
 BETTI. Yes. They're beautiful.  
 KAREN. From Siena. We spent a day there. Can you use them?  
 BETTI. Oh, God, yes, *me?* *(Gabe returns holding four bowls, which had been the kids' ice cream dessert.)*  
 GABE. You should see: I wish I had some film.  
 KAREN. That's right: We ran out of film.  
 GABE. *(Continuous.)* All four kids, all in a row, like this, *(Held in hands.)* like four little Raphael cherubs, watching *The Aristocats*

# Act 1 Scene 1

for the ninety-seventh time. *(Beth suddenly breaks down and sobs.)*  
 KAREN. Beth?  
 GABE. *(Over "Beth?")* What is it? What's the matter? *(Beth sobs piteously.)*  
 KAREN. Oh, my God ...  
 GABE. *(Softly to Karen.)* Did I miss something here?  
 KAREN. *(Shrugs, then.)* Beth, what is it?  
 BETTI. Oh, Karen ... Tom's leaving me.  
 KAREN. What?  
 BETTI. He's leaving me.  
 GABE. What are you talking about?  
 BETTI. He doesn't love me anymore. He's leaving. He left me. He's gone. *(She breaks down again.)*  
 GABE. What happened?  
 BETTI. He says he's in love with someone else.  
 KAREN. Oh, God, you're kidding! *(Beth shakes her head.)*  
 GABE. Who?  
 KAREN. *(Admonishing.)* Gabe!  
 GABE. What, I want to know if it's someone we know!  
 KAREN. What difference does it make?  
 BETTI. It's okay. I don't know, some stewardess.  
 GABE. A stewardess? Tom's in love with a stewardess?  
 KAREN. Oh, God, that is so tacky.  
 BETTI. He's been traveling so much ... "Nancy" her name is.  
 KAREN. How long has this been going on?  
 BETTI. I don't know, a few months, apparently.  
 KAREN. *(Over "... apparently.")* A few months? When did you find out?  
 BETTI. Last week; while you were away.  
 GABE. *(Softly.)* Oh, jeez ...  
 KAREN. What happened?  
 BETTI. He confessed. We had an argument. About the dog. He hates the dog. If the dog chews on the rug, naturally it's *my* fault, so ... *(Takes a breath.)* He told me he was miserable, that he's always been miserable ...  
 GABE. What?  
 BETTI. *(Continuous.)* ... he's been miserable for so long he doesn't remember what it was like to be happy.

# Tom and Beth

TOM. So you're sitting there ...  
BETH. I don't believe this.  
TOM. Tell me.  
BETH. We were sitting there ... and I lost it. I just ... lost it.  
TOM. Oh, Christ ... You *cried*? You actually *cried*?  
BETH. Yes. What do you expect? Of course I cried.  
TOM. Shut!  
BETH. *You* try carrying that around with you. I'm only human.  
I mean, I'm sitting there with our closest friends ...  
TOM. I can't believe you did this ...  
BETH. (*Continuous.*) ... eating their food, drinking their wine,  
making believe that everything is just dandy, and I couldn't do it!  
TOM. I can't believe it ...  
BETH. So what? So what if they know? So they know! They were  
bound to find out!  
TOM. That's not the point! *You've* got the advantage now!  
BETH. What?! I do not!  
TOM. Of course you do! You got to them first!  
BETH. Tom ...  
TOM. (*Continuous.*) They heard your side of the story first! Of  
*course* they're gonna side with you, it's only natural!  
BETH. Oh, come on, nobody's taking sides.  
TOM. Don't be naive! You know how it is! I'm not gonna let you  
get away with this ...  
BETH. What?!  
TOM. (*Continuous.*) Gabe and Karen mean too much to me, I'm  
not gonna let you turn them against me!  
BETH. Tom, you're overreacting.  
TOM. Don't tell me I'm overreacting! You've prejudiced my case!  
BETH. I have not, Tommy. I was very evenhanded.  
TOM. How can you say that?! You're sitting there turning on the  
tears ...  
BETH. I wasn't turning on anything! Fuck you; I stated the facts.  
They were very sympathetic.  
TOM. Of course they were sympathetic. You won them over.  
BETH. I did not; stop saying that.  
TOM. You *intended* to tell them.  
BETH. That is not true! I tried, I really did. I couldn't help it!

# Act 1 Scene 2

Everything just spilled out!  
TOM. Tell me. What did you spill? I want to hear what you  
spilled.  
BETH. Look, this is sick. I'm exhausted. Aren't you exhausted, Tom?  
TOM. (*Over "Aren't you exhausted, Tom?"*) I want to know what  
was said. Do you mind? I'm entitled to know.  
BETH. You *know* all this, we've been through this a dozen times.  
TOM. (*Over " ... a dozen times."*) If you're gonna be speaking for  
the both of us, the least you could do ...  
BETH. I told them what happened. Okay?  
TOM. Everything?  
BETH. (*A beat.*) Yes.  
TOM. And what did they say?  
BETH. They were shocked. They were sad.  
TOM. They were?  
BETH. What do you think? They're our best friends. Of course,  
they were shocked, they were terribly upset.  
TOM. They were sad for *you*, though, right? Because *I'm* such a  
bastard.  
BETH. They were sad for everybody. They were sad for the kids.  
TOM. Did you tell them what you did to me, how you killed my  
self confidence?  
BETH. Oh, Christ, Tom ...  
TOM. (*Continuous.*) Did you? Did you tell them how you refused  
to hear me? How I tried to get you to listen to me ... for years  
but you wouldn't? Did you tell them that?  
BETH. (*Over "Did you tell them that?"*) No more of this. Please?  
TOM. I cried out for help, so many times ...  
BETH. How did you cry out, Tom, by fucking stewardesses?  
TOM. Goddammit, she's not a stewardess!  
BETH. Were your cries detectable by *human* ears, Tom, or could  
just the *dogs* in the neighborhood hear them?  
TOM. That's right, go ahead, cut me down, castrate me all over  
again.  
BETH. (*Over " ... all over again."*) Oh, please. You know, I hear  
you say this stuff, Tom ... I can't believe that someone I could have  
been married to, for *twelve years*!, that I could have had *children*  
with!, would be capable of spouting such banal bullshit!

## Karen, Gabe, Tom and Beth

GABE. What?  
KAREN. Why are you doing this?  
GABE. What does it matter what I think? Tom can decide for himself if he thinks she's any good.  
TOM. Yeah.  
KAREN. *(Over "... if he thinks she's ...")* You're being incredibly negative and I wish you would cut it out!  
GABE. He asked me what I thought! What difference does it make? Jesus ... *(They cook in silence.)*  
TOM. *(Sarcastically.)* Gee, it's really generous of you guys to be setting your friends up. I guess you just want us to be as happy as you are, huh? That's really sweet.  
KAREN. *(Smiling.)* Screw you. *(Beth comes in looking sunburned and pretty, wearing a shoulder bag bursting with art supplies and headphones around her neck. She ignores Tom, who smiles expectantly.)*  
BETH. *(Entering.)* Hello?  
KAREN. Hi!  
GABE. Hi hi.  
BETH. I'm not late, am I?  
GABE. Not at all.  
BETH. I totally lost track of time.  
KAREN. Where did you go?  
BETH. Oh, it was glorious. The light! On the ocean! I walked all the way down to the beach ... Where you took me yesterday?  
KAREN. Lucy Vincent Beach?  
BETH. Yes!  
KAREN. Wow, that's some walk.  
BETH. Uh! I love this place!  
GABE. I know.  
BETH. I am in love.  
TOM. This your first time on the Vineyard?  
BETH. *(Ignores him; to Karen.)* I walked all along the beach, past those spectacular clay cliffs?  
KAREN. Uh huh.  
BETH. The light!  
GABE. I know.  
BETH. I'm telling you, the cliffs glow!  
KAREN. They do, don't they.

## Act 2 Scene 1 *(Flash back)*

BETH. They're this brilliant terracotta.  
KAREN. Uh huh.  
BETH. And these people, these beautiful men and women, were cavorting in the clay ...  
GABE. Oh, yeah.  
BETH. *(Continuous.)* ... and the light on their bodies ...  
TOM. Were they naked?  
BETH. *(A beat, looking at him for the first time.)* Excuse me?  
TOM. I was just wondering if they were naked.  
BETH. Some of them.  
GABE. I'm sorry; Beth, this is Tom. Tom ...  
TOM. Hi. *(He extends his hand; they shake hands.)*  
BETH. I remember you. *(To Karen.)* I do remember him.  
KAREN. I knew you would.  
TOM. Wait wait; I don't think we ever ...  
BETH. At the wedding, I talked a lot to the woman you were with. She was a public defender.  
TOM. Not anymore. I mean, she's still a public defender, I'm just not with her anymore.  
BETH. Oh, that's too bad.  
TOM. Not necessarily.  
BETH. She seemed great.  
TOM. *(Equivocally.)* Uh ...  
BETH. As I recall, I talked to her a lot more than you did. Maybe if you paid more attention to her ...  
GABE. Moving right along ...  
KAREN. Would you like something to drink?  
BETH. I would *love* something to drink.  
GABE. Beer, wine, red, white...? Rum and tonic?  
BETH. Oo, yeah, a rum and tonic; a rum and tonic sounds great.  
GABE. You got it. *(Gabe prepares one.)*  
TOM. So, is this your first trip to the Vineyard?  
BETH. Yeah it is. *(Mostly to Karen.)* And now I see what makes people so fanatical about this place: the terrain!  
KAREN. Uh huh.  
GABE. That's right.  
BETH. *(Continuous.)* This amazing mix of sand and cliffs and rolling hills.

# Karen + Beth

KAREN. A few *months*?

BETH. (*Continuous.*) He's teaching me how to rollerblade!

KAREN. Oh, God.

BETH. I'm getting pretty good at it, too. We play hooky some afternoons and he takes me out to, *you* know, along the canal?

KAREN. Do you wear knee-pads and a helmet and everything?

BETH. Yes.

KAREN. 'Cause you could really hurt yourself on those things.

BETH. It's fun! You should try it. We'll give you and Gabe a lesson.

KAREN. Yeah, I can just see Gabe ...

BETH. He's so full of life; David; he's so open and optimistic.

He's a playmate, *that's* what he is, a wonderful playmate.

KAREN. Boy, that was fast.

BETH. What?

KAREN. Tom is barely out the door ...

BETH. Oh, Karen ...

KAREN. You didn't want to be alone for a while? You haven't been alone in a dozen years.

BETH. I've always been alone, don't you see? I spent my *marriage* alone.

KAREN. But to get *involved* with someone, right away?

BETH. (*Over " ... right away?"*) I'm in love with him.

KAREN. (*A beat.*) How could you be in love with him?

BETH. I am.

KAREN. (*Continuous.*) You've only just started seeing him.

BETH. I knew him years ago, I said.

KAREN. Through Tom.

BETH. Right. We went out socially a few times, the two couples.

KAREN. But that's different.

BETH. I mean, it's not like he's a stranger. The preliminaries were out of the way. There's a history there. There was already a kind of shorthand.

KAREN. I can understand its being exciting, I can understand that. But love?

BETH. Why is that so hard to believe? I fell in love with Tom that first weekend at the Vineyard.

KAREN. Okay, and look where *that* got you. Sorry. (*A beat.*) I just think you have to be careful.

# Act 2 Scene 2

BETH. Karen ...

KAREN. (*Continuous.*) You're very vulnerable right now.

BETH. Oh, please ...

KAREN. I don't want you to get hurt.

BETH. I'm gonna marry him. (*A tense pause.*) David is not Tom. He's not. They're very different men. There's no hidden agenda with him. What you see is what you get. You know? He *talks* to me; he tells me what he's thinking. He lets me in. (*A beat.*) So much of my marriage to Tom was this dark little tango, this adagio dance. I don't want that anymore. I want another shot at it. With David. And David wants me.

KAREN. (*Nods, then:*) I wish you well.

BETH. Thanks. (*Pause.*) He's great with the kids. You should see him with them. They're crazy about him. Particularly Sammy. He's all over him. Things were so gloomy, after Tom left, you have no idea ...

KAREN. I know.

BETH. I never thought my kids would laugh again, I mean it, it was that grim.

KAREN. I'm sure.

BETH. I know what I'm doing, Karen. This is the man I was meant to be with. I really believe that. I had to survive Tom so I could end up with David. It was my fate.

KAREN. That may be, but, still, I wish you'd give it more time.

BETH. And let this moment pass? No way. I don't want to let this moment — look, *why* do I even bother?

KAREN. What?

BETH. You think I'm crazy.

KAREN. I never said that ...

BETH. (*Continuous.*) This is my opportunity for a real marriage, a real partnership. But you don't want me to have that, do you.

KAREN. (*Over " ... do you."*) What an outrageous thing to say! Of course I do!

BETH. (*Over " ... of course I do!"*) I'm finally feeling whole, finally feeling like I'm on the right track, for the first time in my life, and what do you do? You undermine me!

KAREN. I am not undermining you, I'm only thinking of what's best for you.

# Tom + Gabe

TOM. Boy, she really holds a grudge, doesn't she.  
 GABE. Well, this is sort of a biggie, though, you gotta admit. (*A beat.*) When'd you get to town?  
 TOM. This morning. Nancy came *with* me.  
 GABE. Oh, yeah?  
 TOM. She loves New York. Thought we'd hang out, see a couple of shows ...  
 GABE. Uh huh. So, you're going up to see the kids?  
 TOM. No, not this weekend; I have them *next* week. This is *her* week; I'm not gonna mess with *that*, believe me.  
 GABE. Oh.  
 TOM. God forbid there's any change of plan ... It's like Nuremberg.  
 GABE. (*A chuckle.*) Uh huh. You look great.  
 TOM. Thanks, I feel great. I'm turning again.  
 GABE. Oh, yeah?  
 TOM. I lost a little weight ...  
 GABE. More than a little.  
 TOM. Nancy and I, we get up at six ...  
 GABE. Wow. Six!  
 TOM. ... run four, five miles ...  
 GABE. How do you do it?  
 TOM. ... come back, make love in the shower  
 GABE. Uh huh.  
 TOM. Then, off to work. That's my new regimen. And let me tell you: It's totally changed my perspective on my day.  
 GABE. Must be those invigorating showers.  
 TOM. (*Leaning forward.*) The things she's got me doing, Gabe...!  
 GABE. Lucky you.  
 TOM. Nancy has more imagination, more daring, more wisdom  
 I mean, it just goes to show you how age is totally irrelevant.  
 I'm a boy-toy at forty-three!  
 GABE. Uh huh.  
 TOM. She is so at home in her own body. See, I've never known what that was like. A lover teaches you that, it's something you learn together. Beth and I never had that; she was never comfortable in her own body ...  
 GABE. Really? Gee, I always thought ...

# Act 2 Scene 3

TOM. (*Continuous.*) So how could I expect her to be comfortable with *mine*? Nancy and I'll be strolling along and she'll put her hand on my ass or something, just like that, without even thinking about it. With Beth, sex was always up to me. It was never about her *wanting* me, it was never about desire, it was all about obligation. And then once the kids came ... Well, *you* know how that is.  
 GABE. Uh huh.  
 TOM. Sex became one more thing on my list of things to do. You know? Nancy and I, we are totally in sync. She just has to stroke my *fingers* and I get hard, or give me a look, or laugh a certain way.  
 GABE. Do you two ever ... talk?  
 TOM. Oh, yeah. Are you kidding? We talk all the time. Remember what that's like when a relationship is new? All that talk, all that sex, all that laughter? Nancy really hears me. She hears me.  
 GABE. Uh huh.  
 TOM. She saved my life, Gabe. She really did; she breathed life back into me.  
 GABE. (*Nods, then.*) Good. That's great. I'm glad. (*He sips his drink. Tom looks at him.*) What.  
 TOM. What are you thinking?  
 GABE. What do you mean?  
 TOM. Come on, I know *you*. I know that *look*.  
 GABE. I'm just listening. You don't want me to say anything, right?  
 TOM. (*Over " ... right?"*) Oh, Christ ...  
 GABE. No, isn't that what you told me?  
 TOM. I said that to you ... when I was still very raw ...  
 GABE. Oh. And you're not so raw anymore? Well, what are the rules, then? You've gotta fill me in here, pal, I've gotta know the rules so I don't step out of bounds.  
 TOM. Gabe ...  
 GABE. Okay, you want to know what I'm thinking? I'm thinking: I hear you talking, Tom, I hear these *words* coming out, and you sound like a fucking *moonie* to me, Tom, you really do ...  
 TOM. (*Over " ... you really do ..."*) I'm trying to tell you ... I was dying! You don't understand that, do you? I was losing the will to live, isn't that dying? The life I was leading had no relationship