



Eugene Shear

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

Beneath the Moon

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*I'd like to dedicate this play
to Players Ring of Portsmouth, NH,
and to Community Players of Concord, NH,
whose playwrights' group
was invaluable in helping me
with this script.*

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Beneath the Moon was first produced by Players Ring in Portsmouth, NH, on May 25, 2007: Stan Zabecki, director; Tim Robinson, assistant director.

SUSAN DAVIS: Sarah Pietlicki

DEREK DAVENPORT: Tobin Moss

ABBIE DAVIS: Greg Gaskell

TANIA DAVIS: Kate Betton

STEVE BLOCK: Ed Hinton

BRIDGET JOHNSON: Carlyne Gallo

MRS. DAVIS: Stefanie Diamond

FIREMAN: Robin Fowler

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Winner, F. Gary Newton Playwright Award, 2006

COMEDY. All three of Mrs. Davis' children have become recently engaged and arrive at her home to introduce their fiancés to their mother for the first time. When the fiancés finally meet their future mother-in-law, they are shocked to find out Mrs. Davis thinks she is Queen Elizabeth I, wears a Tudor gown complete with an Elizabethan collar, and carries around a pet guinea pig named Lord Halifax. Then, to top off the madness, the fiancés discover that Mrs. Davis has offered up a one-million-dollar dowry, but they must first prove themselves worthy by either performing a great act of caring or a great act of daring.

Performance Time: Approximately 90 minutes.

Characters

(3 M, 4 F, 1 flexible)

MRS. DAVIS: Wealthy, commanding widow who dresses and acts like she is Queen Elizabeth I; speaks with an English accent and in the second person; wears a beautiful, Tudor-era gown with an Elizabethan collar and a wristwatch.

ABBIE DAVIS: Mrs. Davis' oldest child who is engaged to Bridget; cheerful, excitable inventor who is developing a talking washing machine; wears a shirt that hangs out over his jeans.

TANIA DAVIS: Mrs. Davis' middle child who is engaged to Steve; conniving, shrewd, and obsessed with getting rich; wears a pants suit.

SUSAN DAVIS: Mrs. Davis' youngest child who is engaged to Derek; caring and sweet but with a steely side; wears an attractive dress and jacket.

BRIDGET JOHNSON: Independent, impulsive day care director; wears an attractive skirt and blouse.

STEVE BLOCK: Handsome clothes salesman; wears a suit and grey turtleneck.

DEREK DAVENPORT: Self-assured jazz musician; wears slacks and a sports coat but no tie.

FIREMAN: Flexible.

Set

Mrs. Davis' kitchen. Attractive eat-in kitchen. On the wall SR is a door hinged on its upstage side, which leads offstage to the main part of the house. On the opposite wall are two doors also hinged on their upstage sides. The door downstage leads to a pantry (offstage), while the upstage door leads to a back door and downstairs laundry room (offstage). Between the two doors is a stove. Next to it is a small kitchen table. On the back wall are a refrigerator, counter, sink, and a small speaker. Cabinets are above. In the rear corner SR, sitting on a pedestal, is a greatly enlarged papier-mâché statue of an infant pacifier. A circular table is in the middle of the room and seven chairs are placed around it. A vase filled with flowers sits on the table. Several still lifes of fruit hang on the walls. Two or three plants on stands are arranged around the room.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: Saturday afternoon.

Scene 2: That evening.

Intermission

ACT II

Scene 1: Sunday morning.

Scene 2: That evening.

Props

Suitcase, for Derek	Sugar dish
Drinking glasses	Teapot
Pitcher	Dinnerware
Large suitcase	Silverware
Suit bag	Pen
Suitcase identical to Derek's suitcase, for Bridget	7 Placemats
Tudor-era gown, for Mrs. Davis	Wastebasket
Elizabethan collar, for Mrs. Davis	Container of water
Fan	Dress, for Bridget
2 Small speakers or baby monitors	Slacks and dress shirt, for Abbie
3 Soft drinks	Colorful scarf
Vase of flowers	Tie and sports coat, for Derek
Package of cookies	Kitchen sponge
Bottle of whiskey	Stuffed guinea pig
Half gallon of milk	Miniature Elizabethan collar for guinea pig
Teacups and saucers	Cage, for guinea pig
Tuxedo, for Steve	Cell phone
Electric train with a locomotive and car	Box of baking soda
Tall wooden pepper grinder	2 Oven mitts
Napkins	Large papier-mâché turkey blackened on top
Butter dish	Small roasting pan
Salt shaker	Black medical satchel
	Tape cassette

Special Effects

Romantic jazz ballad

Footsteps running up a flight of stairs

Footsteps coming up the stairs

Sound of a scuffle

Jazz ballad

Pulsing red light or another device to simulate an oven fire

Dry ice or other means to simulate smoke

Door opening

“I should have
warned you
about my family.”

—Susan

ACT I Scene 1

(AT RISE: Mrs. Davis' kitchen. Spotlight on a vase of flowers on the table. A romantic jazz ballad is heard and then fades out. Lights up. SR door opens. Susan enters, wearing an attractive dress and jacket. She steps inside, leaving the door open. Her face has a happy glow. She takes off her jacket.)

SUSAN: *(Calls.)* Mom must be upstairs, Derek!

(Susan walks to the table and drapes her jacket over a chair. Derek enters, carrying a suitcase. He has on slacks and a sports coat, but no tie. He looks behind him before shutting the door and sets down his suitcase.)

DEREK: *(In disbelief.)* Your mother's living room looks like something out of a castle!

SUSAN: *(Smile fades.)* I hope she doesn't think... *(Reflects a moment and then shakes her head.)* ...she couldn't. *(Approaches the kitchen cabinets. Smiles.)* Something to drink?

DEREK: Water, thanks. *(Notices the statue of the pacifier.)*
What's that?

(Derek approaches the statue. Susan takes two glasses from the cabinet.)

SUSAN: "The Plug." *(Derek stares at the statue blankly.)*
Remember how my family made its money...Grandfather designed an improvement to the pacifier? *(Removes a pitcher from the refrigerator.)* You remember my brother's and sister's names...

(Derek approaches Susan.)

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DEREK: You're named for Susan B. Anthony. Abbie's named for...Abbie Hoffman? And Tania's named for... *(Tries to recall.)*

(Susan pours a glass of water.)

SUSAN: Patty Hearst, when she was in the SLA.

(Derek puts his arms around Susan's waist.)

DEREK: *(Teasing.)* Your parents named her for a bank robber?

SUSAN: Patti Hearst was pardoned, you know. Besides, Tania's the wealthy heiress.

DEREK: Like you, provided your mother approves of your fiancés.

SUSAN: *(Beams.)* Once Mom gets to know you, she'll love you as much as I do.

(Susan and Derek kiss.)

ABBIE: *(Off SL.)* I'm off balance! Put me right!

DEREK: *(To Susan, startled.)* Who was that?

SUSAN: *(Frowns.)* Abbie.

ABBIE: *(Off SL.)* I'm not normal! I'm delicate!

(Susan goes to the USL door and opens it.)

SUSAN: *(Calls.)* Abbie?

(Brief pause. Sound of footsteps running up a flight of stairs. Abbie enters USL. His hair is uncombed and his shirt hangs out over his jeans.)

ABBIE: *(Beams.)* Sue! *(Hugs her.)* What are you doing here?

SUSAN: Didn't Mom tell you I was coming?

ABBIE: I forgot. *(Conspiratorial.)* I'm in the zone.

SUSAN: I can tell. Derek, this is Abbie. He's an inventor, like Grandfather.

(Derek shakes Abbie's hand.)

DEREK: It's nice to meet you. I play the saxophone.

ABBIE: Cool! I'm working on my latest invention—the talking washing machine. *(Suddenly serious. Takes a deep breath.)* I'm in love, Sue.

SUSAN: You are? *(Sits down at the table. Happy.)* Who is she?

(Abbie sits down.)

ABBIE: *(Excited.)* Bridget! *(To Susan.)* Guess what? We're getting married! She's coming this weekend. Mom wants to meet her.

SUSAN: No way! We're engaged! Mom wants to meet Derek, too. We only met six weeks ago.

ABBIE: I've known Bridget less than that.

SUSAN: When did you meet?

ABBIE: Last Saturday.

SUSAN: Abbie!

ABBIE: Don't worry. Bridget didn't say "yes" right away. Did you know Tania's coming? She's bringing her boyfriend, Steve. They're getting married, too!

SUSAN: All our fiancés are coming and none of them have met Mom? This should be interesting!

ABBIE: *(To Derek.)* Did Sue tell you about your requirement?

(Pause. Derek looks at Susan, who avoids meeting his eyes.)

DEREK: *(To Susan.)* My requirement?

SUSAN: You have to perform an act of great caring before Mom will give me my dowry.

ABBIE: *(To Derek.)* And Bridget has to perform an act of great daring before I can get mine. Mom's a little eccentric.

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DEREK: I guess! *(Smiles at them, hoping they aren't serious. When he realizes they're serious, his grin fades.)* Where'd she get that idea?

ABBIE: From Julia Child. She said men should be more caring and women more daring. *(To Susan.)* I didn't tell Bridget, either.

SUSAN: Does Steve know?

ABBIE: He must. Tania told Mom he adopts greyhounds. Mom has her doubts, though. Tania told her he's waiting for one with the right color.

(Tania enters from the SR door, followed by Steve, who is carrying a large suitcase and suit bag. Tania is wearing a pants suit. Steve is wearing a suit and grey turtleneck. Tania looks behind her through the open door.)

TANIA: *(To Steve, sarcastic.)* I hope Mom doesn't think she's Lucrezia Borgia. We'll have to buy a parakeet to test the food.

(Steve puts down the suitcase.)

STEVE: Lucrezia who?

(Tania goes to the table.)

TANIA: *(Waving her hand.)* Borgia. The Italian woman who poisoned her rivals? That's how they got rid of people back then. *(Takes off her jacket and hangs it on the back of a chair.)* I read she's gotten a bad rap. Too bad! No one will remember her now.

(Susan stands up.)

SUSAN: *(Warmly.)* Hi, Tania.

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(Abbie and Derek stand.)

TANIA: Hello, Sue. *(Notices Derek. To Susan, indicating Derek.)*

Who's this?

SUSAN: Derek.

DEREK: *(To Tania.)* It's a pleasure.

(Derek and Tania shake hands.)

TANIA: The pleasure's all *mine*.

SUSAN: *(Indicating Steve.)* And this is...

(Tania continues to smile at Derek and doesn't let go of his hand.)

TANIA: Steve. *(Finally lets go of Derek's hand. Turns to Steve and gives him an admiring look. To Susan, indicating Steve.)*

Isn't he a specimen?

SUSAN: *(To Steve, smiling.)* I'm sure you're more than that.

(To Tania.) Did Mom tell you Derek and I are engaged?

TANIA: *(Frowning.)* Two of us are?

ABBIE: Make that three.

TANIA: You are? To what's her name...Budget?

ABBIE: Bridget.

TANIA: Whatever. This'll set Mom off! Somebody better call her psychiatrist.

SUSAN: Did Mom ask you to bring Steve so she could meet him?

TANIA: Yes. Why?

BRIDGET: *(Off SR.)* Is anyone there?

ABBIE: We're in here, tulip blossom! *(Leaps up and runs over to the SR door. Opens the door and Bridget enters, wearing an attractive skirt and blouse. She's carrying a suitcase that is almost identical to Susan and Derek's. Arms outstretched, beaming.)*
Ruby lips!

(Bridget drops her suitcase and holds out her arms.)

BRIDGET: Swivel hips!

(Abbie and Bridget kiss.)

ABBIE: *(Catching his breath.)* How have you been, angel wings?

BRIDGET: Wonderful! How's the washing machine?

ABBIE: One more command and I'm done!

(Tania loudly clears her throat. Hastily turns to the others.)

TANIA: *(Introducing.)* This is Sue and Tania. And these are their fiancés, Derek and Steve. Guess what? We're all getting married!

BRIDGET: *(Eyes wide.)* We are? *(Greets everyone. Starts to shake Derek's hand.)* Oh! Hi.

DEREK: *(Startled.)* Hi.

(Awkward silence.)

TANIA: *(To Bridget and Derek.)* Do you know each other?

BRIDGET: We do! Or did. We worked at... *(Looks at Derek.)* ...[Domino's Pizza]? I took the orders and you— *[Or insert the name of another pizza place.]*

DEREK: Delivered! Day and night...

ABBIE: *(To Bridget.)* Derek plays the saxophone. *(To Derek.)* Do you play those slow, romantic tunes? Bridget loves those.

(Bridget turns red. Tania looks at her.)

TANIA: *(To Bridget.)* You haven't seen Derek play before, have you?

(Before Bridget can reply, Mrs. Davis enters SR, wearing a beautiful Tudor-era gown with an Elizabethan collar. In her right hand, she holds a fan, which she waves slowly. Bridget and Derek gape at her)

while Steve looks on, entranced. Tania rolls her eyes. Abbie hurries over to his mother.)

ABBIE: Hi, Mom. I'd like you to meet—

MRS. DAVIS: *(Arches her eyebrows. With an upper-class English accent.)* You may address us as "Queen Elizabeth" or "Your Highness," Abbie.

ABBIE: Mom! *(Mrs. Davis gives him a hard look.)* All right, Your Highness. I'd like you to meet—

MRS. DAVIS: A queen is announced when she makes an entrance. If you would be so kind?

(Abbie gives his mom an exasperated look, turns to the others, snaps to attention, and stomps his foot.)

ABBIE: *(Imitating a royal courtier.)* Hear ye! Hear ye! I present to you Queen Elizabeth the First of England!

MRS. DAVIS: Very good. Now, if you would present our guests? One at a time, please.

ABBIE: Queen Elizabeth... *(Introducing.)* ...Bridget Johnson.

(Bridget approaches Mrs. Davis.)

BRIDGET: How do you do, Mrs.... *(Mrs. Davis gives her a hard look. Corrects herself.)* ...I mean, Your Highness! *(Holds out her hand to shake hands with Mrs. Davis.)*

MRS. DAVIS: *(To Abbie.)* Would you explain proper etiquette to Bridget?

(Abbie stares blankly at Mrs. Davis. Bridget looks on, bewildered. Mrs. Davis glances at Bridget, then down at the floor, then back at Abbie. Abbie stares at her uncomprehendingly. Mrs. Davis frowns and then curtsies slightly.)

ABBIE: *(Finally understands. To Bridget.)* Queen Elizabeth would you like you to curtsy.

BRIDGET: Oh! (*Hastily curtsies.*) I'm honored to meet you, Your Highness.

MRS. DAVIS: The pleasure is all ours, my dear. (*Examining her.*) Why, you're almost as beautiful as *we* were when we were your age.

BRIDGET: (*Unsure how to take this.*) Thank you.

MRS. DAVIS: Not at all. (*Waves her fan, indicating their meeting is over. Bridget turns around, stops, then repositions herself facing Mrs. Davis. She walks backward to where she'd been standing. Mrs. Davis gives her a pleased look.*) You're a quick study, Bridget. (*Turns to Abbie. Indicating Steve and Derek.*) And who are these gentlemen? (*Points to Steve. Her face lights up.*) Now we understand. A man as handsome as this must always accessorize, even when it comes to greyhounds.

(*Steve beams.*)

ABBIE: (*Snaps to attention.*) Your loyal subject, Steve Block!

(*Steve approaches Mrs. Davis.*)

MRS. DAVIS: (*To Abbie.*) Would you explain *male* etiquette, Abbie? (*Abbie looks puzzled, then sees Susan, who is trying to catch his attention. Susan bows twice and then points to Steve. Steve notices Susan out of the corner of his eye and bows twice. Fluttering her fan.*) Once will do, Steven. Once will do.

STEVE: (*Beaming.*) It's nice to meet you, Queen Elizabeth. Tania has told me a lot about you.

MRS. DAVIS: Has she? Did she tell you about the time we thought we were Annie Oakley? (*Sniffs.*) Imagine, thinking we were employed by a Wild West show! (*Steve looks at her blankly.*) No? (*Airily.*) An insurance salesman was smoking a cigar in our parlor and letting the ash burn down. So we took out our Colt revolver, told him to sit perfectly still, and tried to shoot the ashes off. Luckily for him, we shot the

table lamp, instead. We've never seen a salesman leave so fast in our life! Now, *that* was a settlement. But put your mind at ease, Steven. We don't keep guns in the house anymore. (*Gives Tania a piercing look. To Tania.*) We *do* have several lethal poisons, however. (*Tania gives her a puzzled look.*) Lucrezia Borgia?

TANIA: Mom! You've been eavesdropping. (*Looks around the room, spots a small speaker in the corner on the counter, and points at it.*) The speakers we had in our rooms when we were babies? You put them in here, didn't you?

MRS. DAVIS: Didn't we make it clear that we are not to be addressed as "Mom"? (*Mrs. Davis and Tania stare at each other. Narrowing her eyes.*) We believe Steven is here to receive our blessing?

TANIA: All right, Queen Elizabeth, but you still shouldn't eavesdrop.

MRS. DAVIS: When you are queen, my dear, you never know what plots might be swirling about. (*To Steve, beaming.*) We look forward to getting to know you *much* better. (*Steve beams back at her and then turns around. As he starts walking back to the table, he sees Tania, who is motioning frantically at him. He whirls about and walks slowly backward, bowing several times. Mrs. Davis turns to Abbie.*) Would you present our last guest?

ABBIE: (*Snaps to attention.*) Queen Elizabeth, I present to you Derek... (*Looks at Derek questioningly.*)

DEREK: Davenport.

ABBIE: Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

MRS. DAVIS: "Oyez" is for courtrooms, Abbie, not people's homes. (*Stretches her hand in Derek's direction with her palm facing her and then closes her fingers toward her. To Derek.*) You may approach.

(*Derek approaches Mrs. Davis, removes his sports coat, performs a sweeping bow in the manner of Sir Walter Raleigh, and lays his coat on the ground before her.*)

DEREK: I only wish there was a puddle, Your Highness, so I could protect your royal toes.

MRS. DAVIS: We assume you are not mocking our person, Derek. We are pleased to meet you. You may go. (*Derek picks up his sports coat and walks backward.*) We regret we must return to our chambers. Lord Halifax awaits. His condition is very delicate.

ABBIE: (*To the others, explaining.*) Hally's the royal guinea pig. Queen Elizabeth got him from the shelter last week.

SUSAN: Is he sick, Your Highness?

MRS. DAVIS: (*Fluttering her fan, worried.*) He has a bad case of asthma. We had to rush him to the veterinary clinic two days ago. It was touch and go. (*Recovers her poise.*) Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. sharp. We shall rejoin you then. (*Turns to exit.*)

ABBIE: (*Cheerfully.*) I don't see anything on the stove, Your Highness.

MRS. DAVIS: That's because we would like your fiancés to prepare it...as a first test of their suitability. And, Children, you are not to help, except to show your better halves where things are. Abbie?

ABBIE: (*Like a ringmaster.*) La-die-z and gen-tle-men...

MRS. DAVIS: This isn't the circus!

ABBIE: Sorry, Your Highness.

(*Mrs. Davis walks to the door SR, fanning herself in a leisurely fashion. When she reaches the door, she turns.*)

MRS. DAVIS: Children, we have an announcement. Due to the vagaries of the stock market, the \$3 million dollars we'd set aside for your dowries has shrunk. If all your fiancés meet their requirements, each of you will now receive a third of a million dollars. If two meet them, then two of you will receive a half million. And if one meets them? We'll leave that to you to work out. And, Abbie, you might want to tell Bridget what her requirement is...as she's looking

rather bewildered. *(Turns and waits at the door. Pause. Peremptorily.)* Abbie?

ABBIE: *(Snaps to attention.)* Coming!

(Abbie runs over and opens the door. Mrs. Davis exits. Abbie joins the others. Tania and Susan look at each other with dismay.)

BRIDGET: *(To Abbie, puzzled.)* What's this about my requirement?

(Before Abbie can answer, Tania puts her finger across her lips. She tiptoes over to the speaker, picks it up gingerly, and adjusts a knob. After putting it back, she searches the rest of the room and finds another speaker concealed in the corner of one of the cupboards. She holds it up in triumph, adjusts a knob, and puts it back in place.)

SUSAN: *(To Tania.)* Won't Mom know we turned off the speakers?

TANIA: I didn't turn them all the way down...just enough for her to have trouble hearing. *(Everyone looks expectantly at the door SR. After a moment or two, it's clear that Mrs. Davis isn't returning. Angrily.)* I told her she shouldn't pick stocks throwing darts at the business page! *(To Abbie and Susan.)* I don't know about you, but I want to live in a mansion, not a trailer park.

SUSAN: *(Trying to make the best of it.)* A third of a million dollars is still a lot of money, Tania. *(Gets up and walks to the refrigerator. To the fiancés.)* Mom isn't usually like this. She used to see this lady—

ABBIE: Fatima.

SUSAN: Who'd tell her she was a famous woman in a previous life. So she kind of played the part.

TANIA: Kind of played the part? She's a manic-depressive, Sue!

(Susan fishes around in the refrigerator for three soft drinks.)

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SUSAN: She's been much better since she's been on her meds.

TANIA: How do we know she's taking them?

ABBIE: I counted her pills. They check out.

BRIDGET: Would someone please tell me what my requirement is?

(Susan hands out the soft drinks.)

ABBIE: I'm sorry, rose petal! You have to do something very daring, and Steve and Derek have to do something very caring. *(Bridget stares at him in disbelief. Impishly.)* You could challenge Tania to a duel. We could put blanks in the pistols.

(Tania bends over to smell the flowers in the vase.)

TANIA: I don't know, Abbie. I might decide to off Bridget and use real bullets.

SUSAN: Very funny, Tania. *(To Bridget.)* We'll talk more about it after dinner. *(To Derek.)* Would you take up our suitcase? I'd like to wash up.

(Derek and Susan head toward the exit SR.)

DEREK: I worked at my uncle's funeral home one summer. I took care of lots of people.

(Derek picks up Bridget's suitcase by mistake. Susan and Derek exit SR. Abbie heads to the exit USL.)

ABBIE: *(To Bridget.)* Would you like to see the washing machine?

BRIDGET: I'd love to!

(Bridget and Abbie exit SL. Tania goes to the cabinet.)

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TANIA: *(To Steve.)* Did you believe that story about Derek and Bridget working at [Domino's]?

(Steve goes to the oven and gingerly tries the controls.)

STEVE: [Domino's] makes great pizza.

(Tania opens a cabinet and rummages around.)

TANIA: That's beside the point.

STEVE: What do you mean? If they both liked [Domino's] pizza, they could have wanted to work there. *(Tania gives him an irritated look.)* Why's it so important?

(Tania takes a cookie out of a package and approaches him.)

TANIA: Because if they're hiding something, and we can find out what it is, we could break up their engagements.

STEVE: That's not nice!

(Tania positions herself between Steve and the oven.)

TANIA: We're talking a million dollars, Steve! *(Waves the package of cookies in the air.)* Besides, it'd only be for a while. After they make up, Mom'd give them another chance. *(Reaches behind her and places the package of cookies on the stovetop. Steve eyes it hungrily. Tania puts her arms around Steve. Suddenly sweet.)* Anyway, I've never understood the sharing thing.

STEVE: My mother told my brother and me to share.

TANIA: *(Running her fingers through his hair.)* And did you?

(Steve reaches behind Tania and gropes around for the package of cookies.)

STEVE: When she was around we did.

TANIA: There are a lot of advantages to not sharing, Steve. You know that Armani suit you love? You could have a lot more if we had a million dollars.

(Steve ponders this as he continues to grope around for the package of cookies.)

STEVE: Mr. Armani does make great suits...

TANIA: *(Pressing closer to him.)* And you look great in them. *(Just as his fingers touch the package of cookies, Tania kisses him on the lips, inadvertently stepping on his feet. He isn't prepared for her embrace and falls backward. Tania loses her balance and falls on top of him. Tania stands up, straightens her clothes, and turns to help him up. Smiling again.)* So what do you say? Will you help? *(Steve looks hesitant.)* Look, if we end up with the whole pot, we'll give them some.

STEVE: You promise?

TANIA: Don't I always keep my promises?

(Pause. Steve ponders this.)

STEVE: All right.

TANIA: Oh, Steve!

(Tania kisses Steve.)

DEREK: *(Off SR.)* I brought up the wrong suitcase, Sue.

BRIDGET: *(Off SL.)* I'm going upstairs, Abbie.

TANIA: *(To Steve.)* Bridget and Derek are coming! *(Looks around the kitchen and sees the door DSL. Stage whisper.)* Let's hide in the pantry. Maybe we can find out what's going on.

STEVE: Didn't you tell your mother not to eavesdrop?

(Tania grabs Steve's hand.)

TANIA: I told *her* not to eavesdrop.

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(Steve and Tania hurry to the door DSL and exit. The sound of footsteps coming up the stairs USL is heard. A moment later, there's the sound of a scuffle DSL.)

TANIA: *(Off SL. To Steve.)* There isn't time!

STEVE: *(Off SL.)* There is too!

(Steve dashes out of the pantry. He grabs the package of cookies, runs back into the pantry, and closes the door, leaving it slightly ajar. Steve and Tania can be seen through the opening. Derek enters SR, carrying Bridget's suitcase. A moment later, Bridget enters USL. Bridget and Derek flinch when they see each other. Pause. Derek puts down the suitcase.)

DEREK: *(To Bridget.)* I'm sorry about what happened, Bridget.

(Bridget sits down.)

BRIDGET: *(Smiling.)* It was beautiful.

(Derek pulls out a chair at the opposite side of the table and sits down.)

DEREK: You were beautiful. A lot has happened in my life since, Bridget. I met Sue and we fell in love. Wait until you get to know her. She loves people, music... *(Voice trails off. Stares into the distance and then comes back.)* For the record...why didn't you return my calls?

(Bridget looks away with a pained expression.)

BRIDGET: I wanted to. *(Smiles.)* But now we can be friends.

DEREK: Maybe relations.

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BRIDGET: (*Expression changes.*) Yes, maybe relations. (*Pause. Abruptly stands up.*) I need to get unpacked. And we're making dinner, right?

DEREK: Do you know what we're having?

(*Bridget heads to the exit SR.*)

BRIDGET: Abbie says there's a roast beef in the frig. (*Picks up her suitcase, opens the door, and hesitates. She stands motionless for a second, turns, and faces Derek.*) There was something beautiful about the night we met, Derek.

DEREK: Was there a full moon?

BRIDGET: You played a pretty Coltrane ballad.

(*Pause. Derek looks at her. Bridget turns, exits, and shuts the door behind her. Derek stares at the door for a second, runs to it, and opens it.*)

DEREK: Wait, Bridget!

BRIDGET: (*Off SR.*) I'll see you in a little while.

DEREK: You'll see me in a little while? We need to talk.
(*Starts to follow her.*)

SUSAN: (*Off SR.*) Is everything all right, Derek?

DEREK: Yes! I was...asking Bridget about dinner.

SUSAN: (*Off SR, cheerfully.*) Is that all? If dinner was all we had to worry about, life would be simple!

(*Derek picks up their suitcase.*)

DEREK: (*To himself.*) It would be way simple!

(*Derek exits, closing the door. A moment later, the DSL door opens and Tania and Steve enter.*)

TANIA: (*Excited, pounding her fists on his chest.*) Yes! (*Shouts.*) Yes! (*Louder.*) Yes! I *knew* there was something between

them. It doesn't get any better than this, Stevie boy! Now, how do we use this bombshell to blow up their engagements!

STEVE: Do you have to put it like that?

TANIA: Don't be squeamish. This is war!

STEVE: All's fair in love and war?

TANIA: Love, war, and *money*. This is America!

STEVE: But won't Sue and Abbie ask how we found out?

TANIA: We don't *tell* them. All we do is plant some doubt in their minds, then persuade them to hide like we did. Once they hear Derek and Bridget dated, they'll go ballistic! *(Pause. Her face lights up. Puts her hand on his arm.)* Would you take up our bags? I need to think.

(Steve picks up the suit bag and suitcase.)

STEVE: *(Worried.)* What about dinner? You know I don't cook.

(Tania and Steve head toward the exit SR.)

TANIA: Bridget and Derek will tell you what to do. *(Opens the door for him.)* Our room's upstairs, second on the left. *(Steve exits. Tania closes the door. She pauses and then goes to a kitchen cabinet. She takes out a bottle of whiskey, pours herself a drink, and goes to the table and sits down.)* If Steve isn't the only one to meet his requirement... *(Takes another sip and stares ahead. Her expression changes. Looks at the door DSR.)* I hate to do this to you, Steve, but...you know what I said about sharing. After you meet the requirement, you and I sign a pre-nup. Six months later, I file for divorce, and then... *(Toasts herself.)* ...meet the wealthy divorcée!

(Tania downs her glass in one gulp and sets it on the table. The sound of footsteps coming up the stairs USL is heard. She thinks for a moment, hurries to the door DSL, exits, and then re-enters with the

package of cookies. She runs to the table, sets the cookies down, grabs an empty glass, runs to the refrigerator and opens it. As she takes out a half gallon of milk, Abbie enters USL.)

ABBIE: *(Beaming.)* Tania!

(Tania pours the milk into her glass.)

TANIA: *(Innocently.)* What a pleasant surprise!

ABBIE: *(Sees the package of cookies on the table.)* Milk and cookies. Just like old times!

(Tania goes to a cabinet and takes out a second glass.)

TANIA: Isn't it wonderful? I always feel so wholesome when I'm at home. *(Pours Abbie a glass of milk, sits down at the table, and gestures for him to join her.)* I wish I could come more often.

(In her haste, Tania sets her glass in front of Abbie and the clean glass in front of her. Abbie sits down next to her.)

ABBIE: I wish you would.

TANIA: It's just that Steve and I only met two months ago, and, well, you know...when you're in love with someone, you want to spend all your time with them.

(Abbie takes a bite from his cookie.)

ABBIE: I know what you mean. I can't wait to see Bridget.

TANIA: We noticed. By the way, is what Mom said true? You've only known her a week?

ABBIE: Eight days. *(Takes a sip of milk. Pauses, holding the glass in front of him. Puzzled.)* This is different. It tastes like...whiskey.

TANIA: Can I try it? (*Before he can answer, she grabs the glass out of his hand and takes a quick swallow.*) Tastes fine to me. (*Hands him her glass.*) Here, take mine.

(*Abbie takes a sip.*)

ABBIE: This is okay. (*Reaches for Tania's glass.*) I don't want you to get sick.

(*Tania holds the glass out of his reach.*)

TANIA: It's from the same carton. (*Downs it in one gulp and pats herself on the chest.*) So, you've known Bridget eight days. And do you feel you know her?

ABBIE: I know the important things. My only worry is that I'm not good enough for her.

TANIA: I can't say I have that problem with Steve. But that's wonderful! I'm not sure you realize that women can be, well...not completely aboveboard, though.

ABBIE: I've never found that with you.

TANIA: That's because I'm your sister. My point is...you're the son of a wealthy woman who's going to inherit a lot of money.

ABBIE: You don't think Bridget is after my dowry, do you? That would be despicable!

TANIA: (*Innocently.*) Despicable? That's a little harsh, isn't it? (*Casually.*) Did you notice anything strange when Bridget and Derek met?

ABBIE: Isn't it great they love jazz? My future wife and brother-in-law will have something in common.

TANIA: You didn't think Bridget was trying to hide something?

ABBIE: From me? (*Puts his hand on Tania's arm.*) Don't worry, Tania. When I met Bridget, I knew she was it. How did Cole Porter put it? "You are the one, only you beneath the moon or under the sun." That's her! (*Stands up.*) Gotta go.

(Abbie hurries to the door SR and exits. Tania frowns, taps her fingers on the table for a second, and leaps up and runs to the door.)

TANIA: *(To Abbie, shouts.)* Don't say anything to Bridget!

(Tania tries to exit, but Susan and Derek enter SR at the same time, blocking her way. Derek looks preoccupied.)

SUSAN: *(To Tania.)* Were you looking for Abbie? He's running up the stairs.

TANIA: *(Realizes Abbie's gotten away, frowns.)* I'll catch him later. *(Exits SR.)*

DEREK: What was that about?

SUSAN: I have no idea. Are you all right? You seem...different.

DEREK: *(Avoids looking at her.)* I'm trying to take it in, that's all.

SUSAN: I should have warned you about my family. I was afraid if I said something...

DEREK: You met my brother. He's wackier than Abbie.

SUSAN: But your parents are nice.

DEREK: They have their moments. *(Puts his arms around her. Smiling.)* You know, it wouldn't matter if your mom thought she was Snow White and we were the Seven Dwarves. The important thing is that we love each other.

SUSAN: At least there won't be any more surprises.

DEREK: That's a relief.

SUSAN: You shouldn't have any trouble finding things. Just remember the oven runs hot, so set it below what the recipe calls for. And use a meat thermometer. Mom won't like it if the roast is overdone.

(Derek heads toward the exit SR.)

DEREK: We wouldn't want to upset Her Majesty.

SUSAN: A roast beef won't keep us apart.

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DEREK: It would take something bigger than that.

SUSAN: I can't imagine what that could be, can you?

(Susan gives Derek a quick peck on the cheek. They exit. Blackout.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: Kitchen, that evening, after dinner. The dessert dishes have been cleared. Teacups and saucers are placed in front of everyone. Mrs. Davis sits at the upstage end of the table, dressed as she was in Scene 1. Abbie sits immediately to Mrs. Davis' left, Tania next, and then Steve. Susan sits on Mrs. Davis' immediate right, Derek next, and then Bridget. The chairs are positioned so that the downstage end of the table is open. Steve has on a tuxedo. The others are well dressed but not as formally as Steve. An electric train, one of its cars carrying a tall wooden pepper grinder, runs around the inside of the table, tooting. Mrs. Davis pats her lips with her napkin.)

MRS. DAVIS: We hope you'll forgive our eating in the kitchen. The dining room curtains we were promised haven't arrived.

BRIDGET: No problem, Your Highness. Kitchens are cozier.

MRS. DAVIS: Cozy is not a word we use, Bridget, but we are pleased that you find it so. *(Looks at the train and frowns.)* We don't know if we can endorse your electric train idea, Abbie. It seems a noisy way of ensuring access to the condiments.

ABBIE: Would a conveyor belt work better? Like the kind they have in airports?

MRS. DAVIS: We'll take it under advisement.

TANIA: *(To Abbie.)* And would you mind turning it off? It's driving me crazy.

(As he gets up to unplug the train, Abbie looks and sees that the butter, salt, and sugar are in front of Tania's place setting.)

ABBIE: You've done all right by my invention, Tania. The butter, salt, and sugar have all ended up in front of you.

TANIA: Was I supposed to put them back? I must have missed that.

MRS. DAVIS: That surprises us, Tania. You don't miss much. (*Abbie sits. To everyone.*) We know that addressing our person as "Your Highness" may be cumbersome. You may now address us as "Mum."

TANIA: (*Dryly.*) Thanks, Mum. Aren't you overdoing it with the royal "we"? Queens didn't always say that.

MRS. DAVIS: They didn't? Well, then. Henceforth, we shall refer to ourself as I. (*Wipes her mouth delicately with her napkin. She folds her napkin and places it on the table.*) Perhaps we could take a few minutes to get to know each other better. (*Turns to Steve, smiling.*) I wish to compliment you on your attire, Steven. You look resplendent! What do you do?

STEVE: I sell clothes.

MRS. DAVIS: An excellent fit! And how are you at it? Don't be modest now.

STEVE: I sell a lot, but they're always making me change what I'm wearing. They say modeling's my strong suit. They won't even let me ring up a sale!

MRS. DAVIS: I'm sure you're too valuable for *that*. What else should I know? You have an interest in greyhounds, I believe? Did you have a pet dog as a child?

STEVE: Mother wouldn't let me have a— (*Tania kicks him under the table.*) Ouch!

MRS. DAVIS: Are you all right?

STEVE: It's just a twinge, Mum. (*Turns to Tania and gives her an exasperated look. Tania turns so that her back is to the others, cups her left hand to her cheek, and mouths "yes." He thinks for a second.*) Mother wouldn't let me have a cat. I had a dog, though.

MRS. DAVIS: Did you? What was its name?

STEVE: Its name? Its name was...Pooch.

MRS. DAVIS: Pooch?

STEVE: Pooch... (*Looks up at the ceiling as if seeking inspiration.*)
...Dog!

MRS. DAVIS: Pooch Dog? How extraordinary! Who took care of it?

STEVE: Mother took care... *(Tania kicks him harder. Shouts.)*

Ouch! *(Leaps up and starts hopping about on one leg.)*

MRS. DAVIS: Are you having another twinge?

(Steve hops and ends up DSL, a few yards from Tania.)

STEVE: No, Mum. It's a...twitch.

MRS. DAVIS: A twitch? I've never seen such a twitch!

ABBIE: *(Cheerfully.)* It's the mother of all twitches!

(Steve looks at Tania with a pained expression. Tania mouths "you cared.")

STEVE: *(Rubbing his leg.)* Mother took care to show me *how* to take care of...

MRS. DAVIS: Pooch Dog?

(Steve limps back to his chair.)

STEVE: That's it!

MRS. DAVIS: Very good, Steven. It's usually the mother who takes care of the pets. Is there anything you'd like to add?

(Steve sits down.)

STEVE: Being with Tania's a thrill, Mum. I get such a kick out of her.

MRS. DAVIS: I see. On to you, Derek. I understand you play the saxophone? Do you play that horrid bebop? How did Louis Armstrong describe it...Chinese music?

DEREK: You might like it if you gave it a chance.

MRS. DAVIS: Perhaps, but I prefer Duke Ellington. Royals like each other's company. Is there anything else I should know?

DEREK: I was a camp counselor.

MRS. DAVIS: Thank you, we'll talk more about that tomorrow. And you, Bridget? Abbie says you work at a day care center?

BRIDGET: I'm the director, Mum.

MRS. DAVIS: In my time, governesses did all that. You haven't had any scandals? No child molesters traumatizing the little ones?

BRIDGET: (*Appalled.*) We're very careful who we hire, Your Highness.

MRS. DAVIS: I'm glad to hear it. I read recently about a child therapist who was charged with murdering his mother. One wonders what advice he gave the children when they weren't getting along with their parents. What else should I know?

BRIDGET: Do you mind if I wait for our interview?

MRS. DAVIS: That would be fine. (*Stands up. Everyone stands up with her.*) Now, I think it's time—

TANIA: Didn't you say we should get to know each other better, Mum?

MRS. DAVIS: I did say that, didn't I? (*Sits down. Everyone sits down with her. Pause, reflects a moment.*) I suppose what you want to know is...who else I've been and have I done anything as dangerous as discharge a firearm at a grown man. I *did* expose myself to radiation when I thought I was Madame Curie. Fortunately, Fatima rang me up and told me it was Mrs. Billingham down the street who was Madame Curie. My Florence Nightingale period was interesting, although the children complained when I turned the living room into a field hospital. (*Animated.*) Being Gypsy Rose Lee was *quite* enjoyable—she had such *gorgeous* clothes—but the children objected when I began removing them in public—

SUSAN: Mum!

TANIA: Don't stop her! She's just getting started.

(Mrs. Davis stands up and everyone hastily rises.)

MRS. DAVIS: I'm afraid I must. Hally's probably tapping his paw at this very moment. *(To Abbie.)* Would you do the honors?

(Abbie snaps to attention.)

ABBIE: *(Stomps his foot.)* Hear ye! Hear ye! The Queen will now retire!

(Mrs. Davis waves her fan slowly while walking to the door SR. When she reaches the door, she turns.)

MRS. DAVIS: *(To the fiancés.)* I look forward to interviewing you tomorrow after breakfast. I suggest you get a good night's sleep.

[END OF FREEVIEW]