

## ACT II

## Scene I

(Attic room, Berkeley Boarding House. Evening. BENJAMIN stands holding the door open for ELAINE.)

ELAINE. Benjamin, why are you here?

BENJAMIN. Would you like to come in?

ELAINE. I want to know what you're doing here in Berkeley.

BENJAMIN. Would you like some tea? I have tea.

ELAINE. I want to know why you're stalking me.

BENJAMIN. I'm not.

ELAINE. I see you on campus. You duck behind doorways. On the bus you hid behind a magazine.

BENJAMIN. I've been meaning to speak to you.

ELAINE. You've been following me around for days.

BENJAMIN. Would you like to come in?

ELAINE. No!

BENJAMIN. Why not?

ELAINE. I don't want to be in a room with you. Now why are you up here?

BENJAMIN. I'm just living here temporarily. I thought I might be bumping into you. I thought I remembered you were going to school up here.

ELAINE. Did you move up here because of me?

BENJAMIN. No.

ELAINE. Did you?

BENJAMIN. I don't know.

ELAINE. Well, did you?

BENJAMIN. Well, what do you think?

ELAINE. I think you did.

BENJAMIN. I'm just living in Berkeley. Having grown somewhat weary of family life, I've been meaning to stop by and pay my respects but have not been entirely certain how you felt about me after the incident with your mother which was certainly a serious mistake on my part but not serious enough I hope to permanently alter your feelings about me.

*(ELAINE comes in, slamming the door.)*

ELAINE. Benjamin, you are the one person in the entire world I never want to see again. I want you nowhere near me. I want you to leave here and never come back. *(He hangs his head.)* Promise me you'll go.

BENJAMIN. Elaine ....

ELAINE. Promise me.

*(He stares at her for a moment.)*

BENJAMIN. Alright.

ELAINE. Pack your bags and go tonight.

BENJAMIN. Alright!

ELAINE. So promise me.

BENJAMIN. Alright!

*(He stops down, his head in his arms.)*

ELAINE. Goodbye, Benjamin.

BENJAMIN. I love you.

ELAINE. You what?

BENJAMIN. I love you. I love you and I can't help myself and I'm begging you to forgive me for what I did. I love you so much I'm terrified of seeing you every time I step outside the door. I feel helpless and hopeless and lost and miserable, please forget what I did please Elaine O God Elaine I love you please forget what I did? Please forget what I did Elaine, I love you.

ELAINE. Yeah, well, I don't think so.

BENJAMIN. I do.

ELAINE. You do not.

BENJAMIN. Honestly, I ....

ELAINE. How can you love me Benjamin when you're so full of hate?

BENJAMIN. Of hate?

ELAINE. How else could you have done that?

BENJAMIN. Done what?

ELAINE. How could you have raped my mother?

BENJAMIN. What?

ELAINE. You must have so much hate inside you.

BENJAMIN. Raped her? *(ELAINE starts to cry.)* Did you say raped her?

ELAINE. Virtually raped her.

BENJAMIN. Did she say that?

ELAINE. I want you out of here by the morning.

BENJAMIN. No!

*(He runs between ELAINE and the door.)*

ELAINE. Don't you touch me.

BENJAMIN. I'm not.

ELAINE. Then get away from the door.

BENJAMIN. What did she say? What did she say?

ELAINE. Why?

BENJAMIN. Because it isn't true.

ELAINE. She said you virtually raped her.

BENJAMIN. Which isn't true.

ELAINE. Is it true you slept with her?

BENJAMIN. Yes.

ELAINE. Alright then, get away from the door.

BENJAMIN. What did she say? What did she say?

ELAINE. She said you dragged her up to the hotel room ...

BENJAMIN. I dragged her!

ELAINE. ... and you made her pass out and you raped her.

BENJAMIN. I what ... I drugged her? I dragged her up five

floors and I drugged her? I raped her?

ELAINE. You *virtually*, yes.

BENJAMIN. I *what*?

ELAINE. Could I leave now please?

BENJAMIN. That is not what happened.

ELAINE. I have to leave.

BENJAMIN. My parents gave me a party when I got home from college. Your mother came up to my room.

ELAINE. I don't want to hear this.

BENJAMIN. She asked me to unzip her dress.

ELAINE. May I go now?

BENJAMIN. She took off all her clothes. She stood there entirely naked and she said ....

(*ELAINE screams, long and hysterical. BENJAMIN frozen. She calms down. He brings her a chair. He brings her a glass of water. She drinks it.*)

ELAINE. What did you think would happen?

BENJAMIN. What?

ELAINE. When you came up here?

BENJAMIN. I don't know.

ELAINE. You just came up here?

BENJAMIN. I drove up. I made reservations at a restaurant.

ELAINE. You were going to invite me to dinner?

BENJAMIN. Yes.

ELAINE. Then what did you do?

BENJAMIN. I didn't invite you.

ELAINE. I know.

BENJAMIN. I just came up here. I got this room. I kind of wallowed around. I wrote you some letters.

ELAINE. Love letters?

BENJAMIN. I don't remember.

ELAINE. So what are you going to do now?

BENJAMIN. I don't know.

ELAINE. Where are you going?

BENJAMIN. I don't know.

ELAINE. Well, what are you going to do?

BENJAMIN. Are you deaf?

ELAINE. Excuse me?

BENJAMIN. I don't know what I'm going to do.

ELAINE. Well, will you get on a bus or what?

BENJAMIN. Are you concerned about me or something?

ELAINE. You came up here because of me. You messed up your life because of me, and now you're leaving because of me. You made me responsible. I don't want you drunk in some gutter because of me.

BENJAMIN. You want me to stick around?

ELAINE. I want you to have a definite plan before you leave, then I want you to leave.

BENJAMIN. I have no plans.

ELAINE. Then just make up your mind.

BENJAMIN. What?

ELAINE. Don't you have a mind?

BENJAMIN. Of course.

ELAINE. Then make it up.

BENJAMIN. I could go to Canada.

ELAINE. You want to go to Canada?

BENJAMIN. No.

ELAINE. You think I can study? You think I can think with you here?

BENJAMIN. Just tell me to leave and I'll leave.

ELAINE. I have so much work this semester.

BENJAMIN. Would you just tell me to leave, please?

ELAINE. Are you simple?

BENJAMIN. What?

ELAINE. I mean what do I have to say to you?

BENJAMIN. I don't know.

ELAINE. Can't you see the way I feel?

BENJAMIN. Shall I go then?

ELAINE. Why don't you.

BENJAMIN. Why don't I go.

ELAINE. Yes.

BENJAMIN. Alright. That's all you had to say.

(*ELAINE goes to the door.*)

ELAINE. You know what she gave me for my eleventh birthday?  
She gave me a bartender's guide. I made her cocktails all day.

BENJAMIN. She's a strange woman.

ELAINE. Is she attractive?

BENJAMIN. Yes. Not really.

ELAINE. Well is she or not?

BENJAMIN. I don't know.

ELAINE. You don't know which she is or you don't know which  
I'd like to hear?

BENJAMIN. Either.

ELAINE. And am I?

BENJAMIN. I'm sorry?

ELAINE. Am I as attractive as her?

BENJAMIN. Oh, yes.

ELAINE. I have to go now.

BENJAMIN. Would you marry me?

ELAINE. Would I what?

BENJAMIN. Marry me. Would you?

ELAINE. Marry you?

BENJAMIN. Yes.

ELAINE. Marry you?

BENJAMIN. Would you?

ELAINE. Why would I?

BENJAMIN. I think we have a lot in common.

ELAINE. Well, that's true.

BENJAMIN. So will you?

ELAINE. Marry you?

BENJAMIN. Yes.

ELAINE. Hah. Ha ha. Oh Benjamin, you are something.

BENJAMIN. Am I?

ELAINE. Yes you are, but I don't know what. Why do you want

to marry me?

BENJAMIN. It's the way I feel. I feel we should.

ELAINE. What about the way I feel?

BENJAMIN. How do you feel?

ELAINE. Confused.

BENJAMIN. Are you fond of me? (*She sniffs.*) Are you?

ELAINE. Yes, fond.

BENJAMIN. Then let's get married.

ELAINE. And can you imagine my parents.

BENJAMIN. You mean your mother?

ELAINE. I mean my father.

BENJAMIN. I think he'd be very happy for us.

ELAINE. And what if he found out what happened?

BENJAMIN. He won't.

ELAINE. But what if he did?

BENJAMIN. I'd apologize. I'd say it was a stupid foolish thing  
and he'd say he was a little disappointed in me but if it's all in the past  
then that's that.

ELAINE. You are so naive.

BENJAMIN. Forget about your parents. This isn't about our  
parents. This is about us. Have you any other objections?

ELAINE. Yes I do.

BENJAMIN. What are they?

ELAINE. We're too young to be married. You should do other  
things first.

BENJAMIN. What other things?

ELAINE. Well, go somewhere. Asia. Africa. See different places,  
different people.

BENJAMIN. Elaine, I have no desire to hop around the world  
ogling peasants. So do you have any other objections?

ELAINE. Have you thought about finding a place to live and  
buying the groceries every day?

BENJAMIN. Sure.

ELAINE. No you haven't.

BENJAMIN. You mean which brand of cereal we should buy?

ELAINE. Yes.

BENJAMIN. No I haven't.  
 ELAINE. Well why not? I mean that's the kind of thing you'll have to be thinking about, Benjamin, and I think you'd get sick of it after two days.  
 BENJAMIN. But I wouldn't get sick of you, would I?  
 ELAINE. Well yes, I think you probably would.  
 BENJAMIN. Well no, I wouldn't.  
 ELAINE. I'm not what you think I am, Benjamin. I'm just a plain ordinary person. I'm not smart or glamorous or anything like that.  
 BENJAMIN. So what?  
 ELAINE. Well ... So why me?  
 BENJAMIN. Well. You're reasonably intelligent. You're striking looking.  
 ELAINE. Striking?  
 BENJAMIN. Sure.  
 ELAINE. My ears are too prominent to be striking looking.  
 BENJAMIN. No, they're very striking.  
 ELAINE. I wouldn't be enough for you, Benjamin.  
 BENJAMIN. That isn't true.  
 ELAINE. You're an intellectual. I'm not.  
 BENJAMIN. Now listen ...  
 ELAINE. You should marry someone who can discuss politics and history and art ...  
 BENJAMIN. Ah, shut up.  
 ELAINE. Excuse me?  
 BENJAMIN. Would you just ... thank you. Now have you ever heard me talking about any of that crap?  
 ELAINE. You majored in that crap.  
 BENJAMIN. Have you ever heard me talk about it?  
 ELAINE. That crap?  
 BENJAMIN. Yes.  
 ELAINE. No I haven't.  
 BENJAMIN. Alright, then. Goddammit, I hate all that. So will you marry me?  
 ELAINE. No!  
 BENJAMIN. Why not?

ELAINE. Well for a start I'm studying and you're not making any money!  
 BENJAMIN. I'll move up here. I'll get a job teaching.  
 ELAINE. I thought you didn't want to be a teacher.  
 BENJAMIN. Yes, but I could teach.  
 ELAINE. You don't have the right attitude. Teachers are meant to be inspired.  
 BENJAMIN. That's a myth.  
 ELAINE. Is it?  
 BENJAMIN. Oh yeh.  
 ELAINE. It is not.  
 BENJAMIN. Any other objections?  
 ELAINE. Plenty.  
 BENJAMIN. Take your best shot.  
 ELAINE. Well, what about babies?  
 BENJAMIN. Babies?  
 ELAINE. Do you want babies? Because that's what I want.  
 BENJAMIN. Well, I do too.  
 ELAINE. Oh, come on.  
 BENJAMIN. I do.  
 ELAINE. You do not.  
 BENJAMIN. Goddammit Elaine I want babies! Your babies. Triplets! I want to smother in a huge pile of diapers! *(She laughs.)* I'm serious here. Let's get married.  
 ELAINE. Benjamin.  
 BENJAMIN. What?  
 ELAINE. I can't see why I'm so attractive to you.  
 BENJAMIN. You just are.  
 ELAINE. But ... I don't understand.  
 BENJAMIN. What don't you understand?  
 ELAINE. I mean you're a really brilliant person.  
 BENJAMIN. Elaine, don't start that. I mean it. *(She nods. He takes her hand.)* So shall we get married?  
 ELAINE. Benjamin! If you want to marry me so much why don't you just ... drag me off?  
 BENJAMIN. Alright, I will. We'll get a blood test in the morning

and I'll just drag you off.

ELAINE. But you can't. I mean I couldn't. Beside I'd have to see Carl.

BENJAMIN. Carl?

ELAINE. I'd have to talk to Carl first.

BENJAMIN. Who's Carl?

ELAINE. The boy I met last semester. Carl Smith.

BENJAMIN. Well, what does he have to do with it?

ELAINE. I said I might marry him.

BENJAMIN. What?

ELAINE. He asked me to marry him and I said I might.

BENJAMIN. Well, Elaine . . .

ELAINE. What?

BENJAMIN. Why in the hell didn't you tell me about this?

ELAINE. I'm telling you.

BENJAMIN. Now? You're telling me now?

ELAINE. Well there wasn't a before. It was none of your business before.

BENJAMIN. My God Elaine, how many people have done this?

ELAINE. Proposed to me?

BENJAMIN. Yes.

ELAINE. I don't know.

BENJAMIN. You mean more than him have?

ELAINE. Well, yes.

BENJAMIN. How many?

ELAINE. I don't know.

BENJAMIN. Well, could you try to remember? Six? Seven?

ELAINE. About that, yes.

BENJAMIN. Are you kidding me?

ELAINE. No.

BENJAMIN. You mean you have actually had six or seven people ask you to marry them?

ELAINE. Is this any of your business?

BENJAMIN. Well, yes, I think it is. When did he ask you? Was it him on the bus?

ELAINE. What bus?

BENJAMIN. On the bus to the zoo?

ELAINE. You followed me to the zoo?

BENJAMIN. No. I missed the bus! When did he ask you? Did he ask you that day? My God, he asked you that day, didn't he? Where did he ask you, did he ask you at the zoo?

ELAINE. Benjamin, why are you getting so excited?

BENJAMIN. He asked you at the zoo. I missed the bus and he asked you in the monkey house or somewhere. Did he get down on his knees? I hope he didn't get down on his knees. He did, didn't he? What did he say?

ELAINE. Benjamin . . .

BENJAMIN. What did he say?

ELAINE. He said he thought we'd make a pretty good team.

BENJAMIN. Hah!

ELAINE. What?

BENJAMIN. He said that?

ELAINE. Benjamin, what is wrong with you?

BENJAMIN. So what is he, a student?

ELAINE. A medical student. Final year.

BENJAMIN. And he got down on his knees at the zoo and he said . . .

ELAINE. It wasn't at the zoo. It was at his apartment.

BENJAMIN. His apartment?

ELAINE. Yes.

BENJAMIN. You went to his apartment?

ELAINE. Yes.

BENJAMIN. But you . . . I mean you didn't . . . ?

ELAINE. No, I did not spend the night.

*(BENJAMIN grins.)*

BENJAMIN. So good old Carl the final year medic took you up to his apartment and popped the big one, did he . . . ?

ELAINE. Goodbye Benjamin.

BENJAMIN. Did he put music on?

ELAINE. I have to study.

BENJAMIN. No wait. Wait. Are we getting a blood test tomorrow?

ELAINE. No.

BENJAMIN. The day after?

ELAINE. I don't know.

BENJAMIN. Are we getting married?

ELAINE. Maybe we are and maybe we aren't.

*(She leaves, closing the door behind her. BENJAMIN sits. Suddenly the door opens. ELAINE walks in, kisses him hard and waltzes out again. BENJAMIN grins.)*

### Scene 2

*(The same. Morning. A knock on the door. BENJAMIN opens it eagerly. MR. ROBINSON stands there. He's been traveling all night. He's disheveled. He enters in silence and sits on the bed.)*

MR. ROBINSON. Do you want .... Do you want to try and tell me why you did it?

BENJAMIN. I don't .... I don't ....

MR. ROBINSON. Do you have any special grudge against me you'd like to tell me about? Do you feel a particularly strong resentment for me for some reason?

BENJAMIN. No. It's not ....

MR. ROBINSON. Is there something I've said that's caused this contempt? Or is it just the things I stand for that you despise?

BENJAMIN. It was nothing to do with you, sir.

MR. ROBINSON. Well Ben, it was quite a bit to do with me. And I'd like to hear your feelings about me if you have any. I'd like to know why you've done this to me.

BENJAMIN. There was no .... It was nothing personal.

MR. ROBINSON. Nothing personal?

BENJAMIN. No sir.

MR. ROBINSON. Well that's an interesting way of looking at it, Ben. You sleep with another man's wife ....

BENJAMIN. Mr. Robinson, I never meant ....

MR. ROBINSON. Ben, you're a little old to abdicate responsibility ....

BENJAMIN. I'm entirely responsible. It was altogether my own fault, Mr. Robinson, but I would like you to know that ....

MR. ROBINSON. I think we're two civilized human beings: do you think it's necessary to threaten each other?

BENJAMIN. No I don't.

MR. ROBINSON. Then do you want to unclench your fists please? Thank you.

BENJAMIN. I'm trying to tell you that I have no personal feelings about you, Mr. Robinson. I'm trying to tell you I do not resent you.

MR. ROBINSON. You don't respect me terribly much either, do you?

BENJAMIN. No, I don't.

*(MR. ROBINSON nods.)*

MR. ROBINSON. Well, I don't think we have a whole lot to say to each other, Ben. I do think you should know the consequences of what you've done. I do think you should know that my wife and I are getting a divorce.

BENJAMIN. A divorce? Why?

MR. ROBINSON. Why?

BENJAMIN. Well, it shouldn't make *that* much difference, surely? I mean we ... we ... got into bed with each other but it was nothing compared to .... It was nothing at all. We could have been shaking hands.

MR. ROBINSON. I always thought when you took your clothes off and got into bed with a woman and had sexual intercourse with her that was just a little more than shaking hands.

BENJAMIN. Not in this case.

MR. ROBINSON. Well, that's not saying much for my wife, is it?