

HELL'S KITCHEN

by

David Christopher and Gary Cohen

Characters

Susan: A pretty, 28-year-old secretary. Works in the office with John, who is her boss. She is living with her boyfriend, Phillip.

John: A 50-year-old executive of his own company, with his partner, Brandon. He is married to Alice.

Alice: A wealthy 49-year-old, Park Avenue-dwelling woman. She is having a longtime affair with Brandon, but she is married to John.

Brandon: A 48-year-old executive, partners with John in their company. Having a longtime affair with Alice but is married to Rachel.

Rachel: A wealthy 45-year-old woman, who has developed a friendship with Matt. She is married to Brandon.

Matt: A 30-year-old gay actor who has recently befriended Rachel. He is living with his boyfriend, Harry.

Harry: A 29-year-old, gay artist, who has recently struck up a friendship with Phillip. He is currently in a relationship with Matt.

Phillip: A 28-year-old artist, who is questioning his sexuality, by going out with Harry. He is in a relationship with Susan.

Nathan, Guiseppe, Chang, and Gabriel – waiters in the four restaurants – played by one actor.



Scene 1

Juniors, a New York Deli restaurant on 49th and 7th in Hell's Kitchen

(We hear diners talking and dishes rattling as we fade in, then SFX under)

Alice: *(looking around, unhappy)* Brandon, why did you bring us to this tacky place?

Brandon: Well, Alice, I felt like a pastrami sandwich, and they have the best in New York.

Alice: I wanted a quiet, classy restaurant, you know, like Orsay, where we went last week.

Brandon: Sorry, but that was simply too close to your apartment for my comfort level.

Alice: Everyone knows Juniors is just for tourists, *(loudly)* and it's so noisy.

Brandon: Come on. You're thinking about the Juniors in Times Square. This is the Hell's Kitchen Juniors. It's not very crowded at this hour, so it's really not that noisy. You'll block it out in a minute.

Alice: I'll have you know; I have made it a point to never venture into Hell's Kitchen. Hated the name. And its gritty reputation.

Brandon: You've never been here? It's changed! It's become *the* "hot spot" on the Westside. Some of the best restaurants in New York have opened up here.

Alice: Well, if that's true, why in the world couldn't they just keep calling it Clinton? Hell's Kitchen! Sounds like something out of Dante's Inferno.

Brandon: Oh, stop your whining. The food here is really good. You could have a piece of their cheesecake --- it's the best.

Alice: Are you nuts? Do you want me to gain 10 lbs.? I don't do desserts anymore.

Brandon: Hey, I wouldn't mind a little more meat on those gorgeous bones. *(teasingly)* You could use a bit of booty.

Alice: *(beginning to smile)* I'll give you booty!

Brandon: *Come on.* Have some cheesecake, honey.

Alice: *(laughing and snuggling into him)* Oh, just let me order something – healthy -- and we can get out of here. We've got better things to do with our evening.

Brandon: Oooo, that's what I like to hear. And here's our waiter with the menus. Just pick anything you'd like, but I'm having pastrami.

Nathan: *(a hammy, young actor holding the menus; not putting them down, which annoys Alice)* Hey, you guys, welcome to Juniors. I'm Nathan, and I'll be taking care of you tonight. Are you folks from out of town?

Alice: *(grabbing a menu, and says indignantly)* No, we are not. I happen to live on Park Avenue.

Nathan: Nice! And what brings you here to the Hell's Kitchen Juniors tonight? *(He hands Brandon a menu)*

Alice: We're slumming!

Brandon: *(frowning at Alice)* Sorry, sir, I brought her here 'cause I love your pastrami sandwiches, and the cheesecake.

Nathan: Oh, you betcha, they are indeed the best. It's what we're famous for.

Alice: Famous, huh?

Nathan: Well, when you're ready, just flag me down and I'll take your order. *(he flies away)*

Alice: "Flag me down"! What kind of waiter says that?

Brandon: Why are you being so rude? The guy's just being friendly.

Alice: I'm sorry, Brandon. But I don't like being called a tourist. Bet that's the only people who eat in this crummy joint.

Brandon: Okay, Alice, just look at the menu and make a decision. And I can assure that you will be sorry when you see my piece of chocolate cheesecake. *(They peruse their menus)*

(Fade Out)

Scene 2

Amarone Scarlatto, an Italian restaurant on 9th Ave and 47th in Hell's Kitchen

- Harry: I'm so glad you suggested Italian tonight. I haven't been here in ages, even though it's right down the block from my place.
- Phillip: You mentioned it the other night when we were walking to Uncle Charlie's. You said that you liked it.
- Harry: It's great that you remember things like that. Did you have fun at Uncle Charlie's?
- Phillip: It was terrific. I particularly liked when you were belting out showtunes with those other guys. I'd never been to a piano bar before.
- Harry: I noticed that you weren't doing much singing, though. I was afraid that maybe you didn't like it there. Or that I embarrassed you.
- Phillip: No, no. I just didn't know all those Broadway tunes. If they were playing Taylor Swift's songs, I might have joined in more.
- Harry: I find it quite amusing, Phillip, that you're studying to be an *artiste*, but you're quite Broadway-musical-challenged.
- Phillip: Taking classes, Harry, leaves precious little spending money for me to afford exorbitant Broadway ticket prices.
- Harry: There's always the TKTS booth. I'm going to have to train you to be more of a "show queen". *(they laugh and snuggle a bit)*.
- Phillip: I know, I know you have a lot to teach me, and I have a lot to learn. Happily, you're a great teacher. *(nudging him suggestively)*. I'm glad we found each other at the Artists Workshop.
- Harry: Me too! Here comes Giuseppe with the menus. Those lessons will have to wait.
- Giuseppe: *(with a slight Italian accent)* Hallo Signor Harry Welcome to Amarone Scarlatto. I haven't seen you around lately. Glad to have you back. *(hands out the fancy menus)* You're one of my favorite *piasons*. Can I get you something to drink while you look over the menus?
- Harry: Good to be back, Giuseppe, and this is my friend Phillip. *(they nod, acknowledging each other)* I'll have an Aperol Spritz.
- Giuseppe: Ah yes, your usual.
- Phillip: *(to cover his nerves)* And bring me an Old Fashioned, please – umm --- Giuseppe. *(Harry smiles at this)*
- Giuseppe: *Perfetto*, young fellow. Coming right up. *(He exits)*

Harry: An Old Fashioned, before dinner? That's a bit strong, isn't it.

Phillip: Not at all, I just felt like a good old, Old Fashioned. (*looking confused at the menu*) To tell the truth I'd love it if you'd order for me. I'm famished, but don't quite understand all this Italian.

Harry: Tonight's lesson: how to order the best dishes *Italiano* at Scarlatto!
(*Phillip puts his menu down and smiles at Harry as he scans the menu*)

(Fade Out)

Scene 3

Big Wong, a Chinese restaurant on 9th Ave. in Hell's Kitchen

- Susan: Wow, Mr. Carter, what a cool place. But is it really called Big Wong? (*she giggles*)
- John: (*laughing*) Yes, but don't be fooled by the name, it's a superior Chinese restaurant. You'll note that the other clientele is all Asian.
- Susan: (*looking around*) Yes, they certainly are. And I heard somewhere that a Chinese restaurant gets a Gold Seal of Approval if Asian people eat there.
- John: Never really heard that, Susan, but I guess it makes sense. A friend from the office told me about this place. He said they serve authentic Chinese food here.
- Susan: This doesn't seem like a part of town that you'd want to spend much time in.
- John: It never was before, but I've re-evaluated the whole neighborhood. In fact, the partners and I found a rather classy new bar that we've been frequenting. Best Manhattans in, well, Manhattan!
- Susan: Wow. Maybe we could stop over there for a nightcap after we eat. I'd love to see it.
- John: Actually, I thought...maybe you'd ... (*stops himself*) Well, hey, if you want to, why not?
- Susan: Gosh, living in Queens, I haven't been in Hell's Kitchen for ages. It really has changed quite a bit from what I remember.
- John: Absolutely! It's a very hip place nowadays. There are lots of new restaurants and bars, and it's quite lively at night.

Chang comes over with two menus.

- Chang: (*speaks in a realistic but very thick Asian accent.*) Good evening, honored guests. My name Chang, I be happy to serve you tonight.
- John: Thank you, Chang. Do you have any suggestions for us?
- Chang: The Duck with Ginger Sauce one of my favorites, or maybe you prefer Crispy Beef with Sesame Sauce.
- John: Those sound very good Chang. Give us a few minutes to peruse the menus.
- Chang: Certainly, take all time you want. You like anything to drink while you are deciding?

Susan: I'm really thirsty, Mr. Carter, I'd like something cold.

John: Me too. Bring us two Tsingtao, please.

Susan: *(laughing a little too loudly)* Sing-tow? What's that?

Chang: Tsingtao is beer. *(Chang bows and leaves)*

John: You must remember, *we* are the foreigners here.

Susan: *(slightly embarrassed at having laughed)* So sorry, but I didn't know what that beer was.

John: *(delighted at how the evening is progressing)* Perfectly alright, my dear. Now let's look at the menus and choose something scrumptious to eat.

Susan: Yes, good. Let's see. *(looks at the menu)* Wait! This is all in Chinese! How'm I supposed to know what to order?

John: Well, you see there is a photograph of each of the dishes - we can choose that way.

Susan: Gosh, I don't want to get something I don't like. Maybe we could get English menus.

John: Very well, I'll signal the waiter and ask for one. *(he calls out)* Oh, Chang. Could we have an English menu?

(Fade Out)

Scene 4

Marseille, a French restaurant on 9th Ave and 44th St. in Hell's Kitchen

Rachel: I thought we'd have a French dinner tonight. I hope that's to your approval.

Matt: Sure, I can do French cuisine. I liked it the few times I've had it. But it's usually too expensive for me and Harry.

Rachel: Well, this is my treat, Matt. I haven't been here in a while. But I remember that the food here is *tres bien*.

Matt: I've passed the Marseille a million times, but never eaten here. A few years ago I acted in a play at the Producer's Club, across the street.

Rachel: How exciting! I would have loved to have seen you in it. But that was before we met. What was it about?

Matt: It was a coming out story, taking place in the 50's. I played the leading role, who was actually the playwright in his college days.

Rachel: I bet you were marvelous. I couldn't keep my eyes off you when I first saw you in *Candida*. You were mesmerizing. That's why I had to meet you.

Matt: Yeah, Marchbanks was one of my favorite roles. I was lucky to get it.

Rachel: Don't be so modest, Matt, you were just amazing. Oh, here's the waiter.

Gabriel: (*approaches table*) *Bon soir, madame et monsieur*, Welcome to Marseille. I am Gabriel and it is my pleasure to serve you this evening.

Rachel: *Bon soir*, Gabriel. I want to order some good wine, but I'd like to decide on our food first.

Gabriel: *Bien sur, madame*. Take all the time you need.

Rachel: So, what sort of thing do you like in a French restaurant?

Matt: I had *Steak Fritte* both times I had French, so that's fine with me.

Rachel: Oh, for Heaven's sake, every time we go out to eat you get a steak or a burger. You should try something more French --- After all "When in Paree!"

Matt: Yeah, you're right. Since I'm so provincial, why don't you order something for me, Rach. I'm down to try something new. I guess. (*They peruse their menus*)

(Fade Out)

Scene 5 – Juniors

Nathan: (*enters with pad in hand*) OK you two, what scrumptious goodies might bring you pleasure?

Alice: (*whispers to Brandon*) I don't believe this guy.

Brandon: (*ignoring her*) It would be my great pleasure to have a pastrami sandwich, a chocolate milkshake and later, a piece of your chocolate cheesecake.

Alice: (*shaking her head in disbelief*) I'll have a garden salad with balsamic dressing on the side, and a cup of herbal tea. You *have* herbal tea, don't you?

Nathan: (*smiles at her*) Anything your heart desires, m'lady. Comin' right up. (*whisks away*)

Brandon: Is that really all you're ordering? That's not very celebratory for our weekly get-togethers, Alice. Are you sure I can't order you a small piece of cheesecake? It's really delicious.

Alice: I told you before, I really don't do desserts anymore.

Brandon: Right. Well, ok.

Alice: I'm sorry -- I just don't feel like gorging myself.

Brandon: (*with an attitude*) Okay, fine.

Alice: Oh, Brandon, don't be mad. You know, I treasure our rendezvouses ---

Brandon: As do I, so now, I will officially change the subject. How was your week?

Alice: Pretty boring. The most exciting thing I did was go shopping on Madison with my friend. And mostly I just waited around, anxious for tonight. What about you?

Brandon: Work was particularly difficult this week, so I had very little time to do much of anything else. But thinking about seeing you tonight was on *my* mind, as well.

Alice: I'm sorry I'm being grouchy, Brandon. I just want everything to be perfect. These evenings together mean so much to me.

Brandon: I agree, Alice, this is always the highlight of my week. Now let's enjoy our dinner --- (*teasing*) if anyone can call eating a salad enjoyable. Then we can get on with our romantic evening.

Alice: Alright, Brandon my darling, you're on! (*they kiss*)

(Fade Out)

Scene 6 - Amaone Scarlatto

(They are drinking their drinks, when the waiter comes back for their order)

- Guisseppi: *Scusiami Gentiluomini*, are you enjoying your drinks?
- Phillip: Yeah, it looks like I've finished mine already, so maybe I'll order another.
- Harry: *(looks at Phillip questioningly)* Are you sure, Phillip?
- Phillip: I guess I'm thirsty, so yes, Harry. But we can order our food now, too.
- Harry: *(putting his hand over the glass to indicate "no more")* I'm good, Giuseppe, but bring this guy another Old Fashioned.
- Guisseppi: I seem to remember that you favored our lasagna. Would you like that tonight, Signor Harry?
- Harry: Nice of you to remember. Yep, I'll have that tonight. It's been a long time. And my friend here will have your Spaghetti Bolonaise.
- Phillip: Perfect, I'm sure!
- Harry: Their sauce - oh, sorry Giuseppe, *gravy* - is fabulous.
- Guisseppi: *E vero*, Signor Harry, I'm sure you will enjoy it. I'll put that order in immediately. And bring you an Old Fashioned, *Signor Phillip*.
- Phillip: They certainly know you here. I guess you've been here a lot with your boyfriend.
- Harry: Yes, Matt and I have come here for a couple of years. But --- if you don't mind --- let's not talk about him, now. I'm here with you.
- (Phillip sits quietly for a minute, sloshing the ice in his empty glass)*
- Phillip: This is all very weird.
- Harry: What is?
- Phillip: This. You and me. Here. I'm afraid I'm still not very comfortable with all of this.
- Harry: There's no reason for you to be uncomfortable. It's just a restaurant.
- Phillip: It's not the restaurant. It's being here with you.
- Harry: Oh, for heaven's sake, look around. There must be at least 3 other male couples, and a couple lesbians, too. You think we stand out?
- Phillip: I don't care what it looks like. But for me, it's such a strange feeling.
- Harry: What are you talking about?
- Phillip: I never felt like this with a guy, before.

Harry: Well, that's ok. Just go with the flow.

Phillip: I'm even jealous of your boyfriend. That's ridiculous. Maybe I should leave.

Harry: No! Don't be silly. Just think of it as an adventure. Something out of your usual comfort zone.

Phillip: I'm trying...

Harry: So far, it's been fun, right?

Phillip: Gosh, yes. It's been more than fun, but....

Harry: Then just enjoy it. *(reaches over and gives him a kiss)*

(Fade Out)

Scene 7 – Big Wong

Susan: I'm sure glad he gave us an English menu. So, let's see. I'll choose the Beef with string beans. I've had that a few times before, so I know I'll like it.

John: Excellent.

Chang: (approaching) Honor' guests, here Tsingtao. If want, I take order for food now.

John: Thank you, Chang. I think we have decided. I would like the Grand Marnier Shrimp, and my pretty young friend here would like the Beef with String Beans. And we'd like some Cold Sesame Noodles on the side, please.

Chang: Wonderful choice. I go now, have everything prepare specially for you.
(*Bows and exits*)

Susan: The noodle thing sounds interesting. (*she grabs a beer, not bothering to pour it into a glass, and takes a swig*) Mr. Carter, I'm very happy to be here with you, but it does seem odd that you've asked me out for dinner. Is there some business we need to discuss outside of the office?

John: Please, no "Mr. Carter", just call me John. No need to be so formal here. (*he pours his beer into a glass, then pours the remainder of hers into her glass.*)

Susan: Okay, sure...John. So, what is the, well, purpose, of our little get-together?

John: No real *purpose*. I just thought it might be fun to hang out after working together all day.

Susan: Well – John - I don't mean to be coy, but this seems more like a date, and I'm not sure how to handle it.

John: Nothing to handle. I wouldn't call it a "date" – just two associates having some Chinese food! You did accept my invitation, after all.

Susan: I must admit to being pleased that you asked me. Yes, I guess I was curious as to what you wanted to talk about.

John: Anything and everything! What would *you* like to talk about?

Susan: Geez, I don't know. (*pause*) I suppose I wouldn't mind getting to know more about you.

John: That'd please me very much. Ask me anything you'd like.

Susan: (*she takes a long swallow of her beer, then blurts out...*) I assume you're married, aren't you?

John: Indeed, I am.

Susan: Oh.

John: But that shouldn't stand in the way of an innocent, pleasant dinner between a charming young woman and her boss. I'm quite taken with you. Have been since you started to work for me.

Susan: *(taken back a bit, but pleased)* Oh. Well, I was wondering if that might be true.

John: Good! And what are your feelings?

Susan: Look, there's no question that I find you attractive, but I'm not sure I should be carrying on with someone at work. And a married man, at that.

John: I'm very pleased that you find me attractive, as I certainly think you are quite beautiful. And there's no "carrying on"...as of the moment.

Susan: *(perhaps disappointed, but covering it)* No, I suppose not.

John: And this doesn't need to be anyone's business - it's just between us.

Susan: I suppose so. And just for dinner, right? *(Susan senses an opportunity here for advancement in the business, or more. She finishes off her beer)*

John: Well, to start with. But who knows where it might lead? Unless you feel uncomfortable with an older fellow, such as myself.

Susan: Oh, you don't seem old, just distinguished. But....

John: That makes me very happy. *(he leans over to give her a kiss)*

Chang: *(enters with plate, interrupting the kiss)* Here Cold Sesame Noodle. *(he slams them down and exits, disapproving.)*

(Susan looks around and sees others in the restaurant watching them with disapproval)

(Fade Out)

Scene 8 – Marseille

Gabriel: *(comes over to take their order)* Have *madame et monsieur* decided what they would like *ce soir*?

Rachel: Indeed, Gabriel, I'm going to order for both of us. I'd like to begin with Frog's Legs Provençal.

(Matt looks aghast)

And my friend here will try the Escargot en Persillade.

Matt: Wait! Is that snails? It is, isn't it? I don't think so.

Rachel: Just try it, Matt. You'll be amazed. *(back to Gabriel)* And for my main course, I would like Moules Frites Marinieres.

Matt: What the hell's that?

Rachel: *(smiling)* And the young man, with his mouth open, will have your brilliant Bouillabaisse.

Gabriel: Very good, *madame*. And for your wine?

Rachel: We'll have a bottle of 2001 Pouilly-Fumé. That goes well with all this seafood.

Gabriel: *Parfaite, madame*. I shall take care of that for you. *(exits)*

Matt: You said "seafood". Is that what boolybez is?

Rachel: Yes, Matty dear boy, it's a Mediterranean fish stew. It's pronounced *Bouillabaisse* and I think you'll love it.

Matt: Okay, this is going to be an adventure. *(laughing)* I hope I won't have to go to McDonald's after I leave you.

Rachel: *(suddenly bursts out laughing, then tries to stifle it)* Sorry, sorry.

Matt: *(genuinely curious)* What's so funny? McDonald's?

Rachel: *(said as kindly as she can)* Well, no, and please don't get offended, but isn't it conventional wisdom that the gay young man would be the one with exquisite taste and well-acquainted with French haute cuisine? I know, it's a cliché, but....

Matt: *(smiling, not offended at all)* I would totally agree with you if I were born and bred in New York or San Francisco or P'town, but when you're raised in Bumfuck, Idaho, frogs are for croaking in the creeks and snails are something you try to keep off your corn crops!

Rachel: *Touché!* So, we'll just consider this your first of many lessons in French culture!

Matt: Fair enough. Or should I say, *Oui Madame*. *(He tries a French accent)*

Rachel: *Magnifique!* Now that we've got that out of the way. Let's talk about what you said in your text. What was it? "I want to ask a favor". You know that you can ask me anything. So, what's the favor?

Matt: Oh, shit. This is embarrassing. Let's have our wine first.

Rachel: Oh wow, that sounds intriguing. Out with it, my friend. You know I'm always here for you.

Matt: Um...well it sorta has to do with my boyfriend and me. Things have been strained between us lately, and it's kinda my fault.

Rachel: Oh, Matty, I had no idea you were having difficulties. You've always seemed so happy together.

Matt: Oh, god. This is going to get very personal, and I don't want it to ruin our lovely *(making a joke about the food)* – I hope – French fish dinner together.

Rachel: Don't you worry about that, sweetie, I'm always on your side. Tell Mama all.

Gabriel: *(enters with wine)* Here you are, *madame*, a bottle of our best 2001 Pouilly-Fumé.
(he mimes pouring a small portion into her glass. She tastes it, approves, and he finishes pouring the 2 glasses. Then leaves.)

Rachel: Here, sweetie, drink this and we'll have our little talk when you feel more relaxed. You know you can tell me your deepest, darkest secrets. *(she hands him his drink and holds onto his hand affectionately)*

(Fade Out)

Scene 9 – Juniors

(both are miming eating their respective dinners throughout the scene)

Alice: As much as I hate to admit it, this is one of the best salads I've ever had. You were right about this place.

Brandon: *(sipping his milk shake)* Yep, tourist trap or not, it's some of the best food in New York.

Alice: I can't believe you can finish that huge sandwich. And by the way, it smells rather awful.

Brandon: Are you kidding me? The fragrant scent of pastrami is one of the yummiest smells in the world. But yes, I plan to take half of it home for tomorrow's lunch.

Alice: And you have that damn cheesecake coming, too.

Brandon: I think the lady doth protest too much.

Alice: *(after a moment)* Maybe I'll take a nibble of it when it comes.

Brandon: *(smiling)* I knew it! You won't be able to resist Junior's cheesecake.

Alice: A nibble, I said. *(also smiling)* Just to please you.

Nathan: *(approaches the table)* How are my two favorite customers doing? Everything to your taste.

Brandon: It was wonderful, thank you. And I think we're finished with this course. Bring on the cheesecake, Nathan, my boy.

Alice: And a second fork, if you please. I'd like to sample it as well.

Brandon: And would you please box up the other half of the sandwich?

Nathan: T'would be my pleasure, your Highness. *(he clears the plates and leaves)*

Alice: He's got to be one of those "actor/waiters". Kinda cute, though.

Brandon: *(joking)* Ah, are you looking for a younger man, now? This always happens to us older guys.

Alice: Don't be preposterous, you silly old man. I've only got eyes for you. Let's finish this dessert and so we can get to the hotel. I am ravenous, but not for cheesecake.

Brandon: You got it, baby. *(they hold hands and gaze into each other's eyes)*

(Fade out)

Scene 10 - Amaone Scarlatto

(both are miming eating their respective dinners throughout the scene)

Phillip: Boy, you were right. Thanks for ordering this for me. This is one of the best Bolognese sauces I've ever....

Harry: "Gravy"! Guiseppe corrected me on this years ago, and I've tried to remember it.

Phillip: *(laughing)* OK, gravy. Anyway, it's the best.

Harry: And you should taste the lasagna. Here, take a bite. *(he cuts a piece with his fork and feeds it to Phillip)*

Phillip: Mmmm, that is delicious. *(before Harry puts the fork back, Phillip grabs his hand)* This is so strange. I can't believe I'm being fed by a guy. But it feels so natural, like you're my girlfriend. She's always doing that in restaurants.

Harry: It is natural. We're just two people who are enjoying a dinner together.

Phillip: But we're not just two people. We're two guys. And we're sort of having -- what? I guess you'd call it an affair. I can't get my head around it.

Harry: Where is all this coming from? You're enjoying it, aren't you? *(Phillip nods and lets go of his hand)* Then that's enough. Just relax and have fun.

Phillip: Okay, I'll try. *(they finish up their dinners in silence.)*

Guiseppe: *(entering)* Molto Bene, ragazzi, you polished your plates like dishwashers.

Harry: It was wonderful, as always, Guiseppe.

Guiseppe: Can I bring you some delicious desserts? Cannoli, perhaps, *e delizioso*.

Harry: How about it, Phillip, a couple cannolis.

Phillip: That sounds great. *(smiles up at Guiseppe)* Bring 'em on, I'm sure they're fantastic. Just like your pasta.

Guiseppe: *Grazie, signor*. I'll bring them immediately *(exits)*.

Phillip: So, what do you have planned for the rest of the night? Do you want to go to Uncle Charlie's again? And you could teach me some showtunes to sing.

Harry: Actually, I had other plans. My boyfriend is out for the whole night, so I thought we could go to my place and...well...we could see what pops up.

Phillip: *(reacts to the double entendre)* Gosh. *(pause)* That sounds wonderful. *(they hold hands and gaze into each other's eyes)*

(Fade out)

Scene 11 – Big Wong

(Chang puts two more bottles of beer on the table, without a word. Susan starts to take a swig, John points to the glass. She pours it and then she takes a drink).

Susan: *(She is a tad tipsy, as she picks up the chopsticks)* Now, how am I supposed to eat with these dumb things? I thought I asked for a fork, but he never brought one.

John: It's not that hard. Here, let me show you. *(He takes her hand and holds it with the chopsticks, trying to guide the food to her mouth)*

Susan: *(the food drops back onto the plate – she bursts out laughing)* See, it's impossible!

John: *(sitting closer to her, trying again, this time getting some food in her mouth)*
There, you see, you're getting the hang of it.

Susan: *(they continue with this game, getting more and more intimate, giggling)* It only works when you're moving these stupid sticks for me.

John: I enjoy holding your hand too much to let it go. *(Snuggles in and keeps feeding her)*

Susan: *(enjoying the game)* Hey, you're not getting to eat your food.

John: Okay, why don't you feed me? *(They maneuver the chopsticks to his dish, and both feed him with her chopsticks)* Yum. That tasted particularly good. I like you feeding me. *(they laugh).*

Susan: Alright, I think I got it. Let's see if I can do this by myself. *(She picks up a morsel and feeds him, giggling)* I often like to feed my boyfriend.

John: Let's not talk about him right now.

Susan: *(a little embarrassed)* Right. It's our night out. *(another long pause)* Let's not let this great food get cold. But I have to admit - that was fun.

John: Yes, that it was. *(He moves back to his place; he realizes that the whole restaurant has been watching their shenanigans.)* I think we've made a spectacle of ourselves.

Susan: Oh, the heck with them. *(she downs a good swallow of beer and giggles)* You certainly don't act like you do at work. I've always been a bit scared of you, honestly.

John: Oh? I hope you're not scared of me now.

Susan: No. Not a bit. How can I be scared of someone so proficient with these wooden what-do-you-call-'ems.

John: *(laughing out loud)* They're called chopsticks, my dear.

Chang: *(has been watching the shenanigans)* You done with food?

John: Not quite, Chang. Thank you anyway. But we could each use another beer, please.
(Chang scowls and leaves)

Susan: Golly, he seems mad at us. I guess we've been acting rather silly. I think the people at the next table are talking about us. In Chinese, of course.

John: Yes, I suppose so. But I was having some fun.

Susan: Well, me too! Who'da thunk it?

John: *(he reaches over and takes her hand, this time obviously romantically)* I wonder if your fortune cookie will say "Your love life will soon be happy and harmonious."
(They hold hands and gaze into each other's eyes).

(Fade Out)

Scene 12 - Marseille

(they mime eating their appetizers)

Matt: *(he's trying to maneuver the escargot tools)* What the hell am I supposed to do with this thing?

Rachel: *(chuckling)* Matt...you grab a shell with the snail tongs, and then dig in with the tiny fork to get the snail out.

Matt: *(he does so)* Okay, I got it out, now am I supposed to eat that disgusting thing?

Rachel: Just give it a try. If you can get past the look of it, you'll love the taste.

Matt: *(tentatively he puts it in his mouth, chews, and swallows)* Hmmm. Yes, that does taste amazing, Rach.

Rachel: Now you take a piece of bread and soak it in the garlic butter, and that's where the real delight comes.

Matt: *(he does so)* Oh. That is pretty fantastic.

Rachel: Good. Now you know the joys of escargot. Would you like to try one of my Frog's Legs?

Matt: Huh uh. I know, it's supposed to "taste like chicken", but that's going too far.

(he manages eating the snails while she eats her appetizer, and they continue their talk)

Rachel: So, honey, tell me what's going on that you're so afraid to tell me.

Matt: It has to do with Harry and me. I guess it's mostly my fault. I'm just not inclined to be passionate with him lately. And, well, it's because.....

(silence)

Rachel: Come on, out with it.

Matt: I seem to be having – erotic and sexy thoughts about – um – *the opposite sex*. And it's surprising the hell out of me.

Rachel: *(holding back her astonishment and even delight)* Oh boy. That must be strange for you. You'd always told me that you were strictly gay. When did these other thoughts begin?

Matt: Just a feeling I've been having of late. I don't know if they are real. And I guess I'm wondering if maybe I'm bi.

Rachel: How are these feelings manifesting themselves? Have you acted on them?

Matt: Oh no. Not really. *(pauses, embarrassed)* Can I get a little graphic with you?

Rachel: Mathew, my sweet, you know that I'm unshockable. And I want to help you in any way I can. So go ahead and tell me all.

Matt: Well, Harry and I have not been together sexually for quite a while, and I've noticed that when I – um -- take matters into my own hands, so to speak – I've been thinking about women instead of men. It's very weird. And I was just Oh, this is so embarrassing. Let's just finish our food.

Rachel: Alright, Matt. Just take your time.

(They continue eating in silence, each with their own thoughts, finishing their appetizers)

Gabriel: (approaching) I hope you enjoyed your *Hors d 'Oeuvres*. Can I clear these away to make ready for your *Entrees*?

Rachel: Yes, Gabriel, that would be fine.

Gabriel: Very good madame. *(he does so and leaves)*

Rachel: Matt, this has been hard for you, I know. But please don't worry. I'm not here to judge. And besides, sometimes just talking about problems makes you feel better. *(she leans in and kisses his cheek)*

(Fade Out)

Scene 13 - Juniors

(they mime eating the dessert)

Alice: Boy are you right about this cheesecake! I don't think I've ever had better. *(grabs for another piece—he points his fork at her like it's a foil)*

Brandon: Just a nibble, you said. Don't you dare eat it all, wench! "En garde"! *(they play swords with their forks)*

Alice: *Touche!* *(she suddenly points behind him)* Hey, look at that! *(when he turns to look, she steals another piece)*

Brandon: For heaven's sake, let me order you a piece!

Alice: No, I'll just nibble.

Brandon: *(imitating Jackie Gleason, making a fist)* To the moon, Alice!
(They laugh, then, getting serious) Before we leave, I have to ask you something.

Alice: Of course, Brandon, what is it?

Brandon: Your husband, is he aware of our tristes?

Alice: Oh. Well, I'm sure John suspects that I'm having an affair, but I really don't think he knows it's with you.

Brandon: I just wouldn't want it to damage our working relationship. John and I have been partners for, what? 10 years? It would be a shame if that was destroyed.

Alice: Honestly, I don't think he'd mind. I do believe *he's* been carrying on with someone for a while. Probably someone much younger. He hasn't been interested in me *that way* for years.

Brandon: I can't imagine how that can be. You've delectable, Alice. *(they hold hands)*

Nathan: *(Coming back with the check)* Can I get you lovebirds something else. Coffee perhaps? *(They shake their heads "no.")* Ok, then! Here's your check, and it's been a delight serving you both. *(he hands the check to Brandon, gives a theatrical bow, and leaves)*

(Fade Out)

Scene 14 - Amaone Scarlatto

(they mime eating the dessert)

Harry: I'd forgotten how great their cannoli is. I want to give you a bite of mine.

Phillip: It's just like mine, silly. *(pause, then...)* But let's just make sure. *(laughingly they both feed each other a bite)*.

Harry: Mmmmm, yours tastes better than mine. Just because it's coming from your fork.

Phillip: *(after they finish their bites)* I have to admit --- I can't believe how natural this feels, doing this with a guy.

Harry: Had you ever thought about doing "IT" with a guy, before.

Phillip: No! Well, maybe, in college, with my roommate, but nothing ever happened. But then I met Susan, and we just clicked. And pretty quickly we started living together.

Harry: Was – is - your relationship satisfying?

Phillip: Yes. Completely. *(pause)* Or so I thought, at least.

Harry: And...????

Phillip: Then I met you.

Harry: *(secretly pleased)* There's nothing wrong with any of this.

Phillip: *This* is starting to feel wrong. I'm not sure I should be here with you, Harry.

Harry: Will you please just relax, Phillip. Just take it one step at a time.

Phillip: Maybe I should go home now.

Harry: Oh, Phillip, I'd rather you didn't. I was really looking forward to the rest of the evening with you.

Phillip: Gosh, I'm torn and confused, right now. Let me just think.

Guiseppe: *(enters)* Was the cannoli to your satisfaction, *Senores*?

Harry: *Perfecto*, Guiseppe. I think we'll have some coffee and then we'll take the check.

Guiseppe: *Come vuole, Signor.* Right away. *(exits)*

Harry: Why don't we just sit a minute and see how you feel after our coffee?

Phillip: Alright. Coffee would be good.

(Fade Out)

Scene 15 – Big Wong

Susan: *(still giggling)* I think we've eaten every last morsel, even with those wooden things.

John: Once again, Susan, they're called chopsticks...chop...sticks.

Susan: *(quite tipsy)* Chop..sticks! Chopsticks! *(mimes a karate chop as she loudly yells)* HI YA! CHOPSTICKS!

John: *(looks around, a bit embarrassed)* That's right! And you got quite skillful with them, congratulations!

Susan: Yeah, I did, didn't I? But only with your help. *(flirty)* I think I liked it more when you were helping me with the...*(proudly)* chopsticks!

John: I enjoyed that too. And it makes me want to ask you something.

Susan: Uh oh. *(giggles some more)* Sure, ask away!

(Chang interrupts)

Chang: I take dishes now. You want check?

John: Actually, Chang, we 're not quite finished yet, so could you bring us some ice cream? What flavors do you have?

Chang: Pistachio. I bring pistachio and almond cookies. Bring with check. *(takes dishes and leaves)*

Susan: *(leaning in with her chin on her hands)* Now what was it you were about to ask me before Chang so rudely interrupted us?

John: Well, I have an apartment that I use for private meetings, and I wondered if you'd like to come up tonight to see it.

Susan: Oh. I *see*, said the blind woman...uh – well, where is it?

John: Just around the corner, on 44th.

Susan: *(teasing)* Is this a place just for business meetings, or more personal affairs?

John: It serves many purposes, my dear. But right now, yes, I'm thinking about something more personal.

Susan: Oh, I get it. But what do you think your wife would say about that?

John: If I'm not mistaken, she's out on a date with an old friend, too. And if I'm not totally mistaken, it's with my business partner.

Susan: You're kidding. Do you mean Brandon – er -- Mr. Robinson? Gosh, I never would have guessed.

John: I can't say I'm sure, but I've suspected it for quite a while. So, you see, she wouldn't give a damn if you joined me in my tiny abode.

Susan: *(singing, loudly, out front, toasting the absent Mr. Robinson)* Well, here's to you *Mister* Robinson! Oh, and can we pick up some more Sing-Tow on the way? *(she takes his hand)*

(Fade Out)

Scene 16 - Marseille

(they are finishing up their main course)

Rachel: Well, you certainly liked your Bouillabaisse, you've almost emptied your bowl.

Matt: Yeah, it's great. I'm so glad you talked me out of a steak. Even though I miss their skinny *frites*.

Rachel: Here's the rest of the wine. *(pouring into his glass)* So as we finish up, why don't you explain the favor you asked of me, in your text.

Matt: God, this is embarrassing. You've been such a good friend to me these last few months, I don't want to spoil it.

Rachel: My dear, nothing you could ask would spoil how I feel about you. You've made my bleak, lonely little life bearable since Mr. Robinson has decided dilly-dally elsewhere.

Matt: Well, you've told me that he is having an affair with someone at his business, so what I'm going to ask you may not be too off the wall or outlandish.

Rachel: Come on, you sweet boy, out with it.

Matt: I just wondered – if you wouldn't mind – if we could –

Rachel: *(prompting)* Yes????

Matt: You know, hook up?

Rachel: You mean.... have sex.....?

Matt: Yeah. Have sex.

Rachel: I kind of thought maybe that's where this was going. It doesn't shock me one bit. What do you propose?

Matt: Um... well I wanted to try it out with a woman and see if it's really what I want. And I couldn't think of anyone else I'd rather try it out with than you.

Rachel: I'm flattered. And pleased. Come on, finish up that wine, and let's figure out the arrangements.

Matt: Really? Wow. *(downing his wine)* OK.

Gabriel: *(approaching)* May I clear these things up for you? And can I bring you some dessert?

Rachel: Yes, you may. I think we would indeed like some dessert. I think a Cream Brulee and perhaps your Pot de Crème au Chocolat. I think we need something sweet to continue our conversation.

Gabriel: *Tres bien, madame. (he clears the plates and leaves).*

Matt: I can't tell you how relieved I am getting this off my chest.

Rachel: Good. Now, let's enjoy our dessert. (*she takes his hand and gives it a squeeze*)

(Fade Out)

Scene 17 - Juniors

(they are waiting for the waiter to take the signed check)

- Alice: Brandon, this probably isn't a surprise to you, but Rachel confided in me last week that the boy she's carrying on with is gay!
- Brandon: You're kidding? Really? I knew he was young, which delighted her, of course. But gay? No, I didn't know that.
- Alice: He's evidently some young actor, who's become her new "best friend". I don't know if it's a sexual thing, but they've been going out together now for months.
- Brandon: That probably is much of his charm for her. Rachel loves to "change" people. She tried with me, but it didn't work.
- Alice: What do you mean?
- Brandon: You know, she wanted to change the things about me she doesn't like.
- Alice: Well, I'm glad she didn't change a thing. You're perfect.
- Nathan: *(taking the signed check)* Thank you, dearies. I hope you have a wonderful evening, *(winking)* whatever you plan to do with it. *(exits)*
- Alice: That kid is insufferable, but I kinda love him.
- Brandon: Hey! Don't you go falling for some gay young actor.
- Alice: Don't be silly, Brandon, I'm yours, and you know it. You reserved Suite 102, correct?
- Brandon: You got it, honey.

(Fade Out)

Scene 18 - Amaone Scarlatto

(they are waiting for the waiter to take the signed check)

- Harry: *(he reaches over and takes Phillip's hand)* How are you feelin', Phillip. Did the coffee settle your nerves a bit?
- Phillip: Yes, I think so. I was having a bit of a panic attack. This is all so new to me.
- Harry: I have some Xanax.
- Phillip: No...I've got it under control.
- Harry: Listen, I'm really happy being with you, but I don't want to hurt you in any way. Or force you into this if you feel it's wrong.
- Phillip: The thing is, it doesn't feel wrong, and that's what scares me. From the moment that we began this thing, I've felt more myself than I have in a long time.
- Harry: Well, that's good. I would never want to do anything that was against your will. But I have to say, I'm really looking forward to spending an evening with you at the apartment.
- Phillip: I've been thinking about that, too. I think I really want to. But are you sure your boyfriend won't be coming home?
- Harry: No, actually, Matt has a dinner date with Rachel. And they'll probably go out yakking and bar-hopping afterwards, so he shouldn't be home before midnight.
- Phillip: *(with a big, relieved smile)* In that case, I say, let's go for it.
- Guiseppe: *(bringing the check)* Here you are, *Signores*, I hope the meal was to your satisfaction.
- Harry: Absolutely, Guiseppe, as wonderful as ever. Thank you.
- Guiseppe: *Molto bene*. Now don't make your next visit such a long time. *(exits)*
- Phillip: I think that's our cue to get out of here. How far is your place?
- Harry: Just a couple of blocks away. That's why Matt and I used to come here often. But we haven't been out to dinner much recently.
- Phillip: Hey, now. I don't want to be a home wrecker, Harry.
- Harry: Don't worry about it. Actually, I'm the one that's in jeopardy of that. Are you sure you want to do this?
- Phillip: I'm *not* sure, but I'm sure ready to try. I'll deal with Susan when I know more about myself.

(Fade Out)

Scene 19 – Big Wong

(They are eating their ice cream, with spoons)

Susan: *(even more tipsy)* I simply have to ask you, *Johnny*, did you know that I fancied you? I watched you coming in and out of our office all the time and was captivated from the first look.

John: *(very pleased)* I didn't know for sure, but I did notice how you glanced up whenever I came in.

Susan: Yeah, and I always was pretty happy whenever you'd ask me to do something for you.

John: Good to know.

Susan: And now --- here we be. Who'da thunk it?

John: Can I ask you something else --- about *your* love life? Are you with anyone at the moment?

Susan: *(deciding how to answer)* Oh, well, yes...No... I guess. Sorta-kinda. His name is Phillip. We've been living together for quite some time, but lately, he's been distant. I think something is going on in his life that I don't know anything about. We just aren't close anymore.

John: Good. So, this isn't a bad time for us then, is it? Alice is probably schmoozing with Mr. Robinson, and you suspect your guy is slinking off with someone. We have the evening to explore - and to see what happens.

Susan: Okay then. Sounds perfect. *(Raises beer glass)* Here's to us!

(Chang comes to the table with a check)

Chang: Here check! *(Leaves it and storms off)*

John: I have a sneaking suspicion we won't be welcome here anymore.

Susan: I'm sure there are plenty of other Chinese restaurants in Manhattan, without rude waiters and with menus in English.

John: And you can use your new skills with...?

Susan: *(proud of herself, she exclaims)* Chopsticks!

John: Good girl!

Susan: But only if you can continue with your lessons. I had trouble using them to eat the ice cream *(she giggles)*

(Fade Out)

Scene 20 - Marseille

(eating their desserts)

- Matt: This chocolate thing is scrumptious! Can I taste your cream *brew-ly*?
- Rachel: *(laughing)* You certainly can taste my *Cream Brulee* *(emphasizing the proper pronunciation, she takes a spoonful and feeds it to him)*
- Matt: Mmmmm, that's delicious. I like the way the sugar is crunchy on the top.
- Rachel: Yes, that's its great charm. It's actually done with a blow torch. Now, my dear, how are we going to arrange our little *tete-a-tete*? If we use your place, is there a time that you know Harry will be occupied?
- Matt: Oh god, I don't think I could do it in my apartment. Couldn't we go to your place? You said that Mr. Robinson is out with someone tonight.
- Rachel: You mean *now*?
- Matt: Yeah. Before I lose my nerve.
- Rachel: I can't be sure when he will be coming home tonight. To use our place, we'd need to be sure he's out for the whole night. I'm hoping that it will be a rather romantic evening.
- Matt: Yeah, me too, but...Oh, well, I don't know. I'm getting nervous again.
- Rachel: Stop. Don't be nervous.
- Matt: What about a hotel? I was kind of hoping we'd get this over with tonight.
- Rachel: Woah! Get it over with? That doesn't sound very romantic, Matt.
- Matt: I didn't mean that. I just meant that it's out in the open, I'm rather psyched for tonight.
- Rachel: I get it.
- Matt: Before I lose my nerve, I want to know if I can do it at all. And if I will like it. Oh, that sounds awful. I'm so confused about all this. Maybe we should forget about this for now.
- Rachel: No. I'll tell you what. Truth be told, a nice hotel can be quite seductive. There's the mini-bar. And room service. You know, I'm getting rather psyched myself!
- (She takes out her smartphone and begins to punch the keypad, looking up hotels)*
- Gabriel: *(approaching)* *Madame et monsieur*, is there anything else I can bring for you?
- Rachel: *(unhappy that he interrupted)* No, no, thank you, just the check *s'il vous plait*.
- Gabriel: *(who already has the check ready)* Very well, madame, here you are. *(puts it down and leaves)*

(Rachel hangs up the phone but leaves it on the table)

Rachel: Tell you what – I’ve found what appears to be a classy hotel right nearby with the absolutely ridiculous name of Staypineapple, and they advertise themselves as an “artful hotel”. Let’s just see how artful they really are.

Matt: You sure?

Rachel: You bet. And a splendid time is guaranteed for all.

(Fade Out)

Scene 21 – All Four Restaurants

The lights come up on all four tables in all four restaurants as the couples prepare to leave.

- Rachel: *(wiping her mouth)* Hang on a second – I have to make a really quick call.
 (She hits what is obviously a speed-dial button)
- Alice: *(as Brandon pulls out her chair)* You really want me to have a bigger butt?
- Harry: *(putting on his jacket from the back of his chair)* Gravy? Really? Sorry, it'll
 always be sauce to me.
- Matt: *(stands and pulls out chair for Rachel)* Well, I never thought I'd eat a snail!
- Susan: *(pushing away from the table)* Woo hoo, I'm a tad tipsy! That was great
 beer! Ying Yang!
- John: And it's not Ying Yang.
- Philip: Next time, how about Chinese? I bet they have "duck and soy gravy".
 (Harry laughs out loud)
 (Brandon's phone rings in his pocket – a loud ring tone)
- Brandon: *(looking at his phone, hides his grimace)* Don't recognize the number. *(puts*
 his phone away – Alice is a bit curious)
- John: You sure you don't need to use the ladies' room before we leave?
- Rachel: Seems to be a night for "firsts", huh?
- Susan: Know any other good restaurants in Hell's Kitchen? For next time?
- Matt: Let me just use the men's room really quick.
 (as Rachel and Matt are almost at the exit, Gabriel approaches)
- Gabriel: Next time you'll have to try the Tête de Veau
- Rachel: Calf's Head? That would really be a first!
- Alice: Did you leave a 20% tip?
- Susan: Hope you didn't leave 20%. Ten's enough.
- Brandon: I think your actor friend played the part of a waiter pretty well, don't you?
- Phillip: Pretty cool that Giuseppe knows you by name! If I can't be an artist, maybe
 a fancy waiter!
- Susan: Who'da thunk it? *(grabs John's arm)*

(as Susan and John are about to exit, Chang walks past them, scowling, without acknowledgement. They giggle)

Matt: Never mind – I'd rather use the hotel's – and I'll take a shower.

Harry: Nice night for a brisk walk, don't you think?

(as Harry and Phillip are leaving, Giuseppe approaches)

Giuseppe: Harry and Phillip, my friends, please do visit again *presto!*

Alice: Come on, hurry up. Suite 102 awaits.

(Alice and Brandon are the last to leave, and as they do Nathan approaches)

Nathan: Next time you're slumming in Hell's Kitchen, you'all come back now, ya hear!

All four couples are gone as the lights fade to black.

THE END

*The lights fade back in and all four couples walk downstage for curtain calls.
After the first bow, they change places to their real partners.*