

LOTTO DATE

A FULL LENGTH COMEDY PLAY

By Jerry Rabushka

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CHARACTERS

THE SHOW STAFF

JUKE ROCKER	Host of the show.
APHRODITE GONZALES	Co-host.
PRISCILLA VALENTINE	Commentator, Editor of <i>Whiny Girl</i> Magazine.

CONTESTANTS

LARIOPE	Female
CASSIE	Female
SAPPHO	Female
XANTHUS	Male
QUENTON	Male
ZAK	Male

COMMERCIAL ACTORS

NORA
GINA
GREG

EXTRAS

CHARLIE	A cowboy.
OLD WOMAN	At the opera.
MARLIESE	A waitress.
USHER	At the opera, M or F.
XANTHUS' MOTHER	
GUY	
GIRL	

PRODUCTION NOTES

Lotto Date has many small sets. One area of the stage can be the studio, which needs to stay as is throughout the play, as many of the characters watch the action from there. The rodeo, the opera, and the restaurant can all be on the same part of the stage, some simple backdrops or resetting the chairs can set the scene. The commercials don't really need a backdrop at all; on the other hand, a more elaborate staging can play up the studio, the opera, the rodeo, the restaurant, and the commercial sets. The company may also produce the play with minimal props and set pieces according to the company's needs.

There are many "small skits" within the play, allowing for doubling of roles, and also casting many players in medium sized roles that give them a chance to shine while onstage. As a take off on the familiar reality show format, much of the humor can be found in how the characters act like personalities already on TV, or in other instances how they deviate from it. The many different scenes allow the play to pace itself like a TV show.

Opera music and country music are needed for the background of certain scenes, game show music is optional.

LOTTO DATE

by
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ACT I

SCENE 1

Introduction

AT RISE: The characters who will be going on a date, LARIOPE, CASSIOPEIA, SAPPHO, QUENTON, XANTHUS, and ZAK are onstage. They can be seated on chairs, standing in various alluring positions, whatever works best. Lights can be a general wash, or the players can be highlighted. These are all 20-something “hip” people who are trying very hard to make a good impression on TV, even if they come across as idiots. Much of the set for the “studio” should be on one side of the stage, so that the dating action can take place on the other side, thereby allowing actors in the “studio” to watch and comment on the dates on TV monitors.

LARIOPE: I'm Lariope [*pronounced La-RY-oh-pee*], and I want a man who knows how to show this country girl a hootin' hollerin' good time..

CASSIE: I'm Cassiopeia, and I want a date that'll take me to a concert . . . rock, maybe R.&B. (*thinking*) But mainly, he should have money, and plenty of it. And he should spend it all. . . on me.

XANTHUS: I'm Xanthus, and I'm looking for a girl who's crazy about these (*pointing*) lips!

LARIOPE: (*interrupting*) Well keep looking – ew!

XANTHUS: (*points again to lips*) These babies have built-in-GPS. They know the exact location of your lips.

LARIOPE: You're fixin' to know the exact location of my boot!

XANTHUS: Come on. I thought that was a smooth line.

LARIOPE: Think again.

QUENTON: I'm Quenton, and (*sings as the others wince*) I love the operaaaaa! I want to sinnnnnnnnng my way into a girl's heart. Operaaaaa. . .

SAPPHO: (*stops him*) I'm Sappho, and I want a man. . .

XANTHUS: (*waits for her to continue*) A man who. . .

SAPPHO: No, that's it.

ZAK: (*a bit desperate*) I'm Zak. I'm looking for a woman who understands me. Who wants to look deep into my heart and soul and

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get to know the real Zak. The lonely, desperate, despondent Zak who wants to reach out and understand what true love is. . . what true love can be.

SAPPHO: **(The other women aren't impressed, but SHE is.)** Oh, I'm all about that!

ZAK: **(sulking)** I doubt it. I'm beyond anyone's help.

XANTHUS: **(trying to get a word in)** I'm looking for a girl who likes to have fun.

SAPPHO: I'm all about *that*, too.

XANTHUS: Locking lips. . . that's my kind of fun.

SAPPHO: I'm *not* all about that!

JUKE: **(The show host, enters jovial. The contestants take seats, men together and women together.)** I'm Juke Rocker, and we're all about *Lotto Date*, where love is left up to chance, and chance is what we love. Where your partners are decided by the luck of the draw! And here's our co-host, the lovely Aphrodite Gonzalez!

CASSIE: She's not that lovely.

JUKE: **(joking)** Yes, she is.

CASSIE: No – she really isn't.

JUKE: **(under his breath to her, threatening)** I said *lovely*, now can it.

APHRODITE: I'm all about lovely!

CASSIE: You're all about plastic surgery.

(APHRODITE tries to attack CASSIE but JUKE pulls them apart on his next line.)

JUKE: **(laughing it off)** Now, you all know the rules. . .

SAPPHO: No.

XANTHUS: Not really.

LARIOPE: **(can't believe it)** Haven't you seen the show? It's on all the time!

SAPPHO: My TV is stuck on the history channel. I don't really know about anything that's happened since 1789.

LARIOPE: Fine. **(to JUKE)** Off with her head, please.

JUKE: In *Lotto Date*, it all happens by chance.

ZAK: **(starts to chant)** Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. . .

JUKE: **(correcting him)** Chance!

ZAK: That's what you said. Chants!

JUKE: Not chants, chance!

ZAK: That's the inner me. That's the Zak I want someone to find.

LARIOPE: I don't think anyone wants to find that Zak.

JUKE: Come now, you might find yourself kissing that Zak by the end of the night.

LARIOPE: I'd rather drink out of a prison toilet.

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JUKE: (*tired of her*) Annnd you might find yourself doing that too, here on Lotto Date! Here's what happens: on our first nine episodes, three couples vie for the crown of "best date of the evening." The nine winners play off in the next three episodes, and those winners come on our show one more time for a chance to win the grand prize – marriage! (*The contestants are aghast.*) That's right. In a few short weeks, one of you might find yourselves walking down that aisle of nuptial bliss with someone you barely know. Now, the lovely Ms. Gonzales will pass out a sheet of paper, and you'll all write your name down and put it in the secret mixing box! Then. . . by lot. . . we pick your date for the evening.

SAPPHO: Good. I can't pick a man myself anyway.

XANTHUS: I still want a woman who likes to have fun – *my* kind of fun. (*points to lips*) Pucker up ladies.

CASSIE: (*creeped out, as are the other women*) Do you rehearse that?

LARIOPE: Do not make me go out with this man!

JUKE: You know the rules. You go out on the date we select – and you can't leave until the date is over! (*Contestants get scared again.*)

APHRODITE: (*collecting names from a frightened bunch*) No. . . matter. . . what.

XANTHUS: Now that's *my* kind of fun. I like a girl who kisses good, washes my car, and cleans my room.

LARIOPE: And you're single . . . mystery solved.

JUKE: Settle down. The fun is just beginning.

APHRODITE: (*puts the men's names in one box and the women's in another*) Because while *you* might not be having fun, the rest of America is going to have a great time, as we play. . .

CONTESTANTS: (*like puppets*) Lotto Date!

JUKE: Where, not only is your date drawn by lot, (*indicates another small box*) but out of *this* box, we draw where you go and what you do. . . because. . .

APHRODITE: Life is a game of chance! (*reaches into a box and pulls out a paper*) Lariope! You're going out with. . . (*pulls paper out of the other box*) dad a da daaaaaaaaaa! Xanthus!

LARIOPE: Oh yuk!

XANTHUS: My kind of—

LARIOPE: (*aggressively*) Your kind of yuck!

JUKE: (*the more miserable they are, the happier HE is*) And where are they going, Aphrodite?

APHRODITE: (*reaches into the third box and pulls out a slip of paper*) Well yippie-yi-yay they're going to play cowboy, with a trip to the rodeo and then an evening of country dancing!

XANTHUS: (*upset*) We're going to the what?

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LARIOPE: **(excited)** Cowboys! Now that's *my* kind of fun.

XANTHUS: That's not fun at all. Rodeo.

LARIOPE: Yee haw. Buck up, bucko, we're gonna have a good ol' time.

APHRODITE: You better hope someone else doesn't rope your girl away! If you lose the date, you don't get the prize.

JUKE: Our next couple. . .

APHRODITE: **(drawing)** Quenton. . . you're going out with. . . **(draws out of the other box)** . . . Cassie!

QUENTON: **(kisses her hand and raises it up high)** Bellissimo!

JUKE: And where are they going?

APHRODITE: **(picks out of another box)** Me me me me meeeeeeee! To. . . the. . . opera!

CASSIE: I wanna go to a rock concert!

QUENTON: Bravo! Bravissimo! You'll love the opera!

CASSIE: My mother was a soprano, and so was my stepfather. Every night they sang the love duet from Monteverdi's **(in a very Italian accent)** *L'Incorinazione di Poppea*. **(as if this ruined her for life)** Every night. **(QUENTON takes a breath to sing.)** Don't you dare!

APHRODITE: And finally, Sappho and Zak, you're going to **(picks one more paper out of a box)** *L'Haute Cuisine*. . . only the finest French restaurant in town, and the sponsor of our show. . . along with of course the Championship Rodeo Association and the Grand Opera Foundation. Funny how that works, don't you think? **(explains to the audience)** Now, we're going to follow our couple through their dates, and we're going to record everything for you at home to watch and vote on.

CASSIE: What if we need a private moment?

JUKE: You'd better not.

ZAK: **(meekly)** I'm a private person.

JUKE: **(laughs)** No you're not.

ZAK: **(scared)** No, I am.

JUKE: Just pretend the cameras aren't even there. Tonight, our special "Rate-A-Date" guest analyst is Priscilla Valentine, editor of *Whiny Girl* Magazine. **(PRISCILLA enters as they all applaud her.)** She's going to assess our couples and rate their chances for success. If she can correctly predict the audience vote at the end of the night, she wins one hundred thousand dollars. If she's wrong. . . well. . . **(starts to laugh)** well. . . well. . . **(approaches her eerily)**

PRISCILLA: Stop it!

JUKE: Sorry, that's *my* kind of fun. **(aside, to PRISCILLA)** Look, you get it wrong, you don't get squat. **(back in character)** Now, tell us a bit about *Whiny Girl*, and what qualifies you as an expert in the dating habits of today's young people?

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PRISCILLA: (**very educated, almost snooty**) *Whiny Girl* magazine was developed for the young lady who's extraordinarily selfish. Who thinks it's all about her. We give her the means and the motivation to continue in her quest for money, career, and expensive gifts, no matter who she has to step on, crush, or mangle in her climb to the top. Needless to say, we have a circulation of 17 million.

APHRODITE: Okay. . . (**to the audience**) Let's hear it for who *you* like best! (**As SHE names people, SHE gets each woman, JUKE gets each man, and they bring the couples together.**) Xanthus and Lariope. . . (**applauds and encourages the audience to do the same**) Quenton and Casseopia. . . (**again, looks for applause**) and finally, Zak and Sappho. Off you go, to play. . . *Lotto Date!* (**nobody moves**) Come on, off you go. (**JUKE and APHRODITE start hustling them off, to their dismay.**) Get . . . out. . . now!

(The contestants finally exit.)

JUKE: Now, Priscilla, your analysis.

PRISCILLA: (**confused**) I think this year's elections are in the bag, the Super Bowl was fixed, and if there's any justice in television, I shall win an Emmy Award for this episode of "Lotto Date."

JUKE: The couples! Analyze the couples!

PRISCILLA: Why didn't you say so? (**shaking her head**) Politics and sports, on a dating program. (**back to business, a bit like a sportscaster**) Xanthus and Lariope. They have a chance. She's a sourpuss, but he might just win her over to his kind of fun. Now, I'm not all about Zak and Sappho. She's vapid. Like a vacuum cleaner with an empty dirt bag. If they *did* like each other, they wouldn't know how to express it. Now, Quentin and Cassie. Opera. It might be a comedy onstage, but it's a tragedy in the seats.

JUKE: It's a tragedy onstage.

PRISCILLA: What is?

JUKE: The opera. It's a tragedy.

PRISCILLA: Okay, then it's a comedy in the seats. I'm easy on the analysis. You might say I'm a coloratura analyst. (**far too amused with herself, so JUKE has to cut to commercial**)

JUKE: Back in a minute – as we play. . . *Lotto Date!*

(Blackout.)

SCENE 2

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AT RISE: *The contestants are onstage, talking as if to a cameraman/interviewer before their dates. Again, they can be positioned any way for maximum effect.*

CASSIE: He loves the opera. I don't want to seem like a sourpuss, but frankly I'd rather take my brother to the high school prom.

QUENTIN: **(tries to put an arm around CASSIE, who pushes him off)**
She hates the opera. Now. But I'll change her. And she'll thank me for it.

CASSIE: I'll thank him to take me home at intermission.

QUESTION: Which intermission? There's four acts! Four long, luxurious acts!

SAPPHO: French. Can you eat French if you can't speak it? *Parlez vous pate?*

ZAK: **(smiles)** French food is so fine. **(loses the smile)** It's just going to make me look bad.

XANTHUS: I don't care – A rodeo is *not* my kind of fun. I'm urban – sophisticated – debonair. I should be going to that French joint.

LARIOPE: **(pulls him off stage)** Git your high-falootin' self in the car and let's go rooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo. Yeeeeee Hawww!

(Blackout.)

SCENE 3

AT RISE: *Lights back up on the show set.*

PRISCILLA: The way to ensure a successful date is to dress for it. *Dare* to dress for it. You can't go to the rodeo dressed for the opera, any more than you can wear white at a Goth wedding.

APHRODITE: And to help the couples look their best, we've supplied each of them with a killer wardrobe to go with their evening out. Priscilla, will this make them more compatible?

PRISCILLA: In the case of Zak and Sappho, yes. Zak needs the boost to his ego. For Xanthus, putting him in country clothes will make him squirm like a calf in a lariat toss. Prone to wild outbursts. Ahh. I can't wait! My kind of fun!

APHRODITE: And we're all about having fun.

JUKE: And what our couples don't know is, tonight we're sending in special guests – people to rattle their mettle. To sabotage the date. You've done that yourself, haven't you, Aphrodite?

APHRODITE: You've heard of two's company, three's a crowd. Well, company may be pleasant, but a crowd stirs up the action. And

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action we will have. The dark green eye of jealousy is just around the corner. It always works. . . even on the great Aphrodite. (**getting angry**) I'll never forget it. Her walking away, hand in hand with *my* boyfriend. Who cares if he was her fiancé before I stole him.

JUKE: Ok, ok. The question is, will our surprise guests tear our dates apart – or bring them closer together? We'll be right back with a trip to the rodeo.

LARIOPE: (*offstage*) Yeeeeeeeeeeee haaaaaaaawwwwwwwww!

XANTHUS: (*runs onstage and LARIOPE pulls him back off*)
Oooooooooooooooooooooo!

SCENE 4

Commercial #1

AT RISE: *NORA, GINA, and GREG are onstage. They will play all the commercials.*

NORA: Do you have extreme body odor?

GREG: No.

GINA: **(enters)** Yes you do.

GREG: I do not!

NORA: *(approaches quickly, then backs off)* Do.

GREG: Don't.

GINA and NORA: Do.

NORA: But you don't know it. Now, there's a new doctor prescribed antiperspirant for people like you, who suffer from extreme body odor.

GREG: I'm not suffering.

GINA: We are. Now ask your doctor about it.

NORA: Now!

GREG: I can't. Everyone runs away when I go into his office.

GINA: Phone him. Use your cell.

GREG: But my daytime minutes! (*wistful*) So precious.

NORA: **(holding up a small can)** By taking Odoflux, you *can* go out in public again. Even Wal-Mart, where you wouldn't think they'd notice. So, it's either, . . .

GINA: *(goes up to GREG and hangs on him)* Oooooo!

NORA: Or...

GINA: (*gets repulsed*) Eeeewww!

NORA: Ask your doctor. And if you have to phone him, do it on. . .
Phonex! After 7 PM, of course.

GREG: He's closed after 7 PM.

NORA: Leave a message!

SCENE 5

The Rodeo

AT RISE: The rodeo can just be three chairs on a side of the stage. LARIOPE is in the middle, and XANTHUS is on one side. They're dressed in western wear, LARIOPE is having a ball, XANTHUS is miserable and looks a bit ridiculous. Be careful of putting people in cowboy hats as they can cast shadows over someone's face. On the other side of the stage, in the studio, JUKE, APHRODITE, and PRISCILLA are "watching" the proceedings and commenting. The general idea here is that if this were on TV, the cameras would be splicing back and forth between the date and the studio.

LARIOPE: This is one hootin' hollerin' cowboyin' heck of a good time!

XANTHUS: What's the big deal about a bunch of guys getting thrown around by a bunch of cows? It's just like our family get-togethers.

LARIOPE: These are real men. Manly men. Xanthus, you are so cute in those cowboy duds. Even *you* look like a real man.

XANTHUS: I feel like a reject from the North Dakota state fair.

LARIOPE: Well I like these clothes. Don't you think I look pretty? ***(HE's not paying attention, SHE cuffs him.)*** I said, don't you think. . .

XANTHUS: ***(doesn't care)*** Hold me back, baby.

LARIOPE: I can't wait to go dancing after the rodeo!

XANTHUS: ***(lamenting his fate)*** Ah, fortune – thou hast dealt me such a blow. I know not whether I should stay or go.

LARIOPE: Where's that from?

XANTHUS: My last date. She said go.

LARIOPE: Come on, let's get to know each other. Tell me about Xanthus. Come on. Your kind of fun, you know.

XANTHUS: I can't talk in front of all these people.

LARIOPE: Don't be afraid. ***(different attitude)*** Maybe we can have some fun after all. First, try acting like a human being.

XANTHUS: I don't want to act like a human being. It's not in my nature.

LARIOPE: Oh, come on. Tell me a secret!

PRISCILLA: He's not willing to open up. It's not a good sign.

LARIOPE: Come on. Tell me a secret only I can know. It'll be fun . . . your kind of fun.

(XANTHUS starts to whisper something, LARIOPE is intrigued, but much less so as HE goes on.)

APHRODITE: Here he goes – what's he telling her?

LARIOPE: **(shocked)** Oh? You still live with your mother?

XANTHUS: **(defensive)** Hey. . . that's still cool. . . isn't it?

LARIOPE: **(sarcastically)** Oh yeah. . . your kind of cool.

JUKE: **(gleefully)** I think it's time for a little action. Time to throw a cog into the wheel!

PRISCILLA: Xanthus is such a dead-head. I don't think he'll be able to handle this.

JUKE: **(happy about it)** Me, either.

(CHARLIE enters into the rodeo, HE's an overzealous cowboy, speaks with an overstated drawl, and very flashy and outgoing, just about knocking them out of their seats.)

CHARLIE: What is goin' on here? This is an outrage! It's a shame! If this was opera it'd be a tragedy!

LARIOPE: What?

XANTHUS: What, what?

CHARLIE: **(still can't believe it)** An empty seat next to a beautiful young lady. This is a crime and justice must be done. So ma'am, it is my duty as a cowboy to relieve you of this unfortunate indignity.

LARIOPE: **(flattered)** Oh, you.

CHARLIE: **(sitting down next to her, so SHE's in between CHARLIE and XANTHUS)** I'm Charlie.

LARIOPE: I'm Lariope. And this is my date, Xanthus.

CHARLIE: Xanthus. **(looks him over and laughs)** You ain't a cowboy, are ya?

XANTHUS: I'm a chemical engineer.

CHARLIE: A weekend cowpoke all duded up. Well ain't you a handsome feller in them duds you haven't the slightest idea how to wear? Chemical engineer, hmmm? **(to LARIOPE)** And what's a purdy girl like you do for a livin'?

LARIOPE: **(flattered)** Well. I—

CHARLIE: **(comes up with a great idea)** I bet you're an author. **(to XANTHUS)** Don't you think she's an author?

LARIOPE: What makes you think that?

CHARLIE: Cuz you sure wrote the book on goooooooooooooo lookin'!

XANTHUS: Okay, okay. Stop that. You're moving in on my girl.

CHARLIE: Well you ain't movin' in nowhere except a mansion of misery and self depreciation. I think it's for her to decide who she wants doin' the movin'. Hah! Chemical engineer.

XANTHUS: Yes I am. Now you just start movin' on out, buster.

CHARLIE: Look now. Don't get your knickers in a knot.

(LARIOPE laughs.)

XANTHUS: ***(losing his temper)*** I do not have my knickers in a knot!

CHARLIE: ***(shocked)*** You've got knickers?

XANTHUS: No, I don't.

CHARLIE: Well you just said they weren't in a knot. They can't not be in a knot unless you have 'em.

XANTHUS: ***(flustered)*** Well, I don't. They're not. I mean not in a knot! Oh, never mind.

CHARLIE: ***(short pause)*** Well they need some adjusting cuz you're wound up like a social worker at an orphanage on Christmas morning. ***(LARIOPE still thinks CHARLIE's funny.)*** How did you ever get such a pretty girl to go out with a sourpuss piece of stale sirloin like yourself?

XANTHUS: Luck of the draw I guess.

JUKE: Luck of the draw. He's funny.

APHRODITE: But she's not buying it. Do you think they'll make it through this date alive?

PRISCILLA: He looks uncomfortable in those clothes. She's a natural. She's taking to the rodeo like a hog to slop. Factor in Charlie – and frankly – someone's knickers are going to be knotted very, very tight.

JUKE: ***(again, trying to get out of the scene)*** We'll be right back – with a trip to the opera!

SCENE 6

Commercial #2

NORA: Up next after *Lotto Date – Caught In The Act*. Guys who cheat on their girlfriends. Students who cheat on their tests. Teachers who grade your finals without reading them. When we expose a cheater, everyone has a good time!

(GREG approaches NORA carrying flowers or some other romantic gift, as GINA runs in.)

GINA: You cheat! I gave you the best. . . Six months, two weeks, and three days of my life and now it's ruined! Ruined!

GREG: ***(confused)*** Who are you?

GINA: Now you deny we ever met!

GREG: Yeah. We never met.

GINA: Billy!

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GREG: I'm not Billy, I'm Greg.

GINA: You look like Billy.

GREG: I get that all the time. He sounds cool. But. . . nope, not Billy.

GINA: Well. . . sorry. Have you seen him around?

GREG: I don't know who he is.

GINA: **(to NORA)** Well if I ever see Billy with you, your face'll be plastered on the radiator, do you hear me? **(exit)**

NORA: **(relieved)** Whew! That was close. . . Billy.

GREG: **(to the audience, as NORA puts her arms around him and GINA comes in and scowls from the side)** Caught In The Act!
Next, after *Lotto Date*!

SCENE 7

The Opera

AT RISE: *The same chairs can be used from the rodeo, but this time, put one chair behind the other two. CASSIE and QUENTON are seated together at the opera in front. An OLD WOMAN is seated behind them. Some opera music can be playing quietly in the background to set the mood. Everyone is dressed formally, QUENTON in a tux, if possible, CASSIE in a long gown that SHE doesn't enjoy.*

CASSIE: **(whiny)** I can't understand a thing!

QUENTON: It's in Italian.

CASSIE: Well that's stupid.

QUENTON: It was written in Italy.

CASSIE: Then why are they doing it here?

QUENTON: Look. It's translated up at the top of the stage. They're called supertitles.

CASSIE: What's going on?

QUENTON: She's in love with some guy and everyone else is trying to kill him. So she's trying to figure out how to save his life. It's kind of like a *Walker, Texas Ranger* set in 1600.

CASSIE: And these outfits!

QUENTON: Those are period costumes!

CASSIE: I mean our outfits. I feel like a stuffed grouper.

QUENTON: You're more like a large mouth bass. Now just let me enjoy the performance! **(they continue to argue in pantomime)**

JUKE: **(to PRISCILLA)** What do you think, Priscilla? Is her outfit appropriate for a trip to the opera?

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PRISCILLA: For the opera, yes. For Cassie, no. Quenton is right at home. The tux, the bowtie. He's happy in formal wear. Cassie. . . not so much. Stuffed grouper, filet of salmon. She's definitely a fish out of water, and if she doesn't watch it, she's going to be gutted and filleted by the old lady behind her.

CASSIE: Well I hate it.

WOMAN: **(tapping CASSIE)** Excuse me, but I'm trying to hear the performance! **(to QUENTON)** She's such a loudmouth!

QUENTON: **(offended)** That's my favorite soprano!

WOMAN: I mean your date!

QUENTON: Oh yeah. Can it, Cassie.

CASSIE: **(gets a great idea)** Hey, isn't some fat lady supposed to sing?

QUENTON: What do you mean?

CASSIE: They say the opera isn't over until the fat lady sings.

QUENTON: That's only in sports. They don't mean it in opera.

CASSIE: She's too thin. We'll never get out of here!

WOMAN: **(admonishing)** Young lady!

CASSIE: Cool your jets y'old biddie! Hey Quenton, what about that one?

QUENTON: Who?

CASSIE: Her! Third from the left! She's kind of hefty. Maybe she can belt out a number, and we can go.

WOMAN: **(mortally offended)** This is opera! We don't "belt out a number" in opera.

QUENTON: She's in the chorus. She'll never have a solo!

CASSIE: Never? What a loser.

WOMAN: Where did you find this girl? At a motorcycle rally?

QUENTON: Just a chance meeting.

WOMAN: Well shut her up. She's disruptive. I can barely enjoy myself with her constant whining.

CASSIE: Whining? With all that screeching on stage you think I'm whining?

QUENTON: Oh, she's finished. **(stands up and applauds, along with WOMAN)** Brava! *[note: Brava is often said instead of bravo when there is a female performer.]*

QUENTON and WOMAN: *Bravissima!*

CASSIE: Good, let's go.

QUENTON: **(enthralled)** That's just the prologue. We're just getting started.

WOMAN: **(over the top)** I love this opera.

QUENTON: **(looks back at WOMAN, and they "connect")** Me, too.

(THEY start to sing together operatically.)

QUENTON and WOMAN: La la la laaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa.

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CASSIE: *(singing loudly over them)* Silenciooooooooooooooooo.

(THEY sit back down, embarrassed, blackout on the opera.)

PRISCILLA: *(turning to the audience)* I don't hold out much hope for them. He's a pompous mule and she's an uncouth Slobbovian.

APHRODITE: Have you ever thought that maybe she just hates the opera! I hate the opera! I don't like the rodeo much either. Maybe she just hates it. Is there a problem with that?

JUKE: Aphrodite. . .

APHRODITE: *(on a tirade)* Maybe she does! Haven't you had to sit through something you hate? Like a Christmas pageant of four-year-olds? Or a wedding when the guy you love marries some loser? Or—

JUKE: Girlfriend! What is with you?

APHRODITE: Or a roller derby?

JUKE: Calm down!

APHRODITE: I'm just saying we should sympathize.

JUKE: *(apologizing)* I forgot. Her husband has season tickets.

APHRODITE: *(still out of control)* My ex husband. He married that soprano. Every time she dies in the end I keep hoping it's for real, but noooo, she gets up every time – every single time – and it's back into his arms!

(JUKE and PRISCILLA try to subdue her.)

JUKE: We'll be right back, with a visit to a French restaurant.

APHRODITE: *(shouting)* I hate French opera, too!

(Blackout, as JUKE and PRISCILLA try to calm APHRODITE down.)

SCENE 8

Commercial #3

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AT RISE: *GREG and GINA are talking on cell phones. Some sad music can play in the background.*

GINA: **(depressed)** I can't talk to you any more.

GREG: But Gina. . .

GINA: I can't, Greg. Sorry. It's goodbye.

GREG: **(desperate)** But Gina! What about. . . Us?

GINA: Sorry. . . I have to end it. I love you! But. . . I'm out of minutes.

GREG: Wait! I'll give you mine!

GINA: It doesn't work that way. **(tearful)** Not on my plan.

(SHE hangs up, then HE, slowly, quietly, hangs up as well, both in tears.)

NORA: **(enters)** Greg?

GREG: **(like a new day has dawned)** Nora!

NORA: My minutes are unlimited.

GREG: **(enthralled)** Unlimited?

NORA: We can talk forever. Minute. . . by. . . minute. . .

GREG: Oh, Nora!

NORA: Greg!

GREG: **(to the audience)** Phonex! If you want to keep the girl!

SCENE 9

The Restaurant

AT RISE: *ZAK and SAPPHO are seated at a small elegant dining table where the opera was earlier. The other contestants are elsewhere on the stage, talking into a camera.*

JUKE: **(to audience)** Before we go to our third couple, let's recap what we've seen so far. Pay attention, you'll need this information when you phone in your vote later! And remember: if you use Phonex, your vote counts twice! **(the contestants act as if they're talking to a cameraman)**

LARIOPE: I'm caught in a battle between a cowboy and a city slicker! I'm in heaven!

CASSIE: He's singing along and flirting with that old lady behind me. I'm in—

JUKE: Yep, we know where you are. . . Act one, scene nine.

QUENTON and WOMAN: **(applauding wildly)** Brava! *Bravissima!*

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XANTHUS: Oh, just take your *(sarcastic) bravissima* and stick it up your Italian dictionary.

JUKE: Come on, Xanthus. *Your* kind of fun, remember?

XANTHUS: I am not going to lose her to some country bumpkin.

PRISILLA: He's going to lose her unless he loosens up a bit. You know, gets the knot out of his knickers.

XANTHUS: Stop saying that!

APHRODITE: When I was on dates like that, I'd alllll-ways go for the cowboy. Of course, I'm divorced three times and playing a Reality TV bimbo, but. . . Xanthus? What ever you have knotted? Cut it! ***(Lights out on the other contestants, or they exit.)*** Now, let's look in on our third couple, Zak and Sappho. What do you prognosticate for them, Priscilla?

PRISCILLA: I don't have much hope. Zak – he's got self-esteem issues. He doesn't think he deserves her. He feels about *this* big. Like a squashed ant at a picnic. Like a robin's egg falling out of a nest—

ZAK: Stop it already. . .

PRISCILLA: --that gets picked up by a passing pigeon—

ZAK: All right!

PRISCILLA: --only to be dropped on the concrete pavement, cracked, with yolk running all over, invaded by that same colony of ants from whence came the one that was—

ZAK: Gooo away!!!! ***(curling up into a ball)***

PRISCILLA: squished only moments before. ***(sighs with happiness)*** And *that* is Zak's brain on drugs!

APHRODITE: Wow, that was good!

ZAK: Even *I'm* not that bad.

JUKE: What do *you* think? ***(to the audience)*** If you think he's that bad. . . moan in agony!

MARLIESE: ***(a waitress, enters ready to take their order, she's trying to be elegant, but is a bit too hard boiled to pull it off)*** My name's Marliese, and I'll be serving you today. Can I start you off with a drink, or an appetizer?

ZAK: ***(looking over the menu)*** I don't think I deserve anything that's on here.

SAPPHO: Oh, come on. ***(points to something on a menu)*** This looks good. ***(points to ZAK)*** You look good. ***(to MARLIESE)*** Don't you think he looks good?

PRISCILLA: We wanted Zak to look debonair, so we ditched the usual coat and tie, and—

ZAK: I'm ugly.

SAPPHO: Stop that. You are not *that* ugly!

PRISCILLA: We went for upscale casual. Let him show it off a little. But—

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APHRODITE: (*with mock sympathy*) But it doesn't seem to be working, does it?

PRISCILLA: My prediction is that Sappho's outfit will give her an unnecessarily elevated self image and she'll most likely tire of having to rescue him from his constant self-deprecation.

APHRODITE: In her getup, any man should be thrilled to sit next to her.

JUKE: Any man but Zak.

ZAK: (*leaves the table and walks onto the show set*) Look, I have issues. Issues with my looks, my clothes, and my hair. You people make me sick. (*returns to his seat*)

PRISCILLA: How does he do that?

JUKE: Shhh!

PRISCILLA: (*suspicious*) Something's unreal about this reality show!

JUKE: *You* can be replaced!

PRISCILLA: *You* can be cancelled.

JUKE: *You* can be dragged through the mud along with that trashy magazine you edit.

PRISCILLA: *You* can be the subject of a very unpleasant reality TV exposé.

SAPPHO: *You* can all be quiet so we can order. He has problems. Don't you Zak? (*ZAK is quiet*) I said, don't you, Zak???

ZAK: (*cowed*) I guess so.

SAPPHO: I know so! But by the end of the night, we're going to clear things up. Clear things up like a teenager who finally finds an effective acne treatment. Cool?

ZAK: Well, ok. But I do have this one pimple on my—

SAPPHO: (*assertive*) Just. . . say. . . cool.

ZAK: Ok. (*hesitates and SAPPHO smiles threateningly*) Cool.

MARLIESE: Now. May I take your order?

SAPPHO: Sure. I'll have the. . . cheese soup for starters, and he'll have the—

MARLIESE: I'm sure your date can order for himself.

SAPPHO: No, Marliese, he can't. He really can't.

MARLIESE: (*in disbelief*) He can't?

SAPPHO: He can't. Are you taking orders, or are you taking college psychiatry?

MARLIESE: This is a full service restaurant.

SAPPHO: He's my date. I'm taking care of him.

MARLIESE: Are you his date or his mother?

SAPPHO: Excuse me? (*calling the waitress by name as a put-down*) Marliese.

MARLIESE: I said—

SAPPHO: (*things start to escalate*) I know what you said.

MARLIESE: Then answer the question.

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SAPPHO: I am not going to answer the question.

MARLIESE: You are, lady, if you want any service!

SAPPHO: Look, Zak is a co-dependent, self-loathing depressive who **(ZAK starts to cry, SAPPHO rubs his head.)** needs someone to look after him.

MARLIESE: I *hope* you're his mother because you're certainly one dreadful date.

SAPPHO: That's because you started a hoo-ha over the ordering!

MARLIESE: A hoo-ha?

SAPPHO: **(stands up)** A hoo-ha. You started a hoo-ha, and you're escalating it into a brouhaha.

MARLIESE: I did not turn it into a hoo-ha!

SAPPHO: A hoo-ha, a brouhaha, and now you're upping it to a dealie! All we wanted was. . .

ZAK: **(can't hold back any longer)** Can I have some potato skins? **(They look at him, amazed; HE's proud of himself.)** There. I said it.

MARLIESE: **(pause – she's shocked)** Pardon me?

ZAK: Potato skins. **(pause)** Please?

SAPPHO: **(proud of him)** Zak! That's my man!

MARLIESE: Potato skins! **(offended)** The finest French restaurant in town and you order potato skins.

ZAK: **(a bit frightened)** Is that ok?

SAPPHO: Sure it's ok. She's just trying to start a hoo-ha over the potato skins.

ZAK: I don't want to start any hoo-ha. I just like potato skins.

SAPPHO: **(patting his arm)** That's right. You do.

MARLIESE: Who asked you?

SAPPHO: Who asked *you*?

MARLIESE: Who *brought* you here?

SAPPHO: Who *hired* you?

MARLIESE: May I recommend?

SAPPHO: No! You may not recommend. Your job is to do as you're told. Not recommend, not talk back, and not create a dealie, a hoo-ha, or a brouhaha with such insatiable impunity! Now get into the kitchen and process!

(MARLIESE runs off in fear, SAPPHO sits back down.)

ZAK: Gee, you're aggressive.

SAPPHO: Assertive. We're nowhere near aggressive.

ZAK: I hope I didn't start the hoo-ha.

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SAPHO: Zak, you're fine. You're just delicate. Like a barf bag made out of cheesecloth. But I won't let her bully you. If you want potato skins, you should have potato skins.

ZAK: Well, they're not really on the menu.

SAPPHO: What?

ZAK: I couldn't pronounce anything in French. So I asked for potato skins.

SAPPHO: So you *did* start a hoo-ha.

ZAK: **(smiles a bit, bashfully)** I guess.

SAPPHO: It takes a real man to start a hoo-ha in a public place.

ZAK: Oh, you!

JUKE: We'll be right back.

MARLIESE: **(shouting from offstage)** I don't care if they're not on the menu. **(aggressive)** Make some potato skins!!

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