



203 BRENTWOOD COURT

by Herb Isaacs

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Brentwood Court

A play in one act by Herb Isaacs

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CHARACTERS (In order of appearance)

Harvey Geller: The Narrator. Divorced, Late thirties, humorous, highly intelligent.

Elsa King: Early 30's, highly intelligent, writer-editor for a software company, facially scarred but with a very sexy body.

Roger Warshaw: Mid- to late-30's, 2nd generation Hungarian Jew, civil engineer, unconventional.

Bekin's Man: 35+, brusque, sure of himself.

SETTING: The upstage area is split between the living rooms of Elsa's and Roger's apartments. Doorways to the two apartments are in the furthestmost downstage right and left walls. The hallway between the two apartments is downstage at the apron to the stage. Upstage right and left respectively are archways leading to their kitchens and bedrooms. Each apartment has a small couch, side chair and coffee table. They are decorated differently, reflecting feminine and masculine tastes respectively. At rise, the couches, chairs and tables are at the back wall, as far upstage as possible. They are moved into place prior to Scene 3.

The midstage and downstage areas provide playing areas for different scenes. In the opening scene we see the common gathering area for the apartment complex. There are two good looking poolside lounge chairs.

The downstage left area will be used for the laundry room in the complex' common area. Simulated washer and dryer on on the downleft wall. A clothes folding table and a bench are brought on and off for Scene 2. Downstage right is the area for the coffeehouse exterior table, which is also brought on and off for Scene 4.

SCENE 1: BRENTWOOD COURT COMMON AREA

(At rise, stage is barely lit. Elsa is standing downstage left in silhouette so that we see her sexy body. Her face is turned away from the audience. She is frozen. Light comes up on Harvey downstage center.)

HARVEY

(To audience) Welcome to Brentwood Court! The best singles apartment complex in all of West Los Angeles. Great facilities -- pool, tennis courts, and a big common area with a community barbecue pit. Every Sunday afternoon the young men and women grill their turkeyburgers or chicken, or steaks, pass the wine and get ready for the scene at the Brentwood Inn. Sunday is singles night there, and the piano bar is four deep. You can see someone there from just about every apartment in the complex...except Number 203: That's Elsa King.

(Elsa turns toward the audience, closely focused lights come up and reveal her face, which is extremely unattractive. She has a prominent, very old scar on her left cheek, and (through makeup) her mouth appears slightly misshapen.)

Over time Elsa and I have become good friends. We don't date, but even if I felt attracted to her, which frankly I don't, she wouldn't go out with me anyway. She makes it quite clear she won't date anyone in this complex. I guess I understand, but I do love talking with her.

(Lights up on full stage. Elsa sits on one of the lounge chairs. Harvey goes over and sits next to her.)

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Hi, Elsa. It's good to see you out here this afternoon. Can I get you a glass of wine?

ELSA

No, thanks, Harvey. I've got too much to do tonight.

HARVEY

Is there ever a time when you don't?

ELSA

I like to keep busy.

HARVEY

I don't think I've ever seen you at the Brentwood Inn. I'm going up there later. I'd be happy to introduce you.

ELSA

You're sweet, but you know that place isn't for me.

HARVEY

I sometimes wonder if Brentwood Court isn't for you.

ELSA

Sometimes I wonder that myself. I just realized... I've been here almost three years now. I can remember the day I signed the lease, a clear warm Sunday in July. I saw the group over by the pool, the barbecue party going strong. Maybe I thought I would magically become one of them. Three years later I am still in 203 and far from the poolside crowd.

HARVEY

I guess I don't understand why you don't just join in.

ELSA

Come on, Harvey. I'm not like those people... though I must admit, I do think about them. They show up in a dream I have from time to time.

HARVEY

Really?

ELSA

Yes. In the dream I am a lone silver perch, gliding slowly by a school of brightly colored carp. The beautiful fish don't even see me. All we share are the ferns and rocks through which we move.

HARVEY

That's just in your mind.

ELSA

Oh, Harvey! Be real! You know my...situation.

HARVEY

What are you talking about? People really like you.

ELSA

Which people? The truth is, beautiful fish only want to play with other beautiful fish. Over the years, I've come to accept my personal condition. Here, let me see if I can get the point across. Do you find me sexy?

HARVEY

Of course, but what has that got to ...

ELSA

But you're not attracted to me, right?

HARVEY

(Hesitates.) Yes, but that doesn't necessarily mean that...

ELSA

Harvey, I really understand. To put it bluntly, men leer at me from behind but veer away from the front. Oh sure, every once in a while a particularly brave or audacious one stays around long enough to bolster my ego. And I get excited about it, perhaps too excited. But after we have sex a few times, the ending is always the same.

HARVEY

Elsa, not all men are like that.

ELSA

Right, and the ones that aren't, fly, just like pigs do. Sorry, Harvey, you're a sweet guy and I really like you. But you're a man just like all the others.

HARVEY

I'm really sad you feel that way.

ELSA

Just chalk it up to a lifetime of experience. And now, while you head up the street to the Brentwood Inn, I'll just pick up my things and go back to 203 for a quiet dinner and some last minute laundry. Night.

(She gives him a peck on the cheek and heads off, leaving him standing there as the

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK)

SCENE 2: LAUNDRY ROOM

(As lights come up on the laundry area, we see Roger sitting on a bench against the wall, deeply engrossed in his book, his feet propped up on an empty laundry basket. We hear the sound of a dryer rotating. Another laundry basket is sitting on the table. A pile of folded, clean, dry towels is next to it. Elsa enters, ignores the table and goes right to the dryer. She sees that the clothes tumbling around in it aren't hers. She goes to the table and starts to sort through the pile of towels. They are all hers.

(MORE)

ELSA (CONT'D)

(Her back is to Roger. He is still reading. Suddenly, the dryer comes to a loud halt and he realizes Elsa's presence.)

ROGER

Oh, excuse me, please. This was very rude of me, but I was so involved in my book I didn't hear you come in.

(Roger gets up and starts toward her. Her back is still turned to him. She hesitates, then finally turns to face him. He doesn't miss a beat.)

Hello, my name is Roger, Roger Warshaw.

(He holds out his hand. She carefully places hers in his and he gently shakes it.)

ELSA

Elsa King. I've not seen you around here. Are you new?

ROGER

Not brand new...a bit tarnished, I'm afraid. (She laughs in spite of herself.) Actually, I moved in on Friday. And you? Surely you are not one of the oldtimers?

ELSA

Oh, I've been around for a while, but I'm not in the Brentwood Court history books just yet.

ROGER

Well, I'm sure you will be some day. (He looks around the room.) I must admit this is a very nice facility, and convenient.

ELSA

Oh yes, and it's used a lot. The people here are pretty nice, too. You can leave your machine going and if you don't get back in time, they'll empty your stuff out on the table for you. See? Like this, though they've never folded my laundry for me before.

ROGER

I hope you don't mind. Your towels were dry, and I thought I ought to at least fold them if I was going to use your machine.

ELSA

Oh, no. That was very nice of you. I was gone just a little too long. Actually, in the future, you could just leave your own things drying and do your reading in the comfort of your own place.

ROGER

But then I'd miss the chance to meet someone such as you.

ELSA

If you're looking to meet someone, you'll find plenty of opportunities at the poolside.

ROGER

Yes, perhaps, but I find that scene a little too...congested. I think deep down inside I am more of a laundry room person. And besides, I really go for articulate women who do their own wash.

(An awkward moment for Elsa. She turns back to the basket and places the towels carefully in it, picks it up and turns to leave.)

ELSA

Well, it was nice meeting you.

ROGER

Wait a minute. I'm leaving as soon as I unload. Let me walk you.

ELSA

That's all right. I'm really in a hurry. I left something in the oven.

(She exits quickly).

ROGER

(Shouts after her.) See you around then.

(He shrugs his shoulders and picks up his empty basket. He turns toward the dryer as the

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK)

SCENE 3: HALLWAY BETWEEN APARTMENTS

(It is Saturday during the daytime. Elsa enters from stage right going toward her doorway at stage left, carrying two big bags of groceries against her chest. Roger enters from stage left going toward his doorway at stage right, head down, carrying a briefcase. They almost bump into each other.)

ROGER

Oh, excuse me! You caught me deep in thought again.