

Women of Manhattan - Duke & Judy

*The backdrop remains the same, except now just a few of the windows in the buildings are lit, and Mister Quarter Moon has appeared in the sky; he has a smile and a broad wink.*

*The only pieces of furniture are a round table, center, covered with a red-and-white checkered tablecloth, and two wooden chairs which bracket the table.*

*Downstage is a lit sign suspended aloft; the legend reads:  
MARIA'S CIN CIN HOME OF THE PURPLE MARTINI.  
(Pronounced: Chin Chin.)*

*At Rise, Duke is discovered at the table. He's dressed in a dark and elegant suit. He's very handsome and he's black. On the table is a bottle of dark red wine, two glasses, and a lit candle. Duke's glass is full; the other is empty. He's gazing off left, smoking a pipe, steeping in a cool tranquility. In the distance, romantic Italian accordion music plays. A moment passes.*

*Judy enters from right. She's dressed in a breathtaking, fairytale-blue evening gown. Duke rises. They're both slightly taken aback by the other. Judy because he's black. Duke because of her gown. Both are secretly pleased by what they didn't expect.*

DUKE  
Hello?

JUDY  
Hello?

DUKE  
Judy?

JUDY  
Duke?

DUKE  
Isn't this funny? Please.  
(He pulls out her chair. She sits.)

JUDY  
Thank you.

DUKE  
May I pour you a glass of wine?

JUDY  
Thank you. I didn't know this place, Maria's Cin Cin, huh?

DUKE  
Known as the home of the purple martini. (He pours her a glass.)

JUDY  
Quite a handle for a... Well, it seems straightforward spaghetti and meatballs.

DUKE  
I do hope you aren't hungry? They tell me the kitchen's

already closed.

JUDY

I always eat well before midnight.

DUKE

I do, too. In fact, I'm often in bed well before midnight.  
But I couldn't resist.

JUDY

What?

DUKE

I don't know. The mystery of it all, I haven't been on a  
blind date since I was sixteen.

JUDY

Me either!

DUKE

I didn't expect you to look like you do.

JUDY

I didn't expect you to look like you. Look.

DUKE

You mean black?

JUDY

Yeah!

DUKE

Does it bother you?

JUDY

No!

DUKE

Frankly, it's not that you're white that threw me.

JUDY

It wasn't?

DUKE

No.

JUDY

Then what was it?

DUKE

The way you're dressed.

JUDY

Oh, this? I know it's like really inappropriate...

DUKE

It's stunning! You're completely beautiful. When you walked  
in, it actually knocked the wind out of me. It's as if you

walked out of one of those storybooks I was addicted to as a boy, the princess I dreamed of saving from heaven know what. You know, in my whole life no woman has ever walked in and made an impression on me like that. I have to congratulate you. And thank you.

JUDY

You're welcome.

DUKE

Do you always dress like that?

JUDY

Never. I mean, I had this conversation with some friends... Oh, well one of them was Billie.

DUKE

How do you know Billie?

JUDY

College. How do you know Billie?

DUKE

We had an affair.

JUDY

Really!

DUKE

But you were in the middle of saying something.

JUDY

Oh. Yes. Anyway, my friends got on me for the way I dressed, they said I was too tailored or something. Anyway, this outfit is my overreaction to what they said. You had an affair with Billie?

DUKE

Yes.

JUDY

When? Oh, I'm sorry, I'm being so rude!

DUKE

A few months ago.

JUDY

A few months ago? But Billie was married a few months ago.

DUKE

I think she's been married for about three years.

JUDY

I know that. What I mean... Billie had an affair with a black named Duke... You a... She never said a word to me!

DUKE

Well, maybe this date's her way of telling you?

JUDY

I guess it is. I can't believe that you a, I don't know, that you've confided in me so quickly. I mean, does her husband know?

DUKE

I don't think so.

JUDY

Well, why did you tell me? I'm a total stranger.

DUKE

That has to do with a rather extraordinary conversation I had with Billie a couple of days ago.

JUDY

I had an extraordinary conversation with Billie, too!

DUKE

She got me to agree that when I met you for this date I would be completely candid with you.

JUDY

I agreed to the same thing! Are you still having an affair with Billie?

DUKE

No, it's been over for some time.

JUDY

How did it end?

DUKE

We got bored with each other. Sexually.

JUDY

Really!

DUKE

Is that so unusual?

JUDY

No. But this conversation is making me feel so exhilarated!

DUKE

Why?

JUDY

I guess because you're a man and you're not lying to me!

DUKE

Sounds like you have a pretty low opinion of men.

JUDY

No, not really. YES! For the most part I have just the lowest opinion of men! Oh, that felt good to say! Listen, let me ask you something. Are you straight?

DUKE

You mean, am I heterosexual?

JUDY

That's what I mean.

DUKE

I just told you I had an affair with Billie.

JUDY

Right, right. But are you a complete, unadulterated heterosexual?

DUKE

Yes.

JUDY

What would you do if a guy like put his hand on your leg and gave it a squeeze?

DUKE

Well, frankly, I'd probably punch him in the mouth.

JUDY

Really?

DUKE

Yes.

JUDY

I like you, Duke!

DUKE

Well, I like you, too, Judy, even though I don't know you very well. Yet.

JUDY

What do you mean?

DUKE

Well, we just met a few minutes ago.

JUDY

No. I mean, what did you mean by that "Yet"?

DUKE

I don't know.

JUDY

Did you mean that later on you think we'll sleep together?

DUKE

I didn't say that.

JUDY

Forget what you said. Is that what you were thinking?

DUKE

Well, maybe we will. What do you think?

JUDY

I don't know if I'm up to this.

DUKE

What?

JUDY

This telling the truth. It's not important to me. Other things are more important to me than whether we sleep together or not. There's conversations I want to have with a man.

DUKE

So let's talk.

JUDY

Alright. What should we talk about?

DUKE

I guess we should have these conversations you want to have with a man.

JUDY

Right. God, I feel like such an American!

DUKE

What do you mean?

JUDY

You know. No Zen. No indirectness. You are very attractive.

DUKE

Thank you.

JUDY

And what you said about the way I looked when I walked in, that may well be the nicest thing that any man's ever said to me.

DUKE

I meant it.

JUDY

Thanks. I don't trust you.

DUKE

I don't trust you, either.

JUDY

You don't?

DUKE

No.

JUDY

Why?

DUKE

I don't know. You seem a little artificial to me.

JUDY

I do? Oh.

DUKE

Now you don't.

JUDY

That's because you hurt me.

DUKE

Is that the only way I can get the real you? By hurting you?

JUDY

I don't know.

DUKE

Maybe that's why you don't like men.

JUDY

Why?

DUKE

Because you only reward them when they're nasty to you.

JUDY

You're very insightful.

DUKE

Thank you.

JUDY

I don't trust you at all.

DUKE

Why not?

JUDY

You're black but you talk like Robert Wagner.

DUKE

You don't like the way I talk?

JUDY

Did your parents talk like that?

DUKE

No.

JUDY

Then why do you talk like that?

DUKE

Because I'm better educated than they were.

JUDY

Bullshit.

DUKE

Alright. I talk this way because I made a conscious effort to learn to talk differently than my parents and my friends.

JUDY

Why?

DUKE

Because nobody in my storybooks talked like them.

JUDY

Storybooks again. What was with you and storybooks?

DUKE

I don't know.

JUDY

Do you go through a lot of women?

DUKE

Like a hot knife through butter. Do you go through a lot of men?

JUDY

No.

DUKE

I think you're very sweet.

JUDY

I wish I knew how to do this.

DUKE

What?

JUDY

I don't know. I'm lonely. I think you're lonely, too. We're sitting here together. Maybe I should have one of those purple martinis.

DUKE

Are you going to start a fight with me?

JUDY

Maybe.

DUKE

Have I done something to offend you?

JUDY

Maybe I'm just sensing if I really knew you I'd hate your guts.

DUKE



If you really knew me. If you really knew me, Judy - and I'm not sure that's possible - but if you really could, I think you'd like me.

JUDY

This seems like a very weird date to me.

DUKE

Listen! Maybe I'm not doing a very good job, but I am trying to talk to you!

JUDY

Okay.

DUKE

This is very hard for me! I've been going from woman to woman for the last two years. I sleep with them, I get bored with them, I go on! Do you know what that's like?

JUDY

No.

DUKE

It's like if they dusted my body it'd just be nothing but fingerprints! If they dusted my soul, well, that's when the women wore gloves. There's a bitterness in my mouth. I'm trying not to let it make me talk bitterly. To you. Because it is true what you say. I am lonely. That is peculiar and special to me. My loneliness is not your loneliness. Do you understand?

JUDY

Yes.

JUDY

Can I do something?

DUKE

What?

JUDY

(Taking a hankie from her sleeve.)

There's this little white mark on your face. I think it's a little powder or something. Can I wipe it off?

DUKE

Sure.

*She touches the hankie to her tongue, and reaches across to him.*

JUDY

I don't know why I want to do this so much.

*She takes a lot of time and tenderness removing the invisible mark. He's awkward and cooperative.*

DUKE

Is it coming off?

*She doesn't remove her hand.*

JUDY

It's gone.

*He takes her hand gently.*

DUKE

I think maybe you just removed one of those fingerprints I was talking about.

DUKE

I think we should sleep together.

JUDY

Why?

DUKE

Because I can't think of anything else, left, that comes before.

JUDY

You can't? I can. I can think of loads of things.

DUKE

Such as?

JUDY

Such as why would you want to?

DUKE

I find you very attractive.

JUDY

Why? Because of my dress? My hair? My face? What about me do you find attractive enough... No! So compelling that you would want to have me naked in your arms and physically pass within my walls, broach me, that you would want to possess me, be possessed, lose yourself?

DUKE

If you think it'll be that good we should definitely get to it.

JUDY

No, I don't think it would be that good. You approach the whole thing too casually.

DUKE

Maybe you approach it a little too seriously.

JUDY

I don't think so.

DUKE

How long's it been since you last shared your favors?

JUDY

That's none of your business.

DUKE

That long.

DUKE

Have you wondered why Billie fixed us up? She must've been thinking of something.

JUDY

I guess so.

DUKE

I mean, I don't know about you, but I feel like we're natural enemies.

JUDY

Do you really?

DUKE

Yeah. Like the mongoose and the cobra.

JUDY

Which one are you?

DUKE

Take your pick.

JUDY

I figure you for the snake.

DUKE

I find you very attractive.

JUDY

Wait a minute! Wait a minute! What did I miss? I thought we were natural enemies?

DUKE

That's exactly what I find so hot!

JUDY

That's sick!

DUKE

Call it what you want!

JUDY

You're like a wall!

DUKE

That's right, Judy! Like the Great Wall A China. You can't get by me. Lean forward.

JUDY

Why?

DUKE

I'm going to kiss you.

JUDY

I really don't understand how we got to this point.

DUKE

People don't end up in bed by logic.

JUDY

Are we going to bed?

DUKE

Lean forward!

*She leans forward. They kiss. She gets caught up in the kiss. It ends. She leans back, looking at him. She's surprised.*

JUDY

That was good.

*The lights go down as Duke smiles wolfishly.*