

**MARS NEEDS WOMEN,
BUT NOT AS MUCH AS
ARNOLD SCHECTER**

(alternate version with approved changes)

a comedy by Rich Orloff

Cast of Characters

ARNOLD, a guy in his 20's

SALLY, his girlfriend

J.D., his best friend

LAURIE, a waitress

BALTHAZAR, from the planet Mars, single

VELICHANTRA, from Mars, his female cousin

Place. A coffee shop in Passaic, New Jersey.

Time. The present.

Scene 1

(Before the play begins, we hear the following.)

ANNOUNCER. The following story takes place in a land of intrigue, adventure, romance and mystery... Passaic, New Jersey. The author admits he's never actually been to Passaic. Consider this location "the Passaic, New Jersey" of the mind.

(Lights up on a coffee shop in Passaic, New Jersey. It's empty, except for LAURIE, a waitress who's seen it all, or at least as much as you can see in Passaic. She reads the newspaper. ARNOLD enters. Arnold's rather insecure and nebbishy; he's more comfortable in his photo lab than with people. He's also a decent guy, currently in love, or something like it.)

LAURIE. Hi, Arnold.

ARNOLD. Hi, Laurie. Is Sally here yet?

LAURIE. Not yet.

ARNOLD. Anything in the newspaper?

LAURIE. Apparently, in towns other than Passaic... **there are signs of life.**

ARNOLD. To each their own, I guess.

LAURIE. *(Noticing ARNOLD's cologne.)* What are you wearing?

ARNOLD. It's my own blend of Obsession for Men and Brut. What do you think?

LAURIE. It's very...distinctive.

ARNOLD. Thanks.

LAURIE. Is this a special occasion?

ARNOLD. I hope so. I'm—I'm going to ask Sally to marry me.

LAURIE. You're kidding.

ARNOLD. No. When I'm kidding, I always end my sentences with a raised inflection.

LAURIE. Does Sally know this is coming?

ARNOLD. I don't know. I have been dropping hints.

LAURIE. Like what?

ARNOLD. Saturday night I told her I couldn't live without her and that she made my life worth living.

LAURIE. Those aren't good hints.

ARNOLD. They're not?

LAURIE. In my experience, lines like that mean either (a) "I think you're gullible" or (b) "I *really* think you're gullible."

ARNOLD. Well, that's not what I meant. Not at all. Would you like to see the ring I bought?

LAURIE. Sure.

(ARNOLD takes a ring box out of his pocket and opens it.)

It's very...distinctive.

ARNOLD. Did you know that the cubic zirconium is the state stone of New Jersey?

LAURIE. Would you like a drink?

ARNOLD. Not yet.

LAURIE. I think I'll have one.

ARNOLD. Isn't this a beautiful day? Isn't this one of the most beautiful days of your life?

LAURIE. Arnold, I, I, I don't want to dampen your spirits, but, well, I think of us as friends—

ARNOLD. So do I.

LAURIE. You were one of the few customers who stuck by this place after that new coffee shop opened down the block offering better food at cheaper prices.

ARNOLD. I just see that as a sign they're desperate for business.

LAURIE. And, well, as your friend, well, are you sure you're not rushing into things?

ARNOLD. I'm positive.

LAURIE. You two have only been going out a few months.

ARNOLD. I love her, Laurie.

LAURIE. How do you know it's love?

ARNOLD. Why, why, Sally's everything I ever wanted in a woman. She returns my phone calls. She never laughs in my face. When I'm with her, a deep inner voice says, "Hold onto this one for dear life."

LAURIE. I'm not sure that's love.

ARNOLD. Of course, it's love. It's not fear, anger, sadness or thirst. What else could it be?

LAURIE. Do you think she loves you?

ARNOLD. Oh, yes.

LAURIE. Has she said so?

ARNOLD. Not in so many words. But I can tell, when I hold her close in my arms—when she lets me—she's feeling love.

LAURIE. Oh, Arnold, you're so—distinctive.

(SALLY enters. Although Sally is from Passaic, she aspires to larger towns and larger dreams. She seems a bit nervous tonight. Perhaps she has news, too.)

SALLY. Sorry I'm late.

ARNOLD. Hi, darling.

(They kiss. ARNOLD wants more than SALLY is comfortable with.)

SALLY. Arnold, please. We're in a commercial establishment. Hi, Laurie.

LAURIE. Hi, Sally. I'll get you some menus.

SALLY. Actually, I can't stay long.

ARNOLD. But I invited you out for dinner.

SALLY. I know, but...

ARNOLD. It's Monday night. Tonight's the night I get to impress you because I'd rather be with you than watch sports on television.

SALLY. Arnold... Let's sit down.

(SALLY and ARNOLD sit at a table.)

LAURIE. Can I get either of you a drink?

SALLY. I'll have a vodka cranberry. *(On second thought.)* Hold the cranberry.

LAURIE. Arnold?

ARNOLD. I'll have a caffeine-free Diet Cherry Coke.

SALLY. Arnold...

ARNOLD. Okay, okay. *(To LAURIE.)* I promised Sally I'd start living it up more... I'll have a Diet Cherry Coke *with* caffeine.

LAURIE. Coming up.

(LAURIE gets the drinks.)

ARNOLD. You look lovely tonight.

SALLY. No, I don't.

ARNOLD. I could look at you forever and never avert my gaze.

SALLY. We need to talk.

ARNOLD. Oh no!! What have I done wrong?! Tell me. I can change. I want to change. I need to change.

SALLY. Arnold, I enjoyed us a lot more when we agreed to keep things light.

ARNOLD. I agreed with my brain, but my heart has a mind of its own.

SALLY. Arnold...

ARNOLD. I can't tell you how much it means to me that every time we go out, you remember my name.

SALLY. Arnold...

ARNOLD. There you go again.

SALLY. Arnold, you're not making this easy.

ARNOLD. I'm not making what easy?

(ARNOLD looks at SALLY, as LAURIE enters with the drinks. ARNOLD finally understands what's going on and SCREAMS.)

LAURIE. Would you like me to put something in your Diet Cherry Coke?

ARNOLD. *(In shock, to SALLY.)* No...no...

SALLY. You're a nice guy, Arnold—

ARNOLD. It's just a phase I'm going through.

SALLY. You don't—we're just very different people.

ARNOLD. But that's what I like best about you. You're not me. You're beautiful; you're confident; you have social skills.

SALLY. Your social skills are completely adequate, Arnold. And I'm sure with some other woman—

ARNOLD. No, never.

SALLY. Why are you so pessimistic?

ARNOLD. Because...I can't tell you.

SALLY. Why not?

ARNOLD. It's too embarrassing.

SALLY. What's too embarrassing?

ARNOLD. You're not going to stop until you drag it out of me, are you?

SALLY. Ar—

ARNOLD. Okay, here goes. Here's me at my most open and honest and vulnerable... Am I going to get extra points doing this?

SALLY. I don't know.

ARNOLD. I'll give it a shot. The reason I'm so pessimistic, and I've never told this to anyone, Sally Zimmerman, but before I went out with you, I had already asked out every other single woman in the Passaic phone book, alphabetically.

SALLY. Is that the reason you go out with me?

ARNOLD. Oh, no. If I had known how wonderful you were, I would've gone in reverse alphabetical order.

SALLY. Thanks, but, well, it only proves what I've always suspected about you.

ARNOLD. That I have a big phone bill?

SALLY. No. That you never think bigger than this town.

ARNOLD. And why should I?

SALLY. It's a big world out there, Arnold.

ARNOLD. It's too big. It frightens me.

SALLY. Oh, Arnold, you're so...Passaic.

ARNOLD. Passaic's a nice town, with nice people who wear nice shoes and drive nice cars.

SALLY. That's not very exciting.

ARNOLD. I suppose you'd rather live in Trenton.

SALLY. Don't you have any sense of adventure?

ARNOLD. I once filled out my income tax forms barefoot.

SALLY. I was right. You're completely Passaic.

ARNOLD. I *like* Passaic. This town supports me and my studio very nicely. Just today I was named official photographer for Passaic's Holstein of the Month Contest.

SALLY. Well, I'm glad that's enough to make you happy.

ARNOLD. I didn't know you scoffed at bovine photography.

SALLY. I'm not—

ARNOLD. Did you know that the average Holstein produces 17,788 pounds of milk, 647 pounds of butterfat, and 564 pounds of protein per year? How many Trentonians can you say that about?

SALLY. Arnold, I— Look, I don't want to end this with a fight.

ARNOLD. I don't want this to end, period. You're too precious to me.

SALLY. Well, you're not too precious to me.

ARNOLD. I'm numb.

SALLY. I'm sorry.

ARNOLD. I can't taste the cherry in my Diet Cherry Coke.

SALLY. Arnold, we never really—

ARNOLD. You told me I made you happy.

SALLY. I said that *once*.

ARNOLD. You said I made you smile.

SALLY. I was going through a very depressed phase in my life.

ARNOLD. Still, you said it.

SALLY. Arnold—

ARNOLD. I taped all our conversations. I can show you the transcripts.

SALLY. Okay, Arnold. I didn't want to have to say this, but you've forced me. There's someone else.

ARNOLD. I can no longer taste the Coke in my Diet Cherry Coke.

SALLY. I'm sorry. But you forced me.

ARNOLD. So, so who is this guy?

SALLY. It's not important.

ARNOLD. Is he someone you met at work?

SALLY. No.

ARNOLD. Is he someone you met at a recreational facility?

SALLY. No.

ARNOLD. Is he someone you met at a recycling plant?

SALLY. No.

ARNOLD. So he's not from around here.

SALLY. I don't think this is a useful con—

ARNOLD. I think, after all we've been to each other, I'm entitled to know.

SALLY. No, he's not from around here.

ARNOLD. What's his name?

SALLY. Balthazar the Magnificent, Prince of Mars.

ARNOLD. So how'd you meet?

SALLY. He materialized one night **on my couch**.

ARNOLD. I would've been willing to do that.

SALLY. Arnold, whenever you visit, my cat never stops hissing.

ARNOLD. No hisses for this Balthazar guy, huh?

SALLY. Not a one.

ARNOLD. Have the two of you... **kissed**?

SALLY. Don't ask.

ARNOLD. I must know.

SALLY. Okay, if you must know, yes, we have.

ARNOLD. I was wrong. I didn't need to know... How was it?

SALLY. Don't ask.

ARNOLD. I've gone this far. I might as well know everything.

SALLY. It was marvelous.

ARNOLD. Wrong again. No wonder you want to dump me; I'm incapable of learning from my mistakes.

SALLY. Arnold, I— Oh, forget it. Just forget it. I do like you, Arnold, or at least I did, before you became so—

ARNOLD. Sally...

SALLY. In fact, when Balthazar first materialized, I was very tempted to tell him to leave. But then he said he had traveled the universe searching for me, and that he wanted to make me a princess and help him conquer the universe.

ARNOLD. Do the two of you love each other?

SALLY. You know, I've been giving that a lot of thought. Love is so ephemeral...but the opportunity to marry up and conquer the universe...

ARNOLD. So you don't love him.

SALLY. I'm sure I'll grow to love him. And more importantly, he loves me. And as any insecure woman will tell you, it's more important to be loved than to love.

ARNOLD. I love you, Sally.

SALLY. You just think you do.

ARNOLD. I'd cut off an ear for you, but I don't know how to paint!

SALLY. I have to go.

ARNOLD. Don't go! Please!

SALLY. Arnold, stop it.

ARNOLD. Don't go, Sally!

SALLY. I have to. The journey to Mars is over 48 million miles, and before I go, I've got a lot of shopping to do.

ARNOLD. Stay with me, Sally. Stay with me, and together we will create a race of, of Super—Passaicites.

SALLY. It's just not the same, Arnold.

(SALLY exits. ARNOLD finishes his drink. LAURIE enters, with a box of Kleenex on her drink plate. She removes Sally's drink and places down the Kleenex.)

ARNOLD. I wish I were dead.

LAURIE. Please, we've gotten in enough trouble with the health department lately.

ARNOLD. Laurie, do you believe in love?

LAURIE. Of course. Without love, life is nothing but a grueling ordeal with small tips.

ARNOLD. What do you think I should do?

LAURIE. A new phone book comes out in two weeks.

ARNOLD. But I want Sally.

LAURIE. You'll think of something.

ARNOLD. You really think so?

LAURIE. Definitely!... Well, possibly... I've got work to do.

(LAURIE exits. ARNOLD sighs.)

(The lights fade.)

Scene 2

(The next day. ARNOLD is confessing his woes to his best friend J.D., a man filled with either charming self-assurance or smug arrogance, depending on whether you ask J.D. or any woman who's ever dated him.)

ARNOLD. ...And I pleaded with her on the phone, but she said her mind was made up.

J.D. Women, they're so surface. They say we're surface, but they're the ones who are surface. *(deleted dialogue)*

ARNOLD. I guess you're right.

J.D. Last night, I went out with this chick. Now it's not like it's the first date or nothing that I'm putting the moves on her. It's already the second date; third, if you count the time I drove her to her foot doctor.

ARNOLD. I hear you.

J.D. So I take her out to a fancy restaurant, you know, with tablecloths, and when we're done eating, and I let her finish, I pick up the tab, leave a nice tip, 11.6%, and then we go to a first-run movie, and I buy this expensive tub of popcorn, and I don't even care how much she's having—roughly two-fifths, and then after the movie we go out and I buy her a couple of drinks, the fancy kind, with those cherries that give you cancer, and then I drive her back to her place, and I tell her she's beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, and then she says, get this, she says she's still not ready to invite me inside. And I'm so stunned, I just blurt out, "What do women want?" And she says, "I like my popcorn buttered."

ARNOLD. I don't understand women.

J.D. Me, neither. And I tell you something. I watch *Oprah*, and it doesn't help.

(LAURIE enters with drinks for the men. She places them on their table.)

LAURIE. One caffeine-free Diet Cherry Coke, and one beer.

J.D. Hey, Laurie, remember that date we had last November?*

*(*Or February, if the play is performed November-January.)*

LAURIE. *(Not a happy thought.)* Yes.

(LAURIE exits.)

ARNOLD. So what do you think I should do?

J.D. About what?

ARNOLD. About Sally.

J.D. Buy a quart of ice cream, **rent some movies**, and forget about her.

ARNOLD. I can't do that, J.D.

J.D. **DVD player broken?**

ARNOLD. I love her, J.D. Her very presence brings me joy. The thought of seeing her gets me through the toughest day.

J.D. Boy, you're really mired in it, aren't you?

ARNOLD. You bet. So what do you suggest?

J.D. Any way you can get in touch with this guy?

ARNOLD. I don't know.

J.D. How does Sally get in touch with him?

ARNOLD. He materializes **on her couch**.

J.D. Very smooth.

ARNOLD. Yeah.

J.D. Maybe you could get him to materialize in your life.

ARNOLD. Why would I want that?

J.D. So you can talk to the guy. Feel him out. **Maybe he'd be willing to find someone else for his purposes.**

ARNOLD. Not as well as Sally.

(deleted dialogue)

J.D. **You're right, you're right, I'm sure** Mars would definitely be better off if she were there. The whole universe would be better off if she were there.

ARNOLD. Maybe I'm being too selfish in wanting her for my own.

J.D. It's a selfish world.

ARNOLD. It's a selfish solar system.

(LAURIE enters the room and does waitress stuff.)

J.D. The main thing is, if you want her, you have to be willing to fight for her.

ARNOLD. Yes, but...but why would she want a guy like me if she could have a guy like him?

J.D. Never think like that.

ARNOLD. But—

J.D. Remember, Arnold, to make it in this world, you've got to have confidence in yourself, even if you're you... Hey, Laurie—

LAURIE. Forget it.

J.D. *(To ARNOLD.)* If she ever goes out with me again, I'm *not* buying her popcorn.

(J.D. exits.)

LAURIE. I'd rather never see another movie.

ARNOLD. J.D. thinks I should try to contact Balthazar.

LAURIE. Sounds like a good idea.

ARNOLD. But what if Sally finds out?

LAURIE. Look, who knows what Sally's really feeling? Some women are prone to temporary infatuation with interplanetary royalty. It may not last.

ARNOLD. I wonder how I could reach him.

LAURIE. I guess you have to make him want to materialize in your life.

ARNOLD. What could I offer a Martian that would make him want to materialize in my life?

LAURIE. I don't know. Think like a Martian.

ARNOLD. If I could think like a Martian—... If I could think like a Martian, I'd probably still have Sally. *(Sighs)* Think like a Martian... Think like a Martian... What a challenge.

(ARNOLD begins to think.)

(The lights fade.)

Scene 3

(A few days later. LAURIE cleans as ARNOLD enters, carrying a briefcase.)

ARNOLD. Hi, Laurie.

LAURIE. Hi, Arnold.

ARNOLD. Any extraterrestrial beings show up yet?

LAURIE. Not yet.

ARNOLD. I keep thinking, what if he doesn't show up? Then I think, what if he *does* show up?

LAURIE. He'll show up. Your plan is perfect.

ARNOLD. You think so?

LAURIE. Don't be nervous. Remember, you have the home planet advantage.

ARNOLD. I just hope a Martian will be interested in what I have to offer.

(BALTHAZAR THE MAGNIFICENT materializes out of thin air. He's tall, strong and handsome, everything you don't want in your ex-girlfriend's new boyfriend. He dresses like a Martian prince, and he has a formidable ray gun in his holster. BALTHAZAR and ARNOLD look at each other.)

BALTHAZAR. I am Balthazar the Magnificent, Prince of Mars.

ARNOLD. Arnold Schecter, Passaic, New Jersey.

(They shake hands.)

Have a seat.

BALTHAZAR. Thank you.

(BALTHAZAR sits down.)

So you really have photos of the President making out with Britney Spears?

ARNOLD. Yes.

BALTHAZAR. Give them to me. I can make a bundle off them on Mars.

ARNOLD. In a moment, first –

BALTHAZAR. Let me see the pictures.

ARNOLD. Not so fast.

BALTHAZAR. I demand to see the pictures.

ARNOLD. First, prove to me that you are indeed Balthazar the Magnificent, Prince of Mars.

(BALTHAZAR takes out his wallet, opens it, and shows it to ARNOLD.)

(Reads.) "Balthazar the Magnificent, Prince of Mars." Nice holograph.

BALTHAZAR. I hate it.

(BALTHAZAR puts his wallet away.)

ARNOLD. So how are you enjoying your visit to Earth, Balthazar?

BALTHAZAR. The air is unfit to breathe, the water is unfit to drink, and ever since I spent fifty bucks on those carving knives, I no longer trust infomercials.

ARNOLD. So tell me, what brings you to our planet?

BALTHAZAR. Let me see the pictures.

ARNOLD. Is it true that you came to find an Earth woman to help you conquer the universe?

BALTHAZAR. Enough questions! Show me the pictures!

(ARNOLD opens his briefcase, takes out an envelope, and slides it across the table to BALTHAZAR. BALTHAZAR opens it and removes some photographs.)

Wow... Hmm... You'll get quite a reward for— Wait a second. These photographs have been doctored.

ARNOLD. Oh, no. They're genuine.

BALTHAZAR. Britney Spears's feet aren't this big.

ARNOLD. It's the lighting.

BALTHAZAR. It looks like the President has a line across the bottom of his neck.

ARNOLD. Maybe he cut himself shaving.

BALTHAZAR. You're not playing with me, are you earthling? If I wanted, I could obliterate you with my dissolvo ray. With my bare hands, stronger than the claws of ten Earth lions, I could crush you at will.

(BALTHAZAR takes out his glasses and examines the photos.)

These are definitely doctored.

(BALTHAZAR points his ray gun at ARNOLD.)

Get ready for a slow, painful death. With bad side effects.

ARNOLD. Okay, I admit it. They're doctored. I stuck the heads of Britney Spears and the President on the bodies of—

BALTHAZAR. Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt?

ARNOLD. No.

BALTHAZAR. Katie Holmes and Tom Cruise?

ARNOLD. No.

BALTHAZAR. J. Lo and What's-His-Hame?

ARNOLD. No! They're just, they're just pictures from a magazine I bought.

(Note. The celebrity references can be contemporized if dated.)

(deleted dialogue)

BALTHAZAR. You dare toy with Balthazar the Magnificent, Prince of Mars?! Give me one good reason why I shouldn't destroy you this second!

(LAURIE, who's been watching this, comes by.)

LAURIE. Excuse me, but there's a five-dollar minimum at this table. Would either of you like something to drink?

BALTHAZAR. I'll have a caffeine-free Diet Cherry Coke.

ARNOLD. *(His confidence growing.)* Make that two.

LAURIE. Coming right up.

(LAURIE exits.)

ARNOLD. So, Balthazar, let's talk.

BALTHAZAR. I have no need to talk to a lying, disreputable earthling.

ARNOLD. I know about you and Sally Zimmerman. I know you want to take her to Mars **and conquer the universe**.

BALTHAZAR. How'd you find out?

ARNOLD. I have my ways.

BALTHAZAR. Are you from *60 Minutes*?

ARNOLD. No.

BALTHAZAR. *20/20*?

ARNOLD. No.

BALTHAZAR. *Dateline NBC*?

ARNOLD. No.

BALTHAZAR. That CNN newsmagazine nobody watches?

ARNOLD. No! To be honest, I'm just... I'm Sally's brother.

BALTHAZAR. How come you have different last names?

ARNOLD. I'm her half-brother.

BALTHAZAR. She's never mentioned you.

ARNOLD. She's mentioned you. And I thought, as her closest living relative—

BALTHAZAR. What about her parents?

ARNOLD. *(After a thought.)* They're dead.

BALTHAZAR. I've heard her talk to them on the telephone.

ARNOLD. She lives in a great deal of denial.

BALTHAZAR. No wonder she wouldn't put me on the phone when I asked to talk to them.

ARNOLD. So I do feel I have a right to ask you some questions.

BALTHAZAR. And what exactly do you want to know?

ARNOLD. Well, for starters, are you gainfully employed?

BALTHAZAR. I am Prince of Mars!

ARNOLD. Is that a full-time position?

BALTHAZAR. Are you trying to insult me? With these two fingers, I could—

ARNOLD. I'm just showing brotherly concern.

BALTHAZAR. Your sister will have her every need met. She shall live as royalty, with many servants.

ARNOLD. A hundred?

BALTHAZAR. She won't need a hundred servants.

ARNOLD. Fifty?

BALTHAZAR. Not that many.

ARNOLD. Twenty-five?

BALTHAZAR. Be reasonable.

ARNOLD. Ten?

BALTHAZAR. Eight.

ARNOLD. I don't think that's many.

BALTHAZAR. It's more than several! She shall be a princess. Has anyone made her a better offer?

ARNOLD. I guess not.

BALTHAZAR. *(Preparing to go.)* Then unless there are further questions...

ARNOLD. I have one more question.

BALTHAZAR. It will be your last question, earthling, so make it count.

ARNOLD. Do you love her?

BALTHAZAR. What is this earthly obsession with love? Whenever I hear earth music, it is always about love. Whenever I read earth stories, they are always about love. Whenever I see earth plays, they are always about love. At least your movies are about car crashes; that's fun.

ARNOLD. Then you don't love her.

(LAURIE brings the drinks and sets them on the table.)

BALTHAZAR. I shall treat Sally with respect and dignity, and her life will be full and rewarding.

LAURIE. I'd settle for that.

(SALLY enters.)

SALLY. Arnold! Balthazar! What are you—

BALTHAZAR. Sally, my beloved. You never told me you had a brother.

SALLY. I don't.

ARNOLD. I'm a close personal friend.

(BALTHAZAR takes out his ray gun.)

BALTHAZAR. Say your prayers, Earth man!

SALLY. Balthazar, don't!

BALTHAZAR. Why not?

SALLY. Dissolving people isn't socially acceptable on this planet.

(BALTHAZAR puts his gun back in its holster.)

BALTHAZAR. I will spare him, this time.

ARNOLD. Thank you for saving my life, Sally.

SALLY. Well, don't expect me to make a habit of it. What are you two doing here?

BALTHAZAR. This maggot—

ARNOLD. I lured Balthazar here, because, well, I was hoping to convince him not to take you away.

SALLY. Of all the underhanded, sneaky—

ARNOLD. I know.

SALLY. You have no right to interfere in my life.

ARNOLD. I know, I know.

BALTHAZAR. This worm is your boyfriend?

SALLY. We went out a few times.

ARNOLD. We went out *many* times. More than several.

SALLY. Arnold, just, just leave me alone.

ARNOLD. I need to talk to you, Sally.

SALLY. Just go, okay?

ARNOLD. Can't we discuss this like two rational human beings?

BALTHAZAR. "Rational human beings." Now there's an oxymoron.

SALLY. Hey, I'm a human being.

BALTHAZAR. Sorry, honey.

ARNOLD. Sally—

SALLY. Arnold—

ARNOLD. He doesn't love you. I do.

BALTHAZAR. *(To SALLY.)* Of course, I love you. *(To ARNOLD.)* Lying mealybug.

LAURIE. *(To SALLY.)* He doesn't love you. I heard him.

BALTHAZAR. Of all the women on Earth, I've chosen you to be my princess. If you come with me, your every need will be met and your every wish will be granted.

ARNOLD. Yeah, but...

(All eyes turn to ARNOLD.)

I have a regular job and a good dental plan.

BALTHAZAR. I will shower you with jewels and riches.

ARNOLD. I have an aunt with a condo in Florida we can stay at two weeks a year.

BALTHAZAR. You will be a princess.

ARNOLD. Ditto. Maybe not in title, but certainly in my attitude.

BALTHAZAR. **My brain cells are a million years more evolved than any on Earth.**

ARNOLD. I did really well on my S.A.T.'s.

SALLY. Look, Arnold, I've made my decision.

ARNOLD. Okay, okay, just hear me out.

SALLY. Arnold—

ARNOLD. Look, I know I can't compete with him. If I were a woman, I'd choose him over me. I can't compete with most men. I'm just a nice Passaic guy whose only dream is to lead a nice Passaic life. It's just that, well, there's this emptiness I have that when I'm with you disappears. I always thought it was part of me, but when I'm with you, I think maybe it isn't. You're the first woman I ever met I wanted to fight for. You're the first woman I ever met I had to fight for.

SALLY. That's a very nice speech, Arnold.

ARNOLD. Thanks.

SALLY. Unfortunately, even a speech that good can't make me love you.

ARNOLD. I know.

SALLY. If it makes you feel better, it does make me like you like a brother.

ARNOLD. I knew it was a high-risk speech.

(VELICHANTRA, Balthazar's female second cousin, materializes out of thin air. She's a tall, strong, attractive woman, the type often seen on covers of science-fiction novels written by lonely science-fiction writers.)

VELICHANTRA. Balthazar the Magnificent, I have spanned the entire universe looking for you. I have searched through the twin moons of Quantax. I've trekked through the galaxies of the darkest stars. Finally, on this misbegotten planet, I have found you. You turkey, you couldn't leave a note?

BALTHAZAR. Velichantra the Annoying, you have come at a most inopportune time. Please go.

VELICHANTRA. No.

(BALTHAZAR puts a hand on his ray gun.)

BALTHAZAR. Velichantra, I am warning you.

VELICHANTRA. Oh, big Martian with a dissolvo ray's trying to scare me. You couldn't pierce my energy shield in a million years... And trust me, he's tried.

BALTHAZAR. You insolent vixen.

ARNOLD. Excuse me, um, Velichantra the Annoying—

VELICHANTRA. Velichantra the Alluring—

ARNOLD. Velichantra the Alluring, hi, Arnold Schecter. I know this is none of my business, but what brings you here?

VELICHANTRA. I was at a feast at the palace of my great aunt, his grandmother, and someone teased him about not being able to hold onto a wife—

SALLY. What?

VELICHANTRA. And as he always does when someone teases him about this, he went off to get a new wife.

SALLY. Balthazar!

BALTHAZAR. My beloved, I can—

SALLY. You've been married before?

BALTHAZAR. A few times.

VELICHANTRA. Many times.

BALTHAZAR. Several! But none of them could compare to the wonder and the elegance that is you.

VELICHANTRA. Laying it on a little thick, don't you think?

BALTHAZAR. Velichantra, just shut up.

SALLY. Balthazar, I'm so confused. Is there anything else you've been hiding from me?

BALTHAZAR. Nothing, my dearest. I promise.

VELICHANTRA. Ha!

SALLY. You are Prince of Mars, aren't you?

BALTHAZAR. Of course, I am.

VELICHANTRA. The royal family's been out of power for 14,000 years.

SALLY. They do call you Balthazar the Magnificent, don't they?

BALTHAZAR. Definitely.

VELICHANTRA. On Mars, "magnificent" is one of the lowest titles you can get.

BALTHAZAR. That's not true.

VELICHANTRA. Our plumber is Glemfab the Amazing.

BALTHAZAR. Don't listen to a—

SALLY. Balthazar, what about your promise that we would **conquer the universe together**?

(VELICHANTRA busts out laughing, then.)

VELICHANTRA. **Sorry, I just can't believe that pick-up line still works.**

BALTHAZAR. *(To SALLY.)* Pay no attention to her. Behind her back, most Martians call her Velichantra the **Nerdy**.

VELICHANTRA. *(To SALLY.)* Listen, dearie, before you hook up with this guy, you should know that the only reason he searches other planets for a mate is because no self-respecting Martian woman would have him.

BALTHAZAR. The women of Mars are arrogant, demanding and unsatisfiable.

VELICHANTRA. He only says that because he's been rejected by every single woman on the planet...alphabetically.

ARNOLD. Excuse me... Do you mean like one small town on the planet, or literally, the whole planet?

VELICHANTRA. The whole planet.

(ARNOLD mimes an enthusiastic "Yes!")

SALLY. *(To BALTHAZAR.)* So this is the only reason you came to Earth, huh?

BALTHAZAR. You cannot trust anything that woman says.

SALLY. Oh, Balthazar, I thought you were different.

BALTHAZAR. I have two navels.

SALLY. I meant in a deeper way.

BALTHAZAR. Sally, I will do whatever is in my power to make you happy.

SALLY. But Balthazar, you have lied, you have exaggerated, you have misled me.

BALTHAZAR. Well, those are the things I do to make *me* happy.

LAURIE. Men. You can't trust any of them.

ARNOLD. You can trust me, Sally. I am immensely trustworthy.

SALLY. Oh, Arnold. You're a nice guy, and you have nice shoes, and we've had some nice times. But I don't want to be responsible for your happiness.

ARNOLD. Sally—

SALLY. I'm sorry, Arnold. But you wouldn't want the two of us to be together if only one of us was happy, would you?

ARNOLD. I'd be willing to give it a try.

SALLY. Goodbye, Arnold. And good luck.

(SALLY kisses ARNOLD on the cheek and turns to go.)

BALTHAZAR. Sally my beloved—

SALLY. Goodbye, Balthazar.

BALTHAZAR. If you don't agree to be my princess, I shall annihilate this entire planet!

SALLY. You don't handle rejection well, do you?

BALTHAZAR. I swear I'll do it!

(BALTHAZAR takes out his ray gun.)

VELICHANTRA. Don't listen to him. As long as there's **one gullible woman** on this planet, it's safe.

LAURIE. It's safe.

SALLY. Men... Sometimes they make me think the whole universe is just one cosmic...Passaic.

(SALLY exits.)

VELICHANTRA. Let's go, Magnificent. The elders of Mars await us.

BALTHAZAR. I will return when I'm good and ready.

VELICHANTRA. Your grandmother said that if you don't come back immediately, she'll cut off your trust fund.

BALTHAZAR. I am good and ready.

(BALTHAZAR and VELICHANTRA dematerialize into thin air.)

ARNOLD. I'm such a fool.

LAURIE. We're all fools.

ARNOLD. Why didn't I bring my camera?

(LAURIE leaves a box of Kleenex on Arnold's table.)

LAURIE. I'm very proud of you, Arnold. **You stood up to that guy.** That took real courage.

ARNOLD. I was motivated by love.

LAURIE. No, you were motivated by love's ugly cousin, desperation.

ARNOLD. What's the difference?

LAURIE. One day you'll find someone who actually is the person you want them to be, and then you'll know it's love.

ARNOLD. You think that'll ever happen?

LAURIE. After the way you acted today, Arnold, I have confidence in you.

(LAURIE hands ARNOLD the phone book.)

ARNOLD. I wish I did.

LAURIE. Would you like another caffeine-free Diet Cherry Coke?

ARNOLD. No, thanks. *(Sighs, then.)* I guess I can always ask out Zoë Zuzzerzyx.

(ARNOLD begins to look through the phone book. LAURIE goes back to her newspaper. VELICHANTRA materializes from thin air, goes up to ARNOLD and kisses him hard.)

VELICHANTRA. Don't ask me why. I just had to.

ARNOLD. I knew I lived on the wrong planet.

VELICHANTRA. Come with me, and we'll trek to the far ends of the galaxy. We'll bathe in the lights of a thousand different suns, and we'll witness every wonder in the universe.

ARNOLD. I have an appointment at ten a.m.

VELICHANTRA. I like a man who's responsible. Move your appointment to the afternoon, and we'll just do a quick tour of the highlights of the Milky Way.

ARNOLD. Do I need to bring anything?

VELICHANTRA. Just a sense of wonder.

(ARNOLD thinks for a moment, and then decides.)

ARNOLD. Laurie, call the Holstein society and tell them I'll have to see them in the afternoon.

LAURIE. You've got it.

VELICHANTRA. Come with me, Arnold, and I'll show you just how marvelous the universe can be.

ARNOLD. Great. When we're done, can I show you Passaic?

VELICHANTRA. I'd like that. There's something about this town that fascinates me. It's so – not Martian.

(ARNOLD hands LAURIE the phone book.)

ARNOLD. I don't think I'll need this anymore. *(To VELICHANTRA.)* Let's have an adventure, Velichantra.

VELICHANTRA. What kind of adventure?

ARNOLD. **The kind guys like me never have.**

VELICHANTRA. You're on.

(ARNOLD and VELICHANTRA kiss.)

(The lights fade.)

End of Play