

ACT I

CROSSING DELANCEY

31

BUBBIE. What's this?

IZZY. It's been lovely meeting you, Sam, and I appreciate your kind invitation, but I don't think I want to go. Thank you very much.

BUBBIE. *(pained)* Well. She spoke.

HANNAH. You talk, you meet, you try, you see. Sometimes it fits, sometimes it don't.

BUBBIE. She spoke.

SAM. *(rising)* Thank you, Mrs. Kantor, for the exceptional blintzes.

BUBBIE. The best.

SAM. Yes. *(He collects his hat and shopping bag.)* Mrs. Mandelbaum.

HANNAH. Zige zunt, Sam.

SAM. Zige zunt. *(He starts for the door and turns.)* Isabelle. You should try a new hat sometime. It might look good on you. *(IZZY and SAM lock stares for a brief moment. Then she pulls her eyes away. His hand touches the doorknob. Black out.)*

*(IZZY crosses down left in a single spot.)*

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Izzy. Last night I got my nerve up and called. I got his unlisted home number from the files at the store. That part was easy. The hard part was figuring out what I would say — I wanted to catch him off guard, but not sound too kooky or desperate. I wanted to peel back the careful layers of polite conversation and let him say what I hoped was really on his mind — in his heart. In other words — this was to be an *ambush*. *(She picks up the phone and dials.)*

*(We hear ringing. Then the ringing stops. Lights up on TYLER holding the phone. He wears a towel. IZZY shuffles several 3x5 cards.)*

TYLER. Hello.

IZZY. Tyler?

TYLER. Yes.

IZZY. Izzy.

TYLER. I beg your pardon?

IZZY. Izzy Grossman. Isabelle Grossman. From New Day Books. *(pause)* The girl at the downstairs counter who sometimes wears contacts and sometimes wears glasses — who tripped as you were coming into the store this week — who's read *FREEFALL* more times than you want to know—

TYLER. Oh, yes, yes. Isabelle.

IZZY. Or Izzy.

TYLER. Izzy — yes. *(pause)* Well — what's up? Am I in terrible debt over there? I know I owe some money, but isn't this kind of bad form, calling folks at ten at night to collect bills? You know I'm good for it.

IZZY. I'm not calling on store business.

TYLER. Oh?

IZZY. *(reading from one of the cards)* I'm calling to give you a chance to express yourself more freely outside the confines of our formal friendship. *(Tosses card away.)*

TYLER. I didn't realize we had a formal friendship.

IZZY. *(reading from another card)* The work-a-day world does frame our contact. — I want to give you a chance to crawl out of that frame.

TYLER. Well, right now I've just crawled out of the shower and I'm standing here dripping—

IZZY. Oh, I'm sorry.

TYLER. I'm also working pretty furiously on a review that's due in next week so my time is kinda tight. But if you like, maybe one day I could take you out for coffee and you can interview me. What is this for — graduate thesis?

IZZY. No ... just something I'm doing on my own.

TYLER. Small magazine? Straight Q and A I hope. Listen, I'll drop by next week, we'll set a time, you can bring a small tape recorder then prepare the *unedited* transcript. I get final edit. Those are my conditions. Okay?

IZZY. Yeah. That's great.

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*(Blackout. Lights up on center bench area where HANNAH sits leaning herself, her shoes off, a full shopping cart at her side. IZZY wanders by without noticing her, absorbed in her thoughts.)*

HANNAH. Isabelle, vus tuht seh?

IZZY. Oh. Hello, Mrs. Mandelbaum.

HANNAH. Come. Sit.

IZZY. I can't — Rubbie's expecting me.

HANNAH. Sit a minute. It wouldn't kill you.

IZZY. I don't like to keep her waiting.

HANNAH. *(a big smile on her face)* I got something for you.

IZZY. What?

HANNAH. Sit a minute.

IZZY. *(sits)* What is it?

HANNAH. It's perfect. A little corsette shop on Orchard. They got a nice line in brassiers, too. I never bought nothing there, but it's good quality stuff. This