

Joan Braderman; No More Nice Girls Script Part 2 - 1989

NO MORE NICE GIRLS,

Script for a videotape; Joan Braderman @ 1989--

Dialogue part 2:

MAMA SAID THERE'D BE DAYS LIKE THIS

JACKIE

I just hate it when Brenda starts that shit about how you have to make a choice - period. You know when she gets into her "politically correct" mode. It's usually about someone else's life. I think her life is more complicated for reasons mere mortals like us can't comprehend.

PEARL

Has she been making cracks to you about Lili again?

JACKIE

Well, not exactly to me about my kid, but it's hard to ignore what she's saying in that performance she does.

PEARL

Look, if you went to see her do "Old Ladies Having Babies," knowing full well what it's about, that was an act of sheer masochism.

JACKIE

I thought I could take it, Pearlie. I mean I've known the woman for fifteen years. I know she's completely gone on the subject for her own fucked up reasons. But she can be most eloquent when she's out of control. I actually thought I might learn something.

PEARL

Famous last words. That's like trying to understand rape by looking to get raped. You know, when she starts that dogmatic anti-child, anti-family stuff, I feel like asking where she'd be if her mother had adopted that line.

JACKIE

The weird thing was I could have sworn she was looking me right in the eye when she started that part about about the woman who says, "oops, I forgot to have it all; I think I'll just impregnate myself with this boy or that turkey baster."

PEARL (laughing)

Come on, Jack, that's actually pretty funny. I really like the egg

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part, you know, where she starts trying to,
what does she say, "slap some life into these old eggs,
feed'em any hormone they want, sing "the hills are alive with the sound of music"
to them each morning, get them moving with some egg
aerobics so they can fly down the old
fallopian tube just one more time and..."(breaks ups)

JACKIE

You can laugh (laughing) but if I hadn't gotten those
old eggs to hatch, I wouldn't have Lili. Of course I'd have
peppier breasts. (sighs) But, seriously,
life would be much less interesting
less real to me, somehow -- without Lili.

PEARL

I know, my sweet, and it's obvious that I'm in love with that
little girl of yours, I mean, not as much as my kitties. You've heard Bren on that,
right, when she says she finally understands why
people have children? Because they're allergic to cats. ha ha. Sorry.

But listen, you should be fine on this one.

In a way -- Lili herself, just the fact that she exists,
makes you almost invulnerable to Brenda's attacks.
Because there's no way in the world Brenda can understand
why you've given things up so you can have a kid in your life.
Think of her as half-blind, sweetie. She is, you know.

JACKIE

I know. It's part of her charm, really. But that doesn't
make me invulnerable to her self-righteous crap. There's
no pure feminist high ground for mothers, in case you
hadn't noticed. I didn't get that until I became one.

That's why I went to the damned performance. It's like listening to the
wise fool in Shakespeare or something. You get to see the world
from the point of view of a passionate feminist Martian.

PEARL

Nice line. I'm sure she'd like to see it in a review.
But you have to remember not to take her too personally, not
to let it get you. I remember one night she started reading me these
manifestoes; she lit a candle, right, there were four or five of us
there, including Delores. Everyone has been smoking pot
for hours and drinking single malt scotch and
is half tripping. No one is in the mood for some heavy, righteous
deal, you know, like it's totally inappropriate. But to make her point
she starts reading this thing...

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JACKIE

Why do I think I've heard this story?

PEARL

Well, you didn't hear it from me. That whole period was too weird to even think about for a long time -- for me, anyway. You know what things were like then, between me and Delores, I mean. I was desperate. So anyway, Bren clears her throat. It's like after midnight, right and she starts to read: "Motherhood is dangerous to women..."

JACKIE

Oh, that radical feminist piece by that British dyke separatist, what's her name, right? It said, any woman who sleeps with men or makes concessions to "family life" has sold all her feminist ideals down the river. I heard this from Brenda herself! The best part of the story is when our girl Brenda finds out that this woman, too, the writer, five years later, has gotten her girlfriend knocked up by a test tube and the two of them are raising this kid in the London suburbs.

PEARL

Oh this is wonderful. I just love how practice always follows theory. It's all so marvelously messy, ooh la la, I feel myself becoming profound, yes, shall we say, like zee life sheself? What did Brenda say to that?

JACKIE

She was actually being cute, telling me the whole story so she could find some loophole for me when I was deciding whether to marry Sam or not. I mean partly, I always get married to pacify that little tape recording that plays in my head. I don't think it's even my own mother's voice. I think it's Big Mommy or somebody who polices little girls as soon as they get old enough to be wrenched apart by all the old contradictory stuff. You know, good girls must be great cock teasers but they can't DO IT. Be smart and get into college but no one makes passes at girls who wear glasses. I, of course, wore awful glasses but was convinced that if Lady Chatterly had great sex, so, of course, must I. If you don't get married when you're young, you are doomed to be a barren spinster old maid, but don't get married too young. I think they install this little tape recorder in girls heads right after sixth grade. It came with a lifetime battery supply.

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Right here, at the back of your neck.

PEARL

Now you sound just like Brenda --straight from Mars. But I do know what you mean. I read Virginia Woolf then, and a lot of Harold Robbins and decided to be a bad girl with a room of my own.

JACKIE

Do you think all those good girls still live in the suburbs with a dentist? Don't you think they ever ran into some good LSD? But anyway, here was Bren, who has never stopped railing at how the institution of marriage is thoroughly corrupt; then there's me, who half agrees but was already married to a guy I never saw; and then there was my real mother, the inimitable Grace, whom I hadn't even been able to tell about the fucking marriage, the one thing that would make her feel finally relieved of me, and she thinks her poor hopeless daughter is a spinster. Memories are made of this. Jesus, I wonder if I'll be able to save Lili from any of it.

PEARL

Listen, if Lili is like either of those two, she'll fight her way through all of it. Now that I think of it, Brenda's not so different from your mother, always trying to make life fit into some scenario or other, or some political program. They're both dogmatic as hell but they're also both incredibly energetic, warm, and thoroughly spontaneous, when they're in action.

JACKIE

I've never thought of it but you are absolutely right, God help me. I'm surrounded by lunatics. That's probably why Sam is so good for me. Like a long, tall valium.

PEARL

I think so. I do. Sam is such a good boy. Though sometimes I still can't imagine how you can live year round with a male human, well, any human for that matter. You know my famous theory, Jackie, girl...

JACKIE

Oh don't start. I know it by heart. Pearl's answer to biological determinism. "The female of the species has two brains, allowing her to be mentally ambidextrous, capable of operating in at least two of the known terrains of

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daily life -- the private, the public, call them what you will.
The male, poor thing, is only a
single brain creature, which neatly accounts for some
of his limitations...

PEARL

You said you knew we were gonna be friends when
you heard me giving forth on the subject at that party. You were such a
little snot. You said, in your best graduate student voice, that
the theory had "tremendous explanatory power."
The exact phrase, I swear. I thought well, she seems bright
but a little pretentious. But that was after you'd only had
one glass of wine. After the third, you started talking
about your little colleagues as what? Oh yeah. Giant cow flops.

JACKIE

Absolutely. Another technical term. I was just too
sophisticated for you, cutie. Wasn't I a jerk?

PEARL

We were all a little jerky, I guess. But heady. That freedom
idea was strong stuff. Not just another word for nothing
left to lose. Je ne regrette rien, Jackie. (sighs) I'm not
a bit sorry. Not even about all the
meetings. Back then, I thought a room was empty
if there were less than fifteen people in it.

JACKIE

Can we help it if we got to come of age, as they say, in one of
the most exciting moments of the century? Who would trade that?
Not me, babe. Oh, being a teenager now would really be the death.
Lousy drugs, safe sex, and straight crowds, full of Republicans!
You know, the only other time or
place I think I would have liked to be twenty was during
one of the great revolutions. Or the Paris Commune,
or the First International, or even here, building the CIO,
fighting the bosses toe to toe. But then who knows
what would have become of you afterwards.
Maybe it would be a little like now -- dimmer or greyer
somehow. Am I just getting senile?

PEARL

Probably you are. Think of all the weird chemicals you
have injested. It's amazing that Lili has all her parts in

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the right places. If our main problem is being disillusioned, even marginalized as we are, things could be a hell of a lot worse.

At least Brenda's a performer. She can script everything and have things just how she wants them. Our Mothers, on the other hand, have had some pretty mean curves thrown their way. My mama says, so dahling, who esked, I vanna know? Did I esk to have a daughter to be crazy feminist, to be lady writer? I would be heppy with nice boring daughter, staying in Brooklyn, nice Jewish vife. A revolutionary, I get. I leave Russia to try to get away from my revolutionary family. I come to America. I make a new von. Oy. Vays mere.

JACKIE

They thought they were handing us the world on a platter and then we demanded that they change all the rules. But listen before we get off the subject of Brenda and Delores, you're not the only one who'se getting trashed around here.

JACKIE

I thought we were off the subject already.

PEARL

This is important. Look, they hate my work. I'm sure of it.

JACKIE

Oh I see. The person really being victimized here is not me or my kid or the entire generation of mothers before us. It's you. Listen, sweetie, Delores can't deal with any poetry, much less yours, for Chrissakes. She thinks white peoples' poetry is like lousy music with no back beat. Anyway, what do you expect with all the blood under the bridge between you and Delo. Huh? It's amazing that the two of you can even exist in the same city.

PEARL

That's simply not true. I'm not bitter. Why should she be?

JACKIE

The interesting question would be, why are you not? If you were as in love with her as you said you were eight years ago. But let's not replay that one again now. WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT THAT. You wanted to get me to agree to some new imagined insult to your work as a writer.

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And I won't be part of that. Jesus, Pearlie, I wasn't going to say anything until she talked to you about it but Brenda wants to read from your book in her next piece.

PEARL
You're kidding!

JACKIE
Would I kid about the fact that a person of my acquaintance wants to read my friends' poem while walking a tightrope between two buildings? I can barely think about this much less kid about it. You people really make me feel like I'm normal. And that takes some doing.

PEARL
Oh, I know the one she wants to read. It must be the Humpty Dumpty piece, you know about women trying to keep their balance when we're still monsters -- half new woman, half, the old. The girl's got an eye for metaphors, I'll give her that. Wait a minute. She hasn't even asked me for permission. What the hell is she doing talking to people about this without even, that sneaky little bitch...

JACKIE
Hold on now, hold on. I'm not "people." I'm me. Your friend and hers. I shouldn't have opened my big mouth, but when you start that self-deprecating crap, I'll say anything to get your little feet back on the ground.

PEARL
I mean, of course she should do it, by all means. I can use the publicity. Feminist press poetry books are not exactly competing with "Hollywood Wives" in the bookstores.

JACKIE
Well, neither are downtown performances pieces. Or labor history books like my magnum opus, for that matter.

JACKIE
Anyway, she meant me. That's the other thing I was going to tell you so you can't spend the rest of the week deciding to go back to waiting tables. My Ma actually went out and bought ten copies of your book, gift-wrapped each one by hand in her yellow flowered paper and mailed them to all her friends with her own little jingle on each one.

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PEARL

This, I truly don't believe. What a darling Grace is!
Personally doubling my sales.

JACKIE

This is the closest she has ever come to admitting
that we have anything to say that might mean something
to women like herself. You remember when we were
first publishing our magazine and she used to hide all the copies
I proudly sent home, under the bed?

PEARL

How could I forget your raging? And how your father
was secretly so proud after he found the
article about women in the union movement, and
would move that issue back to the coffee table.
But, I understand that, how our mamas felt.
You knew, they knew, we knew
something, but they couldn't take up ideas that seemed to negate
the value of their own lives, you know, as wives and
mothers first, and people second. I think our mothers were
a little like those "post-feminists". They knew their
situation as women wasn't entirely fair but they were determined
not to acknowledge it, as if it would go away like in a fairy tale - if they just kept
their eyes closed - tight - and thought "there's no place like home, there's no place
like home." ... But I thought Grace was
just being polite when I got the prize, you know, saying
she loved my book. Of course, she'd say she loved gargling salt if
it would save somebody's feelings. But she really
got it, wow, that's quite a special tribute, Jackie, from your
mother. My mama still thinks, in her heart of hearts, that I write
because I'm lonely, or her expression -- "a discontent."

JACKIE

Maybe Brenda is the one who can really see,
and like she says, it's actually all the
mothers and daughters who are blind about
each other, But listen, what you were saying about the post-fems? That's totally
different. We broke the rule of silence forever. That will
never be the same. Some things don't change, though -- my mother sends your
book to her friends and
she wishes my book were in paperback and written for a
general audience. (sighs)

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PEARL

My mama thinks you are a respectable professor with a good job and a baby and that I write silly poems because I'm despondent. And no matter what you say, I know that Delores thinks so too. But not cause I'm lonely, because I won't put romance at the center of my life. God, being with Delores was like having your soul in the window of Macy's. She wanted to know what I was thinking every time I moved a hair. And usually did.

JACKIE

I know it was rough for you. But you two did have something amazing. When you were hot, you were hot. I was consumed with envy, did you know that?

I thought you were single handedly re-defining love. But nothing that intense could last. You did what you had to do and now you live -- more or less alone. Funny. Just like your mother.

(deadly serious and getting carried away)

You know how you spend half your life struggling not to be your mother? Then you wake up one morning, look in the mirror, and by God, there she is? I've been thinking a lot about this, Pearl..I swear it... It's like...

PEARL

Jaackie, Jackie, you're starting to sound all wound up, like you're about to discover the theory of relativity. Anyhow, I may live with cats instead of people, but don't start that psychoanalytic crap on me again. I'm not sitting in Brooklyn wringing my hands for twenty years because some husband happenened to die like my mother did. I made a choice, Jackie. There's a world of difference... I know you, alright? This kind of talk actually means that you are stressed out and courting a wicked flu.

JACKIE

I breathed. Here, I'll do it again. (breathes deeply)
I'm dead serious, Pearl.

I had this same feeling when I found myself singing in the supermarket the other day. I spent half my childhood running to a different aisle, pretending I was someone else's kid when my Mother would do that. She would burst into song, and she's good, let me tell you. Something like "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." So there I was, by the fruit, shaking a cantaloupe just like she does, of course, and I notice, people are staring. Damned if I'm

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not virtually belting out, "June is busting out all over." See what I mean? Nothing whatsoever you can do about it. Years of breaking taboos, trying to be at the cutting edge of every transgressive movement you can find and, bingo, there you are, in the Stop and Shop, singing to a cantaloupe. So I'm thinking, jeez, I'm not even dotty my way. I'm dotty her way. There's no escaping it.

PEARL

Six years of therapy this girl has, and six years in graduate school, and... nothing. Listen to her. Vays mere.

JACKIE

I'm listening. I'm listening to you and you know who I hear? Reba Kellerman, sweets, none other than your mama! I told you. I think we're tripping. (She sings.) "June is bustin' out all over."

PEARL

Alright already, you win you're right. But please. Grace has a great voice. You, welllll...You're a wonderful teacher. I have a song for you though. Wait a minute, let me find it I'll put it on. It comes with a little story. (Jackie is still singing.) Have you seen Jeannie lately? Well, I did. We hung out the other night after running into each other at the Health Spa.

JACKIE

You might as well just move your computer over to the Health Spa, you know, just move in. You'd have everyting you really need.

PEARL

Not a bad idea. Not bad at all but I think that Bob and Monkey's cat fur and litter box might mess up the dressing room. Here. The song I want to play for you is Jeannie's. Remember in the CR group, when she talked about her frustrated young singing career, how she gave it up when she realized the way she sang made every man for miles around want to jump her.

JACKIE..

I do remember. I also saw her once, years before with her hair down to her knees, dressed in one of those India print mu-mu's with her seed beads dangling, singing Ian and Sylvia songs in a coffee house with her boyfriend

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on guitar. At the time, I thought she was incredibly cool. Who
would have thought that image would turn out to be
a kind of cartoon memory?

PEARL

Yeah. Anyway, recently Yvette dared her to sing in
public again since she always serenades her friends. She
took the bet, got a voice coach, went into a studio and cut
this record -- with back-up and everything. And she's
dedicated it to the women in that group-- you know, "No
More Nice Girls" -- aging feminists from hell.

JACKIE

(with her daughter Lili on her lap)

Don't tell me -- it's a Shirelles song, no, no, wait. The Ronettes.

No, I've got it : "Mama Didn't Lie" . Never mind, we all know she did lie, whether
she meant to or not. Now I've got it: "Mama Said There'd
Be Days Like This." I wish I had know she was doing this.

I personally always wanted to be a Wonderette.

PEARL

(singing)

"Mama said there'd be days like this, there'd be days like this, my Mama
said."

JACKIE

Was that it?

PEARL

What?

JACKIE

The song, the song. "Mama Said There'd be Days Like This."

PEARL

No. Madame Know- It - All. You're not even warm.

LILI

HEY, BABY!

PEARL

(to LILI)

C'mon, gimme a kiss. Gimme a little kiss. (LILI blows a kiss to the camera)

Oops, you blew it in the wrong direction. It went over
there. (LILI laughs.

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Continue with final part of Dialogue # 1 then
We hear studio sounds, then another voice (Joan's):
singing "LOVE IS HERE TO STAY " over credit roll.