

# The Girl of My Drams {wow!}

By

*Michael Hardstack*

**WHY I LIKE IT:** *Drama Editor HOHN SULLIVAN writes... As an example of a concise, well-built short comedy, it would be hard to top The Girl of My Dreams. Interesting characters that develop organically out of crisp dialogue and zany action, an impossible scheme using spells and suggestion, and a plot that hinges on misdirection and turn-about: all the elements we associate with entertaining comedy are present and deftly employed. I especially like how the playwright develops a central character – visibly asleep for most of the show - strictly through mumbled phrases, perceptions, revelations and descriptions in crosstalk between other characters. And how a spell cast for inspiration to salvage a stalled writing career – and jumpstart a romance – actually works, though not remotely as intended. Arkady, the apartment building’s doorman and creator of unauthorized biographies, is “ by the ghosts of Ivan the Terrible, Joseph Stalin and Rasputin the Mad Monk,” for me, the most remarkably drawn presence in this play, followed closely by Annette, the wanabe love-witch whose plans for upward mobility are thwarted by circumstance and the unexpected outcome of her spell.*

## THE GIRL OF MY DREAMS

A one-act play

By Michal Hardstark

List of characters:

Annette Bergdorff.....a woman between 20 - 30 years of age.

Arkady Savantsky.....a man between 40 - 50 years of age.

David Ciarlitano.....a man between 40 - 50 years of age.

Iris Ortiz.....a woman between 30 - 40 years of age.

Note: when the symbol, /, appears towards the end of a sentence, that marks where it should be interrupted by the following speech.

SYNOPSIS : a perfume demonstrator at Bloomingdales uses witchcraft to ensnare in matrimony a famous novelist who has seen better days. Her plans are nearly thwarted by the writer's apartment building doorman who is also his 'unauthorized' biographer.

SETTING: the bedroom of an apartment on the upper westside of Manhattan. The bed is stage center. There are nightstands on either side of the bed. A radio on the S.L. Nightstand. A dressing table is D.S. Left, on top of which is a half-empty bottle of wine, wine glasses and a mini-bar. A desk is D.S. Right. It is piled up with books, papers, and writing paraphernalia, also a cookie jar. There is a chair in front of the desk with a purse on it and a waste paper basket D.S. of the desk. The living room and the entrance to the apartment are off-stage right. The bathroom is off-stage left.

TIME: early morning.

AT RISE: a woman is sitting up in bed, staring out into the audience. Next to her is the figure of someone who is fast asleep. His snoring can be heard intermittently during the following monologue.

ANNETTE: There is no getting away from the fact that life is very mysterious. Why just yesterday afternoon I was demonstrating sundry toiletry products in an, as yet, unnamed famous department store and here I am - currently lying in bed next to an authentic celebrity! And not just ANY celebrity but a literary one! Like Nicklaus Sparks or Stephanie Meyer!

*(Pause)*

It might be the wine but I'm feeling very satisfied with myself at the moment. In the years to come, when I look back on this moment, I KNOW I'll be looking back on a millstone in my life - the day that I took a giant step towards fulfilling my 'destiny'. Now there are those that would've used the word 'fate' just now but I prefer to use the word 'destiny'. I don't believe in 'fate'. I believe in 'destiny'! Fate is what happens to people in Wes Craven movies. 'Destiny' is what happens to people like Elizabeth Taylor. Elizabeth Taylor was 'destined' to marry Nicky Hilton, 'destined' to marry Michael Wilding, Mike Todd, Eddie Fisher (well, maybe not Eddie Fisher), Richard Burton, Richard Burton, Senator Warner, and - Larry Fortensky...

*(Slight pause)*

Did I miss anyone? No, I think that's it. Any motivational speaker worth their salt uses the term 'destiny' in their seminars and I've been to lots of them and the most important idea I got out the them? You can CHANGE your fate and make your own DESTINY!

*(She gets up from the bed, goes over to the chair, picks up her purse and brings it over to her side of the bed)*

If you were to ask me if I had deliberately 'planned' for things to work out this way I'd have to say - "not exactly". I didn't 'plan' to meet him yesterday afternoon at Bloomies but I did 'visualize' it. Visualization is a big part of changing one's destiny according to any number of motivational speakers...and when he handed me his publicity packet I had a pretty good idea of what was coming next.

*(By now, she is taking out several items from her purse and placing them on the dresser)*

Let's just say that I came 'prepared' for just such a possibility as this one. Now I realize that to some people what I'm about to do might seem very underhanded and I don't blame them for thinking that...however, there is 'underhanded' and then there is 'dirty low-down'. 'Dirty low-down' is putting a water-soluble drug into his wine glass that would make him highly suggestible to anything I asked him to do and he would feel 'compelled' to do them and that feeling would last a long, long time, months and months even - THAT would be taking advantage of him. But I'm not going to do that...it would be 'dirty low-down' and besides, I don't HAVE such a drug. Neurologists don't have such a drug. Dentists don't have such a drug. Even DRUG DEALERS don't have it! You can't find such a drug in nightclubs, after hour clubs, hotel bars, even the BATHROOMS of hotel bars...I've been all over Manhattan and NOBODY seems to have such a drug! I'm not even sure that such a drug even exists!

*(Pause. She needs to calm down a little)*

Fortunately, there are ALTERNATIVES. And the one that I've found to be most effective is - MAGIC!

*(She takes a paperback out of her purse and holds it up)*

'The Little Black Book of Kosher Magic Spells' - an invaluable guide to changing your 'destiny'.

*(She opens the book to the Table of Contents)*

'Spells for Love & Marriage'. 'Page 56'.

*(She turns to p.56, reads it for a moment then puts the book down. She glances at the page from time to time during the rest of the monologue)*

First thing you're gonna need is a candle.

*(She holds up a candle)*

You'll want to purchase a nice regular 'taper' style candle, normally used for the dinner table. Those stubby, little votive' candles don't give you enough room for carving initials and those big, fat, designer candles are just too impractical for carrying in your purse. SO - a word about color. Now, my teacher prefers to use a red candle when performing love spells. But I like to work with pink-toned ones...they seem to generate a touch of romance along with the required 'passion'. But it's strictly up to you. Either one will do. Next item on the list is a knife...now this is nothing to worry about...you won't be needing a big knife - you're going to be digging into soft pliable candle wax - not bone and gristle. So, a pocketknife will do. In fact,

*(She hold up another item)*

I use an ordinary eyebrow tweezer! So - you've got your candle, you've got your knife (or eyebrow tweezer - it's up to you) - the next thing you need is a container of Anise, orange blossoms and Orris root.

*(She holds up the container)*

If you cant find any Orris root, oregano will do just fine. Place your red candle in the anise mixture and roll it around real good. Make sure you got a nice coat all around it - like that. When the candle is nice and coated, it's time to carve. You simple carve the initials of the intended lover into the candle along with your own initials. Some Witches prefer to carve West to East but I was taught to carve East to West but, again, it's up to you. Now comes the hard part - BLOOD. Yes I said - blood. It can't be avoided. It acts as a binder, it's required in order to seal the pact and it symbolizes one of the laws of magic - you gotta give something to get something. The bright side is that you only need a drop and it only hurts for a second.

*(She picks up the tweezer, takes a deep breath and stabs her left index finger)*

OUCH! That hurt! Now, you press your finger against the initials and chant the spell. Have I got that right?

*(She quickly glances down at the book)*

Yes. You chant the spell...here we go - WAIT! I forgot to light the candle! The most important part...

*(She lights the candle)*

Okay....this is it.

*By the fire of this candle,*

*By my blood ruby red,*

*I'm all you can handle,*

*To me you'll be wed.*

*(She glances at the book again)*

This next part's important...

*David Ciarlatano, hear my invocation,*

*You will marry me without hesitation,*

*And though it may seem to be abrupt,*

*you'll do it anyway and without a pre-nupt.*

Okay now, we got through that, the rest is pretty straightforward.

*(A quick glance at the book)*

*By the stars in the sky, by the light of the moon,*

*We'll set the date for a weekend in June.*

*They'll all be cheering, Uncle Artie, Uncle Marty, the entire mishpocheh,*

*Aunt Bessie, Aunt Tessie - the whole Bergdoff Gang,*

*When I stand there under the Chuppah,*

*Wearing a strapless, wrapless, white Vera Wang.*

*Poppa will smile and Momma will Kvell,*

*When I walk down the aisle of Temple Emanu-EL.*

...and that's that.

*(ANNETTE starts to put back her equipment into her purse. She stops suddenly)*

WAIT! He might not be JEWISH! 'David'? ...'King David'? Thing is - it's a common name...'Ciarlatano' - that's sounds Italian. Italians are all Catholics...on the other hand, he could be Sephardic...hmmm...well, of course! He's circumcised! That settles that.

*(Pause)*

Isn't he?

*(She carefully lifts the cover and looks under it. She goes over to the desk, pokes around, find a flashlight, goes back to the bed, turns on the flashlight, lifts the cover again and looks under again)*

He's circumcised.

*(She goes back to cleaning up. She stops.)*

The thing is - they ALL are nowadays ...hmmm...I got it!

*Caramel candy and chocolate fudge,*

*Forget the Rabbi, it'll be done by a judge.*

*And if I said 'Temple', well I must've forgot,*

*We'll marry in Newport on somebody's yacht.*

Okay, that should do it...now all I do is say 'goodbye' to my old, mundane life, lay back and dream about my new 'celebrity' life...

*(She lays down)*

*(A man enters the room. He walks directly to the desk and begins to rummage through the papers and books piled up on top. He is dressed in a military-type uniform in the style of a Sigmund Romberg operetta complete with a Captain's cap. He is carrying a battered valise.)*

*(ANNETTE sits up)*

ANNETTE: It's possible that I'm in a deep REM state and I'm dreaming that the Captain of the H.M.S. Pinafore has just walked into the bedroom and is standing over by the desk...hello there? Mister, am I dreaming you? Are you a symbol of something? According to Freud, if this is my dream then you're a symbol of something...

ARKADY: *(spoken out loud, to himself)* That I, Arkady Savantsky, should be in the dream of a mere shopgirl - a quaint notion.

*(Stunned pause)*

ANNETTE: David!

*(She shakes his shoulder)*

David, wake up! There's a stranger in the room!

DAVID: Huh...?

ANNETTE: Someone's in the room with us!

DAVID: Whaa...?

ANNETTE: There's a strange man standing at your desk!

DAVID: Izzywhehhnaat?

ANNETTE: What?

DAVID: Izzywhehhnaat?

ANNETTE: Mumble slower, David, I can't understand what you're saying.

DAVID: Duhzee have ahhhat?

ANNETTE: Does he have a hat?

DAVID: Uuuhhh...

ANNETTE: Yes, he DOES have a hat. How did you know that?!

DAVID: Inoreim.

ANNETTE: Ignore him?!

DAVID: Ummm...

ANNETTE: But he's standing in your bedroom . He's looking through your stuff...

DAVID: Pay him so mind.

ANNETTE: What are you talking about?! He could be a burglar! He could be a LUNATIC! He's dressed like one...

*(David sits up)*

DAVID: Jesus Christ! ...listen, ah, hmm, Annie...

ANNETTE: ANNETTE!

DAVID: Annette - he's doing research...nothing to worry about, so lets' go back to sleep...

*(He lays back down)*

ANNETTE: How did he get past the doorman?

DAVID: He IS the doorman - go to sleep.

*(He goes back to sleep. Pause)*

ANNETTE: Oh, wow...this is so bizarre...

*(She stares at ARKADY for a moment)*

Well, this is the life that I've chosen. What is it that they say? 'When you make your bed you have to lie in it.'

*(She lays down and tries to go to sleep. ARKADY dumps the contents of the wastebasket into his valise, locks it, straightens up the desk a bit, takes a swig from a flask he keeps in his coat and opens the lid of the cookie jar, reaches in and pulls out - nothing! He turns over the cookie jar, taps it - empty! Starts to prowl around the room, looking on top of the night-stands, behind the headboard, under the bed. Finally, he lifts the pillow where ANNETTE is resting her head)*

ANNETTE: Hey!

*(ARKADY crosses around to DAVID's side of the bed and looks under his pillow.)*

DAVID: What the hell...

ARKADY: Where is it?

DAVID: What?

ARKADY: My money.

DAVID: Huh?

ARKADY: It was not in designated location.

DAVID: Ahhh...right. The money...

ARKADY: The cookie jar is empty.

DAVID: Things are a little tight right now, Comrade...

ARKADY: We had agreement...

DAVID: I know, / I know...

ARKADY: ...no document, nothing signed, just handshake between GENTLEMEN...

DAVID: /Arkady...

ARKADY: ...twenty dollars deposited in the cookie jar /once a week...

DAVID: ...why don't I cut you a check? I'll cut you a check and I'll just post-date it? A simple solution...

ARKADY: 'Checks', 'post-date'. This was supposed to be cash-only arrangement. To insure 'plausible deniability' you said - remember?

DAVID: I give you the check. You don't cash it. I give you forty dollars next week. You give me back the check.

ARKADY: I give you this!

*(He opens his valise and deposits the contents on the bed.)*

The literary detritus of David Ciarlatano! Make sense of it if you can!

*(ARKADY starts to leave.)*

DAVID: Wait! Annette, could you help me out with a few dollars? I'm a little short on cash.

ANNETTE: How much do you need?

DAVID: A few bucks - hundred, maybe two hundred...

ANNETTE: I don't have that kind of cash on me - how about a ten?

DAVID: How about forty? You got forty on you?

ARKADY: I don't want forty. I want what we agreed upon.

DAVID: Hey! A little privacy please...I'm having a conversation with my fiancée, okay?

ANNETTE: All I got is a twenty. I need the rest for the subway and a coffee and bagel did you just say fiancée?

DAVID: Did I?

ANNETTE: I think you did.

DAVID: Arkady?

ARKADY: As a professional, I hear many things. But as an employee - I am deaf as a post.

ANNETTE: He said 'fiancee', didn't he?

*(ARKADY shrugs as if to say, 'it's out of my hands'.)*

I'll walk to Bloomies. It won't kill me. And I'll skip breakfast for a change...here - forty dollars. It's all I got on me.

*(She hands DAVID the money.)*

DAVID: Here.

*(He gives ARKADY the twenty and puts the rest in the night stand drawer on his side of the bed.)*

Now, I have an interview with Scott Simon at NPR at noon and if I hurry up I can STILL catch a few hours sleep and be WITTY, INSOUCIANT and PROFOUND all at the same time.

*(He lays down and immediately begins to snore.)*

ANNETTE: Nobody I know TALKS like that!

ARKADY: Ah, yes, he is very facile manipulator of words also of the reading public - a master of - le mot juste.

*(ARKADY begins to pick up the various pieces of trash scattered about the bed and the floor and puts them back in the valise during the following exchange.)*

ANNETTE: Actually, you talk a little bit like HE does.

ARKADY: We are both men of letters...

ANNETTE: Really? You look familiar. Have I ever sprayed you?

ARKADY: With what?

ANNETTE: 'Pavanne' by Guerlain...?

ARKADY: You mean 'Ravel'.

ANNETTE: No. I'm pretty sure it's Guerlain. Although it could've been Hugo Boss...

ARKADY: Our paths have never crossed 'til now.

*(She holds out her hand.)*

ANNETTE: Annette Bergdorff - no relation to the department store...we spell it with two F's.

ARKADY: Arkady Savantsky.

ANNETTE: Pleased to meet you. So, what sort of writing do you do?

ARKADY: I specialize in unauthorized biographies.

ANNETTE: I read an unauthorized biography of Barbara Streisand once. I liked it so much I read the authorized one. I thought she led a much more exciting life in the unauthorized one.

ARKADY: There is no authorized biography of Barbara Streisand.

ANNETTE: Is that so? Well, whoever she was, her life was a lot more interesting than Barbara Streisand's.

*(Slight pause.)*

ARKADY: I must go now. There is much to do...

*(ANNETTE finds a crumbled piece of paper. She picks it up.)*

ANNETTE: How's it coming along?

ARKADY: What?

ANNETTE: The biography.

ARKADY: What biography?

ANNETTE: David's biography.

ARKADY: Where did you get such information?

ANNETTE: Well, I ...just...

ARKADY: A friend?

ANNETTE: No...

ARKADY: A conversation overheard at cocktail party?

ANNETTE: No.../I...

ARKADY: An anonymous phone call from a burner cell phone?

ANNETTE: No...

ARKADY: A stethoscope placed against an adjoining wall?

ANNETTE: Uh uh...

ARKADY: Page Six in the Post?

ANNETTE: I put two and two together.

ARKADY: You are very clever for a mere 'shop-girl'...

ANNETTE: I'm not a 'shop-girl'. I'm an independent contractor, currently working part-time demonstrating toiletry products in the men's department at Bloomingdales...and you don't have to be very 'clever' to figure out what YOU'RE doing here - why else would you be interested in this?!

*(She holds up the crumbled piece of paper.)*

ARKADY: Where did you get that?

ANNETTE: I found it.

ARKADY: Where?

ANNETTE: It was lying on the floor.

ARKADY: Is your custom to pick up anything lying about in strange bedroom?

ANNETTE: It's just ordinary trash.

ARKADY: Trash?!

*(She reads aloud from the paper.)*

ANNETTE: "Call Super re: Faucet in kitchen." "Cancel subscription to New Yorker." "Order fruit basket for Janice." Who's Janice?

ARKADY: His agent.

ANNETTE: Oh. Well, I don't know what YOU'D call it but I call this - TRASH.

ARKADY: One man's trash is other man's treasure.

ANNETTE: My point exactly...

ARKADY: (*indicating the paper.*)Put back in valise...

ANNETTE: Maybe...

ARKADY: Put back...

ANNETTE: I just might keep it...

(*He grabs for the paper. She grips it tighter in her hand. They struggle for it.*)

ANNETTE: NO! Let go!

ARKADY: You have grip like BEAR TRAP!

(*He wrestles the paper away from her and stuffs it back into the valise.*)

ANNETTE: You big bully!

ARKADY: I warned you.

ANNETTE: You didn't have to be so rough!

ARKADY: (*a bit sheepishly.*) I need - for research.

ANNETTE: So you admit it - you are doing a biography of David Ciarlatano.

ARKADY: Shhhhhh!

ANNETTE: Who's gonna hear us at eight in the morning?

ARKADY: The electrician in hallway. The plumber in boiler room. The house painter in next apartment...

ANNETTE: Boy...this building sure needs a lot of maintenance...

ARKADY: Nobody's supposed to know what I'm doing here.

ANNETTE: What's the big secret?

ARKADY: Is unauthorized biography. That means without permission of subject!

ANNETTE: But he knows all about it.

ARKADY: Of course he knows. Is AUTHORIZED unauthorized biography.

ANNETTE: Oh, wow...that's sorta like planning your own surprise party.

ARKADY: Precisely.

ANNETTE: Don't worry. I can keep a secret.

ARKADY: I would most appreciate.

ANNETTE: Well, hold on to your hat 'cause I got a secret of my own and since you're his biographer(unofficially, that is,) you should be the first to know...

ARKADY: Yah...?

ANNETTE: David and I are engaged to be married!

ARKADY: That's not possible.

ANNETTE: Why not?

ARKADY: There would've been some clue...a date on calendar, a note mentioning your name - something...

ANNETTE: It was a whirlwind courtship...we met yesterday afternoon. He invited me to the 92nd Street Y for a panel discussion he was doing that night on 'Sex and the Short Story or Writing With Your Pants Down.' Afterwards, we went back to his apartment and we got engaged early this morning, while he was asleep.

ARKADY: Wait! If he was asleep, how do you know that you are engaged?

ANNETTE: I put a spell on him. He doesn't know what hit him.

ARKADY: A spell?

ANNETTE: Uh huh.

ARKADY: You are Witch?

ANNETTE: I studied with Lilith Kornfeld, the Kosher Witch, at the Learning Annex - yes.

ARKADY: Magic?! Fairy tales for children! Divertissement for immature adults!

ANNETTE: It really works and I can prove it.

ARKADY: When I read the marriage license - then I believe you. Until then - cockadoodle dooo!

*(ANNETTE goes over to DAVID and shouts into his ear.)*

ANNETTE: *Abracadabra, butter and jam on whole wheat toast.*

*Who's the one you want the most?*

DAVID: *(talking in his sleep.)* Annn-neeette...

ANNETTE: You hear that?

ARKADY : A happy coincidence. It proves nothing.

ANNETTE: Oh yeah?

*(She shouts into his ear.)*

*Hocus Pocus, frogs and locusts,*

*To me you must confide,*

*Name the name of your lovely bride!*

DAVID:*(in his sleep)* Annn-neeette...

*(ARKADY goes over to DAVID and shouts into his ear.)*

ARKADY: *Smirnoff vodka comes in first,*

*Stolischniya's second-rate.*

*Tell the truth or die of thirst,*

*Have you set the wedding date?*

DAVID: Inn...juuunne...

ANNETTE: Well?

ARKADY: All right. You're no longer a footnote in the life of David Ciarlatano.

ANNETTE: I suppose you'll want to interview me now...

ARKADY: This is not my method...

ANNETTE: What method do you use?

ARKADY: The 'Method Oblique'. I talk to your friends, your acquaintances, your/ co-workers...

ANNETTE: Why don't I give you/ a list?

*(She goes to the desk. Begins to write.)*

ARKADY:...study the contents of your garbage, go through your mail, peruse/ your working area...

ANNETTE: You definitely have to talk to Dede Lawler. I've known her since grade school - she's my best friend...

DAVID: (*in his sleep*) Fehhhh-bruuuarryy Fihhhhteeeenth...

ANNETTE: No, David. It's June. Sometime in June. I'll set the exact date later...  
(*She goes back to her list.*)  
...of course, you ought to talk to Lillith at the Learning Annex...

DAVID: (*in his sleep*) Fehhhh-bruuuarryy Fihhhhteeeenth...

ANNETTE: He's fixated on February the Fiteenth for some reason...  
(*To DAVID*) that's only two weeks from now, darling - too short a notice...

ARKADY: It's the deadline?

ANNETTE: What deadline?

ARKADY: For the novel he's writing.

ANNETTE: He's writing a novel?

ARKADY: Yes, what do you think? He IS writer, you know...

ANNETTE: I was just wondering when he finds the time...being a Celebrity is a full-time job,, what with talk show appearances, night-clubbing, recipe-sharing and all...

ARKADY: What do you think pays for all that monkey-business?

ANNETTE: I thought he wrote a best-seller once...

ARKADY: 'Arnstein's Lament'...

ANNETTE: Yeah. They made it into a movie starring...oh, who was it now? He was married to...?

ARKADY: Elliot Gould.

ANNETTE: That's right - Elliot Gould. The studios must've paid David a fortune, what with gross points and all...

DAVID: (*in his sleep*) Straight buy-out. No points, no points...

ARKADY: It's been five years since his last novel. Do you know how long that is in the world of publishing?

ANNETTE: Is it anything like dog years?

ARKADY: Exactly.

DAVID: (*in his sleep*) Debt-to-worth ratio - nine-to-one, nine-to-one...

ANNETTE: WOW. I guess it's been awhile.

ARKADY: The reading public has short memory. I'm surprised that you even knew who he was...

ANNETTE: I didn't. When he introduced himself he handed me a copy of an article he wrote for some newspaper...

ARKADY: The Westside Resident - the Gardening Issue...

DAVID: (*in his sleep*) Financial ruin...ruin...

ANNETTE: What's he moaning about now?

ARKADY: He often talks in his sleep. You'll get used to it.

ANNETTE: I thought I heard the word, 'financial' ...?

ARKADY: 'Ruin'. Yes. A constant theme with him most nights.

ANNETTE: He's got money troubles?

ARKADY: I won't take check from him. No, no, no, no - cash only. You kidding...?

ANNETTE: But this apartment...the autograph-seekers...

ARKADY: (*pointing to the valise*) I have copy of his eviction notice in here...the autograph-seekers are the same ones from twenty years ago...

ANNETTE: Yesterday, at the Y, one of them was using a walker - I thought it was just a skiing accident...

ARKADY: You're marrying a pauper, Miss Bergdorff-Goodman! If you were dreaming of moving into farmhouse in Connecticut - forget it! Count yourself fortunate to get fifth floor walk-up in Flatbush!

ANNETTE: But - but - this is completely unacceptable. I loaned him forty dollars of my hard-earned money! I gave my BLOOD to that man! All under the false impression that he had a extremely high marriage quotient!

DAVID: *(in his sleep)* ‘Arnstein’...got to finish it, got to /finish...

ANNETTE: Oh, shut up! You wrote that twenty years ago!

ARKADY: He means ‘Arnstein Falling Down’ - the unfinished novel. If he completes it before the deadline they give him a lot of money.

ANNETTE: Well, what’s he waiting for?

ARKADY: *(he shrugs)* Writers Block.

ANNETTE: I know what that is. That’s when you’ll do anything to avoid confronting boredom...

ARKADY: Boredom’s not so bad...  
*(He takes another swig from his flask.)*

ANNETTE: Well, I’m pretty sure there’s a spell for Writers Block, but I’ll have to look it up.  
*(She grabs her bag, searches through it, pulling out all sorts of things: a rubber chicken, candles, perfume bottles, ribbons etc. She takes out the Spell book.)*

Let’s see...’wages, wands, warts, weddings, weight-loss, WRITERS BLOCK’...hmmm...  
*(She reads a passage from the book)*

“To break through resistance to creative ideas, call upon Iris, the goddess of inspiration...”

ARKADY: IRIS - the name of my first love...

ANNETTE: “...she lives under the rainbow and can be called forth by bribery...”

ARKADY: MY Iris lived on Bolshevik Street and I called her forth by entreaty...

ANNETTE: Hmmm...”She loves fruits, candies, especially Halvah...also beverages such as Cel-Ray Tonic, pina coladas, wine...” Wine?! I have that...

*(She reads from the book for a moment then puts it down on the bed, grabs a yellow scarf and wraps it over her head, goes over to the night stand and pours a glass of wine, lifts the glass and intones the Hebrew blessing for the wine.)*

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, boray p’ree hagafen.

ARKADY: Amen.  
*(He takes a swig from his flask.)*

ANNETTE: Stand up! Show some respect !

*(ARKADY slowly rises to his feet.)*

ARKADY: (What am I doing...?)

*(Annette puts down the glass and flings open the bedroom door.)*

ANNETTE: Enter, O Iris, Goddess of Inspiration. Welcome to the Upper Westside abode of the writer David Ciarlatano...I offer you wine and - depending upon results - a portion of Halvah as well...

ARKADY: ...an irresistible remuneration.

ANNETTE: You mock me but she's here - I know it!

ARKADY: Pish-phash!

ANNETTE: See for yourself...  
*(She points to the glass of wine.)*

ARKADY: What?

ANNETTE: The wine - she drank some of it...

ARKADY: You're demented.

ANNETTE: Look closely...  
*(He bends down eye-level to the glass and gazes intently at it.)*  
I poured it to here...  
*(Indicating a level on the glass.)*  
ANNETTE: *(cont.)*  
NOW it's down to here!

ARKADY: There must be rational explanation...

*(ANNETTE grabs a small bag from her purse and begins to toss handfuls of glitter about the sleeping head of DAVID.)*

ANNETTE: Oh Iris, Shiksa Goddess of the rainbow and creative undertakings, shower David Ciarlatano with sparks of imagination, ignite his slumbering brain with breakthrough ideas so he can finish 'Arnstein Falling Down' and I can feel a little more confident about my personal and monetary investment in this guy. I thank you in advance, O Whimsical One. *(Pause.)* Well now, that's taken care of...remind me to pick up some Halvah later...

ARKADY: That's it?

ANNETTE: That's it.

*(Pause. Sound of DAVID snoring.)*

ARKADY: He doesn't sound inspired to me...

ANNETTE: Wait - any moment now...

*(Sound of DAVID still snoring.)*

ARKADY: I heard one 'snort' there that sounded promising...

ANNETTE: I'd better noodge him a bit.

*(She goes over to David. Nudges him.)* Wakey, wakey, David...*(pause.)* David, time to finish your book...*(Grabbing him by the arm and pulling at him.)* Get the hell up, damn you!

*(She throws his arm over her shoulder and attempts to lift him off the bed.)*

ARKADY: You must've put him into coma...

ANNETTE: For God's sake, help me get him over to the desk! He's like a sack of bricks...

*(Together, ANNETTE and ARKADY lift DAVID up off the bed and drag him over to the chair in front of the desk. DAVID slumps forward onto the desk.)*

ANNETTE: Is he right-handed or left-handed?

ARKADY: Huh?

ANNETTE: What hand does he write with?

*(He doesn't know.)*

ARKADY: Ridiculous question.

ANNETTE: Well...?

ARKADY: You dare to test my erudition?

ANNETTE: Why not? You're his biographer!

ARKADY: His RIGHT! His RIGHT! *(Aside.)* Four-to-one in my favor.

*(She grabs a pen from a cup filled with pens and puts it in DAVID's right hand. He reflexively puts it into his left hand. She keeps grabbing another pen from the cup and putting it into his right hand. He keeps putting it into his left hand.)*

ANNETTE: *(said during the above stage business.)* Wakey, wakey, writey, writey, David...let's go...

*(Finally - no more pens.)*

I may have to give Lillith an emergency call...

ARKADY: You want him to wake up? I know how to wake him up!  
*(He whispers in DAVID's ear.)* The 'O.Henry First Prize'...the 'REA Award for the Short Story'...the 'National Book Award'...the 'Pen/Faulkner Award'...the 'PULITZER PRIZE'!!!

*(At the mention of each award title, DAVID becomes more and more awake. By the end of the previous dialogue he is completely awake.)*

DAVID: I just had the strangest dream...I was at Vanity Fair's annual New Years Eve party, chatting up a cute, little secretary when she suddenly turned into Mrs. Pomerantz - my third-grade teacher. She kept grabbing the pen from my left hand and shoving it into my right. I kept putting it back into my left - a real battle of wills. Finally, just when I thought that she was about to pull my arm from it's socket, I heard my name being called. I must've had a few too many because two attendants had to assist me onto the dais where I found myself standing in front of a microphone, accepting the Pulitzer Prize! Only, all I could think about was when were they serving dinner? *(Pause.)* I'm hungry...

ANNETTE: I'll make toast...

DAVID: I don't want TOAST! I want something more than mundane food...  
*(He stares at the writing pad in front of him, picks up a pen and begins to write.)*  
 I want to taste the elixir of the Gods! Isn't that worth writing for? The elixir of the Gods?! The intoxicating wine of Dionysius - of inspiration!  
*(He starts to pick up the pace of the writing.)*  
 O, to be 'in the spirit', to revel in the intoxication of inspiration, to have the writing flow through me like FIRE! It's a powerful aphrodisiac, as powerful as Viagra, as powerful as Aphrodite...that's who Faust brought home with him after he made his pact with the Devil. He brought Aphrodite into his bed - the Goddess of Love, his MUSE of the moment. A 'nymph' to warm his bed and body...DONE!  
*(He grabs the writing pad and turns around to face ARKADY.)*  
 I did it! Stop the presses! Ciarlatano has made the deadline!

ANNETTE: Hooray!

DAVID: *(handing ARKADY the pad of paper.)* Savantsky, you have the privilege of holding in your hands the ending of 'Arnstein Falling Down'.  
*(ARKADY begins reading it.)*

ANNETTE: *(to ARKADY.)* I told you!

*(DAVID fixes himself a drink.)*

DAVID: Should I call Janice now and tell her the good news or wait until after my interview with Scott Simon? Simon - a little fish in a small pond...once this baby gets published, they'll ALL want to interview /me again...

*(ANNETTE fixes herself a drink. She starts to take in the room visually.)*

ANNETTE: ...a comfy chaise-lounge would do nicely over here...that way I could put on my pumps without having to walk all the way over /to the chair...

DAVID: Terry Gross will probably want a full hour with me! Howard Stern for sure! Do I do Oprah? Why not? Business /is business...

ANNETTE: ...and this bed - we'll just have to replace it. I envision a four-poster, draped in sheer bed curtains, and, of course, a Belgian cotton metelasse coverlet with plenty of /thick pillows...

DAVID: ...Ryan and Kelly? Maybe...I'll have to give that some serious consideration. After all, I'm a writer not a media/ whore...

ANNETTE: ...I'll need something to lend interest to that corner - it's too bare...perhaps a French toile-covered screen...?

ARKADY: BY THE GHOSTS OF IVAN THE TERRIBLE, STALIN AND RASPUTIN THE MAD MONK!!!

DAVID: Yes! I know! I know!

ARKADY: THIS IS THE WORSE SHIT I'VE EVER HAD THE MISFORTUNE TO READ SINCE LENIN'S SOCHINENYA!

*(Long pause.)*

DAVID: What?

ARKADY: Always I've taken whatever trash I'd find in your wastebasket, put in case and leave with it but - THIS - this should never leave the building. My advice? Burn in kitchen sink!

ANNETTE: One man's trash is another guy's treasure - remember?!

ARAKDY: The only ones to treasure this would be the New York Sanitation Department.

DAVID: Let me see...

*(ARKADY hands DAVID the pages.)*

DAVID: *(reading from the pages.)* "Campbell gently ran his fingers along the worn leather cover of Kylie's Day Runner, "I miss your sweetheart," he said softly, the words catching in his throat as a single tear began to slowly make it's way down his left cheek and fall upon the powdery sand to join the rivulets of water that flowed down to embrace the rolling, salt-kissed waves of the sun-flecked sea that filled the horizon of which Campbell was only a tiny part of; a small, insignificant figure standing within a vast landscape of sea and billowing nimbus clouds. He could hear the sound of Ravel's Bolero being played on a zither from somewhere far off in the

distance and right then he knew - knew with a certainty forged in the red-hot Cauldron of Experience - that he would spend the rest of whatever hourglass of time remained for him, right here, in Henderson's Landing - waiting - waiting patiently for a small, wooden boat to appear out over the sea break and slowly make it's way to shore..." *(long pause.)* Who's Campbell? Henderson's Landing? What the hell got into me?! How could I've written this CRAP?!!!

ARKADY: You were bewitched.

ANNETTE: *(very moved.)* That - was - so - **beautiful...**

DAVID: *(slowly sinking onto the bed.)* What am I going to do? What the hell am I going to do? I don't want to be Yesterday's Hero...I want to be Prince of the City...

ARKADY: I could talk to my cousin Tartikoff - they might have opening for doorman at his building...

DAVID: You're dismissed. The special project that you were working on is hereby terminated.

ARKADY: *(he shrugs.)* Pish-pahsh!

DAVID: I'd like some privacy now...

ANNETTE: *(to ARKADY.)* Yes. You've done enough harm for one morning.

DAVID: You, too.

ANNETTE: Me? You want me to leave?!

ARKADY: Hah!

ANNETTE: But I'm your finance! We're getting married in June!

*(Pause. DAVID seems puzzled for a moment. He shakes it off.)*

DAVID: Look - I'll autograph a book for you but that's it...

ANNETTE: I don't want an autograph. I want to be Mrs. David Ciarlatano!

DAVID: Well, take a number 'cause I'm already married.

*(ANNETTE is struck speechless.)*

And now, if you'll excuse me, I need to get ready for my interview. Please show yourselves out.

*(DAVID exits to the bathroom.)*

ANNETTE: Why didn't you tell me?!

ARKADY: *(he shrugs.)* I forgot.

ANNETTE: You forgot?! How could you forget a thing like that?!

ARKADY: It's of no importance.

ANNETTE: No importance!

ARKADY: Such details are for gossip columnists. I am Serious Journalist.

*(ANNETTE starts to dress and gather up her things.)*

ANNETTE: Ughhh! This has been a horrible morning! I am so disgusted. Nothing's gone right this morning. A girl strives to get ahead. She studies, takes classes, takes advantage of her opportunities and what happens? She's BLINDSIDED by FATE!

*(She goes to the nightstand S.L. and looks through the drawer.)*

Well, at least I've found my money. He tucked it under a box of tissues but I found it...come to think of it, he gave you my twenty - I want it back!

ARKADY: No, no, no, no...you gave HIM your twenty. Me? He gave what I was owed...

ANNETTE: I don't care. That's MY twenty in your pocket!

ARKADY: I don't see your name on it.

ANNETTE: I work hard for my money!

ARKADY: What? Hard! You do nothing! Spray a little here, spray a little there...

*(ARKADY starts to leave. ANNETTE follows him.)*

ANNETTE: I'm on my feet all day long!

ARKADY: I, also, am on my feet!

ANNETTE: Everybody tells me what to do...

ARKADY: The same for me! You know, we have a lot in common...

*(They exit. Sound of water running in the bathroom. Sound of keys opening the lock of the front door. Sound of the front door opening and closing.)*

IRIS: *(from off-stage.)* Hola!

*(A woman appears at the bedroom door. She is a plump yet sexy, middle-aged woman, with an earthy face that radiates warmth and mischief.)*

Hola!

DAVID: *(off-stage, from the bathroom.)* Is that you, Cleo? You can start in the bedroom, I'm getting ready to leave...

*(IRIS enters the bedroom. Looks around the room. Stops at the desk and picks up a copy of 'Arnstein's Lament'. DAVID enters from the bathroom. He is dressed except for a tie and jacket.)*

DAVID *(cont.)*

Oh...I thought you were Mrs. Ortiz, my cleaning lady...

IRIS: Si...Ortiz...

DAVID: Your name is Ortiz?

IRIS: Si. Cleo es mi hermana.

DAVID: Cleo is your - sister

IRIS: Sister...si...

DAVID: She's not sick, is she? *(Pause.)* Cleo es Malo?

IRIS: No, no es malo. Cleo...(como se disay?) 'visit' her - 'sisters', Polly, Cali y Tallia...

DAVID: Mucho hermanas...

IRIS: Nuevo.

DAVID: Nuevo? (Uno, dos, tres - ) You have NINE sisters?!

IRIS: Si. Mi familia es muy grande...

DAVID: Muy...(he notices the book in her hand.) Es mi libro. *(IRIS starts to give it back to him.)*

No, I mean - I wrote that book...

IRIS: Como?

DAVID: Yo escriba eso...(he takes the book and opens it to the title page.) See? That's me - David Ciarlatano...me llamo David...

IRIS: David...

DAVID: Como te llama?

IRIS: Me llama - Iris.

DAVID: *(He stares for a moment at the book he is holding.)* I knew an Iris once...a long time ago...she was the girl of my dreams...

IRIS: Que dijo - 'dreams'?

DAVID: Uhhh...Suenos...

IRIS: Ah, si. Suenos.

DAVID: Well, I'd better be going...*(he starts for the door. He stops.)* Wait - I always leave cash in an envelope for your sister. I forgot - too much on my mind...

IRIS: Si?

DAVID: Si...mi cabeza es muy - loco.

IRIS: Ah, loco, si...*(she laughs. It's is a full-throated, lusty laugh.)*

DAVID: You have a great laugh. *(An awkward pause.)* So - how am I going to pay you? The nightstand...*(he goes over to the nightstand. Looks through the drawer - no luck.)* I thought I had some money here. I'm sorry...no hay dinero...

IRIS: *(she points to the bottle of wine.)* No necesito dinero. Vino es acceptable. *(Pronounced, 'Ah-sept-ahh-bull'.)*

DAVID: Wine? You want some wine instead?

IRIS: Por favor.

DAVID: Sure. That's easy enough. *(He goes to get the bottle of wine.)*

IRIS: ...y...?

DAVID: Yes?

IRIS: Un poco - Halvah.

DAVID: Halvah?

IRIS: Por favor.

DAVID: No tengo Halvah...I've got ruggelah, from Zabars. It's in the fridge...

IRIS: No importante. Vino es bueno.

DAVID: Here, let me - *(he pours her a glass.)* In fact, why don't I join you...*(he pours a glass for himself. He hands her the glass of wine.)* Here's to...to YOU - IRIS Ortiz! Welcome to mi casa!

*(They sip some wine.)*

This doesn't taste the same as it did last night...more like - port.

IRIS: Porto, si.

DAVID: ...whoa! It goes down like liquid fire!

IRIS: El fuego...

DAVID: I'm getting light-headed. I ought to go...*(he turns to leave.)*

IRIS: Un momento, Senior...

DAVID: Yes?

*(She brushes some glitter off his jacket and straightens his tie.)*

IRIS: Bueno.

*(He stands still - transfixed.)*

DAVID: Me gusta la perfuma...

IRIS: Si?

DAVID: Si. Como se llama?

IRIS: Inspiration. *(Pronounced: in-Speer-rah-see-ohn.)*

DAVID: Oh. *(Pause. He struggles to pull away from her.)* It's - quite - intoxicating...

*(He slowly turns away from Iris and exits. She goes to the nightstand, turns on the radio, adjusts the dial until she finds a Spanish language station. The song, 'Amor, Amor', comes on. Iris starts to sing and to dance to the music, as she dusts and cleans. DAVID re-appears in the doorway. He watches her as she sways sensually to the music. He loosens his tie, pulls it off and throws it to the floor. He takes off his jacket and tosses it over the chair as he slowly makes his way to the smiling, hip-swaying, singing IRIS ORTIZ...)*

END OF PLAY

**THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:** *I sometimes use cartoons as jumping off places for plays. I've written two one-acts & one brief play that way. 'The Girl of My Dreams' is one of those plays. It was prompted by a New Yorker cartoon.*

*I thought the situation was a good vehicle for riffing on the role of a Celebrity in American society...in this case - a 'literary' one. Also the broader (inescapably theatrical) theme of 'identity' ...the comic, absurd, often frustrating interplay of personas & role-playing between people.*

*I appreciate & love : Pinter, Mamet, Bernard Malamud short stories, Sid Caesar's Show of Shows & Laurel & Hardy.*

**AUTHOR BIO:** Michael Hardstark is a playwright and theatre artist based out of New York. Michael has worked as an acting teacher, director, bartender and pitchman. He writes about his experiences working and coaching in the theatre industry as both a performer and playwright in his blog, [The Script Alchemist](#).