

SCENE 7

Clothesline: The Bra

That is such a painful subject.

My first bra.

I can't even talk about my first bra.

May Company.

Macy's.

Nordstrom's.

Bloomingdale's at a bra sale and I was almost trampled to death.

My father took me. I still can't talk about it.

Bras, breasts, the whole works, this is a very painful subject.

I was always trying on bras.

My aunt had this really big one and I used to wear it on my head.

My first bra was like two triangles. I got it at Jordan Marsh. It was awful, because there was some really cute guy there shopping with his girlfriend and my mom kept saying, "Julia, why are you in that section? The training bras are over here."

My mother said, "If you don't wear a bra you will get pendulum breasts."

It was a 28AA bra. Tiny, but not tiny enough. I put it on and there were like empty little puffs on my chest. The saleswoman said, "Lean over." So I leaned over, hoping that breasts would magically tumble out of my body and into the bra. But they didn't.

I bought a blow-up bra. It had plastic balloon inserts and came with a plastic straw that you inserted into the balloons and blew up to the size you wanted. One day I was talking to this guy I had a crush on, and one side collapsed right before his eyes.

It was something about your dad.

You couldn't run around the house naked any more.

You couldn't sit on your daddy's lap.

The breasts, the bra, the divide.

My mom's friend worked at Bloomingdale's when I was in college and recommended the Minimizer. It's a spandex bra that flattens your boobs about a cup size. I was totally excited about it because I was so self-conscious about my breasts. The bra flattened me but kind of gave me a monoboob look. I wore it to the veterinary hospital where I was working as a technician. There was this crazy Indian substitute vet there. He said, "Please don't take this personally, this is only for your own good, but I have to say there is something wrong with your boob." I said, "I don't know you and I don't appreciate your comments about my boobs. They are none of your business." First time I ever stood up for my boobs.

Someone gave me a cashmere halter top that needs a bra to make it work. So I go to the Town Shop on Broadway and tell the saleswoman Marvelene my size. She immediately tells me I'm wrong. "All you girls think you should be going up in inches but you should be going up a cup." I am deposited in something that perhaps is a dressing room but looks like a utility closet with a mirror and a case of paper towels. I'm strapped into my strapless when the curtain is parted like

the Red Sea and my linebacker saleswoman commands me to bend over. She then grabs me and my bra and hoists us up until I can feel the blood changing direction in my body. She reaches in, cups my breasts with her hands and shifts them. Then she invites all the other saleswomen in to look at me. Everyone cheers. I look in the mirror. I realize that I am a new woman and it took Marvelene feeling me up in a utility closet to get me this way.