

# APPLIANCE

By Lindsay Price

Lindsay Price  
PO Box 1064  
Crystal Beach, ON, L0S 1B0  
416-410-2282  
[lindsay@theatrefolk.com](mailto:lindsay@theatrefolk.com)  
[www.lindsay-price.com](http://www.lindsay-price.com)

## Characters

Ruth Boyle – *travel writer. Strangely afraid of all things mechanical.*

Naomi Boyle - *Ruth's mother. Slowly moving away from a stereotypical past.*

Simon MacRae - *Ruth's Best friend. Vivacious. He's also blind.*

## Setting

### **Act One**

Scene One: Ruth's Apartment - Sunday (early afternoon)

Scene Two: Ruth's Apartment - Monday (early afternoon)

### **Act Two**

Scene One: Ruth's Apartment - Tuesday (evening)

Scene Two: Ruth's Apartment - Wednesday (early morning)

SCENE ONE  
Sunday Afternoon

*The lights fade up on RUTH'S apartment. The space is eclectic – many items that reflect a well traveled and far traveled person. But it's also very cluttered. There are at least three dead plants.*

*There are three exits: the front door (which leads to stairs) the kitchen and the bedroom (which also leads to the bathroom). The apartment is on the fifth floor of a building that has no elevator.*

*NOTE: SIMON is blind. SIMON should show himself to be extremely competent and knows RUTH'S apartment as well or better than she does. There is no need for him to fumble about.*

*The door is open. There is a large keyring attached to the lock. A large coffee table straddles the doorway – half in, half out. SIMON lies sprawled on the coffee table. His head and shoulders are off the front of the table, so that their appear upside down.*

*RUTH enters in from the bedroom/bathroom entrance. She gives a big sigh of relief.*

RUTH: Good news! I did not explode.

SIMON: I wouldn't have cleaned up if you did.

RUTH: Yes you would have.

SIMON: I draw the line at exploded pee.

RUTH: What are you doing?

SIMON: Convalescing.

RUTH: Don't dent my table.

SIMON: I'm touched by your concern for my well-being.

RUTH: It wasn't that bad.

SIMON: *(waving his hands in the air)* Look at these fingers! These hands were not meant to have calluses.

*RUTH pokes SIMON to get him to move and sits on the table.*

RUTH: Shove a bum.

SIMON: *(groaning as he moves)* You took advantage of a poor blind man.

RUTH: And I'm not done yet.

SIMON: I think you should leave the table here.

RUTH: Here?

SIMON: Right here. Right in front of the door. Only people who really want to see you will make the effort. If after climbing five flights of stairs – Five. Five! Why, why, why, why, why do you live in a building with five flights of stairs and no elevator?

RUTH: Keeps away the travelling salesmen and Jehovah Witnesses.

SIMON: If after climbing seven million billion stairs, you came face to face with this behemoth monstrosity -

RUTH: Are you insulting my new coffee table?

SIMON: It's hideous.

RUTH: How would you know?

SIMON: Animal. Instinct.

RUTH: I think it's beautiful. Stunning. Attractive. The best looking -

SIMON: Shut up, shut up, shut up. Who would climb the coffee table? Sarah?

RUTH: I've never actually seen her climb the stairs in her own home. She's against perspiration.

SIMON: Mama Boyle?

RUTH: She'd hurdle a hat rack.

SIMON: She would. She'd hurdle one of those fences with the barbed wire around it.

RUTH: Maybe I should get one of those.

SIMON: I don't think my constitution will allow me to block the path between a mother and her child.

RUTH: Why not?

SIMON: It's unconstitutional.

RUTH: It's a great place for plants.

SIMON: Oh yeah? Which one of the myriad of dead plants scattered about your abode would you put here?

RUTH: I don't have any dead plants.

SIMON: Pull the other callused finger.

RUTH: Ok, ok. There's one. *(she looks around)* Two. Three tops.

SIMON: Ha. *(he lifts his head of suddenly)* Did you kill the orchid?

RUTH: No....which one's the orchid?

SIMON: Do you know how much those are? I told you to give it to me!

RUTH: I've been busy.

SIMON: Did you talk to your agent?

RUTH: Hmm?

SIMON: I know you can hear me. We're sitting side by side.

RUTH: Sort of.

SIMON: You didn't tell him.

RUTH: How could I? He sent me an orchid. He can't wait for me to stop doing the restaurant reviews. I can't wait to stop doing restaurant reviews. I'm supposed to be writing about eating raw horse meat in Kumamoto and how to make your own lutefisk. And before you start -

SIMON: I didn't say anything.

RUTH: I'm very grateful and very happy over the restaurant reviews.

SIMON: Happy and grateful, got it.

RUTH: I'm just ready wipe the dust off my passport.

SIMON: What happens if you get sick?

RUTH: (*quickly*) I'm not going to. It's fine. I can't do anything till Mary's mat leave is over anyway and John knows that. And by then the chemo will be done and I'll be fine and no one will be the wiser. Don't make that face. I know what I'm doing.

SIMON: When exactly did you make your own lutefisk? I missed that.

RUTH: (*she stands*) Come on.

SIMON: I'm not ready.

RUTH: (*tickling*) Come on....

SIMON: Hey! Don't tickling the living martyr.

RUTH: Can I poke the living martyr?

SIMON: You can address him with – cut it out!

RUTH: Get off your ass McCrae.

SIMON: (*getting up*) That won't do at all. Why do you need a new coffee table?

RUTH: I saw it. I bought it. One, two, three, lift.

SIMON: (*not lifting*) What ever happened to comparison shopping?

RUTH: Compared to the sea chest I like this table more. One, two, three, lift.

SIMON: (*not lifting*) I adore the sea chest. It's rustic. Charming. Delightful. If you put your ear to the lid you can hear the ocean.

RUTH: It's a sea chest not an ocean chest. Will you be picking up the table in my lifetime?

SIMON: (*picking up the table*) Forgive me father I have sinned. It's been three weeks since my last confession. I confused the sea for the ocean.

RUTH: Forward. Slowly, slowly.

SIMON: Are we there yet?

RUTH: Don't you make me stop the car! Forward, forward. Almost there.

SIMON: Not good enough. Stopping and dropping!

RUTH: Don't you dare drop!

SIMON: Too late.

RUTH: You suck.

SIMON: (*climbs back on the table and lies down*) I'm tired.

RUTH: That was five steps. You can't be tired.

SIMON: This is leftover tired. From the seven billion trillion gazillion steps. With me on the bottom the whole way. I thought we were going to switch.

RUTH: How is it that you can spend your weekends bungee jumping, white water rafting and yet you cannot lift a teeny tiny table?

SIMON: First of all this is not teeny. Nor is it small, tiny, diminutive or wee. This is an extra country you have decided to add to the landscape of your apartment. Second, the other people in the raft feel sorry for me and paddle extra hard.

RUTH: You let them paddle.

SIMON: Don't blow my cover.

RUTH: You can't have a nap on my coffee table.

SIMON: Watch and learn.

RUTH: I have a couch.

SIMON: Bah! I don't go for them new fangled couch things. *(he squirms and snuggles on the table. RUTH flops on the couch)* What time do you go tomorrow?

RUTH: Ten.

SIMON: I'll come with you.

RUTH: No. I don't want to make it any more important -

SIMON: It is important. If this is what you need -

RUTH: *(getting up)* Do you want some water?

SIMON: Filtered or tap?

RUTH: I'm not telling.

SIMON: I'll know.

RUTH: Do you want some or not?

SIMON: Give me some tap. I need the roughage. *(he squirms around on to his back)* Hey. What does this remind you of?

RUTH: A man sleeping on my coffee table.

SIMON: Use your imagination. A raft.... Greece....Mediterranean Sea.....splash, splash, splish....

RUTH: *(exiting)* Everything reminds you of that raft.

SIMON: Oh Eros your hands are so strong....

RUTH: *(offstage)* Keep me out of your flashback!

SIMON: Oh Eros climb aboard my teeny tiny raft in your teeny tiny swim suit.

RUTH: Shut up!

SIMON: Oh Eros how the water drips off your pectorals...

RUTH: What the hell is that?

SIMON: Boyle?

RUTH: Not again.

SIMON: What's the matter?

RUTH: The drop ins have started.

SIMON: Mama Boyle! I thought I smelled something funny. Lysol with a hint of *(taking a deep breath)* Chanel Number five.

RUTH: Everything has been moved. She has touched everything in my kitchen.

SIMON: She's just being helpful.

RUTH: *(entering with an appliance that looks vaguely like a toaster)* Guess what I'm holding.

SIMON: A glass of water.

RUTH: In a minute.

SIMON: A tube sock.

RUTH: Be serious.

SIMON: I am.

RUTH: It's a computerized toaster.

SIMON: I didn't know toast was so complicated.

RUTH: Shove a bum.

*She sits on the coffee table and puts the toaster in SIMON's lap.*

SIMON: Don't you have a couch?

RUTH: Toastfine 3000. You can program it to remember how you like your toast done.  
*(reading)* "This toaster has a programmable memory. You can have seven different kinds of toast, seven days a week! You can move the slots around to accommodate everything from baguettes to bagels. And forget the smell of burning bread! The Toastfine 3000 shuts off automatically." Isn't that something.

SIMON: You don't like toast.

RUTH: It comes with a remote. Why does she give me these things?

SIMON: You can't even figure out an electric toothbrush.

RUTH: That brush was defective. Even the repair man said so. I hate machines.

SIMON: Actually they hate you. There's a difference.

RUTH: They don't *hate* me...

SIMON: How many laptops have you killed?

RUTH: Seven.

SIMON: They hate you.

RUTH: I knew I should have asked for my key back. Now it's too late. Why can't my relatives leave me alone like yours do?

SIMON: Lest we forget, my brothers want to put me in a home. Your mother leaves presents.

RUTH: If I ask for my key back I'll have to get into a discussion about why I don't want her in my apartment when I'm not here.

SIMON: Talking! Discussion! That would be bad.

RUTH: Calling the kettle black are we?

SIMON: I'm just sitting here, dying of thirst, minding my business.

*RUTH gets up goes into the kitchen.*

RUTH: I talk to my mother, she talks to Sarah, I'll have to talk to Sarah. How do I collect any good karma if I have to talk to Sarah?

SIMON: That I can't help you with. Sarah sucks out *my* good karma, and I haven't spoken to the woman in seven years.

*RUTH re-enters with water and a small sealed envelope.*

RUTH: See I can't talk to my mother. I need all the good karma I can get right now. *(she hands a glass out for SIMON)* I added some dust from under the fridge. Makes it nice and crunchy.

SIMON: You're a doll.

RUTH: *(waving the note under SIMON's nose)* There's a note too.

SIMON: *(sniffing)* Chanel number five with a hint of lysol. What does it say?

RUTH: I don't know.

SIMON: It could be nice.

RUTH: I don't need an ulcer right now.

SIMON: It could be really nice.

RUTH: What – Good luck with the chemo, here's a toaster? I can't. *(she puts it down)*

SIMON: Can I read it?

RUTH: Be my guest. *(she gets up)* I have something for you.

SIMON: Wait, wait, what about the note? Don't leave me hanging!

RUTH: Well if you don't want your present....

SIMON: A present? Pour moi?

RUTH: *(she pulls out a manuscript)* Close your eyes...

SIMON: You're a laugh riot. Gimme!

RUTH: Ta Da.

SIMON: What is it? *(he flits through a few pages and realizes that it's in Braille, he begins to read)* "The sand rippled in the heat. It began before daybreak in little eddies over the desert" - This is my book! It's my book!

RUTH: One Braille copy for you, one typed one for me.

SIMON: Bound and brailed just the way I like them.

RUTH: So, you're the proud owner of a first draft. I have cigars if you want them.

SIMON: I'm speechless.

RUTH: You could thank the nice lady.

SIMON: *(giving her a bear hug)* Thank you, thank you, thank you!

RUTH: How do you feel Mr. Soon-To-Be-Published author?

SIMON: Don't put the cart before the horse! Is there really a market for an ancient Egyptian love story between a dead pharaoh and his bath boy?

RUTH: Well....

SIMON: Don't tell me what you think! Not yet. I want to have this for a while. Carry it around. Introduce it at parties. "Have you seen my draft? This is my draft? Please, meet my draft." *(he hugs her again)* Thank you so much.

RUTH: Don't think I'll go easy on you. I bought a whole box of red pens.

SIMON: And when do I get you in front of the piano?

RUTH: Any time. I have itchy fingers.

SIMON: I bet you say that to all the boys.

RUTH: *(joking tone)* Only the boys who have seen me near death.

SIMON: Now I'm warning you, you better cut your nails before your first lesson. There's nothing that drives me crazy like the sound of the click, click, click, of long nails on the keyboard. It's like torture. I've got a ruler and I'm not afraid to use it.

*There is no answer from RUTH. Her last quip has shaken her.*

SIMON: Boyle? *(still no answer)* Are you ok?

RUTH: I'm fine.

SIMON: *(he grabs her hands)* Your hands are shaking.

RUTH: *(pulling them back)* It's going off the caffeine. Makes me jumpy.

SIMON: I'm coming with you tomorrow.

RUTH: I don't want to make this special. I'm just going to go in, get it done and that's it.

SIMON: But last time -

RUTH: Don't talk to me about last time! I don't want to hear it!

*RUTH gets up and moves away. There is a small pause.*

SIMON: Whooooops.

*RUTH gives an all over body shudder and scream as if she's trying to get something out of her body.*

RUTH: Bwaghaghghaaaaaa. Agh. *(pause)* Agh. *(pause)* Ah. *(she blows a raspberry)*

SIMON: Feel better?

RUTH: I SUCK at pretending everything's normal.

SIMON: We weren't doing so bad.

RUTH: Look at this. *(she moves to the couch and puts SIMON's hand on a pillow)* Feel.

SIMON: Pillow from Indonesia, check.

RUTH: *(she removes the pillow. There are a stack of books underneath)* And now?

SIMON: *(feeling the books)* See here's your first mistake. Books don't make good couch cushions.

RUTH: I'll try to remember that.

SIMON: I can write it down if you want. Can I ask?

RUTH: Go ahead.

SIMON: What are you doing?

RUTH: Just trying to get back in the saddle. *(she goes through the books)* Surviving Breast Cancer, Surviving Breast Cancer, Surviving Breast Cancer, Surviving Breast Cancer, and Breast Cancer, How to survive it.

SIMON: Can I ask again?

RUTH: Go ahead.

SIMON: Why are they under a pillow? And who are you hiding them from? Cause if it's me, this might be a good time to tell you *(stage whisper)* I can't see.

RUTH: I'll remember that.

SIMON: I can write it down if you want. Well?

RUTH: I – uh.... I don't know. I think I'm hiding them from me. Ha. That's sad.

SIMON: And tragic.

RUTH: And tragic.

SIMON: And pathetic. And pitiful. *(pause)* And distressing.

RUTH: Are you done?

SIMON: One more. And lugubrious.

RUTH: Show off.

SIMON: Go on.

RUTH: I brought them home and I had good intentions.... I don't want to do this all over again. *(with a sigh)* I hate the idea of being turned into a toxic waste dump. And I so want a coffee.

SIMON: Maybe going off caffeine is not such a good idea.

RUTH: I should just snort a couple of coffee beans and be done with it.

SIMON: *(referring to the books)* What do you want to do with these?

RUTH: I want..... *(replacing the pillow)* to read that letter from my mother.

SIMON: You want to read mama's letter over *Surviving Breast Cancer*? I'm not sure I have that much "pretend" in me.

RUTH: If you don't want to hear what she says....

SIMON: I do, I do, I do. Hey. *(he grabs her hand)* I'll do what ever you want, be wherever you want, not be wherever you want. Ok?

RUTH: Thanks.

SIMON: Now read the damn letter before I explode.

RUTH: Cheeky. *(she gives him a kiss and a hug and then reaches for the note.)* Ooh there's pictures.

SIMON: Of people in compromising positions, I hope, I hope?

RUTH: Of my nieces.

SIMON: Boring.

RUTH: *(reading)* "Thought you might like to see pictures of the twins' birthday..."

SIMON: Weren't you there?

RUTH: I was under the weather. *(she gives a couple of fake coughs)*

SIMON: You don't build up good karma that way.

RUTH: You don't kill anyone either. *(she gets to the bottom of the page)* Oh no. She's done something.

SIMON: What?

RUTH: I don't know, it's on the back of the page. *(reading)* "I hope you don't mind but yesterday I..."

SIMON: It could be something nice.

RUTH: If I don't turn the paper over then I'll never know.

SIMON: It could be nice.

RUTH: I read part of the note, surely that counts for something.

SIMON: You have to go the whole hog. No halvsies.

RUTH: If you were a real friend you'd read it for me.

SIMON: Hog away!

RUTH: *(reading)* "I hope you don't mind but yesterday I *(she turns the page)* received a letter from Peter asking how you were."

SIMON: Peter-ex-Peter? Husband Peter? Peter the Great?

RUTH: Oh no!

SIMON: They correspond?

RUTH: What is she thinking?

SIMON: They write to each other? Do they call? Spend holidays together?

RUTH: I keep blowing up my bridges and Naomi Boyle is right behind me with the crazy glue.

SIMON: Tell me what she said!

RUTH: (*reading*) "I had to send a thank-you card to him for the flowers he sent,

SIMON: Flowers?

RUTH: and I told him about how your 'thing' came back. I think he has a right to know. Peter is your husband. Love Mom." Was. Was my husband. Was!

SIMON: I think you should have half-hogged that note.

RUTH: Right to know. What the hell...

SIMON: When was the last time you sent flowers to your mother?

RUTH: Why doesn't she think I can't get through anything without a hulking skulking Scandinavian at my side? "Right to know?"

SIMON: It's been what, eight years?

RUTH: Nine and a half. What's he going to do? Leave his brood and his Luxenboob wife and fly to my rescue?

SIMON: Is he strong enough to do that on his own or would he need a plane?

RUTH: What?

SIMON: It's not that big a deal. He might call you. At the very worst he might want to visit but you don't have to see him. If he makes a fuss I'll confuse him by flexing my massive vocabulary.

RUTH: I have to call her. (*she picks up the phone and puts it down.*) Damn.

SIMON: He's not going to come.

RUTH: I don't want to think about this right now. What if he comes?

SIMON: He won't come. Probably.

RUTH: Woefully unconvincing. (*She picks up the phone and slams it down*) See, if she had listened to me during the divorce, instead of being on his side, then I would be able to say "I don't want him around" and that would be it! You talk to my mother. She likes you.

SIMON: If you want to call her, call her.

RUTH: *(she picks up the phone and slams it down)* How on earth did she tell him? She won't even say 'cancer' to me. I have a 'thing!' Of course Peter's so stupid he would equate life threatening disease with the word "thing."

SIMON: Now that will get you lots of karma.

RUTH: Shut up.

SIMON: Don't shut up me, he's not my ex-husband.

RUTH: You wish he was.

SIMON: That is so beside the point.

RUTH: See! You're on his side too.

SIMON: The bottom line here, is that...

RUTH: Is that you're on his side.

SIMON: Is that you have to take care of yourself. Right? So forget Peter. Forget Mama.

RUTH: If it were anyone else....*(she picks up the phone)*

SIMON: What happened to the good karma?

RUTH: Take your karma and blow it out your....answering machine.

SIMON: You know there's not actually a machine.

RUTH: Suck it.

SIMON: Touchy.

RUTH: *(slamming down the phone)* Oh my God! *(she picks up the phone, slams it down again and picks it up and starts again)* I'm the daily.

SIMON: You made the out-going message! This is a proud moment. Let me listen.

RUTH: (*handing the phone to SIMON*) This is her idea of keeping it in the family. Keeping it quiet. Need to know basis. I guess everyone in the Northern Hemisphere needs to know.

SIMON: "Pray for the best." I think that's sweet.

RUTH: Do I say something about the daily?

SIMON: Stay focused. One mountain at a time. Stick to Peter.

RUTH: Stick to Peter.

SIMON: Nothing negative. Stick to "likes" and "would likes."

RUTH: Likes and who?

SIMON: It's a management thing. I like this...I would like to see this. Works like a charm. Here's the beep. (*handing the phone back*) Remember. Calm and composed.

RUTH: Hi! Hi Mom, got your note. Thanks for the toaster! I...

SIMON: Likes and would likes.

RUTH: I really liked it. Mom, I would like to talk to you about the note. I would like to say that I'm a little.....

SIMON: Composure. Poise.

RUTH: ....uneasy with your decision, which you decided without me, to tell Peter about what is going on in my life.

SIMON: Pleasant breezes. Butterflies.

RUTH: We're not married anymore. I haven't seen him in 10 years.

SIMON: Nine and a half.

RUTH: and we haven't spoken in nearly as long. I would like to tell you that Peter doesn't really have a right to know...

SIMON: You're doing very well.

RUTH: And that is how I feel.

SIMON: Ok. That's fine.

RUTH: Now Mom, while I have you on the phone...

SIMON: You did fine. Hang up.

RUTH: I would like to get some rights of my own. As a matter of fact-

SIMON: What are you doing??

RUTH: I'm pretty tired of having everything I say go in one ear and out the other.

SIMON: Abort! Abort!

RUTH: And if you're not going to be able to listen to me, I would like to call this whole mother and daughter thing off. Call me back and tell me what you think, ok? Bye!

SIMON: What are you saying! *(he goes to grab the phone out of her hand and tries to yell into the receiver)* Mrs. Boyle!

RUTH: You're right, it works like a charm.

SIMON: She doesn't mean it Mrs. Boyle!

RUTH: It's all right Simon.

SIMON: You're a very lovely woman!

RUTH: The machine cut off awhile ago.

SIMON: You....You sucky suckerton.

RUTH: I'm beginning to feel better already.

SIMON: And there's no machine!

RUTH: I had you going though, didn't it?

SIMON: You can't tease the living martyr. It's not fair.

RUTH: Didn't I?

SIMON: Hundred percent.

RUTH: Then it was worth it. *(She laughs and collapses on the couch)* I love this table. It's so beautiful. My grandmother had a dining table that smelled just like this. We used to sit underneath it and play cards and pretend to smoke pretzel sticks like cigarettes. It's not really my style but I don't know..... *(she strokes the table)* Now she can be right beside me whenever I need her.

SIMON: You're not going to turn me to insipid goo cause your dead grandmother told you to buy a coffee table. My hands were not made to have calluses.

RUTH: Which reminds me - *(yelling in his ear)* BREAKS OVER!! Back to work.

*They prepare to move the coffee table to its final location.*

SIMON: Oh mom!

RUTH: All loafers out of the car. One, two, three, lift.

*They lift the table.*

SIMON: I bruise so easily. My fingers are cramping.

RUTH: To the left. Left.

SIMON: I will never play the piano again.

RUTH: Not to worry. Your piano playing stinks.

SIMON: No worse than your lutefisk.

RUTH: Touche Sir Suck.

*They lower the coffee table into place and exit.*

*The lights fade.*

SCENE TWO  
Monday Afternoon

*A phone begins to ring urgently. It rings at least 7 times. On the tail of the last ring. NAOMI enters from the bedroom/bathroom. NAOMI is RUTH'S mother and is in her sixties. She is wearing expensive comfortable clothes, an apron, and rubber gloves.*

*NAOMI is wearing an mp3 player. She has not heard the phone ring. (NOTE: this is very important) As she enters she hears something funny in her ear. She opens the back and shakes out the battery. She continues to hum the song she was listening to (something big band) while she finds her purse and roots around.*

NAOMI: Shoot. I thought I had extras.

*She exits back to the bathroom, examining her player as she goes.*

*There is the sound of movement outside the front door. RUTH enters as if she has been chased by wolves for several blocks. She closes the door, throws her purse to the ground and leans against the door breathing heavily. She starts to laugh and stifles it as if she has been caught laughing in church.*

RUTH: Not funny. Not funnnnny.

*She starts to laugh again and rams her fists into her mouth. Leaving the purse sprawled on the floor, RUTH walks with purpose to the phone. Taking a piece of paper out of her pocket she punches in a number.*

RUTH: Hello? It's Ruth Boyle again. Not yet? I'm at home now. Yes she has the number. Please give her the message as soon as she gets in, I don't know what to do...I

NAOMI: *(offstage)* Hello?

RUTH: Oh no. *(she hangs up the phone)*

NAOMI: *(offstage)* Ruth? Is that you?

RUTH: Please let that be a burglar.

*NAOMI enters.*

NAOMI: I thought I heard the door.

RUTH: Mom! Hi! What a surprise!

NAOMI: You're early! Aren't you early? I haven't been keeping a strict eye on the time. I hope you don't mind, I let myself in.

RUTH: So I see.

NAOMI: I thought I would come over, do a little cleaning, have something made for you to eat.

RUTH: Oh.

NAOMI: It wasn't any trouble at all. It's just a shame that your grocery store doesn't carry some of the ingredients I need. I had to go to my grocery store and carry all of the items here on the bus. You know, all you have to do is go to the manager and tell him what you want the store to stock and nine times out of ten it will be there within the week.

RUTH: What's in the oven?

NAOMI: Cabbage rolls. I was hoping to get them out of the oven before you came home. Don't worry, I didn't even think about broccoli, not a glimmer of thought. I didn't even reach for it at the store - just walked on by. There is no point in making a huge batch if it's just going to sit in the fridge.

RUTH: I appreciate that.

NAOMI: Even though I have read that broccoli is one of the best things for *(she makes a vague hand gesture)*.... I have a little surprise for you. Sit down and close your eyes.

RUTH: Mom, this isn't the best time.

*NAOMI disappears behind the couch and brings out CD player. She pops in a CD. She talks through all of this.*

NAOMI: I did some reading this weekend and I read that classical music can actually sooth your....after....you know....*(she makes a very vague hand gesture)* This was a very prestigious magazine. So I thought I'd bring over some of my CD's.

RUTH: I don't have a CD player.

NAOMI: I've already taken care of that.

*NAOMI turns Mozart on full blast. NAOMI moves to the music.*

RUTH: Good God!

NAOMI: *(shouting over the music)* How's that? Pretty soothing don't you think?

RUTH: Turn it off!!

NAOMI: What's that dear?

RUTH: Turn it off!!!

*She jumps up and tries to turn off the player. She can't find the off button and ends up bashing it a couple of times till the CD comes to a halt.*

NAOMI: I never did like Mozart. I'm just in the middle of the bathroom. Honestly Ruth. I'm not sure how you can step into that shower. I can't even tell what was the original color of the tile.

RUTH: Blue. I think.

*During the following, RUTH goes to the kitchen gets a glass of water. NAOMI tidies.*

NAOMI: Sarah uses this lovely cleaner, completely non-toxic. She says that the twins could down the whole bottle and it would still leave them laughing. Not that drinking a bottle of cleaner is a laughing matter. She says it does wonders on the tile. No fumes at all. I find it never gets things really clean though. Non toxic cleaners never do. *(as RUTH re-enters with her water)* Is that for me?

RUTH: Of course.

*She hands over the glass and returns to kitchen for her own glass. She then enters and sits on the couch.*

NAOMI: The cleaners weren't like that twenty years ago believe you me. Whooo. I'm sure that drinking even a tiny tich of those would have sent you to the grave. The fumes went right up your nose and straight to the brain. Sometimes whole afternoons would pass in a fog.

RUTH: Did anyone call me?

NAOMI: I don't know how you live without an answering machine. I can't imagine not knowing if someone was trying to reach me. And you don't even need a machine anymore. They come right inside the phone. It's remarkable.

RUTH: I'll add it to the list.

NAOMI: What did you say dear?

RUTH: Did anyone call?

NAOMI: Mostly people wanting sell things. You must have given your number out at some point. Very careless. When they call you, all you have to do is tell them to put you on their no-call list. They have to do it.

RUTH: Are those the messages?

NAOMI: *(she looks through the messages as she talks before handing them to RUTH)* I just bought a new mp3 player. The sound is so crisp, just like the trumpet section is right there beside me. But I think I'm going to return it, the batteries run out so quickly. So I was cleaning the bathroom and wearing the earphones so I can't say for sure if I missed any calls. With so much to do, I can't be responsible for all your calls as well. That man John was very nice.

RUTH: John?

NAOMI: Something about Spain and the newspaper's fine with it? Something about a co-operation? Next week? That'll be nice. You've been home so long – what's it been a year? *(RUTH doesn't answer; she seems to be in shock)* A year. It's been wonderful having you around of course, but I know that you've always liked to go places. It sounds so exciting. I've never really been anywhere. Your father didn't like to travel. It's all in the message.

*RUTH sits with on the couch with a pained expression on her face.*

RUTH: Spain. Next week.

NAOMI: He said some lovely things about you dear. It's a shame you have your .... *(she makes a vague hand gesture)* at the same time.

RUTH: What did you say? Did you tell him where I was?

NAOMI: We didn't talk that long. His daughter has her first piano recital tomorrow. She's very nervous.

RUTH: (*very troubled*) Oh boy.

NAOMI: I've placed a bucket beside the bed and if you don't feel like eating the cabbage rolls I've brought some tinfoil and some containers. They freeze so well. Sarah says it helps her out tremendously, the twins are such a handful, she just pops a container into the oven and dinner is all taken care of. Crackers! I bought some crackers too. Three boxes of saltines, it was no trouble. They were on sale.

RUTH: I have to call John.

NAOMI: I went to La Poubelle last night with my neighbour, Delilah? You gave it two stars but we both thought it was fabulous. Oh! I talked to Sarah this morning. She and David want to know what you would like for your birthday.

RUTH: It's three months away.

NAOMI: She likes to plan ahead.

RUTH: She doesn't have to get me anything. Didn't we go through this last year?

NAOMI: I told her that's what you'd say but she believes so strongly in birthdays. Birthdays are the cornerstone of the family. Or was it the touchstone. I'm sure they mean the same thing.

RUTH: Did you move my address book? It was here by the phone.

NAOMI: Haven't seen it dear. I was going to suggest some new bookcases. Those ones look like they're falling apart. Maybe David could build some for you.

RUTH: I like my bookcases.

NAOMI: Or new luggage. I was looking at your pieces and they have seen better days. You can't go to Spain with those.

RUTH: (*on phone*) Who's this? Where's Evie? Never mind, never mind, I need to speak to John. Will the meeting be over soon? I...No, no message. I'll call back. (*she hangs up.*)

NAOMI: People notice suitcases. It's just common knowledge. Is it any wonder you haven't been abroad this past year. You're not setting a good example. (*RUTH is clearly not listening,*

*lost in her own world*) I went to Friar Tucks last weekend. You gave it three and a half stars. You had the lamb. Personally I didn't like it at all. I would have given it only two stars although the waiter was very nice; he told me that he's really an actor and that -

RUTH: Did you say you were cleaning the bathroom?

NAOMI: Just a little scrub or two.

RUTH: Thank you.

NAOMI: The grout work is a mess. It's taking me much longer than I thought it would.

RUTH: Well, thank you.

NAOMI: If it was kept clean on a regular basis then you wouldn't be having these problems.

RUTH: I'm going to change. *(exits)*

NAOMI: You've got clean clothes on the bed. All the comfies just like before. In case you were wondering I threw out all those ratty bras. Honestly they must be twenty years old. I'm not sure how you keep your...thing in. Unless you use socks. I found the new bras I bought you behind the dresser. Nice and sturdy. Nothing will accidentally tumble out of those.

*The phone rings. NAOMI goes for the phone.*

RUTH: *(offstage)* I got it.

NAOMI: Are you sure? I'm right by the phone.

RUTH: *(offstage)* I got it.

*NAOMI wiggles her fingers over the phone as if expecting it to ring again. It doesn't. She moves towards the bedroom to try and hear the conversation but she can't. She goes to fix her hair and realizes that she is still wearing the rubber gloves. She takes them off. She sings to herself - sees RUTH'S purse and the papers on the ground and tries to look at them without turning them over and listening and looking for RUTH at the same time.*

RUTH: *(offstage)* Mom, what happened to my bras?

NAOMI: Are you off the phone already? That was fast.

RUTH: (*entering*) It was a wrong number. All my bras are missing.

NAOMI: I get calls for this plastic surgeon all the time.

RUTH: Mom.

NAOMI: People wanting to know about nose jobs and face lifts and tummy tucks. Did you know they can staple your stomach? The mere thought of that....Staples in your stomach. Your father had one of those big staple guns. They make such a noise. (*she makes a staple gun noise*)

RUTH: Did you go through my drawers?

NAOMI: Finally, I called the man up and got a price list. It's easier than arguing with people.

RUTH: Where are my bras?

NAOMI: I left out the new ones I bought.

RUTH: I like my old ones.

NAOMI: They're all so ratty. How long have you had them? Fifteen? Twenty years?

RUTH: They're comfortable.

NAOMI: You need support. Something sturdy.

RUTH: I would like....I would like.....

NAOMI: You have to take care of what you have left.

RUTH: I think I can figure out what I need and what I don't.

*There is a knock at the door.*

SIMON: (*offstage*) Yoo Hoo! Breast Man!

NAOMI: What did he say?

RUTH: Civilization.

*She opens the door. SIMON enters with celebratory paraphernalia. There should be breast balloons; maybe he's wearing a T-shirt with breasts on it. He is also carrying a bouquet of flowers.*

SIMON: Do you know there is no such thing as a "Congratulations you're back in Chemo" card? I went to at least a dozen stores.

NAOMI: *(referring to the balloons)* What a strange design.

SIMON: Mrs. Boyle! A picture of loveliness as always.

NAOMI: Thank you dear.

SIMON: *(handing her the flowers)* These are for you.

NAOMI: For me? Oh Simon, they are gorgeous. How did you know I'd be here?

RUTH: *(aside to SIMON)* You are a suck up.

SIMON: *(aside)* I'm a smart man.

NAOMI: Ruth do you have a vase? I should put these in water.

RUTH: In the cupboard beside the fridge.

NAOMI: *(as she exits to the kitchen)* Simon, you are so thoughtful.

RUTH: You are such a suck up.

SIMON: If Peter the Great is going to send them from Belgium, the least I can do is pick some up at the corner store. Make everybody happy that's my motto. *(handing over the balloons)* Happy?

RUTH: Where did you find these?

SIMON: Do you know people don't like to talk about breasts? I got the cold shoulder more than once because I asked the sales clerk for "balloons with breasts." I was very specific. And they didn't believe me when I said they were for a friend with cancer. Did you know I'm supposed to be very very serious?

RUTH: Don't change on my account.

SIMON: That's what I said. I was soundly chastised by one lady. Frivolous! Disgusting! I think the only thing that kept her from striking me was my convincing portrayal of a blind man.

RUTH: Did you fumble about?

SIMON: Knocked over a shelf. She was extraordinarily rude.

RUTH: So where did the balloons come from?

SIMON: Finally, I had to go to a certain type of store, where I might add, I was fully embraced.

RUTH: Do these stores usually have paper over their windows?

SIMON: I wouldn't know.

RUTH: And XXX in their titles?

SIMON: I learned something else today. Did you know there are these stores that exclusively sell movies with naked people in them? Very shocking.

RUTH: *(throws her arms around SIMON in a bear hug)* I'm so glad you're here.

SIMON: How did it go? Do you feel crappy?

RUTH: No.

SIMON: You're only humouring me. I can tell. Is it Mama? You want I should push her down the stairs?

RUTH: No it isn't her.

NAOMI: *(offstage)* Ruth...

RUTH: But on that note, she threw out all my bras.

NAOMI: ...all I see are mason jars.

RUTH: Won't they do?

NAOMI: *(offstage)* It's not the same as a vase. The flowers won't sit well.

SIMON: *(talking loud)* Ruth, didn't I give you roses on Valentines Day? I'm positive they came in a vase.

NAOMI: Oh that would be perfect. Where would it be?

RUTH: Push *me* down the stairs why don't you.

SIMON: I push with affection my love, purely with affection.

NAOMI: Ruth?

RUTH: Try above the fridge.

NAOMI:*(offstage)* I can't reach. Oh wait, I see a footstool. Don't worry about me, I'll be fine.

SIMON: Does she mean it?

RUTH: Wait. Wait. Mom do you need some help?

NAOMI: Got it. Oh it's so dusty. When was the last time you cleaned it out?

RUTH: *(to SIMON)* Push her down the stairs.

SIMON: Your hands are shaking like crazy. Tell me what's going on Boyle.

RUTH: We have to get rid of her first.

SIMON: Why?

NAOMI: *(re-entering)* These are so beautiful. I love the colors. Ruth, did I tell you that Peter sent me flowers for my birthday?

RUTH: Yes.

SIMON: How is Peter?

NAOMI: He has four children now.

SIMON: Good for him.

RUTH: Mom, when will those cabbage rolls be ready?

NAOMI: Are you hungry?

SIMON: They smell wonderful.

NAOMI: Do you like cabbage rolls?

SIMON: I am always starving for your cooking Mrs. Boyle.

NAOMI: You should eat more, you're so thin.

SIMON: Ruth never feeds me.

NAOMI: I'm not surprised. The cupboards are practically bare.

RUTH: I'm away a lot.

SIMON: Not in the past year.

RUTH: Shut up!

NAOMI: She doesn't eat properly.

SIMON: I agree.

RUTH: There is so food in my cupboards.

NAOMI: Four tins of soup. One container of hot chocolate, Two boxes of cereal and half a package of spaghetti.

*There is a pause.*

RUTH: I can't believe you counted.

SIMON: How about those cabbage rolls?

NAOMI: Let me just check the timer. *(she exits)*

RUTH: I can't believe she counted.

SIMON: Never mind that. What's up with you?

RUTH: Promise you won't yell at me.

SIMON: Why?

RUTH: (*whispering*) I didn't go.

SIMON: What?

RUTH: I didn't go to chemo. I quit

SIMON: What??

RUTH: Shhh.

NAOMI: (*re-entering*) There is at least fifteen minutes to go. Then it has to cool.

SIMON: Sounds great.

NAOMI: If you two don't mind, I going to get back to work.

RUTH: You don't have to clean the bathroom.

NAOMI: It's no trouble.

RUTH: You don't have to clean the bathroom. I'm sure whatever you've done has been a great help.

NAOMI: I don't like leaving an unfinished job. It won't take me very long. Besides, I have to stay till the cabbage rolls are done. Do you have any batteries?

SIMON: You don't have one of those automatic tile cleaners do you?

NAOMI: No, but I've always wanted to try one of those. I hear they have quite a kick.

RUTH: I don't have any batteries.

NAOMI: None?

SIMON: What are they for?

NAOMI: My player. You don't have any? Are you sure? Not even one.

RUTH: I might have a couple in a drawer somewhere.

NAOMI: It's just that I love listening to Glenn Miller when I work.

RUTH: Why don't Simon and I go out and get you some.

NAOMI: Oh I'm just being a bother.

RUTH: Of course you're not.

NAOMI: I thought I had some in my purse.

*NAOMI picks up her purse and starts rummaging through.*

RUTH: Don't worry about it. Apparently, I have to go to the grocery store anyway.

NAOMI: Are you up to it?

RUTH: I feel fine. We won't be gone long...Come on Simon.

*RUTH has just grabbed her purse and is about to put a hand on the door when NAOMI comes out of her purse triumphantly holding some batteries.*

NAOMI: Ah ha! Found them. I knew I had spares.

*NAOMI puts the spare batteries into the player. RUTH reluctantly moves away from the door.*

RUTH: Great. Great.

NAOMI: Now you just sit yourself down and have a rest. I'll be done in no time.

RUTH: Sure.

NAOMI: You know where I am if you need me. *(She exits)*

*There is a pause. Since RUTH has told him that she didn't go to chemo, SIMON hasn't moved. RUTH moves to the couch and puts her head in her hands.*

SIMON: All yesterday afternoon. Five flights of stairs.

RUTH: Don't... don't.

SIMON: Why didn't you tell me?

RUTH: *(she leaps up from the couch)* I can't sit here knowing that she's cleaning my bathroom. Counting the food in my cupboards.

SIMON: Who cares about that?

RUTH: She's going to tell Sarah, Sarah is going to call me.

SIMON: Earth to Ruth! You quit gymnastics. You quit smoking. You don't quit chemotherapy.

RUTH: I planned to go. I went to the hospital. I walked through the lobby. I stood in front of the elevators for a long time. And I quit.

SIMON: I don't believe it.

RUTH: I'm not going back.

SIMON: You can't quit.

RUTH: Why not?

NAOMI: *(offstage)* You don't have to whisper out there, I can't hear you with my earphones on.

RUTH: We're not whispering!

NAOMI: *(offstage)* I'm turning on the music!

RUTH: I think you're incredibly nosy!

SIMON: We have to talk about this.

RUTH: Simon...

SIMON: This has been a very difficult time. I understand that. One week you're perfectly fine, the next week you're not, after a whole year. It's crazy!

RUTH: Would you listen for a moment?

SIMON:*(talking over top of previous line)* ...what you need to do is make another appointment. You make another appointment and I'll go with you. Tomorrow.

RUTH: No.

SIMON: Tomorrow, we'll go together.

RUTH: No.

SIMON: Stop saying that! You can't give up like nothing is happening!

*The phone rings. RUTH dives for the phone.*

RUTH: Hello? *(it's not who she expected)* Oh. Hi. Yes she's here. Yes. Yes. *(calling out)* Mom! *(back to Sarah)* I always answer the phone.

SIMON: Sarah?

RUTH: *(putting her ear to the phone)* She's still talking. *(calling out)* Mom! *(to Sarah)* Yes. I know. I know. I just called her.

SIMON: I'll go interrupt the strings. *(He exits to the bedroom)*

RUTH: Tell her to use the phone in the bedroom. *(to Sarah)* She's coming. She is. Sarah why would I lie? Listen I'm expecting a call so...I have no idea what I want for my birthday.

NAOMI: *(entering)* Yes?

RUTH: It's Sarah.

NAOMI: That's what Simon said.

SIMON: She wanted confirmation.

RUTH: Why don't you use the phone in the bedroom? There's more privacy.

NAOMI: I don't like that phone. Too much static. *(she takes the phone)* Hello? Oh. Sarah, hello dear. No, I can't talk right now. I'm going to be awhile. There's nothing wrong. I'm working on the bathroom. You know about the tile. Yes dear. She is not. I don't mind. It

doesn't take any time at all. I'll see you tonight. Bye. Bye. *(She hangs up)*

RUTH: Mom, you don't have to finish the bathroom. I appreciate all the work you've done, why don't we just leave it at that. I'm sure you'll want to get home and change before you go to Sarah's.

NAOMI: I brought a change of clothes.

RUTH: You did?

NAOMI: I thought I'd leave from here. Is that all right?

RUTH: Of course. Of course.

NAOMI: Back to Glen. *(she exits)*

RUTH: My bathroom can't be that dirty.

SIMON: What are you going to tell her?

RUTH: She won't understand.

SIMON: So you won't tell her.

RUTH: Don't lecture me.

SIMON: What am I supposed to say?

RUTH: Be in my corner Simon. That's all. I need you on my side.

*There is a pause.*

SIMON: What are you going to do?

RUTH: There's a....

*The phone rings. RUTH goes to answer it.*

RUTH: Hello? Yes. Thank God. Yes I am definitely.....can you hold one moment? *(to SIMON)* I'm going to take this in the bedroom. Will you hang this up for me? *(There is no comment from SIMON. She puts the phone down.)* Thanks.

*RUTH exits to the bedroom. SIMON picks up the phone and really wants to listen in.*

RUTH: *(offstage)* Ok!

*He hangs up the phone and sits on the couch. NAOMI enters dancing. She is taking off her rubber gloves.*

NAOMI: *(talking off the earphones)* The bathroom is finished! *(noticing that SIMON is alone on the couch)* Where's Ruth?

SIMON: On the phone.

NAOMI: Where?

SIMON: In the bedroom.

NAOMI: The door's closed. Who's she talking too?

SIMON: I don't know.

NAOMI: Must be a secret.

SIMON: I don't know.

NAOMI: Doesn't she tell you everything?

SIMON: Why would you think that?

NAOMI: I thought friends tell friends everything.

SIMON: If Ruth had something important to say I'm sure she would tell you.

NAOMI: Of course she would. It's all the little things I never hear about. Is she going to be long?

SIMON: I don't know.

NAOMI: Hmmmm. I guess it's just you and me.

SIMON: Uh huh.

NAOMI: Alone.

SIMON: Looks like it.

NAOMI: I'm not sure we've ever been alone.

SIMON: Christmas Eve, 1998, from eight o'clock to midnight.

NAOMI: Oh my. You have an astonishing memory.

SIMON: Some things you never forget.

NAOMI: 1998....is that when we took David to the hospital?

SIMON: Ruth took David to the hospital. Peter and Ben got drunk. Sarah had hysterics. We were alone.

NAOMI: Cleaning up the eggnog!

SIMON: Because Peter and David were arm-wrestling and Peter sent David's head through the eggnog bowl.

NAOMI: That's amazing. *(she stands looking down the hall towards the bedroom door)*

SIMON: Is she still on the phone?

NAOMI: What? The doors still closed. So. How are you Simon?

SIMON: I'm fine Mrs. Boyle. How's your knee?

NAOMI: It only twinges every once and awhile. Only in damp weather. My doctor says it's actually good for me to climb all these wretched stairs.

SIMON: Don't let on.

NAOMI: Still tickling the ivories?

SIMON: In my spare time. I'm going to teach Ruth the Moonlight Sonata.

NAOMI: Where?

SIMON: On the piano.

NAOMI: Ruth?

SIMON: Yes.

NAOMI: Voluntarily?

SIMON: I tried to force her to play the accordion but it wouldn't fly.

NAOMI: For three years I dragged her kicking and screaming to piano lessons. She bit her teacher.

SIMON: If she tries to bite me, I'll bite her back.

NAOMI: Why the Moonlight Sonata?

SIMON: That's what she wants to learn.

NAOMI: I prefer Debussy. Much prettier. *(picking up RUTH'S copy of SIMON'S book)* What's this? Pyramids of Passion.

SIMON: That's mine.

NAOMI: *(reading)* "The sand rippled in the heat. It began before daybreak in little eddies over the desert..."

SIMON: Actually, I'll take it.

NAOMI: Looks like a book.

SIMON: Something like that.

NAOMI: *(flipping to the front)* By Simon McRae! You're writing a book? I'm sorry that didn't sound very nice did it? It's just that you're writing a book.

SIMON: I can pat my head and rub my tummy at the same time too.

NAOMI: I never did enjoy reading. Ruth's father read the newspaper in the morning. He would never read an article longer than a page. He liked to read the first paragraph and that's it. He thought there was nothing else to know after the first paragraph. I guess you haven't

read the books that Ruth has written.

SIMON: What makes you say that?

NAOMI: Well because of .. *(She vaguely gestures to her eyes)* Oh dear...I...

SIMON: I've read them all. How about you?

NAOMI: Of course I have. The pictures were very lovely.

SIMON: I took the pictures.

NAOMI: Simon, you did not.

SIMON: I take great pictures. That's going to be my next book. "A blind man's photography guide." It'll be a series.

NAOMI: *(flipping through the manuscript, trying to change the subject)* I see. I...Are pyramids very passionate?

SIMON: Well, when I was in Egypt...

NAOMI: You've been to Egypt?

SIMON: Twice.

NAOMI: More than once?

SIMON: I have the pictures to prove it.

NAOMI: You and Ruth always on the go.

SIMON: I don't go as much as I'd like. These days.....

NAOMI: Shhhh.

SIMON: What?

NAOMI: The talking's stopped.

SIMON: Is she coming out?

NAOMI: I don't know. *(she dashes over to the couch and starts speaking loudly.)* So, you've been to Egypt.

SIMON: What are you doing?

NAOMI: Keep talking. We don't want her to know we've been eavesdropping. *(she speaks loudly)* So, you've been to Egypt! Twice!

SIMON: Yes that will completely confuse her.

NAOMI: *(whispering)* Simon! *(resumes talking loudly)* And you've seen the pyramids.

SIMON: *(matching NAOMI's volume)* Twice.

NAOMI: What do you think of them?

SIMON: They're very nice. Pointy. You should go.

NAOMI: Oh no. I don't travel.

SIMON: Why not?

NAOMI: She's coming! Keep going.

SIMON: You should go. I think you'd like it.

NAOMI: I couldn't go alone.

SIMON: Of course not. Why not ask Ruth to go with you?

RUTH: Ask Ruth to go where. *(she enters with a suitcase)*

NAOMI: Traveling.

RUTH: Together?

SIMON: Not very far. Just a day trip.

RUTH: Ah.

SIMON: You'd love to take your mother somewhere, wouldn't you? Spend some time together.

NAOMI: What's the suitcase for?

SIMON: Where are you going?

NAOMI: I thought Spain was next week.

SIMON: When are you going to Spain?

*There is the sound of a buzzer going off from the kitchen.*

NAOMI: Oh the cabbage rolls! I hope they're not burnt, I forgot all about them!

*NAOMI exits to the kitchen. RUTH begins searching the desk for her address book.*

SIMON: Ruth.

RUTH: Hold on...

SIMON: Where are you going?

RUTH: Where is my address book?

SIMON: Pleasure trip? Cruise? Greenpeace mission?

NAOMI: *(offstage)* They're not burnt at all. They smell lovely! Ruth? Where are your oven mitts?

RUTH: *(finding her address book somewhat hidden on a book shelf)* Finally! Ok. *(she turns to SIMON)* I just spoke to a woman at the BodyPower Clinic. It's...

SIMON: *(cutting her off)* I've heard of it.

NAOMI: *(offstage)* I got them! Don't worry about me.

RUTH: They specialize in aggressive alternative treatments.

SIMON: They don't use drugs.

RUTH: Any chemical created drugs.

SIMON: How aggressive is that.

NAOMI: Would you like oven mitts for your birthday?

RUTH: I'm just going to go see what they have to offer.

SIMON: Herbal medicine from a bunch of wackos.

RUTH: You don't know that.

SIMON: You didn't spend much time packing your suitcase. Just taking a tooth-brush are we?

RUTH: I don't have time to fight about this.

SIMON: You didn't just decide today.

RUTH: Yes I did. When the tests came out positive, I called a friend, someone, someone I knew who had been to the clinic.

SIMON: You've been planning this all along.

RUTH: I haven't. I planned to go to my chemotherapy. I wanted to. I thought about going to the clinic. I packed a suitcase. I changed my mind and now I've changed it back.

SIMON: And when you packed your suitcase, were you going to tell anyone or just send us a postcard?

RUTH: I know I'm doing this badly but.....

SIMON: I vote for the postcard. It's the Ruth Boyle specialty: run away and leave a mess. What about your mother? What about "I don't want to back away?" And Spain, what the hell is Spain?

RUTH: It doesn't matter.

NAOMI: (*offstage*) What about oven mitts?

SIMON: Mrs Boyle, why is Ruth going to Spain?

NAOMI: (*she enters*) That's not 'til next week.

SIMON: But why is she going?

NAOMI: It's for a new book

SIMON: So much for Mary's mat leave.

NAOMI: (*entering*) That suitcase is the rattiest thing. Luggage. It has to be luggage. I'm going to tell Sarah to get you a new suitcase for your birthday. I don't understand how you travel with that, it's frightening. (*she notices the tension in the room*) Is everything... all right in here?

RUTH: Mom, sit down a moment will you? (*RUTH brings her mother to the couch.*)

NAOMI: What's the matter?

RUTH: I have something to tell you.

NAOMI: This is how she started on about the divorce. And before...

RUTH: Mom....

NAOMI: It's worse isn't it? Something is terribly wrong.

RUTH: No, no, no. I just wanted to say..... that luggage would be fine for my birthday.

*The door buzzer rings.*

RUTH: That's my taxi. (*she gets up and grabs her suitcase*)

SIMON: Ruth has something else to tell you Mrs. Boyle.

RUTH: I have to get that taxi or I'll miss my plane.

SIMON: Just wait five minutes.

RUTH: Mom, there's no time to explain, I'll just do it badly. I'm going to a clinic out west. I'll be just fine. Everything is fine.

NAOMI: Are you switching hospitals dear? I always liked the General. Very polite and clean. Although I hear the food is quite dreadful. They don't make it fresh; it's all dried and packaged.

RUTH: You're going to have to trust me.

*The buzzer rings again. RUTH is out the door.*

RUTH: Tell him I'm on my way. I'll call. Don't worry.

SIMON: You can't leave like this.

RUTH: I love you both. *(she exits)*

SIMON: Ruth!

NAOMI: Well. She didn't say anything about the bathroom.

*The light fades to black.*

## ACT TWO

## SCENE ONE

Tuesday Evening

*The lights come up on RUTH'S apartment. The stage is empty. We hear a key rattling in the door. NAOMI enters with a wrapped casserole, and a bucket of cleaning supplies.*

NAOMI: Hello? Hello?

*There is no answer. She enters, closing the door behind her. She puts the bucket on the floor and places the casserole on a side table. She looks around the space. She runs a finger over a table top and brings up dust. She picks up a couple of knick knacks. She straightens the afghan on the couch. She places the pillows on the couch the way that she thinks they should go. She sits. She spies a wooden box and, still not sure that she is alone, peers around before she does the ultimate nosy act. She brings the box over to the couch and opens it. She finds mail inside. She begins to take a letter out of an envelope when SIMON leaps from the kitchen in a karate stance. He is wearing bright yellow rubber gloves. NAOMI dives to the floor.*

SIMON: Freeze or I'll break your spine in two!!

NAOMI: Aiie!

SIMON: I'm a black belt!

NAOMI: I'm a mother!

SIMON: Mrs. Boyle?

NAOMI: Simon! *(panting and gasping for air)* What the devil....scared the life out of me....

SIMON: Scared the life out of you? I don't know karate. I can't even wear the outfits.

NAOMI: Empty.....I wasn't doing anything....I was just.....

SIMON: *(tripping over her as he walks in front of the couch)* Why are you on the floor?

NAOMI: Oh my goodness.

SIMON: Do you need a hand?

NAOMI: *(referring to the rubber gloves)* Gloves! Gloves!

SIMON: *(helping her off the floor)* Here, let's get you on to the couch.

NAOMI: Oh my. *(she takes a few deep breaths. She holds her chest and closes her eyes)*

SIMON: Deep breaths. Cleansing breaths.

*They take a couple of deep breaths together till everything is calm.  
NAOMI opens her eyes and look shrewdly at SIMON.*

NAOMI: What are you doing here?

SIMON: What are you doing here?

NAOMI: Just passing by.

SIMON: You don't live anywhere near here.

NAOMI: Neither do you.

SIMON: I wasn't passing by.

NAOMI: Why are you here?

SIMON: I forgot something yesterday. I had to come back.

NAOMI: What did you forget?

SIMON: A book.

NAOMI: What book?

SIMON: I don't know, a book, a very important book that I can't live without out. I thought we agreed that we were going to stay in our respective homes and wait for Ruth to call.

NAOMI: Then I guess you had better shake a leg.

SIMON: Why me?

NAOMI: You're the one she's going to call.

SIMON: My out-going message says I'd be here.

NAOMI: So does mine. Why are you wearing rubber gloves?

SIMON: I'm cleaning the oven.

NAOMI: You are not.

SIMON: I am.

NAOMI: *(leaping up)* Excuse me. I need a glass of water. *(exits to kitchen)*

SIMON: Is there something the matter?

NAOMI: *(offstage)* No, no. I'm just very thirsty.

SIMON: No problems?

NAOMI: *(offstage)* None.

SIMON: Nothing like....Simon may have used the wrong products on the oven and is about to blow us both to kingdom come?

NAOMI: Don't be silly.

SIMON: Nothing like...Simon might have reached for a cloth and drank an entire bottle of cleaner instead?

NAOMI: I just.... *(she enters without water)*

SIMON: My mother stuck a cleaning brush in my hands when I was ten years old. I can tell the difference between all the appliances and their respected cleaning products. Blindfolded.

NAOMI: That would be a very useful... um... talent.

SIMON: You must have been quite thirsty.

NAOMI: Hmmm?

SIMON: I didn't even hear the tap.

NAOMI: Well. I am very thirsty. It's very dry out. Dry heat. I can tell the difference between a dry heat and a wet heat, it's obvious. Now apparently there is a difference between a dry cold and a wet cold but that is beyond me. I think I need another glass of water...*(exits)*

SIMON: Watch out for that wet cold dry heat.

NAOMI: *(offstage)* The water tastes very strange in my apartment. I can never get it cold enough. I think there's.....Oh my!

SIMON: Mrs Boyle?

NAOMI: *(offstage)* The fridge Simon it's....

SIMON: Do you like?

NAOMI: *(offstage- very impressed)* Oh my!

SIMON: I had to throw out three bunches of broccoli. They were mating in the crisper.

NAOMI: *(entering without water)* It's spotless.

SIMON: Thank you.

NAOMI: It looks brand new.

SIMON: I'm not sure how it got dirty in the first place. Never been used in my presence.

NAOMI: How did you get it so clean? What did you use?

SIMON: I never disclose my secrets.

NAOMI: You have to give me a little hint.

SIMON: Wait till you see the oven.

NAOMI: Just give me the first letter.

SIMON: (*giving in*) It's not even on the market yet. A friend of mine is developing this line of products; completely environmentally friendly and it works like a dream.

NAOMI: I can never get a good shine with environment cleaners.

SIMON: I know, I know. But this is good stuff.

NAOMI: I'd love to try it. Sarah uses non-toxic cleaners...

SIMON: But they never do a good job.

NAOMI: It's a dull clean, not a sparkling clean.

SIMON: I'll get you some.

NAOMI: That would be wonderful. (*a small pause*) I couldn't stop thinking about those glasses in the sink yesterday. I hate leaving the house when there are dirty dishes.

SIMON: In case the burglars think badly of you.

NAOMI: They'd only take five minutes to do. So I thought, if I'm going to do the dishes, I might as well clean the oven, defrost the fridge and wax the floors too. It seems you've beat me to it.

SIMON: I was just finishing up. It's too bad you've already tackled the bathroom.

NAOMI: Yes.

SIMON: I guess we're all done.

NAOMI: Yes.

SIMON: We should go home.

NAOMI: I guess.

SIMON: You first.

NAOMI: You were here before me, you should go first.

SIMON: We could both leave together.

NAOMI: Is that what you want?

SIMON: If it's what you want.

NAOMI: I...

*The phone rings. SIMON and NAOMI both stare at it.*

BOTH: You get it.

SIMON: No you.

NAOMI: It could be Ruth.

SIMON: John whos-it has called twice since I've been here. I don't know what to tell him.

NAOMI: He was very nice to me.

SIMON: I'm not a good liar. I told him Ruth was out of town and he almost came at me through the receiver.

NAOMI: Nonsense.

SIMON: Then you get the phone.

NAOMI: *(answering the phone)* Hello? No this is her mother. Why hello!

SIMON: Who is it?

NAOMI: Yes that's right. No, I'm sorry she's not in right now. Didn't she call you back? She told me she was going to call the instant she got your message. Yes she knows. She is very excited about Spain.

SIMON: I knew it was him.

NAOMI: How did your little girl do? Wonderful! Oh, please pass on my congratulations. You must be very proud. I will. I will. She will absolutely be there. Good-bye dear. *(to SIMON who is watching her in awe)* His daughter placed first in her piano recital.

SIMON: He didn't take your head off.

NAOMI: Not a bit.

SIMON: Huh. Perhaps he's only extremely hostile to blind people.

NAOMI: The casserole! I almost forgot - I better get it into the fridge. It's macaroni and beef. That's one thing about Ruth, she's never become one of those vegetarians. I'm not sure what I would do with one of those. *(she exits)*

SIMON: I hear they're normal people just like you or I. Mrs. Boyle....

NAOMI: *(offstage)* Hmmm?

SIMON: Why don't we stay?

NAOMI: *(entering)* What was that dear?

SIMON: We could stay. We don't have to go.

NAOMI: Stay here?

SIMON: Yes.

NAOMI: Alone?

SIMON: Maybe not.

NAOMI: What would we do?

SIMON: I don't know. Eat casserole?

NAOMI: I...

SIMON: It would be the perfect dish to christen the oven with.

NAOMI: Then what would we do?

SIMON: Maybe we could play charades.

NAOMI: You know, there is one thing..... Ruth might get a little...

SIMON: What?

NAOMI: We could clean up in here.

SIMON: This room?

NAOMI: Yes.

SIMON: Together?

NAOMI: Ruth likes to pile things.

SIMON: It's very dusty in here, have you noticed?

NAOMI: Who knows the last time it was cleaned.

SIMON: She never cleans.

NAOMI: That's not good you know. Not good for the system.

SIMON: Sometimes I can feel the dust sitting in my lungs. I never say anything...

NAOMI: And the poor plants.

SIMON: She killed an orchid.

NAOMI: She didn't!

SIMON: She did. We could...you know, help out a little.

NAOMI: Just a bit. Not too much.

SIMON: She doesn't like surprises.

NAOMI: No.... I brought my own cleaners.

SIMON: I have my own rubber gloves.

*There is a small pause and then they fly into action. There is a flurry of activity as they prepare to clean.*

NAOMI: You tackle the wood. I'll organize and tidy.

SIMON: Done.

NAOMI: Don't use paper towel on wood dear, it scratches the surface. Doesn't Ruth have any rags or old socks?

SIMON: I think all her socks are old socks. I'll see what I can find. *(he exits)* One hole or two?

NAOMI: Sarah is fanatical about holey socks. The tiniest bit of unravel and into the rag bin they go. I suggested she give them to me to darn but apparently darned socks are worse than holey socks.

SIMON: *(entering with holey socks on his hands)* Voila! Will these do?

NAOMI: Those are just fine.

SIMON: *(humming and singing as he gets to work polishing the new table)* La donne e mobile, the nun is ovulating, La, la, la la....

NAOMI: In my day, we didn't have money to throw around on new socks whenever the mood struck us. No one minded darned socks, because everyone wore darned socks. Times have changed. What did your mother do?

SIMON: We never wore socks.

NAOMI: Never? What about the winter?

SIMON: She said it built character to go barefoot.

NAOMI: But Simon, the winter I mean....*(she stops)* you're pulling my leg aren't you.

SIMON: Just a tug.

NAOMI: That's not a nice thing to do to an old lady.

SIMON: You're as young as they come Mrs. Boyle.

NAOMI: Oh my, that's not true. Do you see her often?

SIMON: Who?

NAOMI: Your barefooted mother.

SIMON: No.

NAOMI: Why not. Don't you get along with her?

SIMON: I did.

NAOMI: But now you don't. *(uncovering the pile of books underneath the couch cushions)* What do we have here?

*NAOMI sits on the couch and looks through the pile.*

SIMON: I didn't say that. What do you think of the new table Mrs. Boyle?

NAOMI: Hmmmm.

SIMON: The table.

NAOMI: Yes, I meant to ask Ruth about that.

SIMON: *(hearing something odd in her voice)* Did you find something dead under one of the piles?

NAOMI: The books about... these books...Did she take any of them with her?

SIMON: No. I don't think so.

NAOMI: Perhaps she just forgot. I'm sure books are such a bother on planes. They're so heavy and bulky. It's a shame really. Now, magazines are perfect for traveling. So many different topics.

SIMON: Maybe we should have a talk.

NAOMI: I'm going to check on the oven.

SIMON: I probably explained things poorly yesterday.

NAOMI: It's not good to put food in an oven so soon after it's been cleaned.

SIMON: I didn't know I'd have to explain them at all. Everything happened so fast.

NAOMI: Although we really should wait a day. Casseroles always taste better on the second day. I don't know why that is.

SIMON: Why don't we sit down and...

NAOMI: Are you really hungry? I could go to the grocery store and pick up some chicken. Do you like chicken?

SIMON: Mrs. Boyle...

NAOMI: You don't like chicken. I can tell.

*There's a pause.*

SIMON: Why do you always change the subject?

NAOMI: I do not.

SIMON: Whenever you don't want to talk about something you change the subject.

NAOMI: You're one to talk.

SIMON: What did I do?

NAOMI: I engaged in a perfectly respectable conversation about your mother and you started talking tables.

SIMON: That is completely different.

NAOMI: It's the old switcheroo.

SIMON: Mrs. Boyle, you're a very nice woman but...

NAOMI: I'm sure she would love to hear from you. No matter what it was. No matter what you did.

SIMON: How come I did something? Maybe she's the one who did something really nasty.

NAOMI: Did she?

SIMON: No.

NAOMI: Aha! Mothers never do.

SIMON: Of course they don't.

NAOMI: So. What's your mother's number? Does she live in town?

SIMON: I beg your pardon?

NAOMI: I'm going to invite her to dinner and we'll straighten this all out.

SIMON: Mrs. Boyle this isn't necessary.

NAOMI: Does she like casserole?

SIMON: I've kind of led you astray here.

NAOMI: Simon. Number!

SIMON: She's not available.

NAOMI: Did you put your mother in a home? The poor dear.

SIMON: No!

NAOMI: You can't do that you know. Leave her stranded, strapped into a bed all day long.

SIMON: You've got it all wrong.

NAOMI: It's not fair! Children run off cutting the cord before they've even got legs to stand on.  
What happens to the mothers!!

SIMON: Mrs. Boyle!! She's dead!!

NAOMI: What?

SIMON: Deceased, Demised, and Dearly Departed! Kicked the bucket! Croaked! Bought the farm and all the horses too!!

NAOMI: Oh my God.

SIMON: He didn't help.

NAOMI: *(she is truly shocked)* Oh my God.

SIMON: You know, I'm sure she would have loved your casserole. I don't think she ever got the hang of them. *(he senses that something is awry)* Mrs. Boyle? Are you ok?

*NAOMI makes a small whimpering noise.*

SIMON: Do you want some water?

NAOMI: Yes. NO!

SIMON: I can turn on a tap. Trust me.

NAOMI: Yes. Water. Please.

*SIMON exits to get a glass of water.*

NAOMI: Why didn't you say something?

SIMON: I didn't want to talk about it. I thought I could cleverly maneuver my way out of the conversation, but obviously I am face to face with a master. She's long gone. Pushing up the daisies. Crocuses actually. She liked crocuses.

NAOMI: Ruth should have told me.

SIMON: *(entering with a glass of water)* No she shouldn't have because it's a topic of non-discussion and that's the way I like it.

NAOMI: But I'm her mother. She should have at least warned me. What happened?

SIMON: Ah, ah, ah. I don't want to talk about it.

NAOMI: Of course. I'm so sorry.

SIMON: Thank you.

NAOMI: It's obviously quite painful for you.

SIMON: Yes it is.

NAOMI: It's not good to keep things inside.

SIMON: Mrs. Boyle.

NAOMI: I'm not one to pry.

SIMON: I can see the can opener in your hand.

NAOMI: What? Oh. Sorry. *(There is a pause as NAOMI drinks her water)* I had an aunt who had to deal with her mother's....you know....and all the horses... Aunt Bethyl seemed to handle the situation quite well. She was always a cheerful girl. People would ask how she was, how she was doing, and Aunt Bethyl was always fine. "How are you dear" they'd say and Bethyl would always fine - "fine." Now, Bethyl had this mole I guess, on her neck and right after the funeral it started to fester and grow. There's Bethyl cheery as cheery can be and that abscess is getting larger and puffier. Till one Thanksgiving when someone made Aunt Bethyl's mothers stuffing and that growth burst right open, all over the table, mostly in the mashed potatoes. She had a nervous breakdown. They had to take her to the asylum and she's been there ever since.

SIMON: All right. All right. I'll make you a deal. You can ask me something about my mother and I get to ask you something I've always wanted to know.

NAOMI: What.

SIMON: I'm not telling you before hand. We'll get mom out of the way first.

NAOMI: That's hardly fair.

SIMON: That is my deal.

NAOMI: Do I get a hint?

SIMON: It's about you and Ruth.

NAOMI: I don't really know too much about Ruth.

SIMON: Yes you do.

NAOMI: What about her?

SIMON: I'm standing my ground on any further information. Are we agreed?

NAOMI: All right.

SIMON: Now. Before we start, I need a little help (*he crosses to the hutch and takes out a bottle*)  
Mrs. Boyle, how would you like to try some of Ruth's prized Ouzo.

NAOMI: I don't think so. I'm not so fond of liquors.

SIMON: Come on. I hate to drink alone.

NAOMI: I...maybe just a little tich.

SIMON: You open the bottle and I'll get the glasses. (*he exits*)

NAOMI: (*opening bottle*) It smells like licorice. Ruth's father presented me with a bouquet of licorice once. He thought they were better than flowers. Well, "Cheaper than flowers," he said, "And they smell better." I'm not sure I agree with that logic. A piece of licorice can't compete with a rose in the smell department but I do know which one tastes better in a pinch.

SIMON: (*entering with glasses*) Here we are. Shall I do the honours?

NAOMI: Maybe I should....no. All right dear.

SIMON: You can either sip this or throw it down the back of your throat in one shot.

NAOMI: If you don't mind, I think I'll sip.

SIMON: Now you have to say Opa, drink, and slam your glass on the table. Or gently set it down half full. Ready? Opa! (*he downs the drink*)

NAOMI: Oopa! (*she takes a sip*) That is very nice. (*she takes another sip*) Goes all the way to my toes. (*she downs the shot*) Oh my.

SIMON: Shall I set you up with another?

NAOMI: Maybe just one more. And why don't we leave that nice stuff on the table just in case.

SIMON: Ok. So...

NAOMI: What happened to the poor dear?

SIMON: (*as he pours another drink*) Let's see. She found a lump. She died. It was horrible. I was  
15. Opa. (*he downs the shot*)

NAOMI: Opa. *(there is a pause)* That must have been hard. *(another pause)* You have brothers though; they must have been a help.

SIMON: If being comforted by the Bobsey twins from hell is a help then yes.

NAOMI: Another drink please. *(SIMON obliges)* That must have been so hard.

SIMON: They dug a hole in her chest and it didn't matter. They couldn't save her. *(SIMON takes in a deep breath)* You're right Mrs. Boyle. I feel **so** much better. I'm so glad we did this.

NAOMI: I didn't know.

SIMON: And now you do.

NAOMI: I really didn't know.

SIMON: It's ok. I don't want my growth to burst all over Thanksgiving dinner.

NAOMI: Do you think Ruth is selfish?

SIMON: Where did that come from?

NAOMI: I was just...nowhere. Oopa. *(she drinks)*

SIMON: Generally no, I don't think she's selfish.

NAOMI: This whole....thing.

SIMON: What.

NAOMI: This thing, this thing. Ruth doesn't smoke.

SIMON: No she doesn't.

NAOMI: No one on my side of the family has ever had it. Not on her father side either.

SIMON: Sometimes it just happens.

*He pours them both another shot, which they both drink - NOTE: even if it is not mentioned in the text, they should continue to drink.*

NAOMI: Do you think that people....that they deserve to get.....things?

SIMON: What things? Cancer?

NAOMI: Do people deserve it?

SIMON: Where did you hear that?

NAOMI: Sar (*she starts to say Sarah and cuts herself off*)...I read an article.

SIMON: It's ridiculous.

NAOMI: I read that some people can give themselves things. If you have enough negative thoughts. If you don't love yourself enough, if you are unhappy, if you're not a good person, if you're selfish, you can get things, like..... And it will keep coming back.

SIMON: That is the most horrible thing I have ever heard.

NAOMI: You don't believe it.

SIMON: Absolutely not. You should tell Sar...write a letter and complain. It's your turn now.

NAOMI: Oh...I... really Simon I don't know....

SIMON: My question is: why is it, whenever Ruth receives bad news, you give her a new appliance. When her cancer came back - the remote control toaster. First time around - the automatic garlic grinder. Her divorce - the microwave, capuchino machine and electric toothbrush.

NAOMI: She doesn't like them does she?

SIMON: I didn't say that.

NAOMI: She doesn't use them.

SIMON: She doesn't know how to. They fall apart in her hands. You're changing the subject.

NAOMI: I am not. It was an...the whole thing was an accident. Because my husband...he...well he....you know.

SIMON: What?

NAOMI: And all the horses....

SIMON: He died.

NAOMI: You see?

SIMON: I'm missing the death to appliance connection.

NAOMI: I was in a department store, just after he... (*she gestures vaguely*) And I was walking by the audio/visual section, and there was this wall of televisions: 40 tvs all with the same program on. 40 voices. 40 faces turning at the same time. I always find that so startling. So many people staring right at me. It was just before the holidays. I was walking by and I was startled by a wall of Jimmy Stewarts. 40 Jimmy Stewarts. It's a Wonderful Life. My husband and I watched that movie every year. Sometimes we liked to cheer for Mr. Potter, Lionel Barrymore's character, but that was in the privacy of our own home, no one saw it but us. So I was startled by 40 Jimmy Stewarts speaking and moving and I couldn't turn away. The salesmen kept asking me if I wanted help, if I needed anything, very nice young men with red faces and new blazers and...I just stood there. Must have been over an hour. A crazy lady in front of a wall of TVs. I saw the salesmen out of the corner of my eye conferring by the stereos about who was going to be the one to escort me out. A young man approached me, the one who drew the shortest straw I guess, all red in the face and before he said one word I slapped my hand down on the nearest thing. I bought a VCR.

SIMON: Just so he wouldn't throw you out.

NAOMI: What if someone saw me? Naomi Boyle escorted out of a department store? I couldn't live that down. I was going to take it back. But a week turned into two and three and one night I was so tired of staring at the box sitting on the middle of the floor and I just was so....at ....and I ripped it opened, spilled everything out onto the floor. It stayed like that for a long while. Every night I would sit and look at this thing. VCR. I lined up all the parts, the cables, and finally I looked at the directions. I don't think it was written by someone who spoke English. I spent hours at a time going through the directions. Trying to figure it out. That darn machine made me so mad. I wanted to throw the whole thing down stairs so many times. But every night I sat on the floor and before I could blink, it was time for bed. It was almost... soothing in a way. There wasn't any room in my head to think about other things. It took me four months to get it to work. But I did. I figured out how to hook up a VCR and I can tape my shows when I'm not there and I can re-set the time when the power goes out.

The next day I bought a coffee maker you can program at night and when you wake up the coffee is made. I had an answering machine which was fine, but now I have one that is inside the phone, it is so easy to check your messages. I have one remote control for the VCR, the TV and the stereo system. I can work them all.

SIMON: I don't recall Ruth ever telling me that her mother was so technologically inclined.

NAOMI: I'm getting up the nerve to buy a computer with a CD ROM and unlimited internet access. I didn't know exactly what to get Ruth. I wanted to....She doesn't have a TV.

SIMON: It would take her longer than four months to work a VCR.

NAOMI: Ruth and I...we don't....we never..... I do know some things. I know she thinks. She gets trapped by her thoughts. Ben never thought about anything, he was a doer all his life. Ruth and I, we think. There isn't anything wrong with that. Thinking is good. An active mind is what keeps you going. My grandmother lived to a 100 because she played bridge every day. Sometimes, you get trapped. You need a VCR to balance things out.

SIMON: (*pouring another drink*) You know, we never made a toast. We have to toast to something. What shall we drink to?

NAOMI: To Ruth. Where ever she may be.

SIMON: All right.

NAOMI: I'm sure she's fine.

SIMON: To Ruth.

NAOMI: (*raising her glass*) To Ruth.

*The lights go to black. Loud Big Band music starts to play (Pennsylvania 6500) which NAOMI and SIMON call out with the band.*

## SCENE TWO

Late Tuesday Evening

*The lights come up and the ouzo bottle is almost empty - there is enough for both of them to have one more drink. It is now much later in the evening. After midnight. NAOMI and SIMON are dancing big band style. They are happy drunk - not sloppy but very relaxed and not themselves. They laugh and spin pretty much as fast as they can. When the music stops SIMON collapses on to the couch.*

NAOMI: (*clapping her hands*) Encore! Encore!

SIMON: Holy moses.

NAOMI: Isn't it wonderful? *(she starts to dance again by herself and sings the tune)*

SIMON: My feet are smouldering. Do you see any smoke?

NAOMI: *(singing)* Pennsylvania 6-5-0-0-0

SIMON: You're a maniac. Where did you learn those moves?

NAOMI: I'm going to start the music again.

SIMON: No more! I can't do any more.

NAOMI: It's so early.

SIMON: I'm not young and strong like some people.

NAOMI: One more dance.

SIMON: I have to catch my breath.

NAOMI: I'll go easy on you.

SIMON: Thanks ever so.

NAOMI: I think we should never stop dancing. Everybody should dance all the time! The whole world, moving, moving, moving!

SIMON: I can think of one or two things which would be a little arduous done to a samba.

NAOMI: It wouldn't be so hard; you just have to count the beats.

SIMON: Mrs. Boyle. You just made a dirty joke.

NAOMI: I did not.

SIMON: I think you did.

NAOMI: It was not!

SIMON: What would Sarah say?

NAOMI: Simon! I never.....my goodness. Is there any ouzo left?

SIMON: *(holding the ouzo bottle)* Feels like one more drink each. Are you up for it?

NAOMI: If it's only one more.

SIMON: *(pouring)* You are a woman after my own heart.

BOTH: Opa!

NAOMI: I want another dance.

SIMON: You wore me out.

NAOMI: A slow one. Please.

SIMON: If it's only one more. No dipping this time. And you have to let me lead.

*NAOMI puts the music on and they begin to waltz very leisurely. "Moonlight Serenade" would be appropriate. NOTE: If during the scene the music stops they should continue to dance until the stage directions say they stop. After this song plays out they can dance to no music at all.*

NAOMI: I can't believe you know how to waltz. No one knows how to dance properly anymore.

SIMON: I used to go out with a ballroom dancer.

NAOMI: What happened?

SIMON: He wanted me to wear one of those fancy feather dresses and that is where I draw the line. And heels. Don't even speak to me about heels. I don't know how women do it day after day....

NAOMI: Simon...

SIMON: Sorry did I drift off into something a little too discrepant?

NAOMI: Why don't you like girls?

SIMON: I thought I told you no dipping.

NAOMI: I'm sorry. That was very rude, I shouldn't have asked.

SIMON: No, you can ask.

NAOMI: Are you sure?

SIMON: Ask.

NAOMI: Why don't you like girls?

SIMON: I like lots of girls.

NAOMI: No you don't.

SIMON: I do too. I like you. You're a girl. A woman, if I might say so.

NAOMI: That's not what I meant. You don't date girls. You don't love girls.

SIMON: Not true. I have loved girls. I just don't fall in love with girls.

NAOMI: Is there a difference?

SIMON: The width and breath of the grand canyon.

NAOMI: Would it be so bad to fall in love with a girl? Settle down?

SIMON: If I was anymore settle, I'd be underground.

NAOMI: I mean if it was the right girl.

SIMON: How come no one sticks up for the wrong girls. Give the wrong girls a chance that's what I say.

NAOMI: What about Ruth?

SIMON: What about her?

NAOMI: You and Ruth should get married.

SIMON: But is she a right girl or a wrong girl?

NAOMI: Do you love her?

SIMON: Very much.

NAOMI: That's a start.

SIMON: What about Peter the Great?

NAOMI: Who? Oh Peter. He's all right. He calls me Naomi.

SIMON: I look great in white.

NAOMI: I'll wear lavender. When Sarah got married her bridesmaids wore lavender and she said I had to wear a complementing colour but I wasn't allowed to wear lavender.

SIMON: (*singing*) "Here comes the bride....she's glassy eyed!"

NAOMI: There would be lots of flowers. A wedding isn't a wedding without flowers.

SIMON: Ruth loves daisies.

NAOMI: She hated her first wedding, I know she did.

SIMON: I think she'd like to get married outside.

NAOMI: A garden wedding.

SIMON: Those are always so pretty.

NAOMI: A garden wedding. And the ceremony could take place under a trellis.

SIMON: Completely covered in baby's breath.

NAOMI: Oh that's lovely. Would your family come?

SIMON: I'm sure my brothers would love to give me away.

NAOMI: And the twins could be flower girls. And Ruth has a cousin who sings, and I could wear lavender.

SIMON: Of course you could.

NAOMI: You need to do it right away. As soon as she gets back.

SIMON: (*not really listening.*) As soon as she gets back.

NAOMI: Down on one knee, the whole nine yards.

SIMON: Ten yards!

NAOMI: I can't wait to see her face! Can I be there? Oh please let me be there!

SIMON: Who's face?

NAOMI: Ruth's.

SIMON: What am I doing to Ruth's face?

NAOMI: When you propose.

SIMON: Who's proposing to Ruth?

NAOMI: You.

SIMON: (*breaking away*) I thought we were just fooling around.

NAOMI: But you said...

SIMON: Ruth and I can't get married.

NAOMI: Why not?

SIMON: Because we don't want to.

NAOMI: That's not a reason.

SIMON: Ok, I'm not in love with her.

NAOMI: You could be.

SIMON: Mrs. Boyle.

NAOMI: You don't want to give it a chance.

SIMON: That's not it at all.

NAOMI: You're afraid!

SIMON: I'm not afraid of anything.

NAOMI: You don't want to marry her because she's sick! She's damaged goods! If a blind homosexual won't take her because she's got...she's got....

SIMON: Cancer.

NAOMI: You're afraid! You're afraid you'll catch what she's got! You're afraid of her....

SIMON: Cancer.

NAOMI: I know what it is!

SIMON: You can say the word. It can't get you. It's not a bad word.

NAOMI: It's a horrible filthy rotten word! I hate it! I hate it! I....

SIMON: Say cancer!

NAOMI: I won't.

SIMON: Say it!

NAOMI: I will not! I won't! *(She collapses onto the couch and hides her head)*

SIMON: All right. You don't have to.

NAOMI: *(into her hands)* My fault.

SIMON: *(sitting down beside her)* Shhhhh.

NAOMI: All my fault. I used hairspray when I was pregnant. I didn't breast feed her. Everyone bottle fed in my day. That's what was done. I didn't have a choice. Nobody gave one to

me.

SIMON: Don't talk nonsense.

NAOMI: She blames me.

SIMON: She does not.

NAOMI: I wouldn't do it on purpose. I wouldn't. I wouldn't.

SIMON: *(holding her)* Shhhhhhhhh.

NAOMI: I'm so tired.

SIMON: Must be all the dancing.

NAOMI: How do I get through this?

SIMON: You just do.

NAOMI: I don't want to.

SIMON: You'll be fine. You're a strong woman. Ruth always says she's exactly like her dad but I think she gets her strength from you.

NAOMI: No, no, no. We're nothing alike at all.

SIMON: Don't worry I won't tell her. It will be our little secret.

NAOMI: I am so tired.

*She starts to pass out. She brings her feet up on to the couch and uses SIMON as a pillow. She doesn't really hear SIMON'S speech but he must address it to her as if she is listening.*

SIMON: When she first told me, the very first time she told me, she was so nonchalant. Very calm. Matter of fact. We had a party the night before her mastectomy. Everyone wore black arm bands. Someone gave a eulogy. There was a pink cake in the shape of a breast. Right down to the cherry nipple. She was so matter of fact. "Breasts just get in the way. Saggy mounds of flesh. Good riddance and goodbye!"

NAOMI: Bye bye. Bye bye.

SIMON: After the surgery she was....different. Not the Ruth I knew. No sense of humour. Lost. I tried to drag her back but she kept slipping through that damn hole in her chest.

NAOMI: I haven't.....Ben.....all the time.

SIMON: Finally I got mad. " You said yourself you didn't care!" And she sat there took it all, everything I had to say. Then she asked me to sit down on the couch. Without saying a word. She unbuttoned her top. Removed her shirt and placed it on my lap. She unhooked her bra and placed that on my lap. She took my left hand and made me cup her remaining breast. "Hold right there." I've never held a breast before. "Tell me what you feel." she said. There's a real weight and a softness. It's warm underneath, very comforting and the top is cool to the touch. The texture is so soft, even round the nipple. Which began shrinking. They move! And the nipple became hard like a pebble. And you can squeeze a breast too, I don't think I ever realized, I guess when I imagine what a breast might feel like I think of hard plastic. Upright and perky. Something impersonal. More perfect. But the whole thing is kind of like a baggy filled with apple sauce. It was alive. Beautiful. "Now give me your right hand." she said. And she took my right hand and ran my fingers along her mastectomy scar. It was long. And hard. Ragged. It was rough and the skin felt jagged and hurt. It was ugly and empty and I started to cry. "Do you see?" she said "A part of me is missing. I am not complete. Not the same. I will never be the same again." Mrs. Boyle? *(there is no answer, she is asleep)* Naomi? You and Ruth are so....I'm the one with no strength. What will I do if she leaves me? What am I going to do if she leaves?

*The lights fade to black.*

### SCENE THREE

Early Wednesday Morning

*The phone rings 5 times in the darkness. Lights come up very low on the stage. It is now 6 a.m. the next morning. SIMON is sleeping on the couch. When the phone rings, SIMON hears the phone in his dreams but it doesn't wake him up, only disturbs him.*

SIMON: *(stirring in his sleep)* Mr. Blondheim, I can't do that! The phone's ringing. What? It's a cordless. What? You don't play football.

*The phone starts to ring again and doesn't stop. This time SIMON does wake up and he instantly regrets it. He starts to get up too fast and has to pause while his head catches up with the rest of his body.*

SIMON: Oh my God. *(The phone continues to ring. SIMON flops back down on the couch and holds a pillow to his head.)* Give up already. *(The phone continues to ring.)* No one wants to talk to you. Determination will get you thrown out the window. Still you insist? *(He makes his way over to the phone)* All right, all right but I make no guarantees on my manner, my demeanor or my vocabulary. *(He clears his throat and answers the phone)*

Hello? Hello. What do you want? No that's the right number. Ruth isn't here. I don't know where she is at six in the morning. *(double take)* Six o'clock? What the hell are you doing calling people at this hour. I need my beauty sleep. My God. You're just going to have to call back at a later, saner.... Who am I? Who are you? Sarah? Sarah! Honey, I'll give you A for effort, but you have got to work on your timing. Six o'clock..... It's Simon. You're very descriptive in the morning aren't you? Huh? No. Sarah. Sarah. *(He holds the receiver away from him as if it is giving him a headache)* No, she's right here.

*RUTH enters the apartment as quietly as she can. She is wearing the same clothes as when she left. She listens to the phone conversation.*

SIMON: *(speaking slowly and annunciating)* Your mother is here. At Ruth's. Sleeping. I will not. You are more than welcome to come over here and wake her up yourself but I will not be putting my hand in with the lions. There's nothing wrong.

RUTH: *(softly)* Hey there.

SIMON: *(he wheels around at the sound of her voice and slams down the phone)* Aiee!

RUTH: Sorry.

SIMON: Don't do that to a person! Sneak up behind me - I'll have a heart attack.

RUTH: I wasn't sneaking.

SIMON: You just appear out of nowhere and I'm supposed to keep my composure?

RUTH: Who was that?

SIMON: Where?

RUTH: On the phone.

SIMON: Sarah. Sarah! Oh Christ. I hung up on Sarah.

RUTH: That takes some guts.

SIMON: What will she do to me?

*The phone starts to ring again.*

RUTH: Better get that. She's been known to call out the National Guard.

SIMON: *(picks up the phone and talks as fast as he can)* Hi Sarah, everything's fine, nothing's wrong. Gotta go.

*He slams down the phone.*

RUTH: That should cover it.

SIMON: I wanted to get something in before she started yelling.

RUTH: If you get her on a roll, she starts going up and up in pitch. *(Imitating)* I can't believe you're doing this to me!!!"

*The phone starts to ring.*

SIMON: You get it this time. She's like an ice-cream headache.

RUTH: *(Answers the phone)* Hello? Who? Sarah? My sister Sarah? What a pleasant surprise. It's been so long. What's new? No. I just walked in. I guess we're just a couple of early birds this morning eh? Mom's here? *(Looks to SIMON who nods his head. SIMON gestures and RUTH tries to interpret)* That's what I said. Mom is here. She is.....She's drunk? Sleeping. She is sleeping. I don't know why, I just walked in. No. No. Sarah. It's six o'clock. I'm going to hang up now and go to bed.

SIMON: Right between the eyes.

RUTH: No. That was Simon. You know who Simon is. No, what I'm going to do is hang up the phone and then unplug it, so everyone can go back to bed. If you call back no one is going to pick up. There's nothing wrong! She's fine. She's not drinking. She's.... She's.... She's.... *(realizing she is never going to get a word in, RUTH gives a cry and hangs up the phone)* Aiiiiie!!!

SIMON: What is that sound? I can't quite make it out. Oh yes - it's Sarah having kittens.

RUTH: *(acting as she speaks)* The phone is unplugged, which means we'll be getting a visit.

SIMON: Less than an hour.

RUTH: Depends how long she's been up. She won't mail a letter without make-up.

SIMON: This is probably an emergency. Less than an hour.

RUTH: Hour fifteen.

SIMON: Fifty-three minutes exactly. *(extending a hand as in a bet)* Apple Brandy.

RUTH: Cinnamon Schnapps.

SIMON: Actually, I owe you a bottle of Ouzo.

RUTH: You drank a whole bottle by yourself?

SIMON: Not exactly.

RUTH: You got my mother loaded?

SIMON: It's a long story.

RUTH: All right, Ouzo.

*They shake on the bet. A moment passes and the relationship is awkward again.*

SIMON: Listen.....

*Before SIMON can go on RUTH tackles him in a bear hug.*

RUTH: I knew you'd be here. I knew it.

SIMON: Hey there.

RUTH: I'm so sorry.

SIMON: I'm the sorry one. I said some things...

RUTH: Shut up.

SIMON: You know I love you.

RUTH: It's ok. Shut up.

SIMON: You shut up.

RUTH: I missed you.

SIMON: I missed you so much. I can't believe you're here. What happened? One day of wacky tobaccie and you're cured?

RUTH: Sure.

SIMON: A miracle!

RUTH: What's wrong with my apartment? It smells funny.

SIMON: You mean clean.

RUTH: You didn't. The whole apartment?

SIMON: We're going to set up tours. The kitchen is a masterpiece. You're not allowed to live here anymore. You'll just mess it up. So. What happened?

RUTH: We're friends right? No matter what.

SIMON: Oh no.

RUTH: I haven't slept in two days. Things keep racing around in my mind and...I'm not sure how this will come out so bear with me.

SIMON: I am desperately hung-over. If you tell me something frightening right now I'm going to vomit on something that took me forever to clean. Can we pretend everything's all right for a few more minutes longer?

RUTH: Ok.

SIMON: How was the flight? Did you throw peanuts at the suits in first class?

RUTH: Just tell me that we're together in this.

SIMON: Ok.

RUTH: I can do a lot of things you know. I can ask for the bathroom in fifteen different languages. I can write, I'm a damn fine writer... But you have to promise me. We're together, right?

*SIMON reaches out a hand and RUTH grabs it. There is noise outside the front door and NAOMI enters with a bag full of groceries, trying to be very quiet until she sees RUTH and SIMON.*

NAOMI: *(entering)* Hello! Good morning. I've got breakfast! When did you get home?

RUTH: Five minutes ago.

SIMON: You're up? And dressed? And shopping?

NAOMI: That grocery store around the corner is open twenty-four hours.

SIMON: What time did you get up?

NAOMI: My usual time. 5 o'clock.

SIMON: Five a who? In the morning?

NAOMI: Early to bed, early to rise....I always have been. I thought I'd sleep in a little this morning; usually I don't stay up quite so late. But 5 o'clock came and there I was wide-awake. I hope I didn't bother you.

SIMON: And you feel fine? No illnesses? Dry mouth? Headache? Massive stomach convulsions?

NAOMI: No.

RUTH: I hear you like Ouzo.

NAOMI: It's a lovely drink. Licorice!

SIMON: I don't believe it.

NAOMI: Not an early bird?

SIMON: Middle of the afternoon bird.

RUTH: Sarah just called, Mom.

NAOMI: Oh I forgot! She usually calls me in the morning.

SIMON: You get up like this every day?

RUTH: She was looking for you.

NAOMI: She knows I'm an early riser.

SIMON: Early? Why bother going to bed?

NAOMI: I should call her back, she....didn't know I was staying here.

SIMON: I'll say.

RUTH: You don't have to call. She'll be over in about an hour.

SIMON: Fifty three minutes.

NAOMI: Is she bringing the twins?

RUTH: I don't know.

NAOMI: Good thing I bought eggs.

*SIMON groans.*

NAOMI: Simon you like eggs don't you?

SIMON: Usually I do...

NAOMI: Scrambled all around. *(she starts to exit into the kitchen, turns around and comes back to RUTH)* How's your cancer?

RUTH: My what?

NAOMI: How is your cancer?

RUTH: It's fine. Thanks for asking.

NAOMI: Do you want coffee before eggs?

RUTH: Yes please.

SIMON: And a vacuum for my tongue.

NAOMI: You shouldn't be drinking coffee. I read that caffeine isn't good for you.

RUTH: But I'd like one.

NAOMI: All right dear.

*NAOMI exits. There is a moment's pause.*

RUTH: What the hell have you two been doing?

SIMON: Must be the cleaning fluids.

RUTH: I got to get me some.

*They laugh a little hysterically. RUTH is overcome by her tiredness.*

RUTH: Is your stomach under control?

SIMON: No.

RUTH: Do you want to sit down?

SIMON: You're not going to tell me about a divorce are you?

RUTH: I never left the airport. I've been there all the time.

SIMON: For two days?

RUTH: Uh huh.

SIMON: I have been so....you never left the city?

RUTH: Nope.

SIMON: That must have been quite traumatic. Being in the airport with all the phones cutting out at the same time so you couldn't call your loved ones to let them know how you were, let alone that you were in the same city.

RUTH: I couldn't go.

SIMON: Why not?

RUTH: I had my ticket. *(she laughs)* It's the stupidest thing. I had my ticket. I went through security. I waited for my flight and I couldn't go. They called my name three times....and I couldn't do it. And as I sat there, it was as if the fog lifted in my head. My path is clear. I have to come home, I'm an idiot, I have to come back, go through the treatment and do whatever the doctors want. *(she laughs)* Ok....Ok. But I couldn't make my legs move. I couldn't lift my head; I couldn't wipe the snot from my nose... I wanted to go to the bathroom to cry but I couldn't. *(she laughs)* It's the stupidest thing. I can't go anywhere. What the hell does that mean? What is that supposed to mean?

SIMON: It's ok. You're safe now.

RUTH: No, no, no, no. It's not ok. *(she completely begins to crumble)* I can't think. I can't I... I'm in big trouble here.

*NAOMI has entered the space during the previous.*

NAOMI: Simon can you make eggs? *(There is no reaction from SIMON)* Can you make eggs?

SIMON: I'm not hungry Mrs. Boyle.

NAOMI: I didn't ask if you were hungry. Can you make eggs?

SIMON: I don't think we want any.

NAOMI: Simon, go in the kitchen and bang some pots together.

SIMON: Oh! I...I make very good eggs.

NAOMI: Good. Perhaps you could go.

SIMON: Yes ma'am.

*SIMON exits to the kitchen. There is a pause as NAOMI flits nervously, looking at RUTH curled up on the couch. She goes to touch RUTH'S hair and suddenly turns to call out to SIMON.*

NAOMI: Can you bring out the new toaster dear? It should be on the counter beside the fridge. Don't forget the remote.

SIMON: *(entering with the toaster)* Why are you making toast out here?

NAOMI: I'm not. Don't forget to put a little salt and pepper in with the eggs.

*SIMON exits.*

NAOMI: He is a very nice man. All these years, we have hardly said more than pleasantries but last night we had such a lovely time..... I think. Do you remember the first time that he came to the house? You called all excited, telling us about the friend you had met in Greece. Simon showed up with skin-tight leather pants, a tiny tanktop and he never took his sunglasses off inside the house. Your father cornered me in the kitchen and said: "If that's the way they dress in Europe you'll never catch me there!" *(there is no reaction from RUTH)* You never called John. He called four times yesterday.

RUTH: I forgot.

NAOMI: I talked to him. It's fine. I just wanted to remind you that he called. We had a lovely conversation. I told him you'd be at the meeting Wednesday.

RUTH: Today.

NAOMI: Today is Wednesday? *(RUTH starts to laugh)* What?

RUTH: Was John actually pleasant to you?

NAOMI: His little girl plays the piano.

RUTH: Amazing.

NAOMI: It's a good thing you came back. I don't know what I would have told him.

RUTH: Good thing. You asked me about my...

NAOMI: *(interrupting)* I found the garlic grinder I gave you last year.

RUTH: It broke. I don't get along with machines too well.

NAOMI: They take time getting used to. Did you look at the toaster?

RUTH: I'm not much of a toast eater.

NAOMI: Why don't we have a look, together?

RUTH: Now?

NAOMI: Now. Two minutes and you'll be a master.

RUTH: I don't want to.

SIMON: *(offstage)* Look at the toaster!!

NAOMI: I thought you were making eggs!

*SIMON bangs together a couple of pots.*

NAOMI: Everything is done with the remote. You can program the days of the week, how dark, how light. *(She sees RUTH staring at her as she pushes buttons)* What?

RUTH: You know how to work this.

NAOMI: I have one myself. Take the remote.

RUTH: There's too many buttons on this.

NAOMI: It just looks intimidating. Did you know that this table is just like Gran's?

RUTH: That's why I bought it.

NAOMI: It's so smooth. Lovely. No matter how I tried I could never get my table tops as smooth as hers.

RUTH: Where do I start?

NAOMI: Why don't we make it French bread, dark, every Tuesday. Do you remember sitting under Gran's table when you were little?

RUTH: Smoking pretzel sticks.

NAOMI: There's nothing like a pretzel cigarette. Let's start with the bread. 1 for thin, 2 for medium and 3 for thick.

RUTH: Where's 3 for thick?

NAOMI: Left hand side near the top. You're going to have to make a decision you know.

RUTH: I know. Is it 3 for dark?

NAOMI: It's 7 for dark. Don't think too hard. That's when you get into trouble. Your father never thought a day in his life and he did all right. Now, enter the day, the month and the year.

RUTH: How did he do that? I can't get through anything without thinking. I used to be... now what?

NAOMI: Enter the time. When do you usually eat breakfast?

RUTH: I don't.

NAOMI: Let's say eight o'clock. There's no shame in admitting something is hard. Don't forget the AM button.

RUTH: I know, I know. There's a green light. What does that mean?

NAOMI: You're finished.

RUTH: That's it?

NAOMI: It wasn't so bad was it? All you have to do is remember the bread. What do you want to do?

RUTH: I should....

NAOMI: No! Not should. Not should.

RUTH: I...want to be well?

NAOMI: Will this, this clinic make you well?

RUTH: I don't know. But I still want to go.

NAOMI: Then why didn't you? What's holding you back?

RUTH: Everything.

NAOMI: Maybe you need someone to go with you. I've never been out West. What is the weather like out there? I hear it's very dry.

RUTH: It can be.

NAOMI: It's so humid here. My hands swell up so much. Your father never liked to travel. He was born here, he died here and it was good enough for him. I always thought about you on your travels. I...I have always thought about you.

RUTH: Mom....

NAOMI: I have the luggage. It all matches too. I love the look of matching luggage. But not many girls want their mothers along for the ride I know.

RUTH: Thank you.

NAOMI: It's something to consider. Oh Ruth! This works out perfectly I...I almost forgot!

RUTH: What?

NAOMI: I hope you don't mind but Peter might be dropping by today.

*SIMON bursts into the room with coffee on a tray.*

SIMON: Coffee! Coffee! Who wants coffee? Ruth?

RUTH: What did you say?

NAOMI: I was checking my messages at the supermarket and there was one from Peter.

SIMON: Mrs. Boyle do you take cream and sugar?

RUTH: You got to be kidding me.

SIMON: I'll just dump some in, you can always take another cup.

NAOMI: Peter got my note. The mail service these days is remarkable! He was very anxious to hear about your condition.

SIMON: Ruth? No maybe a hot cup of liquid isn't something you should be handling right now.

NAOMI: He's on a layover for business, and this is his only day in town. I told him you might not be here, but he was going to stop by anyway. I hope you don't mind.

RUTH: I...I like....I would like....

NAOMI: Then it's settled. Do you mind if I pop into the shower? I want to clean up a bit before everyone arrives. This is going to be a lovely morning. A family breakfast; I'm not sure when the last time was we had one of those.

*NAOMI exits.*

RUTH: What am I going to say to him?*(she gives a burst of laughter)* What will I say?

SIMON: What you need is a good eight hours of sleep and some breakfast and a shower. *(he leans in)* Most definitely a shower. You're next after Mama. Everything will seem better after you're cleaned up. How about that coffee? *(RUTH doesn't answer)* What? Ruth?

RUTH: You think you've won, don't you. Ruth is back. Life is wonderful. Get some sleep, have a shower, make an appointment with the doctor.

SIMON: I didn't say that.

RUTH: You don't have to. It's all over your face. Make an appointment with the doctor. Go back to chemo. Don't you see that puts me right back where I started?

SIMON: No I don't.

RUTH: Simon, I can't do it, don't you see, I just can't...

SIMON: What I see is someone with options. Someone with choices that my mother...

RUTH: Don't you dare bring her into this.

SIMON: .. that my mother couldn't even dream up and you're throwing them back in her face. You're giving up.

RUTH: I AM NOT GIVING UP!

SIMON: What about the Moonlight Sonata?

RUTH: What about it.

SIMON: *(quoting)* "Before I die...

RUTH: Don't.

SIMON: "Before I die I want to learn...."

RUTH: I haven't forgotten.

SIMON: I sat on your bed and I held your hand and you said to me...

RUTH: There are pianos out west.

SIMON: What?

RUTH: My mother is right. I need someone to go with me.

SIMON: And she has volunteered.

RUTH: And we both know how it would turn out.

SIMON: No we don't. It was a beautiful gesture and I think you don't give her half the credit she deserves.

RUTH: Oh really.

SIMON: So there you are.

RUTH: Not there you are! I need you Simon. I need you.

SIMON: That is a rotten thing to say.

RUTH: Why?

SIMON: You keep talking about sides and about being alone and have you ever thought once about what it's going to be like for me? Who's going to be alone when this is over? Me! No matter where I go, I'm going to end up alone. I can watch you die close up or I can stay here and have you die at a distance. And I will be desperately alone.

RUTH: You can't turn against me here Simon, you can't do it, I can't, I can't... I know something has to be done. But I have to do it on my terms. Not your, not your mothers, not my mothers, not my doctors....I'm sorry it turned out this way. I made a blood bath I know. McRae? (*SIMON does not respond*) I'm going to go call the clinic. I'll be in the bedroom if you need me.

*RUTH exits. There is silence for a minute. SIMON stands and paces for a minute trying to find a way to vent his feelings. He walks by the coffee table and bangs his knee on it. He bangs his hand on the table and freezes there for a moment. Then he frantically starts to try and lift the table. He manages to move it a little, making a lot of noise in the process. RUTH comes out of the bedroom and watches him for a moment before speaking.*

RUTH: Simon...

SIMON: Don't talk to me.

RUTH: What are you doing?

SIMON: Don't talk to me.

RUTH: What are you doing?

SIMON: What does it look like I'm doing?

RUTH: Like you're trying to throw your back out.

SIMON: I am moving this table.

RUTH: Why?

SIMON: Because.

RUTH: Because why?

SIMON: Don't talk to me.

RUTH: Where the hell are you moving my table?

SIMON: I am moving it in front of the door.

RUTH: Why?

SIMON: So no one can go in or out.

RUTH: I see.

SIMON: Nobody is going anywhere. We'll all three of us die here together.

RUTH: That's a pleasant thought. *(she sits on the coffee table)*

SIMON: And then Sarah and Peter will come and we'll solve this coffee table question once and for all!

*SIMON struggles for a few seconds while RUTH watches. Finally SIMON has used up all of his strength and collapses onto the table.*

SIMON: Are you just going to sit there?

RUTH: You want me to help?

SIMON: I can't carry this thing all by myself.

RUTH: You are such a weakling.

SIMON: Shut up and give me a hand.

RUTH: *(helping to lift)* One, two, three, lift.

SIMON: Right in front of the door.

RUTH: Forward, forward, forward.

SIMON: Tell me you're staying.

RUTH: No.

SIMON: Tell me it's just a phase that everything will go back to normal tomorrow.

RUTH: Almost there....

SIMON: Tell me. I need to hear.

RUTH: Ok you can drop it.

*They drop the table and sit on it.*

SIMON: I won't let you go. You can't leave me.

RUTH: Shhh it's ok.

SIMON: It's not ok. Nothing is ok. Doesn't twenty years count for anything?

RUTH: Shhhhhh.

SIMON: I'm too old to start again. You're not supposed to get sick. What the hell did you have to do that for?

RUTH: Just like my mom said. Not enough broccoli and not enough cross over support.

SIMON: I am so mad at you.

RUTH: I know.

SIMON: I'll never forgive you.

RUTH: Shhhhh.

SIMON: Please don't go.

RUTH: It's going to be ok. All of my relatives live forever. My Aunt Ester smoked a pack a day from birth to death. I've got a good shot: completely healthy in the physical department.

SIMON: Healthy as horses.

RUTH: Now the mental department is another story.

SIMON: Could have fooled me.

RUTH: Come with me.

SIMON: I hate the West Coast.

RUTH: Oh Simon.

SIMON: What if you don't come back?

RUTH: Would I do that to you?

SIMON: I don't know. I don't know what to do.

RUTH: For a man who jumps off bridges with an elastic band round his ankles, you're being a little paranoid about the unknown.

SIMON: Where's your elastic band?

RUTH: Isn't that supposed to be the fun part? No band. No life jacket. No net.

SIMON: Now you tell me. This is supposed to be fun! All this time I was hung up on the life and death of it all.

*There is a knock at the door.*

RUTH: Sarah.

SIMON: Or Peter.

RUTH: Do you remember when you first met Peter? I think you fainted.

SIMON: It was the rugged, raw, mountain man sexuality of the moment.

RUTH: Good looks aren't everything.

SIMON: Maybe he's bald.

RUTH: That would help.

*The knock comes again, more persistent. A female voice gives a muffled "Ruth" through the door. NOTE: this can be done by NAOMI*

SIMON: Maybe his voice changed. Maybe he's Polly now. Wouldn't that be something?

RUTH: It's probably Sarah. I think you won the bet.

SIMON: Now I'm safe. You'll never be able to leave if she's here.

RUTH: Do you think she'll climb the coffee table?

*The knocking continues. RUTH and SIMON ignore it. They hold each other tight.*

*The lights fade.*

THE END