

Remodeling Plans

a domestic comedy built around significant changes

by Jennie Webb

Jennie Webb
1977 Escarpa Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90041
323.255.5520
jenniewebb@earthlink.net

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CHARACTERS, all of whom are into their 30s/40s if not beyond:

THE HOMEOWNER, first heard as WOMAN'S VOICE, lives life very carefully, at her own pace and by the rules. Mostly someone else's. She's very good at making do, waiting for just the right thing. And until she gets it—and in case she never does—she's used to saying everything's fine and convincing herself that it is. She also has a hard time opening up, keeping up, or making a move when it comes to people, places, or things. So a lot passes her by.

THE FIRST FRIEND, first heard as ANOTHER WOMAN'S VOICE, is definitely the kind of woman you'd want at a party, unless it's a Church function. Or if there are going to be kids there. Or if you want anyone else at the party to get any attention.

THE CONTRACTOR, first heard as MAN'S VOICE, is a surprisingly stylish man who has over-sized ideas.

THE FRIEND WHO KNOWS prides herself on being able to put ideas into action. Her own ideas, especially. And if they're not hers, there's always room for improvement so she appropriates them, along with the people who had them.

THE WIDE-EYED WOMAN is pretty much constantly amazed. At the beauty, excitement, wonder, and injustice of it all. It inspires her, reminds her of her place in life, and sometimes even pisses her off. Although she'd never admit it.

THE HUSBAND, first heard as DEEP MALE VOICE, is quite literally all man, and because he takes up so much space he ultimately loses himself in the role.

THE MOTHER is really very entertaining, unless she happens to be your mother.

THE HUSBAND, TOO, played by the same actor who plays the contractor, seems like he is large enough to reasonably communicate and function in reality.

THE GUY, played by the same actor who plays the husband, is maybe just a guy, maybe more.

and **THE CHILD'S VOICE**, heard on the answering machine.

SETTING:

A kitchen in flux.

—structured in 9 scenes, the full-length play takes place in the present day over the course of one calendar year; an intermission is suggested after scene 7—

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Scene 1—early August

The stage is dark. However, there is definitely a sense that we're about to enter a place of untapped domestic energy: the heart of the home. Perhaps we even hear it beating, or in this case struggling to stay alive. Offstage, there is women's laughter and overlapping conversation—the normalcy belies the almost otherworldly vibe onstage.

WOMAN'S VOICE:

(offstage) And I wasn't really sure about the living room at first...

ANOTHER WOMAN'S VOICE:

(offstage) No?

WOMAN'S VOICE:

(offstage) I mean, living rooms have always intimidated me...

ANOTHER WOMAN'S VOICE:

(offstage) Yeah?

WOMAN'S VOICE:

(offstage) But I'm getting used to this one.

ANOTHER WOMAN'S VOICE:

(offstage) Okay.

WOMAN'S VOICE:

(offstage) And you know—I sometimes even find myself living in here!

ANOTHER WOMAN'S VOICE:

(offstage) Well, then! This the kitchen? I'm getting a bottle of wine. You got a bottle of wine?

A door swings open and we see a woman silhouetted, then reaching next to the door.

WOMAN'S VOICE:

(offstage) Definitely!

ANOTHER WOMAN'S VOICE:

Where's the switch?

WOMAN'S VOICE:

(offstage) What?

ANOTHER WOMAN'S VOICE:

The— Never mind. If there's wine, I'll find it.

WOMAN'S VOICE:

(offstage) In the fridge!

The door swings shut as the woman moves through the darkness.

ANOTHER WOMAN'S VOICE:

Okaaaaaay...

We hear a sound: a refrigerator opening.

There's no light!

The door swings open again as the first woman moves into the room.

WOMAN'S VOICE:

Let me—

ANOTHER WOMAN'S VOICE:

(interrupting) I mean in your fridge. And there's no cold. Geeeee! It's like it's alive! A dark, warm refrigerator full of—

The light to the room is switched on. We see two women, both dressed in upscale summer attire, in a skeletal kitchen-esque room—it's covered with trash, and littered with construction materials. The first woman, the homeowner, is by the door. The other woman, the first of her friends, is looking into an empty, broken refrigerator which has seen more than a few leftovers.

FIRST FRIEND:

Ughhhhhh!

The first friend slams the refrigerator shut with a loud bang, and immediately sets into motion a domino effect of destruction which systematically spreads throughout the kitchen—lumber crashing, fixtures toppling, refuse flipping, etc.

As the dust settles, the homeowner produces a bottle of wine from a mini-fridge.

HOMEOWNER:

Low-rent Chardonnay?

FIRST FRIEND:

(starting to move away from the refrigerator) Suuuuuuure.

HOMEOWNER:

Should have told you not that fridge. Watch out for the floor.

The first friend catches herself before she steps into a significant hole.

FIRST FRIEND:

My god! There's a hole in your floor!

HOMEOWNER:

Right, I said: watch out for the—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) Hole! It's not the floor, it's the *hole* to watch out for...

HOMEOWNER:

Do you see the corkscrew? I just put it down...

FIRST FRIEND:

Sweetie, when did this happen?

HOMEOWNER:

(searching for the corkscrew) I actually had it yesterday.

FIRST FRIEND:

No, I'm— Honey. This didn't just— We've been traipsing around your shiny new digs for like an hour now and you forget to mention you've got a... abandoned dope den for a kitchen?

HOMEOWNER:

Oh, please. You wanna see the dining room?

FIRST FRIEND:

I don't fucking care about the dining room. What is going on in *here*?

HOMEOWNER:

In here?

FIRST FRIEND:

Yeah, in here! Do not tell me it was like this when you moved in.

HOMEOWNER:

When I—? Oh, no! When I moved in... Well... There wasn't really a kitchen here when I moved in.

FIRST FRIEND:

There wasn't?

HOMEOWNER:

No. I mean the room was here, but it wasn't really a kitchen.

FIRST FRIEND:

It wasn't.

HOMEOWNER:

Not really. Which is sort of why I bought the house.

FIRST FRIEND:

It was?

HOMEOWNER:

I didn't tell you that? It gave me great leverage. I practically stole the house, so it didn't really bother me. The kitchen thing.

FIRST FRIEND:

The lack of kitchen thing.

HOMEOWNER:

Right. I was pretty much fine with it.

FIRST FRIEND:

Having no kitchen.

HOMEOWNER:

I mean, I don't really cook...

FIRST FRIEND:

Uh huh.

HOMEOWNER:

So I guess I don't think about it!

FIRST FRIEND:

No.

HOMEOWNER:

No.

FIRST FRIEND:

No. I mean, no. This is not something you don't think about. Or forget to mention. This is something you're intentionally blocking, repressing.

HOMEOWNER:

What?

FIRST FRIEND:

Although it now all makes perfect sense. Why after living here for the past—over a year?—you're still walking around with your new-homeowner-queen-of-all-she-surveys: "No, I can't go out for drinks; weekend's shot; I'll be at Home Depot..."

HOMEOWNER:

Wait...

FIRST FRIEND:

Not that any of us have been invited over...

HOMEOWNER:

It's just that I haven't—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) So we're all figuring you must have some, I don't know, *man*, or at very least the pool boy, hidden away here. Only now I discover your deep, dark secret: you've placed yourself in solitary construction confinement because your home's a public safety hazard!

HOMEOWNER:

No!

FIRST FRIEND:

Yes! You should have reached out to someone, is what I'm saying! This is so obviously a desperate cry for help and thank god I finally wormed my way in!

HOMEOWNER:

But I'm getting help! I've gotten help!

FIRST FRIEND:

In here?! This *room*? And I use the term loosely...

HOMEOWNER:

It's not bad!

FIRST FRIEND:

It is that bad! It's unbelievably bad! I've never seen anything this bad and you can consider this an intervention!

HOMEOWNER:

I—! *(looking around the room, maybe with new eyes)* Well...

FIRST FRIEND:

Let it all out. Go ahead. Start from the beginning.

HOMEOWNER:

Oh... Kay. So—all right—the... I think what it was is that at some point someone was going to re-do it but it never got re-done, so when I moved in it had been stripped of stoves and sinks and everything that made it a— Anyway. The kitchen... the non-kitchen... the non-operating kitchen... wasn't a real priority for me at first because you know I don't like to be rushed into things and buying the house itself was a big deal for me and it all can get very...*difficult*, especially when there's so much involved and then you start pricing everything and... Like I told you, I don't cook! But, anyway, one morning I knew it was time to take the next step—the kitchen step—when I walked in here and noticed my fridge... *(indicating the old refrigerator)* kind of... smoking... because I guess there was this water leak and... I really loved that fridge...

FIRST FRIEND:

It's gone, baby. Move on.

HOMEOWNER:

Right. And right after that I found these guys who were trying to start their own handyman business, so I talked to them and there were a lot of decisions to make but eventually I figured out exactly what I wanted and it turns out I'll be saving a ton of money, especially because the countertops are still in excellent condition!

Pause.

FIRST FRIEND:

I am so going to need a drink for this.

She takes a corkscrew out of her purse and opens the bottle.

So when did your guys start working their kitchen magic?

HOMEOWNER:

It takes time.

FIRST FRIEND:

How much time?

HOMEOWNER:

We actually started in June.

FIRST FRIEND:

June! Jesus! That's two months ago!

HOMEOWNER:

But it didn't get bad all at once.

FIRST FRIEND:

This is like a fucking abusive relationship.

HOMEOWNER:

It's only been the last couple of weeks. A month. Less than.

FIRST FRIEND:

Did you sign a contract or something?

HOMEOWNER:

It gets worse before it gets better. Everyone knows that.

FIRST FRIEND:

Everyone who, what, hires guys to demolish their homes?

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HOMEOWNER:
Is that cup clean?

She points to a dixie cup on the floor.

Pause.

FIRST FRIEND:
Nice stemware.

HOMEOWNER:
Thanks. I think I have a pair.

The first friend pours into two cups.

FIRST FRIEND:
Listen. I barged in on you tonight...

HOMEOWNER:
I'm glad you did!

FIRST FRIEND:
So let me take you out for dinner.

HOMEOWNER:
Or we can order in.

FIRST FRIEND:
Why don't we just go out.

HOMEOWNER:
You want to go out?

FIRST FRIEND:
Yeah! Let's go out.

HOMEOWNER:
How about Chinese. We can get it delivered.

FIRST FRIEND:
You don't want to go out. How much wine do you have?

HOMEOWNER:
No. We can go out.

FIRST FRIEND:
I can tell you don't want to go out. We don't have to go out. I just... I'm sorry, if I were you and if this were my war-zone of an un-kitchen I would want to go out.

HOMEOWNER:

I kind of... don't... want to leave it.

FIRST FRIEND:

Huh?

HOMEOWNER:

It's like it's... been violated. It's dismembered and naked, and I don't want to leave it.

FIRST FRIEND:

You're having kitchen abandonment issues?

HOMEOWNER:

Did I show you the plans?

FIRST FRIEND:

This took plans? Not just a sledge hammer?

HOMEOWNER:

And you wonder why I don't have people over.

She moves to the door with the wine bottle.

FIRST FRIEND:

No. I'm sorry. I can definitely see something happening, I really can!

HOMEOWNER:

(on her way out) I've got menus out here. Will you grab another bottle?

FIRST FRIEND:

Ohhhhh, yeah.

She moves to the mini-fridge.

(shouting offstage) Hey. Why do you still have that old fridge? Isn't it illegal? Can't children get caught in there and suffocate?

HOMEOWNER:

(offstage) Do you see any children around?

FIRST FRIEND:

I didn't check the freezer.

She moves toward it.

HOMEOWNER

(offstage) Watch out for the—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) Got it!

Indeed, the first friend has again caught herself before she missteps. She gives the room one last, significant look, which might be interpreted as a challenge.

Huuuuuhhhh...

Bottle in hand, the first friend leaves and switches off the light, the door swinging closed behind her.

In the darkness, we hear larger-than-life sounds of movement onstage, as if the kitchen has been resuscitated, or resurrected. Then the setting settles into silence.

Scene 2—late September

The door swings open and the light is immediately switched on, revealing the homeowner dressed professionally, in heavier clothing.

The remodeling has not progressed; if possible, the kitchen looks worse than it did. The old refrigerator is still there, and a microwave now sits atop the mini-fridge. The homeowner carries two cups of take-away coffee. She moves toward the microwave.

HOMEOWNER:

(shouting offstage) I don't have any cream or anything. Is that okay?

MAN'S VOICE:

(offstage) I've cream in mine already. Thanks.

HOMEOWNER:

Right. *(putting the cups in the microwave)* Is it cool to re-heat coffee with cream in it?

MAN'S VOICE:

(offstage) I'm sure it is, but you really needn't bother.

HOMEOWNER:

Right.

She turns on the microwave. A stylish man comes through the door.

CONTRACTOR:

So. *(apprizing the room)* Let me guess what's going on here... started out as something you thought you could handle yourself?

HOMEOWNER:

No. Well. What happened was that I had a friend—

The first friend comes in with her own coffee.

FIRST FRIEND:

Not me. A different friend. Although I'm a friend. Her single, non-homeowner friend. I mean, she's single, but—

HOMEOWNER:

(interrupting) —who recommended these guys—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) Who terrorized her and her home for— for months, really, right? They said all the right things but didn't know what in the hell they were doing, and by the time we figured out what was going on, it was too late! *(short pause)* She didn't have a contract.

CONTRACTOR:

You didn't have a contract?

HOMEOWNER:

I didn't have a contract.

CONTRACTOR:

No contract. Who were these guys?

HOMEOWNER:

Friends—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) They weren't friends.

HOMEOWNER:

Well, friends of a friend—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) Remind me which friend...?

HOMEOWNER:

Diane? From the other office?

FIRST FRIEND:

Who is now our ex-friend.

HOMEOWNER:

It wasn't her fault.

FIRST FRIEND:

I don't do anything without a contract.

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CONTRACTOR:

No...

FIRST FRIEND:

I mean, nothing.

The contractor moves toward the old refrigerator.

HOMEOWNER:

Watch out for the floor.

CONTRACTOR:

My god!

He just avoids stepping through it.

FIRST FRIEND:

There's a hole.

HOMEOWNER:

(handing the contractor coffee) They were musicians.

CONTRACTOR:

Musicians?

HOMEOWNER:

The guys. They were musicians.

CONTRACTOR:

Musicians.

FIRST FRIEND:

So. Can you do anything with this?

HOMEOWNER:

(to her first friend) Can I heat up your coffee?

FIRST FRIEND:

I like it this way. *(to the contractor)* Give me your coat.

CONTRACTOR:

No, I... *(looking around the kitchen, to the homeowner)* I'm sorry, but it's difficult for me to tell what, exactly, you're trying to do.

FIRST FRIEND:

She has plans. *(to the homeowner)* Show him the plans.

HOMEOWNER:
I do have plans.

CONTRACTOR:
These “guys” drew up plans?

FIRST FRIEND:
Oh god. They were musician plans?

HOMEOWNER:
No. They were my plans.

CONTRACTOR:
Of course they were.

HOMEOWNER:
I mean I did them.

CONTRACTOR:
You drew them?

HOMEOWNER:
It's not like I *drew* them. I just used graph paper and... (*short pause*) The guys at the hardware store helped me.

Pause.

FIRST FRIEND:
(*to the contractor*) Give me that coffee. Do you want some wine? I want some wine. (*to the homeowner, moving to the mini-fridge*) Do you have any wine?

HOMEOWNER:
There should be some... (*to the contractor*) I didn't think it was that big of a deal!

CONTRACTOR:
Obviously. What you people never seem to understand is that there's a *reason* to hire a professional... (*looking around*) in *situations* like this.

HOMEOWNER:
What sort of *situation*—?

FIRST FRIEND:
(*interrupting, offering the contractor a scavenged cup of wine*) Be careful with the crystal.

CONTRACTOR:

No. Thanks. *(to the homeowner)* I tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to put together a little something for you. Sketch some things out, run a range of ideas by you—

HOMEOWNER:

(interrupting) I think I pretty much know what I need—

CONTRACTOR:

(interrupting) Take it from me, there are a myriad of options—

HOMEOWNER:

(interrupting) And what I can afford—

CONTRACTOR:

(interrupting) You say that now, but when you get a taste of what's out there, the whole picture will change! I've seen this a thousand times.

FIRST FRIEND:

How incredibly exciting this is!

HOMEOWNER:

I feel like we haven't even discussed—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) You don't need to discuss! Wait until you see the myriad, the range!

The contractor heads toward the door.

CONTRACTOR:

(to the homeowner) I'll shoot something to you next week. Your system all right with large graphics files?

FIRST FRIEND:

Better send it to me. She's kind of a dinosaur when it comes to these things.

CONTRACTOR:

(to the homeowner) Thanks again for the coffee. It really wasn't necessary.

HOMEOWNER:

No.

FIRST FRIEND:

(following the contractor out) Sure I can't entice you to stay for a glass o'?

CONTRACTOR:

(offstage) Positive. Until next week then.

FIRST FRIEND:

(offstage) I can't wait! Let me show you to the—

CONTRACTOR:

(interrupting, offstage) Not necessary! Talk soon.

FIRST FRIEND:

(offstage) Or sooner!

We hear the sound of a door slamming. The homeowner starts drinking. The first friend comes back in.

Well! That changes the shape of things around here, doesn't it! Isn't he brilliant?!

HOMEOWNER:

Right.

Black out.

Again, the extended sounds of shifting, breathing, and life, building in intensity and capped by a sudden violent sound or motion.

Scene 3—early October

The lights are suddenly up full, revealing the homeowner with a new woman, both in business attire and stocking feet.

The kitchen is now at its sparest, stripped of everything except for the old refrigerator, the mini-fridge, the microwave, and now a blender. The two women are drinking out of styrofoam cups. The scene has an after-work "happy hour" feel to it.

HOMEOWNER:

I feel terrible saying this, but it was like she was... Oh, my god, I don't know, because we've worked together forever and I love her and everything...

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

You don't love her.

HOMEOWNER:

I do love her!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

You don't love her. You like her, because she's charming and smart and funny, but her entire being is dedicated to no one but herself and there's no way she can include you in her life unless you exist only in her reflection so there's no possible way you love her.

Pause.

HOMEOWNER:

I'm fond of her?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Of course you're fond of her. Everyone is fond of her. Until she screws them over.

HOMEOWNER:

Can I have another margarita?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(pouring) It's the Cointreau that makes the difference. Triple Sec is for amateurs.

She looks at some over-sized papers.

Okay. Let's see what this asshole has dreamed up.

HOMEOWNER:

"Dreamed" being the operative word.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Is this supposed to be your house? Your kitchen?

HOMEOWNER:

Yeah. Well.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

This is absurd.

HOMEOWNER:

I thought it was rather "dramatic."

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

And where did you— I mean, where did *she* find this guy?

HOMEOWNER:

I've got no idea. But she flipped over him, and they've been an item for almost a month now.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

She's going out with this guy? The guy who drew these?

HOMEOWNER:

I think it was my kitchen that seduced him, as silly as that sounds...

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:
She seduced this guy?

HOMEOWNER:
Well, I don't know if "seduced" ...

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:
Because he's obviously gay.

HOMEOWNER:
He's— What?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:
He's gay! The guy who drew these... the guy who walked into this kitchen and from this *(gesturing around her)* drew these, is obviously gay.

HOMEOWNER:
How can you say that?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:
Believe me. I can say that. *(taking in the surroundings)* He did you a favor though. He's the one who had you gut the place?

HOMEOWNER:
Well, it wasn't like I had a choice—

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:
(interrupting) I never, I repeat, *never*, want to hear you say that!

HOMEOWNER:
Say what?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:
"I didn't have a choice." We always have a choice. We sometimes just don't allow ourselves to choose.

HOMEOWNER:
Right. But she just showed up one day— *(pointing to the papers)* right after I'd gotten these—with a crew—

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:
(interrupting) Men with power tools—you just have to move past them. But it's all for the best. Gives you a clean slate, a fresh start.

She moves toward the old refrigerator.

So is there a water connection here, or do you not need an ice mak—?

HOMEOWNER:

(interrupting) Watch out for—

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(interrupting) I know, the floor. **My God!**

Neatly sidestepping the hole, she has momentarily opened the refrigerator door.

HOMEOWNER:

It's going.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Heavens! What is it doing here if you aren't using it? They have people that can take away those things!

HOMEOWNER:

I know, I just haven't—

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(interrupting) So all new appliances. Good. I saw that *(pointing to the old refrigerator)* and wasn't going to say anything because I thought maybe it was a... I don't know, family heirloom or something—people do have odd relationships to large metal housings. So here's what you're looking at in a lay-out, appliance-wise:

She produces a measuring tape.

No matter what capacity, your refrigerator is going to be more than 24 inches deep, unless you get a Sub-Zero or top-end cabinet-depth, which are nice but pricey, pricey, pricey and now lots of other manufacturers are doing brushed stainless so you can do the aesthetics at half of the cost. You'll have to allow for the very, very minimum of 28 inches wide; if you want a side-by-side it's 33 or 36. But the depth is what you have to keep in mind when you're talking cabinets, which are—here's some irony for you—pretty much all standard at 24 inches. Deep. 36 inches high. Standard. Stoves are 30 inches wide; you *can* do a pro-series up to 60. But we all know you're not Martha... You have gas, yes? Dishwashers are generally 24 inches. Although they come as narrow as 18, but you don't need to worry about that unless you do some very strange things and are needing to squeeze one in. Sinks. You want a double sink? You want a double sink. No matter what it's made of, I'd give myself at *least* 36 inches for a sink. *(short pause)* Do you have graph paper?

HOMEOWNER:

Yes! I have graph paper!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Great. Grab it.

HOMEOWNER:

I have plans, too. I mean, my plans. That I did. On graph paper.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Oh, don't worry about those.

She crumples the papers in front of her.

And put these in the goddamn fireplace. We'll get you set up here. I've got numbers for you, too. The company who did my kitchen is great. You tell them what you want, and they tell you how they can do it and make it work. None of that, "You can't..." or "It won't..." They're great. You'll truly explore all of your options.

HOMEOWNER:

Sometimes I'm not sure that's a good thing.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Have another maggie. This is going to be remarkable. I can hardly wait to get started. Get me the graph paper.

HOMEOWNER:

Right!

She leaves.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(shouting offstage) And a pencil. No pens. Remember. Options.

HOMEOWNER:

(offstage) And I'll show you the ones I did!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

The what?

HOMEOWNER:

(offstage) I mean, I didn't know what I was doing, but I kind of liked them! I'll show you the—

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(interrupting) What are you talking about?

HOMEOWNER:

(offstage) Never mind.

The lights fade to black as the friend who knows drinks up and absorbs her palette.

Once again, the organic sounds onstage begin, and are soon joined by construction sounds: drills and jackhammers and electric saws. As if a new creature is being created with the help of power tools. We hear offstage voices, and the onstage sounds escalate, like elves scurrying to finish their tasks before humans arrive.

Scene 4—mid October

The sounds quickly fade as the lights come up to reveal the homeowner dressed casually in a sweater, the friend who knows and a third woman coming into the kitchen, which now has the hopeful feeling of a project in progress.

There is an almost-island in the center of the space upon which are the small appliances (mini-fridge, etc.), and we can see the framework of what will be. Although major things—like the floor—are not repaired, a plan is definitely in action.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Wow!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Terrific, isn't it?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Oh, yes!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

I think the island will make all the difference in the world. Wasn't sure at first...

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

I love it!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

But it just makes the space sort of work as it should. Gives it an identity.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

It's wonderful! Just wonderful!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

I always thought islands were overrated? Before I had one. Now I don't know what I would do without it.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

I've always wanted an island.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Some kitchens don't call out for them. This space—I'm sorry to say—didn't. So it was a risk. One which really paid off.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

It sure did!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

We've kind of changed the way the room flows. Before the stove would have blocked the entire kitchen. Or defined it. Very 40s. Now the room is a creative space.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

I can see that!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

But watch out for the floor.

The wide-eyed woman nearly stumbles through it.

(noticing a spot across the stage) Hang on, what's happening there? They were supposed to leave room for a pot rack! We paid extra for that!

She moves toward the problem area.

Pause.

HOMEOWNER:

(to the wide-eyed woman) It's very sweet of you to come over.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Oh, I wouldn't have missed this! She's told me all about it.

HOMEOWNER:

Really? Well! *(short pause)* I don't know what to say. This has all been kind of a whirlwind for me, you know.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Sure!

HOMEOWNER:

I mean, it's very—

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(interrupting) Why isn't this gone?

She stares down the refrigerator.

HOMEOWNER:

They're coming tomorrow.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(moving to another corner) All right, now *here*... I know that right now this looks like wasted space, but don't worry—it's not.

HOMEOWNER:

No, I'm not wor—

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(interrupting) One word: Storage. You'd be amazed by what you can sneak in if you're clever enough.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

I'm already amazed!

The friend who knows continues her rounds.

Pause.

HOMEOWNER:

(to the wide-eyed woman) Do you cook?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

What?

HOMEOWNER:

Do you cook? *(short pause)* I don't really cook.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Oh. No. I don't cook. I mean I *cook*...

HOMEOWNER:

Right. I cook. But I don't cook.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

I don't cook either. Really.

HOMEOWNER:

So it almost makes me feel guilty.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

What?

HOMEOWNER:

This.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Oh. *(short pause)* Why?

HOMEOWNER:

Because I don't co— I have to tell myself it's for the resale value. Otherwise I feel so... It's like I'm spending all this money and getting this gourmet kitchen—

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(interrupting) Ha ha! I wouldn't exactly call this *gourmet*...

HOMEOWNER:

Well, by my standards, it's gourmet.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

It certainly looks gourmet!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Oh, it doesn't look like anything, yet! There's still a lot that needs to be worked out.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

It definitely has gourmet potential!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(to the homeowner) But I can see things coming together, even if you can't.

HOMEOWNER:

Oh, I can! I don't mean to sound... I mean, I trust you!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Of course you do, but that doesn't have anything to do with anything, does it?

HOMEOWNER:

Well, I... Yes! What do you mean?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

You trust yourself, is who you trust! You trust your vision.

HOMEOWNER:

My vision. I thought you said I couldn't see anything.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Your *inner* vision. Because even if you can't picture the *evolution*... I know you, and I know that you've a rudimentary grasp of the *essence*...

HOMEOWNER

Anyone else want a drink?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

And *that's* what's going to take you to where you need to go!

HOMEOWNER:

(to the wide-eyed woman) Screwdriver?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Oh, yes!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Want to know what the most exciting thing about this was? About the plans, initiating the process?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

What?!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Finding out more about my friend. Her likes, her dislikes. Her tastes.

The homeowner fills plastic glasses.

Her little quirks.

HOMEOWNER:

Right.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Right!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

So here's to finding grounds upon which to build a friendship! Investigating and constructing it together!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Here, here!

The three women toast.

I think I'm going to cry.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Let me get you a napkin.

HOMEOWNER:

(to the wide-eyed woman) Are you all right?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

I'm fine. But... *(gesturing around her)* This is all so beautiful!

HOMEOWNER:

Okay.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Really! To me, it's a real message!

HOMEOWNER:

A message?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

A declaration!

HOMEOWNER:

It's a kitchen.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

But a kitchen which is a concrete manifestation of an inner statement. We're telling the world how you want to live your life!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Yes! Exactly!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Each decision we make paves the path to her future. Tile or Corian? Composite or Aluminum? Does she need a double oven? What about shelving? Do we mask the dishwasher, or make a bold comment with it? And then those individual touches—colors, sconces, molding! Where shall we put that antique crockery collection?

HOMEOWNER:

I don't have an antique crockery collection.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Oh, I know that, of course. I was throwing out hypotheticals.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

You could start one.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

But what I'm saying is that this kitchen will be an extension of who you are...

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

I can definitely see you with an antique crockery collection.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

And who you are going to become.

HOMEOWNER:

I don't even have dishes, actually.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

I'll tell you a secret. My own life has completely changed directions in the past couple of years. Radically and dramatically. An about face. Now I'm not saying that this is a direct result of re-doing the kitchen...

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

But what a coincidence!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

A relationship, is what it is. There's something about a woman and her kitchen.

HOMEOWNER:

And I don't cook.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Another toast! To new directions! New vistas! New—

The friend who knows stops short as she stares out at the audience.

That wall.

The other women also look at the audience.

HOMEOWNER:

That *wall*?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

It's superfluous.

HOMEOWNER:

What?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

I don't know why it didn't hit me before. It'll put us over budget, but there's no reason for that wall to be there!

HOMEOWNER:

That's my living room.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Exactly!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Oh, my!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(to the wide-eyed woman) You see where I'm going?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Yes!

HOMEOWNER:

Wait! Where?!

Black out, with the sound of an enormous wrecking ball and ensuing chaos.

Scene 5—still mid October

As we hear what would be dust settling, the lights slowly come up on the homeowner, alone. She stands center stage, surrounded by pieces of torn lumber, plaster and debris, staring blankly ahead. Hitting her hard, straight-on, is a bright spotlight.

After an extended period, the homeowner lets out all of the stops and begins to cry. The lights fade and her frustrated tears combine with the sounds of exertion—groans and grunts as the setting attempts to right itself into a new and improved formation.

Scene 6—November

The sounds fade but we still hear a woman crying, and the lights come up to reveal the homeowner dressed comfortably and warmly, with the wide-eyed woman. The first friend is in tears.

The room now has a very different (albeit still unfinished) shape & look, except that the old refrigerator is still there. There is now hazard tape cordoning off the hole in the floor. The former island is rotated so that one end faces the audience.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Well, like I said, it's all about re-framing old ideas. Start to think of it as an active conduit to the world around you. You're reaching out and allowing it in.

The first friend begins to cry louder.

Short and sweet? Say goodbye to “curtains,” hello to “window treatments!”
(producing a sample) Now fabric with a welcoming print like this—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) Ahhhh!

HOMEOWNER:

What about blinds.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Blinds?

HOMEOWNER:

Big, thick, dark blinds.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
I'm not sure that's on my list of—

FIRST FRIEND:
(interrupting) Ahhhhhh!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
Is she okay?

HOMEOWNER:
Yes, she's—

FIRST FRIEND:
(interrupting) Ahhhhhhhhh!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
Should I get anything?

HOMEOWNER:
No, I've—

FIRST FRIEND:
(interrupting) Ahh Ahhh Ahhhhh!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
I'm sorry, we can talk later. I'll just go then.

HOMEOWNER:
You don't have to—

FIRST FRIEND:
(interrupting) Ohhhhhhhh Ohhhh! No! No! I'm sorry. Don't go. I'm the one who should go.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
No! I'm sorry! You're fine! I'll go!

FIRST FRIEND:
No! I interrupted you guys. I'm sorry. I should go.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
No! It's all right. I'm sorry, I was just dropping off—

FIRST FRIEND:
(interrupting) I shouldn't have come. I'm sorry, I just didn't know where else I could... Ohhhhhhhh... Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
(to the homeowner) Should I...?

HOMEOWNER:
Stay.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
I'll stay.

FIRST FRIEND:
Ohhhhhh, god. I'm sorry.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
No! I'm—

FIRST FRIEND:
(interrupting) Would you let me be sorry, for chrissake?

Pause.

HOMEOWNER:
Anyone want to move into the living room? Such as it is...

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
I really have to be going. But I'm glad I caught you in!

HOMEOWNER:
Yeah, I took they day off 'cause I'm getting so behind and I thought I could—

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
(interrupting) You have samples for the backsplash. Maybe we can all talk cabinet pulls tomorrow? There's some really fun stuff in those books. I went through them and honest to god, I laughed my head off!

HOMEOWNER:
I'll bet!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
(finding a stack of brochures) Lemme see if I can find the one with body parts. Can you imagine, everyday, reaching out and grabbing a—

FIRST FRIEND:
(interrupting) I feel like such an idiot! I should have seen this coming.

Pause.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
I'm sorry? I mean, no! I'm not sorry— (to the homeowner) Did I say something?

HOMEOWNER:

I have no idea.

FIRST FRIEND:

(to the homeowner) Everyone else says they saw it coming. Did you see it coming?

Pause.

HOMEOWNER:

Oh! Him. *(to the wide-eyed woman)* She's talking about...

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Yes! Right!

HOMEOWNER:

(to the first friend) Did I see it coming. I don't think I can answer that—I barely met him.

FIRST FRIEND:

He was just so fucking brilliant, you know?! That's what I always go for, the moron that I am. You've got the right idea. Men. There's sex, sure, but on the whole they're overrated. *(to the wide-eyed woman)* Are you married?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Y—!

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) Of course you're married. You're all married. But what the fuck to you have to do to stay married? That's what I wanna know. Or what I don't want to know. Because who the fuck needs it! *(to the homeowner)* Right?

HOMEOWNER:

(to the wide-eyed woman) Thank you again for stopping by!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Of course!

FIRST FRIEND:

Is it just me? I used to think it was just me. "Foolish choices" and all of that.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

(to the homeowner) Actually I can't tell you how much I enjoy spending time like this. It's fascinating, isn't it?

HOMEOWNER:

Right!

FIRST FRIEND:

But do we really have choices? Maybe we're just buying into this huge, self-help conspiracy, and it's not us at all. It's them!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

(to the homeowner) Anyhow, I—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting, to the homeowner) You, missy, are the smartest woman I know. *(to the wide-eyed woman)* Isn't she? *(to the homeowner)* Single, solitary, unencumbered, one self-sufficient monastic being charting the years ahead all alone, by yourself, just the way you want 'em...

HOMEOWNER:

Right.

FIRST FRIEND:

I should move in here with you. You're a fucking genius.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Look how late it's getting! *(to the first friend, preparing to leave)* Very nice to meet you!

FIRST FRIEND:

Yeah.

HOMEOWNER:

(moving to show the wide-eyed woman to the door) Let me...

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Don't worry. You two do what— May I powder my nose?

HOMEOWNER:

Of course.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Then I'll just sneak away.

HOMEOWNER:

Thanks!

The wide-eyed woman is gone.

FIRST FRIEND:

Hey. I'm serious. I'd move in—

HOMEOWNER:

(interrupting) You're not serious.

FIRST FRIEND:

I am! But I could put up with this kitchen for about two seconds. I don't know how you've stayed sane after all this time.

HOMEOWNER:

Have I?

FIRST FRIEND:

Huh?

HOMEOWNER:

I don't really mean that. But... Okay. I go along in my life, in my house, and everything's fine and makes sense. Then I walk up to that door (*gesturing toward the kitchen door*) and I'm afraid to open it because I never know what I'll find.

FIRST FRIEND:

Or who. Where'd that one come from, anyway? I don't trust those house-broken women.

HOMEOWNER:

No, no. I love her—I mean... I don't know what I mean. I'm 100% glad I'm doing this whole... thing, because it's going to be great. It's going to be totally great. I just had no idea it would be this... all-consuming, you know? That's probably why I feel so weird about it. I started out thinking I wanted a simple efficiency kitchen. Just the basics. Utilitarian. A kitchen where there *was* none, that's it. That's what I started to do, that's what I thought I was doing, and now my whole house, my entire life is caught up in this, like, Julia Child vortex where it's like time and space have no meaning—

The wide-eyed woman bursts through the door.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

I know what I forgot! Flooring! She's thinking of cork tiles! Isn't that courageous!

HOMEOWNER:

Right!!

FIRST FRIEND:

(to the wide-eyed woman) I just realized who you are! We've met before. You're a friend of...

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Yes!

FIRST FRIEND:

(to the homeowner) So, that's who's got her domestic hooks in you. I was wondering whose kitchen this was turning into.

HOMEOWNER:

No. I feel good about it! I mean, like I said it's more than I originally set out to do, but this way it's a real investment. So the fact that it's only me and I don't really— Well, I've come to terms with the fact that the whole thing is *evolving*.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Into a gem! A culinary gem!

FIRST FRIEND:

Of course. I'm now picking up its jewel-like qualities.

HOMEOWNER:

It'll all be over soon and it's going to be great.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

(gesturing out toward the audience) You'll never guess what we're doing here.

FIRST FRIEND:

You're absolutely right.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

She— Excuse me?

FIRST FRIEND:

I said you're right. I will never guess. Not in a million fucking years.

HOMEOWNER:

(to the wide-eyed woman) Do you want a glass of wine?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

No, I've got to go. *(to the first friend)* But you are so funny! I'll give you a hint. The goal here is to increase efficiency and heighten productivity, simultaneously extending, expanding and re-configuring the living arena.

FIRST FRIEND:

(to the homeowner) I'll take one.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

In effect, we're creating a warm, inviting space for guests which opens up to the future by eliminating the superfluous...

HOMEOWNER:

My wall.

She pours wine into two glasses.

FIRST FRIEND:

Your wall.

HOMEOWNER:

It was superfluous.

FIRST FRIEND:

And how do you feel about that?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

It's exciting, isn't it? Because now creative energy can be channeled into the space as it sweeps by the peninsula...

HOMEOWNER:

Where you're sitting. That's a peninsula.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

It was an island, only now it's a peninsula. Because it's attached at its base.

FIRST FRIEND:

Huh.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

And what that does is allows two completely separate but necessary partner cooking triangles, along with a variety of flexible, multi-tasking work zones for every family member! Isn't that incredible?

FIRST FRIEND:

I am speechless. *(to the homeowner)* How about you?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

(to the homeowner) May I use your phone? This always happens. The time's completely gotten away from me.

HOMEOWNER:

Sure. There's one in the di— what was the dining room.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

I won't be a minute. Then I really have to be going.

HOMEOWNER:

Sure.

The wide-eyed woman leaves, and the first friend grabs the wine bottle.

FIRST FRIEND:

More?

HOMEOWNER:

Definitely. Thanks. You think maybe I'm the one that needs remodeling?

FIRST FRIEND:

(pouring) You know, he was never mad at you.

HOMEOWNER:

What?

FIRST FRIEND:

I'm not sure what you thought, but he wasn't mad.

HOMEOWNER:

Who?

FIRST FRIEND:

About the kitchen thing. He's not like that.

HOMEOWNER:

Oh. *(short pause)* I didn't think he should have been.

FIRST FRIEND:

I said he wasn't.

HOMEOWNER:

I'm glad. *(short pause)* But there was no reason— I'm sorry it didn't work out, of course. His designs were... impressive!

FIRST FRIEND:

Yes. Like I said, he's brilliant!

HOMEOWNER:

And I paid him. He got the check, right?

FIRST FRIEND:

It's fine! He was never even mad.

HOMEOWNER:

Good!

Pause.

FIRST FRIEND:

But, you know, he didn't really charge you.

HOMEOWNER:

He did charge me. I paid him.

FIRST FRIEND:

It's not like you paid him, *really*, though. What he charged you wasn't what he really gets paid. He just charged you something because he had to charge you something.

HOMEOWNER:

Oh.

FIRST FRIEND:

He's a professional. That's the way it works.

HOMEOWNER:

Right.

FIRST FRIEND:

So even when he's doing favors, some money's gotta exchange hands. To keep things professional.

HOMEOWNER:

I guess I didn't get the favor part. Because I did pay him.

FIRST FRIEND:

Anyway, that's all water under the... peninsula.

The wide-eyed woman hurries back in.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

(to the homeowner) All right then! So my instructions are to make sure you've got your options, give you some time to decide, and we'll both be here first thing Monday morning!

HOMEOWNER:

Monday? I'll make sure I'm home.

WIDE EYED WOMAN:

Remember, you'll need cash! *(to the first friend)* Again, nice to meet you— see you again. Again. Ha ha ha! *(short pause)* Thanksgiving?

FIRST FRIEND:

Thanksgiving?

HOMEOWNER:

Oh! Yes! Thanksgiving! I know it's a long way off, but there was this idea that if things were ready, I should have it here.

FIRST FRIEND:

Where?

HOMEOWNER:

Here.

FIRST FRIEND:

Like here here? Dinner here?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Of course she should! I volunteered to cook the turkey, and if we do a pot luck it'll be fun and homey! It'll be your very first Thanksgiving in your new house, one of many new traditions, don't you think?

HOMEOWNER:

That was the idea.

FIRST FRIEND:

Whose idea?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

It's a rite of passage!

HOMEOWNER:

This is something I want to do. I mean, I've lived here for over a year—

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

(interrupting) Almost two!

HOMEOWNER:

No. But anyway, I've never done the sit-down dinner thing, and now I'm opening myself up to new experiences and people and even though things might still be—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) We're talking a week away, aren't we? Less than?

HOMEOWNER:

What?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

We can do amazing things in one week!

FIRST FRIEND:

It's been six months and you haven't even gotten rid of that refrigerator!

HOMEOWNER:

It's not six months.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

We'll just have to start hustling! Remember what you-know-who did in seven days!

HOMEOWNER:

Wait. It's not— What's the date, today?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Or six, really. So we won't get a day to rest! Monday, then?

HOMEOWNER:

Right...

The wide-eyed woman leaves and the homeowner looks at her kitchen, for the first time suspicious of its autonomy.

FIRST FRIEND:

Okay, count me in.

The sound of a door slamming as she finishes her wine.

HOMEOWNER:

What?

FIRST FRIEND:

Thanksgiving. I'll bring bread or something.

HOMEOWNER:

Do you have a calendar? I can't find my briefcase.

FIRST FRIEND:

Dessert? You can never have too many desserts, right?

HOMEOWNER:

Or where's my checkbook? This is going to sound very strange, but I could have sworn it was—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting, on her way out) I really can't believe you're doing it, but I'm not about to miss the show! Until Thursday!

HOMEOWNER:

Did we have Halloween? What happened to Halloween?

FIRST FRIEND:

That woman always cracks me up. Thanks for the wine.

HOMEOWNER:

Wasn't it just summer?!

FIRST FRIEND:

Ugh. I should bring someone.

HOMEOWNER:
What?

FIRST FRIEND:
Thanksgiving. It'll be all coupley, won't it? You and your officious women who love being wives?

HOMEOWNER:
Oh. I don't...

FIRST FRIEND:
I mean you guys aren't like that.

HOMEOWNER:
No. What?

FIRST FRIEND:
You're not one of "the wives." You're actually an inspiration to me. I mean I never thought I'd see you settled down as a housefrau. Go figure.

HOMEOWNER:
What?

FIRST FRIEND:
I'll dig someone up. Maybe that guy who... No. It's been forever, and did I tell you? I think he was gay? I'll call you.

She leaves.

HOMEOWNER:
Okay.

FIRST FRIEND:
(offstage) Hey, Mr. Husband! Did ya miss me at work?

DEEP MALE VOICE:
(offstage) All day long!

FIRST FRIEND:
(offstage) Ha ha. She's in the kitchen. I just invited myself to Turkey Day, so if not before, see you guys then.

DEEP MALE VOICE:
(offstage) Great!

The sound of a door slamming.

(louder) Hello?

HOMEOWNER:

Hi?

A rather large man comes through the door. He immediately moves to the homeowner and plants an enthusiastic kiss on her unsuspecting lips.

HUSBAND:

And how are you, my lovely wife?

Black out.

Sounds onstage begin slowly, and escalate into a rhythmic bump and grind so that we can envision... new appliances being installed.

Scene 7—December already

In the dark, we hear offstage voices: the conversation and laughter of many people.

The door opens and we see the homeowner silhouetted, then swings closed and it's dark again. After a moment the light is switched on, revealing the homeowner, wearing an uncomfortable-looking cocktail dress, standing with her back against the door.

She holds a glass of wine and surveys a somewhat remarkable change to the kitchen. Big appliances are set around the room. Huge appliances. Too many grand, commercial machines standing haphazardly like sinister sphinxes. The kitchen itself is still pretty much a shell, with holiday decorations around the hole in the floor and the old, broken refrigerator now in the center of the room.

The homeowner drinks and warily eyes the monsters before her.

HUSBAND:

(offstage) Honey?

The homeowner drinks.

(louder) Honey?

She drinks again.

Sweet—

We hear the sound of someone bumping against the other side of door, and the homeowner moves into the room, followed by the husband as the door abruptly swings open.

What's with the door?

HOMEOWNER:
Nothing's with the door.

HUSBAND:
I tried to— Was that you?

HOMEOWNER:
Was what me?

HUSBAND:
Against the— Never mind.

Pause.

Honey?

Pause.

Is something wrong?

Pause.

Sweet—

HOMEOWNER:
(interrupting) No.

HUSBAND:
No?

HOMEOWNER:
No. Nothing's wrong.

HUSBAND:
Well—

HOMEOWNER:
(interrupting) Everything's fine. Everything's great. Nothing's wrong.

HUSBAND:
Good!

Pause.

So you're okay?

HOMEOWNER:
Fine.

HUSBAND:
Are you sure?

HOMEOWNER:
Yes. Great.

HUSBAND:
Okay.

Pause.

I'm going back out, then.

HOMEOWNER:
Fine.

HUSBAND:
Okay.

He starts out, then turns.

Honey—

HOMEOWNER:
(interrupting) **What?!**

HUSBAND:
I was just going to say... that everyone's having a nice time.

HOMEOWNER:
Oh. *(short pause)* Good.

The husband starts out again.

I'm...

HUSBAND:
Yes?

HOMEOWNER:
I'm sorry. I'm sorry I've been—

HUSBAND:
(interrupting, moving to her) It's okay!

HOMEOWNER:
It's not. It's not okay. This is not okay. I'm not okay. I'm sorry.

HUSBAND:

Listen. You need your space. You've been going through a lot.

HOMEOWNER:

I certainly have!

HUSBAND:

I understand completely!

HOMEOWNER:

I don't know whether you actually do...

HUSBAND:

You're right. I have no right saying that.

HOMEOWNER:

That's not what I meant.

HUSBAND:

Hey. Did I do something? Are you mad at me?

HOMEOWNER:

No! You've been... great! Too good to be true. It's... it's not you—

HUSBAND:

(interrupting) I didn't think it was me. I didn't know, but I didn't think—

HOMEOWNER:

(interrupting) I mean, it *is* you.

HUSBAND:

It is?

HOMEOWNER:

But not—

The first friend comes through the door with a stack of dirty dishes.

FIRST FRIEND:

What a fantastic dinner! Excellent food, excellent company—who *is* the guy sitting next to that wide-eyed woman? A friend of her husband's? He's delicious! But you've gotta' tell me, there's no way he and—

HUSBAND:

(interrupting) Not in the kitchen.

FIRST FRIEND:

What?

HUSBAND:
The dishes. Not in the kitchen.

FIRST FRIEND:
No?

She sees the appliances.

Wow. When did these get here?

HUSBAND:
Aren't they spectacular?

FIRST FRIEND:
Major. One's not a dishwasher?

HUSBAND:
There's no water.

FIRST FRIEND:
In the kitchen?

HUSBAND:
Not yet. Take them to the bathroom down the hall.

FIRST FRIEND:
The dishes?

HUSBAND:
In the bathtub.

Pause.

FIRST FRIEND:
Huh.

She leaves.

HUSBAND:
Ha ha. You forget that to some people it seems strange.

HOMEOWNER:
Right.

HUSBAND:
(looking at the appliances) God, I can't wait to use all this stuff. We'll go shopping together like we used to... Do you remember the first meal I ever cooked for you?

HOMEOWNER:

No. No, I don't. That's what's been— I don't remember any meals. Not a single one. Cooking, eating, shopping... none of it!

HUSBAND:

Ha ha. I don't hardly either. That's a sad statement, isn't it? But just imagine what I can do now! Infinite gastronomical possibilities right in our own home.

HOMEOWNER:

I don't even remember you!

Pause.

HUSBAND:

Darling, I know just how you feel.

HOMEOWNER:

You do?

HUSBAND:

I mean your feelings are your feelings, they're not mine, but... Yeah! With all this stuff going on, it's kinda' like the rug's been pulled out from under us.

HOMEOWNER:

Right!

HUSBAND:

Everything feels so all the sudden.

HOMEOWNER:

And I am having a really hard time! Am I the only one?

HUSBAND:

When things don't develop the way they're supposed to, it's difficult adjusting. I'm not arguing with you there. But...

Pause.

Aw, hell! Who says appliances have to go in last! You fall in love with a professional series, I figure you should just run with it!

HOMEOWNER:

Maybe I'm just asleep. Maybe that's it. I'll wake up tomorrow and have my old Formica back.

HUSBAND:

Oh, sweetie.

HOMEOWNER:

No...

HUSBAND:

You are, you know.

HOMEOWNER:

Dreaming all this?

HUSBAND:

No, you're my sweetheart, my darling, my lovely wife... who is overwhelmed, over-committed and overcompensating for the fact that it's the first time a houseful of guests are celebrating the holidays here, having descended upon us out of nowhere to find our seams showing and rough edges sticking out so what's already an emotionally-loaded, larger-than-life experience seems even less real because it's like we're wearing our underwear in front of company that came a week too early!

Pause.

HOMEOWNER:

I so want to believe you.

HUSBAND:

Try this on for size. Breakfast in bed.

HOMEOWNER:

What?

HUSBAND:

When everything's hooked up. We'll start the new year with breakfast in bed. What do you think?

HOMEOWNER:

I love breakfast in bed!

HUSBAND:

Of course you do!

HOMEOWNER:

How do *you* know that?

HUSBAND:

The same way I know this: fresh berries and mimosas.

HOMEOWNER:

I love mimosas!

HUSBAND:

And Eggs Benedict! You can't get enough of my hollandaise, no matter how hard you protest.

HOMEOWNER:

I love—! *(short pause)* Ha ha ha. Where did you come from?

HUSBAND:

(moving close) You know how much this all means to me, right? Just being here—with you—makes me so incredibly happy.

HOMEOWNER:

I'm... glad.

Her husband gives her a significant kiss, then starts toward the door.

And you know what else? I can't believe I'm saying this, but I'm glad that you're here!

HUSBAND:

Ha ha ha. Well, that's convenient!

HOMEOWNER:

It's just that I didn't... expect it?

HUSBAND:

So when we got married you figured, what?

HOMEOWNER:

Right. Well. This feels... right. It feels strange, and I don't know how it happened, but it feels good!

HUSBAND:

(moving toward her) It does, does it?

HOMEOWNER:

It does! It's not something I was prepared for, but—

The wide-eyed woman comes through the door with more dirty dishes.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Oops! I forgot! In the bathtub!

She quickly leaves as the husband puts his arms around the homeowner.

HUSBAND:

Now. What were you saying?

He begins to kiss and caress her.

HOMEOWNER:

That this wasn't in the plans.

HUSBAND:

It wasn't?

HOMEOWNER:

Nooooo. I never, ever saw myself like—

HUSBAND:

(interrupting) This?

He moves her into a provocative position

HOMEOWNER:

Right. And you weren't supposed to—

HUSBAND:

(interrupting) Do this?

HOMEOWNER:

No. Oh god.

HUSBAND:

Maybe you should just stop fighting it. Sometimes you've just gotta' let things... happen!

HOMEOWNER:

Uh huuuuuuuuuh!

They are interrupted by the friend who knows coming through the door.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

There you two are! Everyone's been asking for—

She sees the appliances.

Oh! They've arrived! Why didn't you tell me!

HUSBAND:

(breaking away from the homeowner) We have to keep some things from you!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

You devil, you. But, oh! You were so right! Is this range going to be incredible! It's only got the single oven?

HUSBAND:

The convection steam unit goes in the wall.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

That cooktop! *(to the homeowner)* The sealed burners will make clean-up a breeze. *(continuing her inventory)* Then we can put the griddle in the peninsula, which will work nicely with a downdraft system next to the trash compactor.

HUSBAND:

(by a huge new refrigerator) And this baby! I can put a whole side of venison in here, frost free!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Side-by-side and 30 cubic feet! Is that gorgeous or what?

She sees the old refrigerator.

I'm personally supervising the exodus of this on Saturday. Now, where's the dishwasher?

HUSBAND:

(pointing to the homeowner) Her department.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(finding the dishwasher) This will work. As long as we elevate it. Not that a big man like you will be bending down to load it, but... They'll be here to install the filtration unit a week Friday. *(to the homeowner)* You'll be home, right?

HOMEOWNER:

Did I say I would be?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(to the husband) So here we are! The kitchen of our dreams! It just makes me salivate, the thought of sinking my teeth into one of your delectable main courses.

HUSBAND:

That'll just have to wait.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Not for too long, I hope!

HUSBAND:

We were just talking breakfast. What do *you* like to eat in bed in the morning?

HOMEOWNER:

Okay. I'm going to see how everyone's doing out there.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

It's almost time for dessert. Is there more coffee?

HOMEOWNER:

I think—

HUSBAND:

(interrupting) Here.

He hands the friend who knows a pot of coffee

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Thank you. Guess that means you want me to play hostess? I can do that. We'll talk about payment later.

She heads toward the door.

Which reminds me, they're coming to check out the gas next weekend. But I'll be here to oversee the hookups! No unplanned explosions on my watch!

She leaves.

HUSBAND:

You do know that it's dangerous to leave her alone with me, don't you?

HOMEOWNER:

What?

HUSBAND:

I'm kidding.

HOMEOWNER:

Right. I should go and... What did you mean earlier?

HUSBAND:

What?

HOMEOWNER:

Earlier when you said that you knew what I was going through.

HUSBAND:

And I apologized. I had no right to say that.

HOMEOWNER:

But what did you mean?

HUSBAND:

I don't understand...

HOMEOWNER:
What is it that I'm going through?

HUSBAND:
What are you asking me?

HOMEOWNER:
You said you understood. Completely. But what *is* it that I'm going through?

HUSBAND:
I said that I didn't, I mean I couldn't—

HOMEOWNER:
(interrupting) What am I going through? What were you talking about?

HUSBAND:
Look. Sweetie. I have no idea of what you're going thr—

HOMEOWNER:
(interrupting) **What did you mean?**

HUSBAND:
I meant that I've lost jobs, too!

Pause.

HOMEOWNER:
What?

HUSBAND:
Well, I haven't really lost a job. But I do know what it's like not to have a job.

HOMEOWNER:
My job?

HUSBAND:
No, not your job. Look, don't worry about it! You don't need to work. We'll be okay with what I make. For awhile.

HOMEOWNER:
I love my job!

HUSBAND:
Of course you do, but it's just a job! You'll find another one!

HOMEOWNER:
I lost my job?

HUSBAND:

Honey, don't dwell.

HOMEOWNER:

I really have no job?

HUSBAND:

Oh, I wouldn't say that! There's plenty to do around here! I'll come home from work and you can bring me my slippers!

HOMEOWNER:

(searching for a bottle) Is all the wine out on the table?

HUSBAND:

Come here. I'm no psychologist, but it looks to me like my wife is stressed out big-time. Could I interest you in a little... love and affection? The—how shall I say this—kind that only a certain someone has what it takes to dispense?

HOMEOWNER:

Fuck love and affection. Let's do it. Right here on the peninsula.

She hikes up her skirt and herself onto the peninsula while the husband opens the old refrigerator. Out comes a small woman holding a large cake.

MOTHER:

And who's ready for dessert?

HOMEOWNER:

Mother!

MOTHER:

Hello, yourself!

The first friend pokes her head through the doorway.

FIRST FRIEND:

Hey! Everyone's asking for Mom and her famous chocolate cake! *(to the mother)* Your stories are the hit of party!

MOTHER:

Well, I do get chatting. It's just that I spend so much time alone...

She sees the homeowner on the peninsula.

Get down from there. Where do you think you are, a playground?

She moves through the door with the cake, followed by the husband.

MOTHER:

Here I am! Dessert!

Sounds of offstage enthusiasm.

HUSBAND:

(putting his head back though the door) Coming, honey?

The homeowner looks in the direction of the audience. The lights fade to black.

We hear cheerful moving sounds which in themselves almost manufacture an optimistic tune. Soon the movements are orchestrated by peppy music, say from a 1950s TV commercial.

Scene 8—January

The lights come up very slowly to reveal an impressive kitchen moving towards completion, now suddenly large enough for the over-sized appliances. They're nestled in appropriately over-sized cabinetry and the old refrigerator is gone. The floor has been repaired.

As the music fades, we maybe hear a rooster crowing and birds chirping. The homeowner comes through the door wearing a heavy bathrobe. She carries a pitcher of water and, keeping an eye on all that surrounds her, moves toward a small coffee maker. She hesitates, then quickly fills it and returns her attention to the room.

After a moment, she addresses the kitchen. In particular, the appliances in it.

HOMEOWNER:

So. What are *you* looking at?

Long Pause.

You all think you're really something, don't you? With your switches and levers and digitally backed-up timers. Your mysterious purposes and hidden recesses. You arrived... and suddenly the entire household revolves around you. On your schedule, to your proportions, in your alternate color schemes. And you figure you've completely out-smarted me because your manuals are gone and I don't stand a chance of negotiating your... plentiful options.

Yet I'm still here, aren't I? Muddling by with my plodding pilgrim ways, my good friend "Mr. Coffee" gurgling away in the background. Why? Because there's nothing you can even begin to do—no service you can render, no operation you can perform—without the cue from one of us. As a matter of fact, there's not a single soul among you who's actually fully functioning!

How does it feel to be stuck, unable to move, trapped in a place you don't belong and not able to do a damn thing about it?

Opening the new refrigerator, she's blinded by an intense, other-worldly light. She grabs a bag of coffee beans and slams the door shut.

The refrigerator emits what sounds like a rather satisfied hum.

HOMEOWNER:

Fine. Just watch you don't get too comfortable. I'm not going anywhere, and might decide one day to take things into my own hands. Get a little sloppy with some H²O in here, spill a bit of liquid where it doesn't belong, the entire room short circuits and... Poof!

It could happen, you know. And everything would change. Just... like... that.

Suddenly her mother pops up, hidden in a heavily cushioned banquette seating area.

MOTHER:

Who are you talking to?

HOMEOWNER:

Mother!

MOTHER:

So! You're finally up! You're making coffee? You keep forgetting to buy de-caf. I put it on the list, but you never get it. You should take me to the stores with you, is what you should do.

HOMEOWNER:

How long have you been—? Never mind.

MOTHER:

Never mind?

HOMEOWNER:

Never mind. I'm making coffee. Do you want some coffee?

MOTHER:

I can't drink coffee with caffeine. Your father used to drink coffee with caffeine but I could never drink coffee with caffeine. Even before they made de-caffeinated coffee. I used to drink Sanka. I still like Sanka. You could buy Sanka, couldn't you?

HOMEOWNER:

You want me to buy Sanka?

MOTHER:

Well, if it's just for me I don't see why you should. I drink Sanka but I don't need Sanka. How come these cushions here are so thick? These are very thick cushions. You kind of sink into these cushions. I feel like I'm getting lost all the time in these cushions.

HOMEOWNER:

That'd be a shame.

MOTHER:

It would be a nightmare, is what it would be. Can you imagine, me sinking down, forever and ever into these cushions and never coming out?

The homeowner grinds coffee beans.

That bed is too thick, too. I can't sleep on that bed. It's too thick. It's like there's a mattress and another mattress on top of it. It's too thick, and it's too high. I have to use a chair to climb into the bed at night, it's so high.

HOMEOWNER:

We'll get you a different one.

MOTHER:

No. Don't worry about me. But I like firm beds. I'm surprised you don't remember I like firm beds. You always had firm beds growing up. All the beds in our house were firm. It was a house full of firm beds.

HOMEOWNER:

I hate firm beds.

MOTHER:

You hate firm beds? I never knew you hated firm beds! We always had firm beds!

HOMEOWNER:

I like soft beds.

MOTHER:

I can't imagine liking soft beds.

HOMEOWNER:

And I like caffeinated coffee.

The husband comes through the door, dressed for work.

HUSBAND:

So how are my girls this morning?

MOTHER:

I didn't sleep well. My, you look rested!

HUSBAND:

I feel rested!

HOMEOWNER:

I'm making coffee.

HUSBAND:

De-caf?

Pause.

HOMEOWNER:

No.

HUSBAND:

(shaking his head) Thanks, then.

MOTHER:

It's very cold in here. Why do you keep the house so cold? I can't get warm. I just can't.

HOMEOWNER:

Toast?

MOTHER:

Are you using the toaster?

HOMEOWNER:

Yes. To make toast, I'm using the toaster.

MOTHER:

I thought maybe you were using the oven.

HOMEOWNER:

We don't have gas.

MOTHER:

No gas? That's why it's like an ice-box in here! I've been living in an unheated house?

HUSBAND:

Is the paper here yet?

HOMEOWNER:

I guess.

MOTHER:

How long is it you've been without heat?

HOMEOWNER:

No, we have heat.

HUSBAND:

Where is it, then?

HOMEOWNER:

Outside?

MOTHER:

But not in the kitchen?

HOMEOWNER:

No, there's *heat* in the kitchen, just not—

HUSBAND:

(interrupting) You haven't brought it in, is what you meant.

HOMEOWNER:

What?

MOTHER:

I don't understand why the heat works in every room but not the kitchen.

HOMEOWNER:

No...

HUSBAND:

Yes. I'll go get it. That's okay, sweetie.

The husband leaves, out front through the house.

MOTHER:

Do you just use the oven to heat the kitchen? Is that what you mean?

HOMEOWNER:

What?

MOTHER:

Because that's how people die. Whole families. I read recently about a whole family that was killed that way by the father.

HOMEOWNER:

What are you talking about?

MOTHER:

Fathers who sacrifice their whole families because they're too proud to admit that they need help. If only he had gone to someone, said "I need help," young lives would not have been lost.

HOMEOWNER:

Mother...

MOTHER:

He didn't die, though. As a matter of fact, now that I think about it, I believe he's facing murder charges! How do you like that?

HOMEOWNER:

Mother. That was a barbeque or something.

MOTHER:

Well, whatever it was, all I can imagine is those cold little children...

HOMEOWNER:

Mother...

MOTHER:

Gone because their maniac of a felon father was too proud to ask for help.

HOMEOWNER:

We have heat. In every room.

MOTHER:

Then why don't you turn it on? It's like an ice-box in this house!

The sound of a door slamming.

HOMEOWNER:

We do turn it on. It is on.

The husband hurries back in from the house carrying the paper.

HUSBAND:

Brrrrrr. What's on?

HOMEOWNER:

The heat.

MOTHER:

She says she turns it on, but to me it's like an ice-box in here! I know I'm old and ridiculous, but I just can't get warm!

HUSBAND:

Oh, you're not ridiculous.

MOTHER:

I am! I'm ridiculous!

HUSBAND:

Not in the least!

HOMEOWNER:

Sweetheart, don't argue.

HUSBAND:

Tell you what. It is nippy out there. Let me turn the thermostat up. See if that helps.

He leaves through the door.

MOTHER:

Goodness! If I'd known you had heat, I would have asked him a long time ago! That's a wonderful man. He wouldn't be too proud to ask.

HOMEOWNER:

So you don't want toast?

MOTHER:

Only if you make it in the oven.

HOMEOWNER:

We don't have— I'm making it in the toaster.

MOTHER:

No. Thanks.

HOMEOWNER:

Okay.

She puts one slice in the toaster, then hesitates.

(shouting offstage) Do you want toast?

HUSBAND:

(offstage) What?

HOMEOWNER:

Toast!

The husband comes back in.

HUSBAND:
What do you need?

HOMEOWNER:
I don't *need*— I'm asking you whether you'd like toast.

HUSBAND:
Are there any English muffins?

HOMEOWNER:
I don't know.

MOTHER:
Did you turn the heat up?

HUSBAND:
I certainly did! Can't have you getting a chill and coming down with some bug, now can we?

HOMEOWNER:
God forbid.

MOTHER:
You know, I feel toasty already!

HOMEOWNER:
Okay. Announcement! I'm making myself a piece of Sourdough toast. I don't think we have any English muffins, but anyone is welcome to look for themselves. If so, I will be happy to insert one—or more—into the toaster. Not the oven, but the toaster. Because that's the way we do it in this house. So. One slice of Sourdough bread. Here it goes. Into the toaster. Where it will become toast. Anyone else for Sourdough toast? No? Last call? One? Two? I'm pressing the lever. Three?

Pause.

HUSBAND:
I really should be getting to the office.

He gives the homeowner a peck on the cheek and moves to the edge of the stage.

Oh, she'll be calling you about the carpenters. They're supposed to finish off this doorway by the end of the week. They'll need a check—you'll be here this afternoon?

HOMEOWNER:
Where else would I be?

HUSBAND:
Right. Bye!

He heads out through the house.

MOTHER:
My. What a catch you've got there. The son I never had.

The sound of a door slamming.

HOMEOWNER:
Right.

MOTHER:
Can you feel the heat yet?

The homeowner watches the toaster.

They don't make toasters like they used to, you know. They don't make toasters that really toast. *(short pause)* That's why I mentioned the oven.

HOMEOWNER:
Mother...

MOTHER:
But I don't want you to go out of your way.

HOMEOWNER:
No, I would gladly use the oven to make a perfect piece of toast, especially for you...

MOTHER:
I'm sorry I said anything. I didn't know you felt this way about ovens.

HOMEOWNER:
But it is not possible. It cannot be done because there is no gas in the— The oven does not work.

MOTHER:
What about the broiler?

HOMEOWNER:
The whole kitchen. No appliance works that requires gas.

MOTHER:
But the refrigerator works...

HOMEOWNER:

The refrigerator doesn't need gas.

MOTHER:

And there's the little oven...

HOMEOWNER:

The little oven?

MOTHER:

The one I make my toasted cheese sandwiches in.

HOMEOWNER:

The toaster oven. That's electric. You want me to make toast in that?

MOTHER:

No. I'm not hungry.

Pause.

HOMEOWNER:

All right then. You're okay?

MOTHER:

Oh, yes. Fine.

The mother smiles beatifically. The homeowner pours herself a cup of coffee.

But if you'd get heat, I might be able to sleep on that mattress.

Black out.

The extended sounds onstage give the feeling of growth, of stretching, of effort, even of birthing. If they are scored by the cheerful music from the previous scene, it now becomes overburdened, discordant.

Scene 9—March maybe even April

The music cuts out abruptly, or is heard in jarring snatches as the lights come up to reveal the homeowner on her hands and knees, in crappy clothes, scrubbing the floor.

The kitchen has again increased in size, and now contains an additional seating area with a large table. It appears to be headed towards... extraordinary ends.

FIRST FRIEND:

(from the house) Helloooooo?

The sound of a door slamming. The first friend comes in from the house, holding letters.

FIRST FRIEND:

Anyone—? Well! Look at you!

HOMEOWNER:

Please. Don't.

FIRST FRIEND:

I'm on my way back from a meeting—here's your mail.

HOMEOWNER:

Thanks.

FIRST FRIEND:

(going through letters) "Dear Homeowner."

HOMEOWNER:

Will you look at these scuffmarks? They talked me into vinyl, and it shows everything.

FIRST FRIEND:

I never thought I'd hear that coming out of your mouth.

HOMEOWNER:

Yeah. Welcome to my world.

FIRST FRIEND:

Where's your mom?

HOMEOWNER:

Getting her hair done.

FIRST FRIEND:

Some event coming up?

HOMEOWNER:

The tile man's coming.

FIRST FRIEND:

Rats. Sorry I missed her.

HOMEOWNER:

Right.

FIRST FRIEND:

I stopped by to see if you wanted to grab lunch. Have you eaten?

HOMEOWNER:

Oh, god—I have to figure out something for dinner.

FIRST FRIEND:

You? You don't cook!

HOMEOWNER:

Well, until everything gets hooked up... it's just that it's hard for him.

FIRST FRIEND:

Huh.

HOMEOWNER:

So it's easier for me to fix something.

FIRST FRIEND:

Ohhhhhhhh Kay.

The homeowner goes back to the floor.

Are you all right?

HOMEOWNER:

Fine. *(short pause)* Why?

FIRST FRIEND:

Because you don't seem fine.

HOMEOWNER:

I don't.

FIRST FRIEND:

No. You look like shit. You're a wreck.

HOMEOWNER:

Thanks.

FIRST FRIEND:

No problem.

HOMEOWNER:

I guess I am a bit... tired. That's all.

FIRST FRIEND:

It isn't all.

HOMEOWNER:

It is all.

FIRST FRIEND:

It's not. Maybe it's *some*.

HOMEOWNER:

And I'm hungry.

FIRST FRIEND:

Aha! You *haven't* had lunch.

HOMEOWNER:

And I'm filthy. I smell like disinfectant.

FIRST FRIEND:

That makes you the opposite of filthy.

HOMEOWNER:

And I'm in pain. My knees are killing me.

FIRST FRIEND:

Scuff marks aren't exactly what I'd be kneeling for.

HOMEOWNER:

I think I'm coming down with a cold.

FIRST FRIEND:

Don't get near me. I've been ducking something going around the office...

HOMEOWNER:

I've got a headache.

FIRST FRIEND:

Oh, god. Did I tell you I've been getting migraines? My whole life I managed to avoid migraines. I never really "got" migraines? And now...

HOMEOWNER:

I feel nauseous, too.

FIRST FRIEND:

So I spent last Saturday night—a night which was supposed to have consisted of me being wined and dined by this incredible guy I met at the dog park—at home, in bed. Alone, thank you very much; which was a good thing, I guess, considering, seeing as how I was throwing up, searing pain behind my eyeballs and covered in a very unattractive cold sweat...

HOMEOWNER:

And I'm burning up. Is it hot in here?

FIRST FRIEND:

I really should *get* a dog, you know that? Dogs are man magnets. Did I just make that up? "Man magnets?" Does anyone say "man magnets," or just "babe magnets?"

HOMEOWNER:

My period is late.

FIRST FRIEND:

What?

HOMEOWNER:

My period is late.

FIRST FRIEND:

How late?

HOMEOWNER:

Late late.

FIRST FRIEND:

Like weeks late, or months late?

HOMEOWNER:

Late enough.

FIRST FRIEND:

Huh.

Pause.

So.

HOMEOWNER:

Right.

Silence.

FIRST FRIEND:

Is it too early for a martini?

HOMEOWNER:

Sounds like lunch to me.

FIRST FRIEND:

I've got ice, you get booze.

HOMEOWNER:
Right.

The first friend hits the freezer as the homeowner gets bottles and a martini shaker.

FIRST FRIEND:
Have you guys talked about this?

HOMEOWNER:
Well, not really.

FIRST FRIEND:
You either have or you haven't.

HOMEOWNER:
We haven't. I haven't. I'm not sure, so...

FIRST FRIEND:
It's not like it's hard to get sure. Three minutes.

She unsuccessfully tries to refill the ice tray.

Water?

HOMEOWNER:
In the bathroom.

FIRST FRIEND:
(abandoning the ice tray) Never mind.

HOMEOWNER:
Here's the thing. I don't know how I feel about this. I need to know how I feel about it before I'm sure.

FIRST FRIEND:
But everything will change anyway. When you are sure.

She shakes then pours into martini glasses.

HOMEOWNER:
What do you mean?

FIRST FRIEND:
You'll be disappointed either way.

HOMEOWNER:
What?

FIRST FRIEND:

It's fucked. Guaranteed. I've been there I can't tell you how many times. Either way there'll be some part of you that doesn't want the answer you get. So why don't you just find out and then you can figure out how you feel? Olives.

HOMEOWNER:

In the fridge. That makes no sense to me.

FIRST FRIEND:

(getting the olives) This is a great fucking refrigerator. What did you do to deserve this refrigerator?

HOMEOWNER:

I'm not the one to ask.

FIRST FRIEND:

Or for what it cost, I guess the right question is *who* did you do to—

HOMEOWNER:

(interrupting) **Will you stop it!**

Pause.

Sorry.

FIRST FRIEND:

(with the olives) One or two?

HOMEOWNER:

Three.

The first friend delivers.

Thanks.

They both drink.

Do you ever feel like you're living someone else's life?

FIRST FRIEND:

Do these look like doubles? I didn't mean to pour doubles.

HOMEOWNER:

Really. I think sometimes I'm losing it. I look around... and it's like someone made a really big mistake and I'm in the wrong—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) What, just because your kitchen's outta' Architectural fucking Digest?

HOMEOWNER:

But listen to me. There are big whole portions of my life I don't— I have these blank periods. Or not blank periods, but I'm all of the sudden at a certain point and I have no idea how I got there. Things will happen and...

FIRST FRIEND:

So I don't remember my entire sophomore year of college.

HOMEOWNER:

That's not what I mean.

FIRST FRIEND:

I'm serious.

HOMEOWNER:

I'm sure you are. But what I'm talking about is this huge, major... reality shift! My husband? He just appeared one day. My mother? Poof! She's living here. Even the appliances—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) These things got in here with out a delivery charge?

HOMEOWNER:

I'm not kidding! It's like one day I was living my own life and the next I've turned into—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) Your mom! I know. Baby, everyone feels that way!

HOMEOWNER:

I really don't think so!!

FIRST FRIEND:

Hey! You could do much worse!

HOMEOWNER:

You don't understand! That woman is not even my mother! I mean, it is my mother, but *my* mother is this very sweet, gentle, gracious, sympathetic—

The sound of a door slamming. Her mother and the wide-eyed woman come in from the house.

MOTHER:

So! I thought I'd find you two here. What are you doing?

FIRST FRIEND:

Mom! I didn't recognize you! Your hair looks fabulous!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Doesn't it?

MOTHER:

I don't like how she did the top—it was a new girl. I'll have to fix it myself, the way I like it. *(to the homeowner)* What time is that nice tile man coming tomorrow?

HOMEOWNER:

First thing in the morning.

MOTHER:

Your morning, or my morning? She says "first thing," but I'm up hours all alone.

HOMEOWNER:

Around eight.

MOTHER:

I never slept the morning away when I was raising my children. I was up at the crack of dawn, and made a nice warm home for my family. Goodness! It's like an ice-box in here! Is the heat broken again?

HOMEOWNER:

The heat was never broken.

FIRST FRIEND:

It is cold! Want me to turn up the thermostat, Mom?

MOTHER:

Don't worry about me. But if you're cold. *(to the homeowner)* What's that you're drinking? Alcohol?!

FIRST FRIEND:

Ha ha. It's that kind of day.

The first friend leaves through the door.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Well! We've had quite the adventure. Haven't we, Mrs.— Mother.

MOTHER:

Have we?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Well, yes! Tell your daughter about the sale!

MOTHER:

You tell her. I don't like to talk to her when she gets like this.

HOMEOWNER:

Like what?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

It was at this adorable little boutique! We found the most amazing bedding. It'll be perfect!

HOMEOWNER:

Like what, Mother?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Your mother was telling me how she's having a hard time sleeping at night?

MOTHER:

Drunk as a skunk, that's what!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

And I told her about this article I'd read, about the effects of color on sleep patterns?

HOMEOWNER:

I am not drunk!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

How colors on the cool spectrum can induce an organic calm, which allows the body's natural rhythms to take over?

MOTHER:

(to the homeowner) I don't know how you expect to run a household...

HOMEOWNER:

I am under a lot of stress here!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

And neutral shades tend to level out the playing field, so to speak. So that negative energy gets absorbed before it enters the body at night?

MOTHER:

(to the homeowner) What if the tile man found you like this!

HOMEOWNER:

I'm not like anything! I've barely had a sip!

MOTHER:

Dressed like a homeless person...

HOMEOWNER:

I was scrubbing the floor!

MOTHER:

I'm only glad your husband isn't here to see you! *Now* I understand why he can't wait to get out of the house.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

And then bright colors can be integrated to inject energy into an environment! Wake it up, if you know what I mean!

HOMEOWNER:

(to her mother) I am going to pretend that you're not even here.

MOTHER:

Nothing new about that.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Well, Mrs.— Mother. It was wonderful spending time with you today!

MOTHER:

Do you see how my daughter treats me?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

You two! I only wish *my* mother were alive...

MOTHER:

Not that I'm complaining...

The first friend comes back in.

FIRST FRIEND:

Feel any better, Mom?

MOTHER:

Did you turn it up?

FIRST FRIEND:

Can't you feel it?

MOTHER:

Yes! I think I can!

HOMEOWNER:

(under her breath) Halle-fucking-lujah!

MOTHER:

Do you hear that? You'd think she didn't even have a mother!

FIRST FRIEND:

(to the homeowner) May I?

She holds the martini shaker.

HOMEOWNER:

Oh, yeah. *(to the wide-eyed woman)* Would you...?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

No! But thanks!

The wide-eyed woman begins to look around the kitchen, as if something's missing.

FIRST FRIEND:

Hey Mom! I'm thinking about getting a dog, what do you say?

MOTHER:

Oh! I used to have a dog. Cute little thing. Biscuit, was her name. *(to the homeowner)* Do you remember Biscuit?

HOMEOWNER:

Can't say that I do.

MOTHER:

Of course you don't. I loved that dog. She used to go everywhere with me. Much better company than my children. I even thought about having her stuffed, after she died.

FIRST FRIEND:

That's so sweet!

MOTHER:

But I'll tell you something. If you're going to have a dog stuffed, you should do it when they're young and healthy. After awhile, they don't look so good anymore.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Excuse me, but where are— Is my watch wrong?

HOMEOWNER:

I have no idea.

MOTHER:

Well! I'm going to take leave of my charming daughter so that I can get warm. Can you believe they don't have heat in the kitchen? It's like an ice-box!

FIRST FRIEND:

(to the wide-eyed woman) There's the clock.

MOTHER:

I think I'll go lie down. In a chair, because it's just too much trouble getting up on that big, thick bed. I've got two mattresses, that's how much my daughter loves me. I think she wants to smother me, that's what I think!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Ha ha ha! Have a nice rest! Just imagine how lovely those new linens will look! *(to the homeowner)* Listen, I hate to say anything, but shouldn't the—?

MOTHER:

(interrupting) It's a miracle they even make sheets for a sky-high bed like that! Incredible what people come up with to suffocate old ladies.

HOMEOWNER:

Go lie down, Mother!!

MOTHER:

Look at her. Ordering her poor old mother around.

FIRST FRIEND:

See you later, Mom!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Good bye Mrs.— Mother!

MOTHER:

(to the first friend) You are a good girl!

She leaves through the door.

HOMEOWNER:

I'm going out of my mind.

FIRST FRIEND:

What a pistol. I love that woman.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

You are so lucky. She could live another 25 years!

HOMEOWNER:

Right.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Now, I don't want to be a pest, but...

HOMEOWNER:

(to the first friend) Any martinis left in there?

FIRST FRIEND:

(pouring) Juusst enough.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

(to the homeowner) I guess the time's kinda' gotten away from you?

HOMEOWNER:

That's the understatement of the year.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Are you okay to drive?

HOMEOWNER:

Probably not. But that's the advantage of having nothing to do except stay in your fucking kitchen all day, don't you think?

FIRST FRIEND:

Where did I leave my cell? I have to call the office. Tell 'em I won't be coming back in. Nope! Not tooodaaaaay!!!!!!

She recklessly negotiates her way through the door as a phone onstage starts ringing.

HOMEOWNER:

See! My brilliant life! I don't even *have* to call the fucking office! I don't even have an office anymore to fucking call!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Okay. Well, it's late, but why don't I get your keys and make the run, then!

HOMEOWNER:

Yes! Get my keys! Find my keys! Make the run!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Okay.

HOMEOWNER:

What in the fuck are you talking about?

Pause.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

The carpool?

Pause.

School?

Pause.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
The kids?

Silence.

The phone has stopped.

HOMEOWNER:
(suddenly sober) Mary, mother of christ.

We hear a beep, then a voice on the answering machine.

CHILD'S VOICE:
Mom? We're here in the office. I think today's your day to pick us up, right?
Where are you? Did you forget?

HOMEOWNER:
(screaming) **NOOOOOOOOOOOO-
OOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!**

CHILD'S VOICE (cont'd):
Mom? Maaahhm? Maaaaaaa-hhhhm?
Mooootheeeeerrrrr?!!!

Black out.

In the dark, we hear sudden shifts, bangs and violent noises of ad hoc slapping together maybe accompanied by sirens or car alarms.

Scene 10—definitely April

The lights come up suddenly on the homeowner and her husband, in a decidedly strange Frankenstein kitchen with gargantuan appliance-like-organs.

She is fully dressed, wearing a light coat, and looks far more together than in previous scenes. Resolute even. Whereas he looks... anywhere but at her. It is silent except for the sound of television cartoons coming from the house.

After an awkward length of time, the husband begins to speak in rather hushed tones.

HUSBAND:
So.

Pause.

What is it that you're trying to say to me?

Pause.

HOMEOWNER:

I...

Pause.

I'm sorry. I'm very, very sorry. But it's got to stop.

HUSBAND:

That's like saying... Do you have any idea what this means?

HOMEOWNER:

No. I don't.

HUSBAND:

You don't. But you're saying it anyway?

HOMEOWNER:

Yeah. This is what I've been trying to tell you! To tell me! To tell someone! No! I don't have any idea! None! No clue! I am completely...

HUSBAND:

Shhhhhh!

HOMEOWNER:

What?

The husband significantly looks out toward the house, and she follows his gaze.

Right. The kids... *(lowering her voice)* I'm doing now what I have to do. It's my only option. This... *(gesturing around her)* this... *(pointing at him)* you... *(gesturing toward the house)* them... everything! Has gotten totally out of control. I need for things to stop. I cannot go on like this!

HUSBAND:

Like what?

HOMEOWNER:

Like it is! Because I do not belong here. It is not mine. I did not choose this. It all just happened to me and I feel terrible about it and I'm very, very, very sorry, but I don't want any of it. It was not my choice. Not a thing. Nothing. None of it.

Silence.

HUSBAND:

The countertops. You chose the countertops.

HOMEOWNER:

No.

HUSBAND:

Because I would have put in granite.

HOMEOWNER:

No!

Pause.

HUSBAND:

So you're leaving?

HOMEOWNER:

It's the only thing I can think of. To do. What else is there?

HUSBAND:

Staying?

HOMEOWNER:

I have no place here. It's been like a... man-made natural disaster and I'm a casualty. Do you know what I mean?

HUSBAND:

How can it be a natural disaster if it's man-made?

HOMEOWNER:

I have to go. I'm sorry.

HUSBAND:

You said that.

HOMEOWNER:

I think it will be best for everyone. You can have your... (*looking around*)... and I can have my life back.

HUSBAND:

I can't believe this is happening!

HOMEOWNER:

Just think how I feel.

HUSBAND:

Why is everything always about you?

Pause.

HOMEOWNER:

That's not what I meant.

HUSBAND:

I don't know. Look. I don't understand what you're saying. Whatever happened— You may have lost you, but I'm not willing to lose you!

HOMEOWNER:

How can you say that? You don't even know me!

HUSBAND:

You don't remember the good times?

HOMEOWNER:

You really want to hear my answer?

HUSBAND:

Deli picnics on the floor before we got the appliances? Late morning breakfasts in our pre-kid days? Right? And stealing a moment or two alone, in here, with a house full of holiday guests...

HOMEOWNER:

Yeah. I remember. I do remember. I remember feeling... right about things. Still wondering about things. But somehow it was okay.

HUSBAND:

It was more than okay.

HOMEOWNER:

And then came my mother. No. Maybe it was before that. It all started with the fridge, then everything just—

HUSBAND:

(interrupting) Is that the baby?

HOMEOWNER:

The what?

HUSBAND:

The baby! I thought I heard the baby.

We hear the sound of a baby crying.

HOMEOWNER:

Where'd we get a baby?

HUSBAND:

Oh, honey...

HOMEOWNER:

I do not remember any baby!

HUSBAND:

I'll go check on her. Grab me a diaper, will you?

HOMEOWNER:

If I knew where we kept the diapers.

HUSBAND:

In the mud room! How long have you lived here, darling?

HOMEOWNER:

Obviously too long. I didn't know we had a mud room.

HUSBAND:

I just love your sense of humor, sweetheart. Never mind. I'll be right back and we'll continue our little chat.

(shouting out front) Hey, you two! Teeth already brushed? Off to bed. Turn off that TV. I'll be in in a second and I want to see eyes shut and lights out, hear me?

The television sounds end, and we hear the pitter patter of little feet as the husband leaves through the house.

The homeowner looks at the audience for a moment, then reaches below a table and produces a small suitcase. She looks around the kitchen, as if she's saying goodbye.

HOMEOWNER:

Okay, then...!

Out of the pantry comes the friend who knows.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

That was one of the smartest things I did. I am positively covetous of your storage space, did I tell you?

The appliances begin to make strangely inappropriate operating noises.

This is not just a closet, but a living, breathing crypt ready to be used. To store. It's a pantry that knows what you need before you do! I love that. You must love that. Don't you love that?

HOMEOWNER:

What are you doing here?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Listen. I'm here because I know exactly where you're headed. I went through it in my marriage—my first marriage—and I've got to tell you that now is the time to stay still and take stock.

HOMEOWNER:

Take stock?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Of what you have. What you're about to give up. Walk away from. And may I remind you that you *never* just walk away. Never. It's never clean and neat and final the way you want it. No, no, no. There are things which will follow you. From one life to another. Things which connect you to what you once were, have their fingers tied around what you want to become like threads of celery caught up in the gears of something wishing it was already over.

HOMEOWNER:

No. There's nothing to take stock of, because none of it's mine!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

You say that now, but once you're away you'll feel it as something missing and find yourself shouting, "Where did it go?"

HOMEOWNER:

This isn't me, none of it! Maybe it's *you*...

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Me? I would've gone with the granite countertops!

HOMEOWNER:

Get out of here. Get out of my house.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Ha! One minute ago, didn't I hear, "None of this is mine!"

HOMEOWNER:

I don't care. I want you out.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

And you think you can just throw me away like old upholstery swatches? (*to the room*) Are you listening to this?

The wide-eyed woman comes out of the buzzing dishwasher, dripping wet.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Oh, yes! Every word!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Can you believe your ears?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

I don't think I've ever been more amazed! Never!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

She should be grateful she has people in her life who are here for her when she needs them. *(to the homeowner)* But don't thank us.

HOMEOWNER:

I'm not thanking you! I'm telling you to leave!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Is this a bad time?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Let's put things into perspective. Here is a woman with a ravishing home and an incredible husband—

Carrying a tropical cocktail, the first friend her, coming out of a large oven in sun bathing attire.

FIRST FRIEND:

You keep your paws off her husband!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Pardon?

FIRST FRIEND:

You heard me. You and your prime cuts of meat, your rotating sinks with teeth. No marriage could survive you and this fucking kitchen!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

I don't know what you've got up your sleeve—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) Oh, look! *(pulling a loaded toothpick from her sleeve)* Maraschino cherries?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

But this kitchen was nothing before I came into the picture. Nothing!

FIRST FRIEND:

And now it's certainly something! It's horrible!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

It's not horrible!

HOMEOWNER:

It is horrible.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

You think it's horrible?

HOMEOWNER:

Yes. It's a horrible kitchen.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Oh, my!

FIRST FRIEND:

(putting down her cocktail) Uh huh. So are you ready to beat it, or what?

HOMEOWNER:

All of you. Would you please just—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) You don't need this crap. Home and family? You were not cut out for it!

HOMEOWNER:

It's not that I'm not—

FIRST FRIEND:

(interrupting) Your bag's packed, let's get out of this place.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

I don't think it's horrible. It's not horrible at all!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

And without me, she would have laminate cabinet facings and self-adhesive floor tiles!

FIRST FRIEND:

Who the fuck cares! She doesn't even cook!

HOMEOWNER:

Well I don't *cook*, but I—

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

I love this kitchen!

HOMEOWNER:

Please! Everyone! I need some time to think. I need some room to breathe.

FIRST FRIEND:

We can do that on the road. Vaminos.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

There's the door, but you can't run forever! The design issues will still be there!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

(to the homeowner) You never appreciated this kitchen. You never even liked it.

HOMEOWNER:

I'm sorry, but it got to be too much for me!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Your mother was right! All you think of is yourself!

HOMEOWNER:

My mother... is an awful woman! And I hate this kitchen!!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Ahhh! I have put my heart and soul into this kitchen. I know every corner of this kitchen, every prep sink, every baking nodule, every recessed lighting fixture! Choosing the elements was the closest I've ever been to god! And now you're going to abandon it?

HOMEOWNER:

It abandoned me! Like it knew who it was dealing with and—

The wide-eyed woman picks up an electric carving knife.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

You are not worthy of this kitchen.

HOMEOWNER:

Put that back!

The carving knife begins to whir.

FIRST FRIEND:

(with the homeowner's suitcase, pulling her toward the door) If ever there was a time, sister, now's it!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

This kitchen should be mine!!

To block the wide-eyed woman's advance, the homeowner opens the refrigerator and out comes the mother holding a loaded plate.

MOTHER:

Don't mind me, I just was looking for a snack.

HOMEOWNER:

Mother!

MOTHER:

(to the homeowner and the first friend) You two look like you're leaving the scene of a crime...

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Yes. They're leaving, but I'm staying!

HOMEOWNER:

No! You're not!

FIRST FRIEND:

You take her, I'll get the knife.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

(looking at the mother's plate) Is that Jello?

FIRST FRIEND:

(to the homeowner) Ready? On the count of three.

HOMEOWNER:

No! Go away!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(to the mother) So! You've arrived just in time to see your daughter turn her back on all that she's worked for, all that she stands for, all that she's put down a deposit for...

FIRST FRIEND:

One?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

And *this*, after she's plunged her family into inexorable debt!

HOMEOWNER:

Inexorable *what?* What are you talking about?

FIRST FRIEND:

Two?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Bankruptcy! Economic suicide! Financial ruin!

HOMEOWNER:

No!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

And you not even working!

MOTHER:

(to the homeowner) That's that friend of yours who knows, isn't it? You should listen to her!

FIRST FRIEND:

Two and a half?

HOMEOWNER:

Stop it! It wasn't supposed to be like this. Do you hear me? I'm through listening to any of you!!

MOTHER:

Goodness! It's like an ice-box in here!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Do you want me to turn up the thermostat?

FIRST FRIEND:

Now's our chance! Three!

She rushes toward the pre-occupied wide-eyed woman to wrest the knife away and among the women all hell breaks loose—food, dishes and especially cutlery flying.

HOMEOWNER:

What is wrong with you women? Why aren't you in your own kitchens? Why can't you keep your recipes to yourselves? I'm telling you, this nightmare is over! I have my own plans! So listen to *me* now! You all need to clean up your mess...

Her words have completely stopped the action.

AND GET OUT OF MY LIFE!!!

The husband comes back in from the house, carrying papers. Only from this point in the play forward, he's played by the actor who played the contractor.

HUSBAND, TOO:

Hey! Wanna keep it down in here? Just got the kids in bed and the baby's finally asleep!

He steps onstage and all eyes are on him.

Silence.

MOTHER:

Well, it's a good thing you're here!

FIRST FRIEND:

Yeah, where you been, Mr. Husband?!

MOTHER:

I just came in for a snack because I can't sleep on that bed, and I'm not even going to tell you what I might have interrupted!

HUSBAND, TOO:

No need to. Nothing that goes on here would surprise me anymore.

MOTHER:

Worst mistake I ever made, deciding to have kids. *(to the room—a grand farewell)* Good night!

HUSBAND, TOO:

Night.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Sleep tight!

FIRST FRIEND:

Night, Mom.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

Good night Mrs.— Mother!

The mother rather ceremoniously descends into the floor, through the area formerly known as the hole, or sinks back into the depths of the refrigerator.

Pause.

HUSBAND, TOO:

Damn! What *did* I miss?

FIRST FRIEND:

Nothing. Your little wifey's just not been herself, that's all. Well, I'm taking off. *(to the homeowner)* Last chance? It only gets harder from here? No?

She heads out through the house.

FIRST FRIEND:

Happy trails! Write if you get work!

The sound of a door slamming. The homeowner still has not moved, and as the husband settles down at a table, the friend who knows prepares to leave.

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

All righty, then! *(to the wide-eyed woman)* Time to go home, now.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

But I love this kitchen!

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Of course you do. We all do. What's not to love?

HUSBAND, TOO:

(to the friend who knows) Listen—do you know what’s up with the gas?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Tuesday.

HUSBAND, TOO:

Really? Great!

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

This should be my kitchen...

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

Of course it should. We should all be so fortunate. Shhhhhhh.

They head into the house.

HUSBAND, TOO:

Do me a favor? Don’t slam the door? The kids?

FRIEND WHO KNOWS:

(whispering) Of course!!! *(to the homeowner)* Sweet dreams, my friend!

They are gone. There is no door slamming.

HUSBAND, TOO:

Oh, boy. Your friends are a handful, aren’t they?

Pause.

Honey?

Pause.

Sweetheart?

Pause.

Is everything all right?

HOMEOWNER:

Uh... fine.

He spreads out the papers.

HUSBAND, TOO:

Arrrrgh! You'd think we'd learn, wouldn't you? Every year it's the same thing. Property taxes, homeowner's insurance, then income taxes... Gets you all at once and it seems like it comes out of nowhere, even though every year it happens and you tell yourself, *next year*...

You might not understand this, but it always surprises me how dealing with all of this makes me feel... I don't know. Smaller. Like a different person.

The homeowner remains frozen.

But you don't have to worry—I'll take care of it!

Pause.

Darling?

He moves toward her.

Hey. You're not okay. What happened?

HOMEOWNER:

Don't... come near me. I have never been more confused in my life!

HUSBAND, TOO:

Ohhhhhh. Don't cry, sweetie! Don't feel bad!

HOMEOWNER:

I am not crying! And I can feel bad if I want to! I deserve to feel bad! I deserve to be hysterical! I'm allowed! I'm allowed to scream and yell and—

HUSBAND, TOO:

(interrupting) Shhh! Honey, the baby!

HOMEOWNER:

The baby! My mother! The gas man! Let me tell you something, mister...!!

HUSBAND, TOO:

What?

HOMEOWNER:

(breaking down in tears) You are not the man I married!!!

HUSBAND, TOO:

Sweeeeeeeheart! What's wrong?

HOMEOWNER:

Everything's wrong. Everything. Everything I can think of.

HUSBAND, TOO:

You want me to get you something to drink?

HOMEOWNER:

No, I don't want a fucking drink! I want my life back! I want to get rid of this goddamn kitchen!!!

Silence.

HUSBAND, TOO:

Okay.

Pause.

HOMEOWNER:

Okay?

HUSBAND, TOO:

Okay.

Pause.

HOMEOWNER:

I'm serious. I'm not going to say it again.

She points at the appliances.

It's them... or me!

HUSBAND, TOO:

Okay. Let's do it. Good riddance.

The giant machines make a sudden, almost startled motion.

HOMEOWNER:

Really? I thought that... I thought they... I thought you...

HUSBAND, TOO:

Let's just say that the idea of them is very different from living with them. It'll be good. We'll scale back.

The appliances let out what could be a gasp.

HOMEOWNER:

Scale back. That can be done?

HUSBAND, TOO:

Of course it can! We'll say goodbye to a bunch of these bills...

HOMEOWNER:

Right—those bills! What about them? Where did they come from? How did we get so far in debt?

HUSBAND, TOO:

I know it's been crazy, but we're gonna be okay. It's not something we can't get past. We can't let this take over our lives!

HOMEOWNER:

But why haven't I seen all of these bills?

HUSBAND, TOO:

I don't know. Listen, I thought that was what you wanted, for me to deal with things, decide how to handle 'em and figure out what goes where—

HOMEOWNER:

(interrupting) You can't. I have to. I have to know. I have to look, to deal, to take care of, to figure, to handle! I have to decide! It has to be my choice, my direction, my decision!!!!

HUSBAND, TOO:

Honey... it's a *kitchen!*

Another dramatic appliance movement—perhaps a shudder.

HOMEOWNER:

Okay...

Pause.

Then... I've decided...

She turns to face the vibrating—trembling?—monsters.

They're out of here!

Whimpering, they begin to shut down.

HUSBAND, TOO:

Works for me.

As the appliances fade out, turning themselves off one by one, their sighs and moans dissipate until we hear a last, mechanical gasp.

Brrrrrr. It's a little nippy, isn't it? You've got your coat on! Want me to turn up the thermostat?

HOMEOWNER:

My mother hasn't already done that?

HUSBAND, TOO:

Your mother? Oh, lord. Tell me. When's she coming?

HOMEOWNER:

What?

HUSBAND, TOO:

You know I love her—okay, I put up with her—but is she really coming to visit again?

HOMEOWNER:

To visit?

HUSBAND, TOO:

So that we can go back and forth about the possibility of that toxic creature living here, and I can pretend to convince you that, no, that can *never* happen, not in a million years, because she'd kill us both, and gleefully poison any chance of happiness we have in our life together?

HOMEOWNER:

She doesn't live here. My mother doesn't live here.

HUSBAND, TOO:

God, no, she doesn't live here! Do you think either of us would be left standing if she did?

HOMEOWNER:

Huh.

HUSBAND, TOO:

Wait. Is there something that you're not telling me? Have you made another decision?

HOMEOWNER:

Yeah. I have. My mother... is going to live with my sister in Pittsburgh.

HUSBAND, TOO:

You had me scared there. (*short pause*) I didn't know you had a sister in Pittsburgh!

HOMEOWNER:

I do! I have a sister in Pittsburgh and my mother is going to live there. She will never set foot in this house again. She will spend the rest of her life with my sister in Pittsburgh. (*short pause*) What little time she has left.

HUSBAND, TOO:

Oh. I'm sorry. You got some news?

HOMEOWNER:

Yes, but no need to be sorry. She's led a very... full life.

HUSBAND, TOO:

I've got an idea. I think there's a bottle of champagne in the 'fridge. I'll finish this stuff up. Why don't you turn in—I'll bring you a little late-night breakfast in bed?

HOMEOWNER:

I think that sounds... great.

She starts toward the door and her husband notices the suitcase.

HUSBAND, TOO:

Sweetie? What's this?

Short Pause.

HOMEOWNER:

Someone must have left that.

HUSBAND, TOO:

One of your— They're not coming back over again tonight, are they?

HOMEOWNER:

No. I don't expect them back... for a very long time...

Black out.

There are efficient, easy sounds of things being whisked away and being put in order, of the world relaxing and being set right.

Scene 11—August, again.

The lights come up to reveal the (second) husband—he and everyone else wear smashing summer party togs. He is working and sampling his creations in a small, efficient, attractive, somewhat funky kitchen. Maybe the refrigerator in this new kitchen looks suspiciously like the refrigerator from the start of the play. Except groovier.

There is contemporary music playing and the sounds of upbeat, offstage voices.

HUSBAND, TOO:

(shouting offstage) Okay. Crab puffs are almost ready. Are we all right with the cheese balls out there, honey?

HOMEOWNER:
(*offstage*) What?

HUSBAND, TOO:
Cheese balls!!

HOMEOWNER:
(*offstage*) What?

HUSBAND, TOO:
Cheese—! It's okay!

HOMEOWNER:
(*offstage*) Okay!

The wide-eyed woman comes through the door.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
What a lovely time! Everything's just beautiful! And look at in here! Amazing!

HUSBAND, TOO:
Thanks! But it's really my wife. I just helped out when I could...

He puts a crab puff in her mouth.

Yeah?

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
(*chewing*) Mmmmmmm!

HUSBAND, TOO:
I just thought of something. The little mother-to-be isn't eating any of that rum cake, is she? You know the booze hasn't been cooked out.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
I'm not really sure. I've sort of got my hands full.

HUSBAND, TOO:
Of course you do. I forgot. You have really been a saint! How's she doing after the accident, anyway?

There is a crash against the door, and the wide-eyed woman rushes toward it.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:
Oh, no!!!

The friend who knows lurches through the door, wearing sunglasses and using a white cane.

WIDE-EYED WOMAN:

(to the friend who knows) **Here you are! I've got you!** *(to the husband)* It's funny, but I think not being able to speak is maybe harder on her than losing her eyesight! *(to the friend who knows)* **Isn't it pumpkin?**

You should see what our friend has done to this room! I mean, not see, but... **It's so... completely her!**

The friend who knows turns to leave and hits the door.

Ahhh! **Be careful!**

The wide-eyed woman grabs a crab puff and puts it in the friend who knows' mouth.

Mmmmm! Isn't that yummy! But wait for me! I know just what you need and just where you're going!

They head out together, and the husband speaks through the doorway to someone offstage.

HUSBAND, TOO:

Oh! You know that rum cake is heavy on the rum, so...

In comes the first friend, who is pregnant.

FIRST FRIEND:

Please. I could smell it the minute I walked in the door. Just because I got a bun in the oven, doesn't mean I can't get buzzed off the fumes.

She puts appetizers into her mouth and looks around the kitchen.

FIRST FRIEND:

Mmmmmm. How fabulous!

HUSBAND, TOO:

Isn't it?

FIRST FRIEND:

I thought you were going to make rumaki.

The homeowner comes through the door.

HOMEOWNER:

I hate rumaki. I've placed a household moratorium on rumaki.

HUSBAND, TOO:

Right. No rumaki. Ever again.

HOMEOWNER:

(to the first friend) So this is where you are! You've been like a little church mouse—I thought you'd disappeared! *(to her husband)* Sweetheart, do we have more dip?

HUSBAND, TOO:

(heading through the door) We should...!

HOMEOWNER:

(after him) It's a big hit. *(to the first friend)* You know, I really like your guy!

FIRST FRIEND:

Yeah, me too. Who'da thunk, huh? I've never met anyone like him! *(shouting offstage)* Babe?!

Her guy peeks in; he's played by the actor who played the husband.

GUY:

Hello?

FIRST FRIEND:

You staying out of trouble?

GUY:

Of course not! Ha! What kind of a guy do you think I am?

He holds a bowl of dip.

This stuff is great! I could live on this stuff!

He leaves, mouth full.

FIRST FRIEND:

Huh. Just what I deserve, right? *(to the homeowner)* Oh. Sorry to hear about your mom!

HOMEOWNER:

Thank you.

FIRST FRIEND:

Was it very painful?

HOMEOWNER:

Yes. Extremely painful.

FIRST FRIEND:

Oh...

HOMEOWNER:
But it was time.

FIRST FRIEND:
(with her mouth full) Ummmhhh.

She leaves and the husband, too enters.

HUSBAND TOO:
So I'd say this is a success!

HOMEOWNER:
(moving toward him) Definitely!

She gives him a warm and sexy and happy kiss.

I've been meaning to talk to you about something.

HUSBAND TOO:
What?

HOMEOWNER:
I've decided... that I'm going to go back to work.

HUSBAND TOO:
Great!

HOMEOWNER:
Really? Ah! I'm so glad you said that! I wasn't sure how you'd feel because... well... the kids, the baby...

HUSBAND TOO:
What are you talking about? What kids? What baby?

The homeowner looks at the audience.

HOMEOWNER:
Right...

The lights slowly fade, as we see a whole new range of choices in her eyes.

End of play