

Barbara + Helen 2

BARBARA Thanks.

BARBARA and THELMA sip their tea. Pause.

THELMA Clark Gable died, did you know?

BARBARA Yes. What was it – a heart attack or something?

THELMA Yes, I think so. Sad isn't it. *(pause)* Mind you, he wasn't as good as Gregory Peck. Or Richard Burton. I think he's wonderful. Did you see him on TV the other night?

BARBARA No.

THELMA He was wonderful. Those eyes. That voice.

The front doorbell rings.

Silently, furtively, THELMA gathers her motorcycling gear and hurries upstairs.

BARBARA *waits, tense, until the coast is clear. Then she goes to the front door and opens it.*

HELEN *enters.*

HELEN Hi, honey, how are you?

BARBARA Helen...

HELEN I've brought this tin back. *(She displays the cake tin she is carrying, and walks to the kitchen)*

BARBARA Oh yes...thanks. *(She closes the front door and follows HELEN.)*

HELEN Those little cookies were delicious, Barbara. So light and crisp-yummy! How do you do it?

BARBARA Oh – just a knack.

HELEN Some knack. *(She turns, smiling, to BARBARA.)* So how's life? Is everything okay?

BARBARA Yes, fine.

HELEN How's Julie? I haven't seen her for ages.

BARBARA She's fine – um...working hard.

HELEN Come to that, I haven't seen you either. You gave me those cookies on Monday, and here we are – it's Thursday.
(*mock-accusingly*) Have you been avoiding me, Barbara?

BARBARA (*a stab of alarm*) Have I what?

HELEN A joke, dear – I was joking.

BARBARA Sorry, I didn't hear what you said.

HELEN You're not mad at me, are you?

BARBARA What?

HELEN Well, are you?

BARBARA No no, of course not. I've been a bit busy, that's all.

HELEN Busy doing what?

BARBARA Oh, nothing much.

HELEN Busy doing nothing much...?

BARBARA Well, you know how it is.

HELEN (*lightly*) No, I don't. I'm beginning to feel like the girl in the bad breath commercial. (*She smiles.*)

No response from BARBARA.

How's the dress coming along?

BARBARA The dress...?

HELEN My party dress.

BARBARA Almost finished. Ready next week.

HELEN Terrific! (*glancing at the empty cups on the table*) Hey, what's all this?

BARBARA What's all what?

HELEN Two cups of tea on the kitchen table. Don't tell me you've got a lover hiding away upstairs.

BARBARA Oh dear – fancy that. I haven't even washed up yet.
(*quickly plunging the cups into the sink*) Isn't that awful?

HELEN (*staring at BARBARA*) Are you sure you're all right, honey? You look kinda pale.

BARBARA No, it's nothing, just a headache.

HELEN Take a pill.

BARBARA I have.

HELEN Take another pill.

BARBARA Yes, all right.

HELEN I'll go get you one, shall I?

BARBARA No, please...

HELEN You know me: pills and potions keep me going. I'll run upstairs and see what you've got.

BARBARA It's all right, Helen. Please don't fuss!

HELEN *frowns, startled by BARBARA's irritability.*

HELEN Fuss...?

BARBARA I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be rude.

HELEN You be just as rude as you like, honey. I mean, jeeze, if you can't shout at friends, who can you shout at?

BARBARA I didn't mean to shout. I'm sorry.

HELEN *goes to BARBARA and takes her by the hand.*

HELEN Look, I'll tell you what. Why don't you put your feet up, go to bed – read a book or something, huh?

BARBARA Yes, perhaps I will.

HELEN It'll only make things worse if you try to keep going.

BARBARA Yes.