

Recipe

By

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Cast:

LILLIAN: 70's, White. A retired history teacher. A gentle soul who may feel passionately about social justice, but doesn't really want her comfortable life disturbed with the messiness of actual revolution.

HELEN: 70's, White. More stylish and forceful than Lillian, but also seemingly set in her comfortable ways. She and Lillian are also lovers.

JANICE: 60's, White. Woodstock -era hippie, who still keeps the fires of the Sixties burning. Somewhere between the spacey Flower Power movement and the loudest Student For a Democratic Society,

DIANE: late 30's - 40's, Black. Enthusiastic, committed, reporter for a small public radio station. She knows the history of the movement she wants to be a part of, but tries to have some journalistic objectivity.

RUTH: 80's, White. Hard as nails, old school Radical. Seemingly paranoid, Ruth has been anxiously awaiting the violent overthrow of the "Capitalist Oppressors" since her father was jailed for being a "Red".

ACT ONE

A large living room in a classic Victorian, tastefully decorated. There is a doily-draped sofa, a small piano, a fireplace with a pastoral painting above the mantelpiece, a long, low coffee table, and a large clock on the wall. There is also a kitchen door, and a front door, and a staircase going to a second floor. A woman, LILLIAN, modestly dressed and in her 70's, enters almost at a run from the kitchen. She is carrying plates.

LILLIAN

It doesn't matter how often he washes, he just smells like that!

Lillian bustles about, putting the plates on the coffee table as HELEN enters. She is wearing slacks, and khaki shirt, and is also in her 70's. She is also rushing, carrying a vase full of fresh flowers. The two women seem happily excited, almost frantic, as they dash in and out, fixing up the room.

HELEN

(Holding up vase) Where?

LILLIAN

On the table!

Lillian exits to the kitchen.

HELEN

Well, he's your nephew, so I guess you're used to it.

Helen quickly leaves as Lillian rushes in with tea cups.

HELEN (OFFSTAGE) (CONT'D)

TIME!

Lillian looks at large wall clock.

LILLIAN

11:35. He didn't smell like that when he was growing up, you know!

HELEN (OFFSTAGE)

What did he smell like?

LILLIAN

Oh, I can't remember.

Helen enters with silverware.

HELEN

That's because his current stench has driven it from your mind.

LILLIAN

Oh, stop it.

HELEN

Burned the memory away!

Helen exits.

LILLIAN

We can't all smell like lavender.

HELEN (OFFSTAGE)

Who smells -

She re-enters holding candlesticks.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Are you saying that I smell like lavender?

LILLIAN

I'm just saying Frank is a fisherman, and -

HELEN

Lillian, are you saying I smell like lavender?

LILLIAN

He is on that boat every day -

HELEN

I do not smell like lavender, dammit! Like some old lady's sachet! (Holds up candlesticks) Where do you want these?

LILLIAN

Mantelpiece.

HELEN

And maybe if that nephew of yours would combine ivory soap, a hot tub, and some honest scrubbing he wouldn't smell like he was carrying around tuna in his armpits!

Helen exits.

HELEN (OFFSTAGE) (CONT'D)

He comes in here - stinking like King Neptune on a hot day - when he knows I'm baking, and that smell gets into everything-

LILLIAN

(under her breath)

At least he doesn't smell like lavender...

Helen enters with tea service.

HELEN

Did you say something?

LILLIAN

I wondered how your cake was coming along.

HELEN

You worry about your cobbler, I'll worry about my cake. Did you get the bag from upstairs?

LILLIAN

Not yet!

Lillian quickly scurries up the stairs. Helen puts tea service on the coffee table, moves the plates Lillian placed earlier, and returns to the kitchen as Lillian re-enters down the stairs carrying a small duffel bag.

HELEN (OFFSTAGE)

TIME!

LILLIAN

(looks at clock)

11:40!

HELEN (OFFSTAGE)

Cobbler's ready!

LILLIAN

Thank you!

Lillian rushes to the kitchen, passing Helen as she enters from the kitchen, carrying a beautiful chocolate cake on a platter. She puts it on a small side table, admires it, then smells it.

HELEN

Chocolate... and fish.

LILLIAN (OFFSTAGE)

Your cake is fine!

HELEN

German Chocolate Salmon.

LILLIAN (OFFSTAGE)

It's fine!

HELEN

Maybe some more icing... TIME!

LILLIAN (OFFSTAGE)

The clock is in there!

HELEN

What?

LILLIAN (OFFSTAGE)

It's in there on the wall!

HELEN

What?

LILLIAN (OFFSTAGE)

Oh, for heaven's-

*Lillian enters with a grand
cobbler, looks at clock.*

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

11:41. Your cake looks wonderful.

HELEN

It doesn't smell a little oceanic to you?

LILLIAN

What did Janice say she was bringing?

HELEN

Oh, some organic, something. Her latest free range
concoction. You know how she likes to experiment with her
pies. Last week I spent ten minutes picking fur out of my
teeth!

LILLIAN

It was a Kiwi Lime Pie, and she left the skins on the kiwi
to give it extra texture.

HELEN

It was like eating sliced, sour testicles.

LILLIAN

You sound like an old woman!

HELEN

I am not an old woman!

LILLIAN

Oh really. Helen, is that...lavender tea?

HELEN

(after a tense moment, Helen
picks up the teapot)

Bitch.

Helen exits to the kitchen.

LILLIAN

I do hope that -

HELEN (OFFSTAGE)

TIME!

LILLIAN

It's *TIME* for me to get you another watch!

Helen enters with tea service.

HELEN

I don't like watches. Make my wrist sweat.

LILLIAN

Well then you need to just calm down. The reporter isn't
due until 12:30.

*Helen puts tea service on table.
The two women finally stop with
the hustle and bustle, admiring
their preparations.*

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

There. All ready. I think that's everything.

HELEN

Not everything...

*Helen suddenly takes Lillian in
her arms and gives her a long,
passionate kiss.*

HELEN (CONT'D)

Now, was that the kiss of an old woman?

LILLIAN

Yes, thank god!

They kiss again.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

I have to get the whipped cream.

HELEN

(seductively)

Lil, I don't think we have time for that -

LILLIAN

It's for the cobbler!

HELEN

Is that what the kids call it nowadays?

The phone rings. Lillian playfully slaps Helen's questing hands away.

LILLIAN

Answer that!

Lillian exits to kitchen. Helen answers phone.

HELEN

Hello? Yes, Ruth... Yes, Ruth... yes, Ruth... of course, Ruth... goodbye, Ruth.

Helen hangs up as Lillian enters.

LILLIAN

Was that Ruth?

HELEN

Lady Muffins is on her way.

LILLIAN

Stop that!

HELEN

I'm sorry, but muffins are just little lies for people who can't accept that they are eating cake for breakfast. And you'd think Ruth bringing muffins was like gold on its way to Fort Knox -

LILLIAN

This from the woman who hired those boys to run ahead and stop traffic so she could have her cake slowly driven to a bake sale -

HELEN

That was a cake, not a bunch of lying little cakelets!

The doorbell rings. Lillian goes to the door, but doesn't open it.

LILLIAN

(through the door)

"Power to the People..."

JANICE

(outside)

"Death to the Pigs!"

Lillian takes out a key, unlocks the door, opens it, and JANICE, a middle aged woman enters, she is more casually dressed than the other two, wearing a loose, flowered cardigan and jeans. She is in her mid 60's, is also excited, and is a bit over caffeinated. Lillian closes and re-locks the door.

LILLIAN

(still talking to Helen)

There you were, like Cleopatra on her barge, floating down the Nile with your blessed cake -

HELEN

Hello, Janice.

JANICE

(proudly holds up a beautiful pie)

"Organic Apple Cinnamon Crisp with Ground Ginger, Homemade Whole Wheat Graham Cracker Crust, and Brandy Infused Cherry Drizzle."

Janice puts pie on piano, looks at it lovingly.

HELEN

(to Lillian)

That's it? She's not going to sprinkle free range tree bark on it or something?

JANICE

(a joyous torrent)

I got the recipe from my cousin - Gwen - and since this is such a special day I should just go ahead and try it out - you know her, my cousin with the long black hair - try it out on a test tart and so I tried it out and it was fucking great - the one with that thing on her ear that looks like a bee sting but it's not because it's permanent - so that I just got to baking and baking and before I know it I have a pie and a swarm of tarts and it's time to go so I load up the Prius and here we are!

HELEN

Janice, you do know that drinking five cups of Fair Trade coffee is still drinking five cups of coffee, right?

JANICE

Where's Ruth?

LILLIAN

She called.

HELEN

She'll be here soon. She just wanted to glaze. Ever since she got the diabetes she glazes everything.

Pause

JANICE

Does anyone else smell fish?

After a moment Helen picks up her cake and exits to the kitchen. The sound of something being dumped in the garbage is heard.

LILLIAN

Brandy infused cherry drizzle?

JANICE

Oh, yes! I figured we needed something extra special today. I got the recipe from my cousin - did I tell you that? Well I did and I said to myself this is just like oh shit I left the tarts in the car! I'll be right back!

Janice unlocks the door, and rushes out front door. Lillian re-locks the door as Helen enters from kitchen, tying apron on.

HELEN

Next time your nephew Frank comes in that kitchen stinking of fish while I'm baking I'll be the one making testicle pie!

Helen exits. The doorbell rings again. Lillian goes to the door.

LILLIAN

"Power to the People..."

JANICE

(off)

"Death to the Pigs!"

Lillian unlocks and opens the door. Janice enters.

JANICE (CONT'D)

(still chattering away)

Chicago, Sly and the Family Stone concert -

LILLIAN

After my time, dear.

Lillian closes and re-locks the door.

JANICE

They were finishing a a bitch of tour. 50 cities in 3 months - buses, setting up - Sly was exhausted.

JANICE (CONT'D)

And there he was - backstage - show just finished, sitting on a make-up table. Wearing his rhinestones and al, he looked like the life had been drained out of him. And I was screwing a photographer back then - Michael somebody - and I'm backstage and I'd heard there was going to be an end of the tour party so I baked up a little something. Olallieberry. And Lillian - I tell you the minute Sly Stone took a bite of that pie... it was like all the weariness, all the tension, all the miles of road between him and home melted, and he closed his eyes and leaned back against the mirror, and smiled and smiled - and it wasn't just the weed I'd baked into it - it was because inside all that glitter and rock and roll Sly Stone knew: There is no funk like Pie.

The doorbell rings.

HELEN (OFFSTAGE)

TIME!

LILLIAN

Oh, for heaven's sake! I told you The reporter won't be here until 12:30.

LILLIAN goes to the front door.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

"Power to the People..."

DIANE (OFFSTAGE)

What?

LILLIAN

"Power to the People..."

DIANE (OFFSTAGE)

I beg your pardon?

LILLIAN

Ruth?

DIANE (OFFSTAGE)

Diane Robeson, from KWTF! I have an appointment...?

LILLIAN

Oh, yes, just a minute -

(to others)

She's early!

JANICE

Oh, shit!

LILLIAN

Quick, get the bag!

Janice grabs the duffel bag. Helen enters.

HELEN

Is that Lady Muffins and her treasure?

LILLIAN

It's the reporter!

HELEN

No! I need 45 minutes!

LILLIAN

You'll just have to finish your cake while she's here! Now come on, help us get things set!

The three women hurriedly set to transforming the room. The blinds are quickly lowered, the pastoral painting above the fireplace is quickly replaced with the iconic photo of Che Guevara. A large poster of Huey Newton, in an African chair, is uncovered on another wall, in front of a matching large African chair. Janice removes her cardigan, revealing a black t-shirt with a big red star on it. Helen strips off her apron and top, and pulls a black turtleneck from the duffel bag.

Lillian pulls out and puts on an army fatigue jacket, and hands the other women black berets, which they all put on. Finally all is set. The room has been changed from suburban Victorian to the dark headquarters of underground revolutionaries. Janice and Helen sit on the sofa, and Lillian unlocks and opens the door. All the bakers have taken on their serious, calm, "revolutionary" personas.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

Come in...

DIANE enters. She is a casually dressed, friendly Black woman, 40's.

DIANE

Hi, I'm Diane -

HELEN

Sgt. Diane Robeson. We know who you are.

LILLIAN

We know all about you.

DIANE

You do?

HELEN

You don't think we'd let you come in here without checking out you and your station. We've been monitoring your transmissions.

DIANE

Monitoring my transmissions?

JANICE

Listening to the radio.

*Lillian closes, locks the door as
Diane sits in chair next to sofa.*

DIANE

Oh, this place... it looks exactly the way I thought it would! But first let me say that I...

*She notices Lillian hovering over
her*

DIANE (CONT'D)

Yes?

LILLIAN

(pointing at chair opposite
sofa)

Would you mind sitting in *that* chair please?

DIANE

No! No, not at all!

Diane moves to other seat.

LILLIAN

Thank you.

DIANE

No, thank you! I can't tell you how exciting this is for me. You are a legend in this town! I'm sorry. I really shouldn't... Okay, business -

(pulls out tiny digital
recorder, turns it on)

"Brothers and Sisters, this is Diane Robeson, KWTF. And today I am here with -

*Lillian hits a light switch, and
the three bakers are suddenly in a
dramatic light - which they have
clearly set up for this interview.*

HELEN, LILLIAN, JANICE

The Morning Glory Baking Circle for Revolutionary Self
Defense!

HELEN

This is Sister Janice, Comrade Lillian, and you may call me Helen X.

Helen takes on a authoritative tone.

HELEN (CONT'D)

(very formally)

As you know, we live at the center of a vast, crypto-fascistic corporate -

DIANE

Excuse me, hold on -

Diane turns off recorder.

DIANE (CONT'D)

I just - I was just getting the intro first, you know, capture the moment. Okay... I'd like to get some basic history first, so I can ask the right questions later. (Opens notebook) In - in the press release you said that together The Morning Glory Baking Circle for Revolutionary Self Defense has over a century of experience in progressive activism.

HELEN

That's right.

JANICE

Though most of that is Ruth.

DIANE

Ruth?

JANICE

She's not here yet.

DIANE

And is she a Sister, a Comrade, or an X?

HELEN

She's just Ruth.

JANICE

And she's always been involved in one movement or another -

HELEN

(starting again, in her
formal tone)

As you know, we live at the center of a vast, crypto-
fascistic corporate -

DIANE

Wait! I don't want to miss anything. Sometimes people say
their best stuff before we start. So just hold that
thought...

Diane switches recorder on again.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Interview with the M.B.C.R.S.D., 11:50 am, and - Oh! I'm
early! I'm so sorry.

LILLIAN

That's quite alright, dear.

DIANE

I was so worried about being late I didn't think... it's
okay?

JANICE

True revolutionaries have to be ready at a moment's notice -
'cuz you never know when the shit's gonna jump off! Listen,
I remember one time -

HELEN

(beginning again, formal)

As you know, we live at the center of a vast, crypto-
fascistic corporate auctionocracy, where power is sold to
the can I start now?

DIANE

I beg your - Yes, yes... I'm getting it.

JANICE

Wow! It's so small...

DIANE

Well, it's not tape, it's digital.

HELEN

You're sure it's on? A tape recorder you can hear a little whrrrr.

DIANE

It's on.

She turns on the recorder:

HELEN (VOICE)

(on recorder)

"We in America live at the center of a vast crypto-fascistic auctionocracy - "

HELEN (CONT'D)

My voice sounds weird.

LILLIAN

You sound fine.

HELEN

(Beginning again, in a lower, even more authoritative voice)

A vast, crypto-fascistic corporate auctionocracy where power is sold by the plutocratic elite to the highest bidding would-be capitalist overlord.

LILLIAN

Since our last -

The three women make air quotes with their fingers.

HELEN, LILLIAN, JANICE

- "election" -

LILLIAN

We feel that there is no hope of reforming a system so completely controlled by a money elite - an elite which has no intention of ever letting a real democratic republic of, by, and for the People get between them and the pig's trough of stolen swill they gorge themselves on.

JANICE

There are no rights our would-be masters respect, or innocence they won't trample to achieve Capitalist dictatorship!

LILLIAN

We, The People, must seize real power, overthrow the charade of Freedom we call Amerika -

HELEN, LILLIAN, JANICE

WITH A "K!"

LILLIAN

Free the downtrodden masses -

JANICE

Who slave under the relentless whip of economic and physical violence-

HELEN

And free the world and the future of humanity!

Pause.

DIANE

And you're doing this by baking cakes.

JANICE

And pies!

HELEN

Each one of my cakes is a bullet aimed at the heart of Tyranny!

DIANE

Okay... the Morning Glory Baking Circle -

JANICE

For Revolutionary Self Defense -

DIANE

Has been together since the mid-eighties?

LILLIAN

Selling cakes, cobblers, pies, and muffins -

HELEN

And giving the money to organizations that are making important contributions to the Revolution!

JANICE

It all started when I met Lil -

DIANE

Lil?

JANICE

Lillian. We call her Lil.

LILLIAN

Lil.

JANICE

Lil.

DIANE

(making a note)

Lil...

HELEN

Comrade Lil.

DIANE

Comrade Lil. How did you meet?

JANICE

Well, I'd only been in town a few months, living on my own after my old man ditched me. So I was baking up a storm. Then one Sunday, I was at a bake sale, raising money for the library -

HELEN

A bake sale! Because in Amerika -

HELEN, LILLIAN, JANICE

WITH A "K!"

HELEN

Libraries have to have bake sales, but there's always money for weapons to oppress our Black and brown brothers and sisters!

Pause.

JANICE

And I smelled the most awesome cobbler -

LILLIAN

Blackberry rhubarb -

JANICE

This cobbler... you had to see it

LILLIAN

Across the top, instead of sprinkling sugar, I crisscrossed single strands of dissolved sugar cane fibers.

DIANE

Wow.

JANICE

That's what I said! So I had to find the woman who baked it.

DIANE

(to Helen)

And Helen -

HELEN

Helen X -

DIANE

You were there? At the bake sale?

HELEN

No. I hadn't move here yet.

DIANE

But my notes... let's see... there were three -

LILLIAN

Ruth.

JANICE

She should be here any minute.

HELEN

With her little muffins...

LILLIAN

It was Ruth's idea to start donating our baked goods to revolutionary groups.

DIANE

So she inspired you to be more political.

JANICE

Actually it wasn't her. It was... Reagan.

JANICE, LILLIAN, HELEN

(almost hissed)

Fascist!

JANICE

It seemed every week another school or good cause needed something. It was like everyone in the community had their funding cut, everybody needed money because of... Reagan.

JANICE, HELEN, LILLIAN

Fascist!

LILLIAN

So the three of us would meet once a week, every Saturday, to bake for all the sales and fund raisers and such on Sundays. We were donating cobbles, muffins, and pies. Speaking of which, you should have some of Janice's pie.

*Lillian gets up, cuts four slices
of Janice's pie.*

JANICE

Then Ruth said instead of donating a pie here, a cobbler there, we needed to sell things ourselves - auction them - get the highest price we could, then each year give the money to one revolutionary organization!

LILLIAN

We figured the money would have more impact that way.

DIANE

I'm sorry, but I don't see how the money from baking auctions could come to very much.

Lillian serves the slices to each woman.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Don't get me wrong, I'm sure you're all wonderful bakers, but-

LILLIAN

Eat up, dear.

Diane takes a bite of the pie. The sheer wonderfulness of the taste is stunning. The other women also take their first bites, and the room is silent as each one lets the glorious flavor wash over them. It's almost a religious moment.

DIANE

Oh. My. God. That is the best...

LILLIAN

Would you like some tea?

DIANE

This is the most -

JANICE

So each year we had a tidy sum to give away. And oh! You'd be surprised what a few thousand dollars can do for a small

-

DIANE

A few *thousand*?

HELEN

Thousands, yes, but that's nothing compared to one cargo plane full of C.I.A. cocaine!

DIANE

I knew - everyone knows you give away... but a few thou -

JANICE

1992 we gave \$3000 to School of the Americas Watch, '93 - \$2500 American Indian Movement, Earth First, \$3250, then Food Not Bombs, the Ruckus Society -

LILLIAN

Then Helen came along, and... more pie?

Lillian gives Diane another slice of pie.

HELEN

This was after the invasion of Iraq, and I looked at all the money spent on that stupid war by Bush and Cheney -

HELEN, LILLIAN, JANICE

(hissed)

Fascists!

JANICE

And after the war was -

HELEN, LILLIAN, JANICE

(with air quotes)

"over - "

JANICE

She said why not save our money for a few years, until it really is a nice pile, when it would really make a statement!

DIANE

So you sent out the press release because...

HELEN

Since then we saved it all up, and now, today, it's time to deliver.

RUTH

(off, loudly)

DEATH TO THE PIGS! DEATH TO THE PIGS!

HELEN

That would be Ruth.

DIANE

(to Janice)

You... you made this?

JANICE

You know, I wasn't sure about the crust.

DIANE

It's amazing! And what is that taste... it's like -

JANICE

Cloves.

DIANE

Yes!

Lillian unlocks, opens door.

JANICE

The important thing with cloves is -

Ruth, 80's and feisty, bursts into the room. Lillian re-locks door.

RUTH

DON'T TELL HER ANYTHING!

JANICE

I was just talking about my pies -

RUTH

Ah! Starts with pie recipes, before you know it it's Social Security numbers, bank accounts, then Big Brother has you up against a wall and BANG - in the back of the head!

HELEN

Ruth, the Minister of Defense. Ruth, this is Diane Robeson.

RUTH

(to Diane)

Any relation?

DIANE

To who?

RUTH

Oh, Christ!

JANICE

My, what lovely muffins!

RUTH

When a grown Black woman, named Robeson, hasn't heard of one of the greatest Americans of all time - just kill me now!

DIANE

Robeson! Paul Robeson! Yes, of course I know who he was, it's just, no, we're just not related. It would be great, but, no.

RUTH

(looks Diane up and down)

Well... thank God for small miracles.

HELEN

Can we get back to the interview, please? I have a cake in the oven, and I want it done before the tide comes in.

DIANE

Of course, of course. Sister Lillian -

HELEN

Comrade Lillian. Janice is Sister. (Points at self) X!

DIANE

Thank you... Comrade... you were a teacher when the Circle started. How long had you been a teacher?

LILLIAN

I had been -

RUTH

DON'T ANSWER THAT!

LILLIAN

What?

RUTH

Start rooting around in your records, looking things up, next thing they got your whole life, boot on your neck, and you're locked in Room 101 with a rat eating your face!

Pause

LILLIAN

I was a history teacher for 37 years -

RUTH

Don't say I didn't warn you.

JANICE

The woman's a reporter, Ruth, it's her job to ask questions! You think Lil's War of 1812 lecture and my cloves are the keys to crushing the Revolution? And now, with that vital information, Diane's gonna pounce on us as soon as she gets the call from Donald Trump?

A pause, then Diane's cell phone rings - Public Enemy's "Fight the Power." Diane pulls out her cell phone.

DIANE

Oh.. That's me. (On phone) Hello? Yeah... what? No... no! I don't... it's... listen can this wait 'till... uh huh... hold on. (to women) Freaky timing, huh? Excuse me, I have to run out to the car and check something. Be right back!

LILLIAN

Sure, take your time!

Lillian unlocks door, lets Diane leave, re-locks door.

RUTH

Car?

HELEN

Well, that was weird.

RUTH

She drove here in her car?!? What happened to the whole - Jesus fucking Christ! I draw up all those timetables and plans for you guys: Janice - pick her up, Lil - sweep her for bugs, the two of you blindfold her, double car switch -

JANICE

I had a pie in the oven!

RUTH

(point at self)

Minister of Defense! Am I talking to myself here?

JANICE

I swear, sometimes I think you take the whole Minister of Defense thing much too seriously.

RUTH

Hold on a second...

Ruth starts rummaging through her purse. Finally she pulls out a small knife.

RUTH (CONT'D)

(to Janice)

Don't make me cut you.

LILLIAN

We checked her out, Ruth! Army veteran, came out against the war when she got home -

RUTH

Checked her out, huh?

(Ruth always announces years from her past in the manner of a blaring newsreel announcer.)

1939!

HELEN

Here we go -

RUTH

That's right, here we go! 1939! Labor cell in Brooklyn my Father organized with guys from all the other bakeries! One guy in the cell, great guy, my Father's best friend. Always brought cheese curds to the Collective meetings - which in those days was a big deal. They thought they'd checked *him* out. Seven years, right next to my Father making bread. Then, one day, guy's gone, and the meeting gets raided. Reds, that's what the government said, unAmericans every one of them. Everybody knew who the rat was - my father's friend, the guy with the curds, the guy they had checked out!

Ruth sags.

HELEN

I'm sorry Ruth. You're right. You're Minister of Defense, you set the protocol, we didn't follow it. That was wrong.

Silence.

LILLIAN

Helen, maybe we should see to your cake.

HELEN

Yeah...

JANICE

I'll come with you.

Helen, Janice and Lillian exit to kitchen. Ruth stands silent for a moment. The doorbell rings. Ruth ignores it, goes to sit in big African chair. Doorbell rings again. Lillian enters.

RUTH

(softly)

Death to the Pigs...

LILLIAN

Ruth, didn't you hear the... oh.

Lillian goes to the door.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

Sgt. Robeson?

DIANE

Yes!

Lillian unlocks and opens the door. Diane enters. Lillian relocks the door.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Thanks. I was going to try the password, but I wasn't sure if it would be alright.

LILLIAN

Did you check what you had to check? Everything okay?

DIANE

I think so - but I'm not going to be able to stay as long as I thought -

LILLIAN

Well, we better get back to it then!

DIANE

(setting up)

Now, you were a teacher...

LILLIAN

History teacher...

Janice enters.

DIANE

And Sister Janice, you were -

JANICE

I was just on my own trip. Here, there, everywhere. One time, in Okolona, Mississippi -

RUTH

Nobody gives a damn about Mississippi, Janice! The people who live in Mississippi don't give a damn about Mississippi! Right now, out there somewhere, we have a president ripping up the Constitution! Ya know, I voted against this whole interview thing, but if we are going to do it we should at least pretend like we want to be taken seriously!

LILLIAN

Ruth -

RUTH

1954!

LILLIAN

And, we're off!

RUTH

When some of us stood up and said it was wrong when the CIA overthrew the government of Guatemala we didn't have cute little interviewers from publicly funded radio stations sashaying up with questions about cake! We had G-Men busting in the door, and the only cake we had... was prison!

LILLIAN

(to Diane)

Ruth is from Brooklyn.

RUTH

(to Diane)

Hold on a second.

Ruth starts rummaging around in her purse again. Pulls out her little knife, points it at Diane.

RUTH (CONT'D)

I got my eye on you.

She stabs knife into a piece of pie.

JANICE

Come on, Diane, let's go get something to drink. A cold glass of raw milk goes with cobbler, pie, even muffins. Let's go, before the secret police throw us all in a secret prison. And I can show you the backyard!

Helen enters.

JANICE (CONT'D)

Helen is growing the most wonderful lavender -

Janice and Diane exit to kitchen.

HELEN

That's not my Lavender!

Lillian goes to the window, pulls back the curtain, and looks out. After a moment Helen walks over to her, and slips an arm around her waist.

RUTH

Well, I'll leave you two alone... before you two start eyeing me!

Ruth exits up the stairs. Helen gives Lillian a peck on the cheek.

LILLIAN

Helen! This isn't the time!

HELEN

I say we change the story from "Mature revolutionary bakers fund political action" to "Old lesbians lovers cook with passion!"

LILLIAN

(disentangling herself from Lillian)

And I say let's stick with the press release.

Helen walks to the couch. Lillian sees she has hurt Helen's feelings.

*Lillian goes to kitchen door,
checks on Diane, then tiptoes over
to Helen.*

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

But maybe later you can dress up as the saucy reporter and I can tell you my whole, juicy story...

*They kiss. Ruth comes down the
stairs and walks right past them
to kitchen door, stops.*

RUTH

And I'm not interested in a three way, in case you were wondering.

LILLIAN

Ruth, how many times -

RUTH

Oh, still saying you don't want some of this? Well, no accounting for taste. Not saying I'm like that - as many husbands as I've been through - but I'll tell you one thing: I'd snap you like a twig between these here!

*Ruth dramatically snaps her thighs
together, then exits to the
kitchen.*

HELEN

Three husbands in the ground... You think they were dead? Maybe they just wanted some peace.

Both women chuckle, and embrace.

RUTH (OFFSTAGE)

Is the orgy over yet? Can I come back in?

HELEN

Alright! Jesus!

*Ruth, Janice and Diane enter from
the kitchen. Ruth has a plate of
muffins.*

DIANE

Oh, Lil -

HELEN

Comrade Lil.

DIANE

Comrade Lil, you have quite a kitchen.

LILLIAN

Thank you. I've got a little bit of everything I need in there.

DIANE

(to Helen)

And what a lovely garden! Your lavender is -

HELEN

Don't. Just - don't.

RUTH

(to Janice)

Did you lock the back door?

JANICE

It wasn't locked before, so -

RUTH

Wasn't locked?

She looks around incredulously

JANICE

Nobody is in the backyard, and nobody is going to -

RUTH

Nobody in the yard! That's what we thought in... 1947!

LILLIAN

Just lock the door!

*Ruth storms into the kitchen.
After a moment the loud sound of
many locks being closed.*

*This goes on for a while. Then
Ruth re-enters.*

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

Now then, let's get on with the interview. And Helen, isn't it time for you to go?

HELEN

Oh, yes...

DIANE

But I haven't had a chance to ask you any -

HELEN

I'll be back in a few minutes. I have something to do.

Lillian sees Helen to the door.

LILLIAN

Be careful.

They kiss, and Helen unlocks the door, leaves. Lillian re-locks the door.

RUTH

(to Diane)

We're not all like that.

JANICE

Hey, hey - we still haven't gotten to the big news about the money!

DIANE

Yes! (Sets up recorder again) alright. And how much did you say you've saved up?

JANICE

We didn't say.

DIANE

How much is it?

LILLIAN

Sixty-two thousand dollars.

DIANE
(stunned)

I beg your pardon?

JANICE
Almost sixty-two, actually. We rounded up a bit.

LILLIAN
More tea?

RUTH
Sounds much better than sixty-one thousand, seven hundred
and thirty eight.

JANICE
Much better.

DIANE
You raised sixty-two thousand dollars -

JANICE
Almost sixty-two -

DIANE
Selling baked goods? I don't see how -

LILLIAN
Cobbler, dear?

DIANE
Thank you. I don't see how you could have charged enough
for some cakes and pies to raise that kind of money!

*Diane takes a bite of cobbler, and
is transported to a lush world of
sumptuous taste.*

JANICE
Lillian's boysenberry Cobbler with whole wheat and plantain
crust.

DIANE
Plantains?

LILLIAN

I bake them, then mix them in with the dough.

DIANE

(almost delirious with the
flavors)

Oh yes...

JANICE

As Helen said, we wanted to make an even bigger impact -

DIANE

Mmmmmmmmmmm -

JANICE

So we thought about where we could put the money where it
would really get noticed, and do a lot of good.

LILLIAN

And we finally decided!

DIANE

Where?

RUTH

What, you think we're just gonna tell -

JANICE

Cuba!

DIANE

Cuba?

RUTH

Janice!

JANICE

What!?

DIANE

Wait a minute -

LILLIAN

We weren't going to tell -

DIANE

You're sending sixty-two thousand dollars -

JANICE

Fifty years of blockade all because the Cuban people threw out the gangsters and showed the world that the American Empire can be successfully challenged!

RUTH

(shouts)

COLLECTIVE MEETING!

LILLIAN

Could you excuse us for a moment?

DIANE

Of course.

*The three bakers leave Diane,
huddle in a corner.*

RUTH

Janice, what are you doing? We did not vote to tell her about Cuba!

JANICE

It's why we're here, isn't it? It just seems stupid to go through all this -

LILLIAN

Stick to the press release!

RUTH

"Donation to an UNNAMED organization - "

JANICE

Helen said the money could never be traced to us, so what's the problem? Besides the cat's out of the bag now -

LILLIAN

Well - Helen did say no one could trace the money to us -

RUTH

Lillian!

JANICE

So, what - we say we sent it, they can't prove it anyway!

RUTH

I don't like it...

JANICE

All in favor of telling Diane the truth -

Janice put up her hand, eventually followed by Lillian.

RUTH

No! Lillian, Listen -

JANICE

Ah! No debating during the vote. All opposed?

Ruth vigorously puts her hand up.

JANICE (CONT'D)

The ayes have it!

Janice returns to the couch.

RUTH

Lillian -

LILLIAN

I know, but Helen did say we were safe.

RUTH

I don't like it...

LILLIAN

She said we don't have anything to worry about.

RUTH

That's what they said in... 1951!

LILLIAN

Not now, dear. We don't have time. Come on.

The three women return to the couch.

JANICE

So we gave the money to Cuba!

LILLIAN

We think that's the best way to support for the resistance to the Empire of Amerika -

LILLIAN AND JANICE

WITH A "K!"

Janice nudges a droopy Ruth.

JANICE

Ruth -

RUTH

Yeah, yeah, with a "K"...

DIANE

I get that, but Cuba... it's not exactly a democracy...

JANICE

Every time somebody elects a Socialist or Communist government Americans always say can't be a democracy, must be a dictatorship!

DIANE

But their human right's record... Amnesty International says -

LILLIAN

They're not looking at the whole picture! Of course there are abuses, accidents - but when a people are attacked, under siege, sometimes they have to bend some ideals to save their long term freedom!

DIANE

Like the U.S. after 9/11?

Diane's phone rings again. She checks it.

DIANE (CONT'D)

They can wait. (She silences phone.) Go on. Does Helen leaving have something to do with -

LILLIAN

Helen is going to make a wire transfer of the money to our contact in Mexico, who in turn will shift the money to an account in Santiago de Cuba!

JANICE

Venceremos!

DIANE

Now? Right now?

LILLIAN

And we'll get a call when the money has arrived!

Diane's phone rings again. She checks it.

DIANE

I'm sorry... I gotta take this.

Diane answers phone.

DIANE (CONT'D)

(On phone) Yes? No! No, I can't, I have to.. Okay, listen carefully... The nose is in the box with the chicken, okay? Got it? Yes! Right now! Alright. I'll call you back. (She hangs up.) I'm sorry. You were talking about Cuba...

RUTH

The nose is in the box with the chicken?

JANICE

Diane, I thought you would appreciate what we're doing.

DIANE

I do, I do! It's just that it seems like... is this the best way to make a statement, make a change?

LILLIAN

You have to start somewhere.

DIANE

But Cuba -

RUTH

The nose is in the box with the chicken?

JANICE

When I was a teenager my oldest brother was in a band. It was the sixties, everybody's brother was in a band. Every boy I knew was working a guitar, slamming some drums, or trying to sing. Some of the girls were, too, but mainly the girls were singing groups, and the boys were bands. My brother's band, they were, well, they were terrible. The Velvet Licorice Explosion. But there was one guy - he played bass, and was just as terrible as the rest of them - but he *knew* they were terrible. So he was all the time wanting to rehearse, always wanting to get better. And my brother, the rest of the Explosion, started to hate the guy! The rest of them, frankly they were just in it for the pussy. Oh, is it alright to say that on the radio?

DIANE

It's fine.

JANICE

Good - because pussy was all they thought about: *How* am I gonna get pussy, *when* am I gonna get pussy, am I ever gonna get pussy -

RUTH

Hey! One pussy!

JANICE

So this one kid, he is like 16, 17, and he's writing songs, drawing posters, and promoting and all the other guys are pissed because he had some heavy, heavy stuff to say. He wanted to make something new. He wanted to change things, make people think, while the rest of the band was too horny to sit down and learn a damn G chord!

DIANE

So what happened?

JANICE

First, since he wasn't trying to get pussy all the time he got pussy all the time - at least, from some of us - And he got kicked out of the Velvet Licorice Explosion.

DIANE

Were his songs any good?

JANICE

Some of them were okay, some of them sucked. But they were better than what they had before.

DIANE

So they kicked him out...

JANICE

And that was the first time I was really proud of my brother. He thought it was bullshit. Don't get me wrong - My brother wanted pussy as much as the other guys - maybe more, 'cause he was the guitar player - but he thought it was messed up this guy should be kicked out of the band just because he was making a bunch of pusshounds look shallow. But he was outvoted. So between his gigs with the Explosion, my brother kept playing with the guy, just bass and guitar. They stayed friends. Eventually The Explosion broke up, my brother became a mechanic, but the guy didn't stop, kept on writing and singing, and he always thanked my brother for standing by him when times were toughest. And that kid grew up to be... Luther Anderson!

Pause.

RUTH

Who the hell is Luther Anderson?

JANICE

It's the guy in the story.

RUTH

The way you said it I thought it was going to be somebody famous!

JANICE

The point is Luther is like Cuba, the rest of the band is the United States, and my brother is us!

LILLIAN

Yeah, I got that, but I thought he was going to be somebody I'd heard of - Elvis Presley, Bobby Darrin -

JANICE

My brother slash us helped Luther slash Cuba when the Velvet Licorice Explosion slash United States made him slash it feel alone for trying to make songs slash revolution that make the world slash... the world a better place!

RUTH

And for getting all the pussy.

JANICE

And those songs may not be perfect, but at least they're trying!

LILLIAN

More Cobbler?

DIANE

No, thank you. Listen, um... I have to make a call. I'm sorry. Would you mind if I stepped into the backyard?

LILLIAN

Not at all, dear.

Lillian leads Diane into the kitchen. Sound of lots of locks being opened, a door opening and closing, then a lots of locks being re-locked. Lillian re-enters.

RUTH

Luther Anderson...

JANICE

He was a very nice boy!

RUTH

Tell me something - do all your stories involve you fucking some guy?

JANICE

At least mine were alive when I left them!

RUTH

Hold on a second...

Ruth starts rummaging in her purse again.

LILLIAN

Ruth, you can't pull a knife every time some one make you mad!

RUTH

Why not? It worked for Trotsky!

LILLIAN

Trotsky never did that!

RUTH

But if he *had* Stalin would just be a footnote in history, and we'd all have universal health care by now!

There is a loud pounding on the door.

HELEN (OFFSTAGE)

(too distressed/ panicked to be recognizable)

Open up! Open the door!

Everyone freezes for a moment.

RUTH

It's the pigs! I told you -

JANICE

Oh my god!

Beating on door continues.

HELEN (OFFSTAGE)

Open the damn door!

LILLIAN

We have to - we have to hide everything!

*Lillian tries to cover up posters,
chairs, anything subversive.*

JANICE

We don't have time!

RUTH

You need time? Hold on a second...

*Ruth starts rummaging through her
purse.*

LILLIAN

(points to Che poster)

Quick, get that!

Janice grabs it.

JANICE

Where should I put it?

LILLIAN

I don't know!

RUTH

Here we go!

*Ruth pulls a large knife out of
purse, runs to door.*

LILLIAN

No!

*Ruth unlocks, snatches open door,
holding knife in attack position.
At door is Helen. Both shout:*

RUTH

Death to the Pigs!

HELEN

Death to the Pigs!

JANICE

Helen!

LILLIAN

Jesus Christ, Ruth! Put that down!

*Helen stumbles into the room as
Ruth closes and locks the door.*

JANICE

You scared us half to death!

RUTH

What was all that banging about?

HELEN

It's gone!

LILLIAN

What?

HELEN

It's all gone!

LILLIAN

What's all gone?

HELEN

The - the money! It's gone!

JANICE

What do you mean, gone?

HELEN

Seized, frozen, the account is - oh god!

*Lillian helps Helen to the sofa.
She strokes her hair, holds her.*

LILLIAN

Shhhh.... shhh... It's okay, you're safe, you're here. Come on, honey... tell me what happened...

JANICE

The money we've been saving all these -

LILLIAN

Janice!

HELEN

I - I got down to the bank, and wait! Where's that reporter?

RUTH

She's off making another phone call.

LILLIAN

It's okay, you can talk.

HELEN

I got to the bank, and it was surrounded with cops! And Feds! Homeland security -

JANICE

All that money, all those pies...

HELEN

They'd just raided the bank!

RUTH

Our sixty-two thousand!

JANICE

Well, almost sixty-two thousand -

HELEN

Somehow they knew, somehow... you know that teller, Phil?

LILLIAN

I don't think I -

HELEN

His son is that nice boy who delivers pizzas for Domino's!

LILLIAN, JANICE

Fascists!

HELEN

I saw him in front of the bank, asked him what was going on, and he said they'd gotten a call from the FBI - an illegal money transfer was about to happen! Someone had been storing up money in an account under a false name for years, he said, and this morning they were going to send money through Mexico to terrorists in Cuba!

JANICE

Are you sure he was talking about us?

Helen, Lillian, and Ruth all look at Janice for a second. Then -

LILLIAN

But... if they know about the account...

Ruth runs and peeks put of the window.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

No!

JANICE

Aw, shit!

RUTH

They'll probably kick in the door any minute!

LILLIAN

We just painted it!

JANICE

Aw, shit!

RUTH

It's time for a suicide pact!

JANICE

Aw, shit! What?

LILLIAN

(to Helen)

You said there was no way to trace that account back to us!

RUTH

They probably tortured it out of somebody!

LILLIAN

If they know about us why haven't they come yet?

RUTH

Just waiting for Helen to get back so they can get us all at once!

JANICE

Do you think they know about out connections in Mexico? Mr. Oxoca? That nice woman from San Miguel?

RUTH (CONT'D)

They'll try to pick us off through the windows -

HELEN

I don't know... I don't think so-

RUTH (CONT'D)

Then they'll go for the tear gas, rush the door -

LILLIAN

Helen, do you think they followed you?

HELEN

No. I was very careful-

RUTH

That's when we let 'em have it!

HELEN

Nobody noticed me...

RUTH (CONT'D)

Then, when each of us only have one bullet left, we'll shoot each other! No prisoners, no surrender!

LILLIAN

But if the money was moving today -

RUTH

I'll kill Janice!

JANICE

(screams)

Ahhh!

HELEN

(to RUTH)

Will you shut up! I'm trying to think! If they knew they would have taken all of us when they took the money. Why tip us off?

LILLIAN

They wouldn't.

HELEN

So they probably don't know anything else, who's involved.

JANICE

(to Ruth)

That's right!

LILLIAN

But they have the money!

HELEN

And that's all they'll get.

RUTH

But all that food we sold! Everyone will wonder where the money went! The Feds will put two and two together, and they'll come in here guns blazing!

HELEN

We'll just tell them we gave it all away to the homeless. No receipts. They can't prove we didn't.

LILLIAN

All we have to do is stay calm.

RUTH

(raises hand)

I still vote for the suicide pact.

LILLIAN

We'll just keep our heads down, go about our lives, not draw any attention to ourselves, and this whole thing will blow over. We just have to keep quiet.

Pause.

DIANE (OFFSTAGE)

DEATH TO THE PIGS! DEATH TO THE PIGS!

The women, shocked, all run into the kitchen. Sound of lots of locks being opened, and door opening, closing, and locks re-locked.

Ruth, Helen, Lillian, and Janice quickly hustle Diane into livingroom.

DIANE (CONT'D)

I hope you don't mind, I thought I'd use the password this time. That's so cool! What's going on?

JANICE

We just found out that -

LILLIAN

(screams)

Ahhhh!

JANICE

What?

LILLIAN

Just now - in the kitchen - did smell a cake burning?

HELEN

Oh no! I didn't smell anything!

Helen starts to run to the kitchen, but she is stopped by Lillian.

LILLIAN

(to Diane)

Dear, could you check on Helen's cake? She's tired after her trip to the bank -

HELEN

I'm not tired -

LILLIAN

You look tired!

HELEN

I'm not tired -

LILLIAN

You're tired!

DIANE

Sure! How long has it been in?

HELEN

About half an hour.

DIANE

Okay.

Diane exits.

HELEN

What was that about?

LILLIAN

COLLECTIVE MEETING!

HELEN

What?

LILLIAN

She's the only one who can connect us to the money!

HELEN

You told the reporter about Cuba?

JANICE

Well, she wanted a story -

HELEN

Giving away sixty-two thousand dollars -

JANICE

Almost sixty-two -

HELEN

Isn't enough of a story?

JANICE

You said we were safe!

HELEN

That doesn't mean tell every -

RUTH

It's on her recorder!

HELEN

Well, we've got to get it back from her, ask her to forget the whole thing.

JANICE

Well, she seems very nice. I'm sure we could convince her to give us the recording. We'll - we'll talk about something else for the radio station -I could tell her about that shit pie I baked shaped like Mike Pence!

HELEN

That should be good enough!

JANICE

She'll understand. She's down.

LILLIAN

Should we vote on this?

Diane enters.

DIANE

The cake smells wonderful, and I think it's -

RUTH

(screams)

On fire!

DIANE

What?

RUTH

I smell something burning! Quick get in there!

*Ruth hustles Diane into kitchen,
closes door.*

RUTH (CONT'D)

COLLECTIVE MEETING! How did the Feds know about the bank account in the first place?

JANICE

You said they probably tortured somebody.

RUTH

But we didn't tell anyone, except...

JANICE

Aw, shit!

LILLIAN

But we didn't tell her the name of the bank, the account number -

RUTH

We told her enough!

LILLIAN

And the bank was raided right after she made that call. And what did she say on the phone?

RUTH

"The nose is in the box with the chicken!"

Diane enters.

DIANE

The cake seems fine, nothings on fire -

RUTH

I'm sorry. Did I say fire? This old mind of mine isn't what it used to be. I meant it's on... fine... its way... to goodness. It's a saying in the old country.

DIANE

I thought you were from Brooklyn.

RUTH

Believe me, it's like a different world. Listen, dear, next to the stove is a drawer with some skewers. Go back, stick one in the cake. If it's dry when you pull it out we'll know the cake is done.

DIANE

Okay...

Diane leaves.

JANICE

But why is she still here?

RUTH

They want information! That's what the interview is about, getting us to slip up, talk, name our connections, friends, family! All they need is one little bit of information linking everyone we know to the money and the next thing you know we're all down in Guantanamo, tied to a chair, duck tape around our wrists -

Diane enters.

DIANE

Which side of the stove?

LILLIAN

Right side!

DIANE

Thanks!

Diane exits.

RUTH

And a leather bag over our heads!

Diane enters.

DIANE

How long do I leave the skewer in the cake?

RUTH

Stick it in, pull it out!

Diane exits.

LILLIAN

But the government can't just swoop down and -

RUTH

"There are no rights our would-be masters won't trample to achieve Capitalist..." Jesus! This is what happens when you only read *your* part of the manifesto!

Diane enters.

DIANE

It's still sticking a bit, so I guess it needs a little more time.

RUTH

That's right, dear. We'll make a baker out of you yet.

JANICE

So... what should we do now?

RUTH

I think we should sit Diane right down and see if we can't figure out how much she knows - and what she needs to finish this interview.

DIANE

Great!

JANICE

But... then what?

RUTH

Then... we'll have some cake.

DIANE

Ooh, I hoped someone would say that! It smells so good. Chocolate and -

HELEN

Chocolate chocolate chip, hazelnut - buttercream icing.

DIANE

Wow...

LILLIAN

Have a seat, Diane! Ya know, we can get back to talking about boring old us later. I want to hear about you! Young woman, so passionate about politics -

DIANE

Not that young!

JANICE

Nonsense! You're a child, (menacingly) a baby...

DIANE

What do you want to know?

JANICE

Oh, like -

HELEN

Who knows you're here? Who'd you tell?

RUTH

Helen!

DIANE

Just my boss.

RUTH

Really?

DIANE

You never want to tell too many people about a story. Might get scooped.

JANICE

Good thinking!

RUTH

Such a smart girl! Muffin?

DIANE

Thank you.

RUTH

Pumpkin Spice with raisins.

DIANE

I don't think I've ever seen a glazed muffin.

RUTH

Maple cinnamon glazing. It's the only way to make a muffin that can't BETRAY YOU!

DIANE

What?

JANICE

Any family around here, honey?

DIANE

What? No. Not here. Back in Ohio. By the way, my mom would love this cobbler, Lillian - Comrade Lillian! She's southern, a cobbler fiend! But yours is way better than hers. Oh! Don't tell her I said that, she would kill me!

LILLIAN

I know how she feels.

DIANE

She would love it if I could bake like this! She always said a woman who can't bake is just a man in a dress!

The women all laugh, a bit too hard.

LILLIAN

And so you joined the army -

DIANE

Oh yeah! And was Mom thrilled. That and not cooking cemented in her mind she had a dyke for a daughter, so no grandchildren for her! (Sensing she may have offended) But you know, I'm not saying - it would be alright, I'm just not - well, there was this one girl.. but no, I didn't - not that it would be wrong, but -

RUTH

Where were you stationed again?

DIANE

Oh, mainly in Baghdad. You get shifted, you know... one day over here, over there the next. Fallujah, Najef, Mosul -

JANICE

Abu Ghraib...

RUTH

Was your mother proud?

DIANE

I... I don't know... I don't really...

JANICE

How did you end up on the radio?

DIANE

Well, I bounced around for a while. Then I hooked up with some progressive groups interested in hearing about the war from a soldier's perspective. Guess somebody from the station liked what I had to say.

RUTH

Well, isn't that nice!

DIANE

I just can't believe you're that interested in me! I'm just a... I'm here to interview you, and you ask about *me*. You're all so sweet!

Pause.

RUTH

You haven't touched my muffin.

DIANE

I think I better wait. Still have the taste of cobbler.

RUTH

Helen? Muffin?

HELEN

Why don't you make cakes, Ruth?

RUTH

Cakes are just big muffins for people who can't control themselves.

LILLIAN

So... you're just a journalist? Nothing else, no side job?

DIANE

Why do you ask?

LILLIAN

Just wondering. Not a lot of money in radio.

DIANE

Well, I do take some other jobs.

LILLIAN

Really? Like what?

Diane's cell phone rings again.

RUTH

You should get that.

DIANE

It's not important.

LILLIAN

Ohhh, You can't be too sure. Maybe it's from the station!

DIANE

They know I'm doing an interview.

JANICE

Then it's probably a friend, and we wouldn't want to get between you and a friend!

DIANE

I really don't have to -

RUTH

It's okay. I think it's time for a muffin break, anyway. Everyone?

The members of the Baking Circle take muffins, eat while staring at Diane. The phone is still ringing. Finally Diane answers it.

DIANE

Excuse me...

RUTH

Don't mind us.

DIANE

Hello? Yes, this is... I still am. It's... no they are right here... okay... just a second... I'm sorry, this is business. I should probably go outside...

As Diane starts for the front door...

JANICE

Oh, no! There goes my asthma! I better get some fresh air!

Janice goes to front door, unlocks it.

DIANE

Okay, then I should probably step into the kitchen...

As Diane starts for the kitchen door...

HELEN

(crossing toward kitchen door)

I should check on my cake -

DIANE

Backyard?

LILLIAN

And your lavender!

HELEN

Yes, my... (bitterly) lavender!

Diane looks to the stairs leading upstairs.

DIANE

Mind if I -

LILLIAN

Heavens to Betsy! I forgot.. to... to...

RUTH

Dust -

LILLIAN

To dust... the...

JANICE

Cat!

LILLIAN

Yes, won't take a second. Excuse me...

Lillian starts up stairs. Diane looks at Ruth.

RUTH

Don't mind me. I'm deaf as a post.

Helen, Lillian, and Janice leave.

DIANE

Okay... (on phone, whispering) Sid, why can't you just, no, I can't speak up...

RUTH

Deaf, deaf, deaf...

DIANE

(whispering, on phone)

Listen... you'll find the toy trombone in the rabbit's hat. That's right... The rabbit's... right. Are we clear? Yes, any minute now. I think I have everything I need. Okay, bye.

She hangs up. Slowly Helen, Lillian, and Janice re-enter. They are staring intently at Diane.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Well, I guess that's about it. Is there anything else you want to tell me?

RUTH
You can't leave yet.

DIANE
Why not?

RUTH
Hold on a second...

Ruth starts rummaging around in her purse again. After a moment she pulls out a gun, which she points at Diane.

RUTH (CONT'D)
Sit down.

Diane slowly sits, as Helen, Lillian, and Janice stand behind Ruth.

RUTH (CONT'D)
You still haven't tasted my muffin.

Blackout

End of Act One

ACT TWO

LILLIAN'S HOUSE

Diane is now tied to the armchair with extension cords. Ruth, Lillian, and Janice are all facing her. Ruth is still holding the gun.

LILLIAN

What do we do now?

Pause.

RUTH

I don't know.

Pause.

DIANE

I have to go the bathroom.

Pause.

LILLIAN

I just thought you had a plan or something.

RUTH

I'm working on it...

Pause.

DIANE

You know, I have people waiting for me -

Pause.

LILLIAN

(to Ruth)

You should have talked to us about it before you pulled out the gun! I mean, what's the point of being in a collective if one member is going to take unilateral military action?

JANICE

Well, we did want her stopped.

DIANE

I have another interview this afternoon! If I don't show up they'll call people, they'll call the cops -

LILLIAN

(ignoring Diane)

She didn't ask us first! We didn't get to vote on it! The first fatality in all revolutions is democracy.

DIANE

Listen to me! You can't keep me tied up like this! It's - it's - let me out of this fucking chair!

Pause.

JANICE

Do you still have to pee? It is pee, isn't it? Not -

DIANE

Yes. I have to pee.

RUTH

It's hard to have democracy during the actual Revolution, Lillian! You have to wait until you win.

LILLIAN

That's what the Bolsheviks said, and they ended up with Stalin.

RUTH

(a slow boil begins)

Are you calling me Stalin?

LILLIAN

No, I'm just -

RUTH

(to Janice)

Did she just call me Stalin?

JANICE

No, she didn't call you Stalin.

RUTH

Sounded like she called me Stalin!

JANICE

(to Helen)

Tell her you didn't call her Stalin!

LILLIAN

I didn't call you Stalin! I'm just saying that we should decide as a group on major direct actions - like taking hostages.

RUTH

She's not a hostage. She's a prisoner.

JANICE

Maybe we should let her pee.

RUTH

She knows too much...

JANICE

Too much to pee?

RUTH

Too much about us!

DIANE

You sent out a press release! To a reporter! If you're so interested in keeping this all a secret there's your problem right there!

Pause.

JANICE

We could just untie her ankles so she could walk to the bathroom -

DIANE

(for the hundredth time)

I'm not a federal agent! How many times do I have to tell you!

RUTH

Then who were you talking to on the phone?

DIANE

My boss!

LILLIAN

"The nose is in the box with the chicken?"

DIANE

It's just a slang we use in radio.

LILLIAN

What sort of slang is that?

DIANE

It's technical.

RUTH

Doesn't sound technical to me. Sounds to me like code...

JANICE

She's right, honey, it does sound like code. Back in '78 I was screwing this 'Nam vet, and he had a ham radio set-up, wires and aerials all over the barn - we were on a farm. His wife hated it, but it kept him out of her hair -

LILLIAN

His wife?

JANICE

It was an open thing. She was screwing a beet farmer. Anyway, him and all his war buddies would yammer 'till the cows came home about radios and never once did I hear him say a word about a nose in a chicken box. Didn't hear that once.

RUTH

(to Diane)

So... tell us what it's slang for.

DIANE

It's... technical.

LILLIAN

Technical for what?

DIANE

Well, it's... it's for... you see, it's very -

RUTH

If you say technical again I'm... going to hit you with that pie!

JANICE

No, you're not!

She sweeps pie up protectively.

JANICE (CONT'D)

Use one of those muffins. Those things could knock down a horse.

RUTH

(to Janice)

You know I've got more than one bullet in this gun...

DIANE

You can't just grab a person and tie her up! I'm not a Federal agent, goddamnit! I have to pee, and I'm not a Fed!!

Pause.

LILLIAN

(to her comrades)

Look, if we don't exercise democracy inside our own collective, how can we be sure what we stand for?

RUTH

Well, this particular situation wasn't exactly on last meeting's agenda!

LILLIAN

Well, why wasn't it?

DIANE

Okay, ya know what? I *am* a Fed, alright? I'm a god damn Federal agent of the United States Federal government, alright?

DIANE (CONT'D)

And right now hundreds of my fellow federal agents are gearing up to come and get me into the fucking bathroom because I have to pee, so if you don't want the shit shot out of you you'll let me out of this goddamn chair!

Pause.

RUTH

You just admitted you're a federal agent.

Diane screams in frustration.

JANICE

Could we come up with a different term? Federal agent is getting, I don't know, it's like when you say a word over and over until it sounds like gobbledygook! Federalagent, federalagent, federalagent, federalagent -

RUTH

(leering at Diane)

How about rat?

LILLIAN

I... I never thought the government would really...

RUTH

Really what? Spy on us? Actually do all the stuff we say they do? Disappointed, Lillian?

LILLIAN

Well, I'm not as happy about it as you seem to be! You're like Robespierre with loose dentures and a gun.

RUTH

Hey, I told you to check her out! Don't blame me for being right!

Pause.

JANICE

(to Diane)

Do you still have to pee?

Helen hurriedly comes down the stair, reading a book.

HELEN

Wait! Here it is... here! Listen: "and... and Fidel told the prisoners 'I congratulate you. You behaved like men. You are free. Look after your wounded, and leave whenever you like.' Castro set the policy for the rest of the war: prisoners were always to be sent back alive." Fidel, a critical portrait, by Tad Szulc, Avon Books, 1989!

Helen holds book up triumphantly.

RUTH

That was different. Fidel was fighting against an army -

HELEN

I think we should let her go, like Fidel says, that's all. I mean, we can't keep her here.

DIANE

Finally! Some sanity enters the room!

JANICE

We could put her in the closet!

DIANE

And there it goes.

JANICE

Like Patty Hearst!

LILLIAN

I have things in my closets!

RUTH

(toying with Diane)

Nose and the chicken... nose and the chicken... sounds like money and bank, doesn't it? Nose is in the box with the chicken sounds like money is in the bank with the -

DIANE

Chicken?

RUTH

Don't get smart with me, missy! (Taps Diane on head with gun) I'll crack this egg and scramble yer yolk!

JANICE

I've seen her cook, she knows how to do it!

Pause.

DIANE

I'm going to pee in the chair.

LILLIAN

No!

DIANE

I'm peeing on it...

LILLIAN

No! Wait... no -

DIANE

It's coming out... drip -

LILLIAN

Alright! I'll take you to the bathroom!

Lillian starts to untie Diane's ankles.

RUTH

Lillian, you can't -

LILLIAN

It's part of a set!

Lillian starts to untie Diane's wrists

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

Okay, um...

Diane is untied.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

Ruth, give me the gun...

Diane suddenly makes a break for the front door. The Baking Circle watches as Diane, trying to open the locked door, fails. Ruth holds up a set of keys.

RUTH

You can't get away from me! You can't fool me. I'm in here...

Ruth taps the gun to Diane's head.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Oh, yeah, right in this here egg, ain't I, Mr. Hoover?

DIANE

Now I really do have to go to the bathroom.

RUTH

Well, let's go. I want to see how a rat pees.

Ruth and Diane exit up the stairs.

LILLIAN

I need some cobbler!

HELEN

Goddammit! My cake!

Helen starts toward kitchen.

JANICE

I'll check it!

Janice exits to the kitchen. Helen and Lillian each get a slice of cobbler, sit, and quietly eat for a moment.

LILLIAN

If she's a rat and we let her go and we go to jail. If she isn't we're holding an innocent woman!

HELEN

We can't keep her here forever.

LILLIAN

Janice wants to put her in the closet with my winter coats.

HELEN

This is Ruth's chance to fight Franco at the gates of Madrid -

LILLIAN

From the comfort of our living room!

Pause.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

I wonder what Lloyd would do?

HELEN

Who's Lloyd? A friend of Luther Anderson?

LILLIAN

No... no, he was a student I had back in 1970 -

HELEN

You sound like Ruth - 1970!

LILLIAN

Yeah, well... he was a senior in one of my classes. Bright kid, really serious, but sweet. Lloyd... Always with an idea, always knew what to do - Miss Blum, you should do this, Miss Blum you should teach that... Then one day he showed up to school - full Black Panther regalia, the leather jacket, the beret... he was so smart, he didn't have to... there was so much he could do. The FBI had agents all through the Panthers, I said. Well, he said, maybe they'll learn something. I told him they had the government scared.

HELEN

What did he say?

LILLIAN

He said why would a government of The People be afraid of... The People?

HELEN

I wonder what he'd would say if he were here now.

LILLIAN

"Miss Blum, there is a war between the People and the Pigs. And I'm with the People. So - Death to the Pigs!"

HELEN

Death to the Pigs...

Pause. They both eat a bite of cobbler.

Janice enters. Her demeanor is very much changed - the over caffeinated, bouncy energy she's had up to now has been replaced with a very stoned laid-back Janice.

JANICE

Cake's out, it's fine, it's cooling on the counter. They still in there?

HELEN

Yeah.

JANICE

What do you think?

LILLIAN

I don't know... it seems like a lot, though, doesn't it? We're just baking, we're not... it's just, I mean that somebody would... we're... it doesn't seem...

HELEN

What's that smell?

JANICE

What smell?

JANICE (CONT'D)

I don't smell anything.

LILLIAN

It smells like -

JANICE

What?

LILLIAN

(suspiciously)

Janice... did you just smoke a joint in my kitchen?

JANICE

Hey, I'm under a lot of pressure!

HELEN

Janice!

JANICE

What?

HELEN

This is a serious situation! The cops could bust in here any minute, and you're getting stoned out of your head!

JANICE

I am not stoned! I'm... comfortably numb. This whole situation is making me a little tense.

LILLIAN

We're all tense, Janice, but you don't see me downing a fifth of gin!

Janice flops on couch

JANICE

Good, 'cause that shit will fuck you up.

LILLIAN

Oh god, the Summer of Love is on my couch!

JANICE

Hey, I come up with some of my most profound insights after I burn a doobie.

HELEN

And you needed to do it right now, in our kitchen, getting that smell all over - oh no!

LILLIAN

What?

HELEN

It better not smell like doobie!

Helen exits.

JANICE

Hey, don't worry! Weed and chocolate cake go together like... weed and chocolate cake!

LILLIAN

Is that one of your profound insights?

JANICE

Well, they can't all be gems.

Helen enters. She is carrying a cake.

HELEN

My cake smells like a jazz club.

JANICE

Works for me! Got a fork?

Helen exits. There is the sound of something dropped into the garbage. Helen returns, purposefully picks up the remains of Janice's pie, and goes to the front door, unlocks it, opens it, and throws the pie outside, closes and re-locks the door, then returns to the kitchen.

JANICE (CONT'D)

Whoa. That was messed up. Good thing I made these! (Janice pulls out bag of tarts, starts to eat.) Want some?

LILLIAN

You know, that's what happened to the Revolution in the 60's - you all just got high and forgot what you were doing!

JANICE

Hey, hey! That's not fair! We inherited a fucked up country from you! So we smoked a little weed - we still changed the world!

LILLIAN

Well you definitely brought down the price of marijuana.

JANICE

My generation dragged this country kicking and screaming all the way to civil rights, Free Speech, Black Power, Women's Lib, end the war, and Nixon getting kicked in the ass - all while stoned! You think that's easy? Hell, that takes extra effort! All that talk about "The Greatest Generation..." World War II... it was easy to decide to fight Hitler. The only people who don't hate fucking Nazis are fucking Nazis! And even then, some of that "Greatest Generation" had to be drafted to fight! But *my* generation, the one that fought the Revolution, we volunteered! The generation that changed the country, changed the world, the generation who - stoned as we were - fought against our own government when it was wrong, we... we really were the Greatest Generation.

Ruth and Diane enter.

DIANE

I'm just saying I can't be a rat and an egg at the same time! That's all!

JANICE

Wow, you were in there a long time.

DIANE

I have a hard time going when someone is watching me with a gun. I'm just weird that way.

RUTH

In the chair!

*Diane is tied to the chair again.
And again the women all look at
her. Pause.*

LILLIAN

What do we do now?

Pause.

RUTH

I don't know.

Pause.

LILLIAN

You still haven't come up with a plan?

RUTH

No.

LILLIAN

We can't keep her here.

JANICE

Well, don't look at me - my place is way too small! I mean, at least you *have* closets. I'd have to stash her in some Tupperware.

Helen enters.

HELEN

I don't want anyone - ANYONE - entering that kitchen until my cake is finished!

RUTH

What's that all about?

JANICE

(shrugging)

I think she's stoned.

LILLIAN

(to Diane)

Look, dear, there's something you're not telling us...

DIANE

(shouts)

YES! BECAUSE I WAS INTERVIEWING YOU!

LILLIAN

No need to shout!

DIANE

Between Cinque here watching me pee, Julia Childs screaming about cake, the Magical Mystery Tour on the couch, and you trying to act all nice and shit -

JANICE

Hey! You didn't give Lillian a nickname!

LILLIAN

I don't want a nickname!

HELEN

All you have to worry about is telling us who you are, really.

DIANE

I told you - I'm a reporter - doing a story, gathering information -

RUTH

Like a squirrel...

DIANE

Squirrels don't gather information! They gather nuts!

She looks at the women for a moment.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Anyway, they don't gather information.

RUTH

They do if they're rat squirrels.

DIANE

What the fuck is a rat squirrel?

JANICE

(points at Lillian)

Mata Hari!

All the women look at her.

JANICE (CONT'D)

Hey, at least I'm trying.

RUTH

Lillian, what's the name of that nephew of yours, the one with the fishing boat?

LILLIAN

Frank?

RUTH

You think you can trust him?

LILLIAN

Sure. I practically raised him.

RUTH

Get him on the phone. I want to know when's the next time he's taking his boat out to the deep ocean, past the three mile limit...

DIANE

Wait a minute -

HELEN

Ruth -

RUTH

There's something we might need to dump...

HELEN

Ruth, you're serious -

RUTH

Of course I'm serious!

LILLIAN

But -

RUTH

Isn't this the war we've been fighting? And it *is* a war, isn't it?

JANICE

You're saying we should -

RUTH

They can't be the only ones willing to fight! Life or Death! War is Life or Death! When we sent those medical supplies the Sandanistas it wasn't for fun, it was because our government was helping murder innocent people! Murder them! People who hadn't done anything but kick out a dictator our corporate government propped up! Men, women, and children... Divestment from South Africa wasn't just a chance to dance in the street - apartheid meant killing people! Chemical warfare in Iraq, burning children worse than in Vietnam. And for what? Oil? The Bottom Line? This, all of this, is Life or Death! Of course I'm serious! I thought you were serious, too.

JANICE

Ruth -

RUTH

Are we just talk, or do we really think there is a class war going on?

HELEN

Yes...

RUTH

Then we better start acting like it! And if she's an agent of the oppressive government, the police state -

JANICE

Fascists -

DIANE

No -

RUTH

Ready to send us to prison for helping people who are fighting for their rights -

DIANE

No!

RUTH

Shut up! (to Lillian, Janice, and Helen) What do you want to do - have a meeting? Try to get bipartisan support from the people who are trying to kill us? Huh? IS THIS A WAR?

Lillian picks up phone, dials.

LILLIAN

(on phone)

Hello... Frank? It's Aunt Lillian. I know, I know, and it was great to see you, too... no, not at all! She loved having you over...

Lillian looks at Helen, who scowls.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

(on phone)

I was wondering when is the next time you're going deep sea fishing?

DIANE

You're crazy!

LILLIAN

(on phone)

Really? Tomorrow?

RUTH

Will he be alone?

LILLIAN

(on phone)

Frank, dear, will you be going out with your buddies?

DIANE

You're all crazy!

RUTH

All we have to do is figure out how to get the body to the boat -

DIANE

You'll never get away with this!

RUTH

Big talk from a rat squirrel!

DIANE

I'm not a rat squirrel!

LILLIAN
(on phone)

All by yourself?

DIANE

I'm a reporter!

LILLIAN

What time?

DIANE

I'm not a fed! And... I'm not a veteran!

RUTH
(to Lillian)

Hold on...

LILLIAN
(to phone)

Hold on...

DIANE

I'm...

RUTH

Who are you?

DIANE

It's complicated...

RUTH

Tell Frank we'll be there around 4 -

DIANE
(shouts)

I'M SWEETIE DIMPLES!

Pause.

LILLIAN

Frank, I'm going to have to call you back.

Lillian hangs up phone.

JANICE

Who?

DIANE

I'm... Sweetie Dimples.

Pause.

RUTH

You have completely lost me.

DIANE

I'm a... I'm not a vet, I'm - Okay, I told you, it's complicated. Okay: High school... guy in a uniform - Marine - knocks on our door, tells my mom about the best job her daughter could have, hands her a bunch of brochures, and my mom just lights up. This is how we are going to afford college, this is gonna grow me up. And I'm telling her I don't want to be a soldier, and she's looking at pictures of all these beautiful people, in beautiful, exotic places, and all I saw were people trained to kill. She said I was being stupid. But I didn't do it. I couldn't. So I got a different job to pay for college.

HELEN

Doing what?

DIANE

The point is I didn't join the Army! I got a job that paid for college and journalism school -

HELEN

What did you do?

DIANE

It's not important -

HELEN

What did you -

JANICE

Holy shit! You didn't become... did you?

RUTH

What?

JANICE

You became... a prostitute?

DIANE

What?

HELEN

Sweetie Dimples... was that your "street" name?

DIANE

I did not become a prostitute!

JANICE

It's okay, we're all women here.

DIANE

Jesus fucking Christ!

LILLIAN

It must have been awful!

DIANE

A Black girl works her way through college and you figure she had to be a prostitute?

LILLIAN

It's not because you're Black!

HELEN

Of course not!

JANICE

You're Black? I hadn't noticed.

RUTH

I'm telling you, her other job was the F.B.I.!

DIANE

No!

JANICE

It's okay, you can admit you were a prostitute for the F.B.I. We're all women here.

I became a clown!

Pause.

A what?

I'm a clown.

What... you mean... a... you're...

You mean a *clown* clown?

Yes, a *clown* clown.

A *clown* clown?

Yes.

Pause.

A *prostitute* clown?

Just a clown! Sometimes I'm a reporter. But the rest of the time I'm... Sweetie Dimples.

Sweetie...

Dimples.

Pause.

Well, that's cute.

DIANE

I needed a job. Money for school. And all I'd done up to that point was baby-sitting, watching kids.

LILLIAN

And you liked children so much you decided -

DIANE

Please. I started making balloon animals because it was the closest I could come to wringing their little necks. And when the balloons squeak right it sounds just like a frightened four year old... oh, yes...

JANICE

(to Ruth)

And I thought you were scary...

DIANE

And when I saw other clown shows, how they got all the kids to sit still, and how they could torment and humiliate any kid in front of his friends, get applause, and get paid! I knew that was what I wanted! See, Diane was nothing to those kids, but when Sweetie Dimples tells them to sit down and shut up... fear and respect. It's not what gets said, it's who says it.

LILLIAN

You must be very good.

DIANE

I'm hilarious.

RUTH

Why did you lie about being a vet?

DIANE

Because no matter how cogent or on target or scathing my analysis of how Capitalism is essentially antithetical to Democracy, no one is going to listen to Sweetie Dimples. Oh, I tried, believe me! I went to meetings, put up my hand, started to talk police brutality or economic imperialism and some snot nosed set of braces who's birthday I worked five years ago shouts "Hey, it's Sweetie!" And after that no one gives a damn what I have to say. But a veteran... It was an accident the first time.

DIANE (CONT'D)

I was at an anti-war potluck, wearing an old Army surplus jacket, and I noticed that when I talked about the war everyone was hushed. I'm talking civilian deaths, contractors gone wild, billions wasted, and everyone just sat there... just like those kids did when Sweetie replaced Diane. Then, when I finished, one woman came over and thanked me for my service. I had no idea what she meant. Then this other guy, an old guy, saluted me. I saluted back. That was that. A few more meetings, and few more fatigue jackets, a lot more make-up for Sweetie, and click! I moved out here, became Sgt. Diane Robeson, veteran of Fallujah, and I'm invited to speak on panels, at rallies, I've got a radio show.

JANICE

It's not what gets said, it's who says it. Woah...

Pause.

JANICE (CONT'D)

That is so deep.

DIANE

And really, would you have let me do the interview if you'd known I was a clown?

LILLIAN

Well, probably not.

DIANE

I'm sorry I lied, but if people knew I wouldn't get any respect at all.

HELEN

It could be worse.

DIANE

How?

HELEN

You could be a mime.

DIANE

That's different. Mimes are idiots.

RUTH

(screaming)

I can't believe you're all buying this bullshit! A clown?
Come on!

JANICE

I believe her.

RUTH

That's one of the stupidest cover stories I've ever heard!
Almost as stupid as, one time -

JANICE

No, Ruth -

RUTH

1963!

HELEN

Why, why -

RUTH

A woman says she's a filmmaker, shows up with a camera at a
Central Committee meeting of my Co-op -

HELEN

Ruth! Is there any situation we can have that you haven't
already experienced?

RUTH

No.

DIANE

My costume and props are in my car! Go look! White Volvo
station wagon, around the corner.

RUTH

(to Lillian)

Check it out...

DIANE

The keys are in my backpack.

*Lillian gets the keys, and Lillian
and Helen go to door.*

JANICE

Watch out for helicopters!

*Lillian and Helen crouch down,
unlock and open door, and exit.
Ruth re-locks door. Pause.*

RUTH

(to Diane)

Rat...

DIANE

Clown.

RUTH

Rat!

DIANE

Clown!

JANICE

(trying to join, in her
stoned way)

Fascist!

RUTH

And even if you are a clown it doesn't mean anything! The
feds are everywhere -

JANICE

Fascists!

RUTH

For all we know they could have infiltrated Cirque du
Soleil!

JANICE

Fascists!

RUTH

(to Janice)

Do you even know what that word means?!

DIANE

I do!

RUTH

Shut up.

DIANE

Fascism: A combination of corporate and military interests -

RUTH

I said shut up!

DIANE

Usually associated with nationalism, demagoguery, and violence.

Ruth puts gun to Diane's head.

RUTH

I don't want to hear another fucking word out of your goddamn mouth... until you taste my muffin!

DIANE

Muffin?

RUTH

Not another word!

*Ruth cuts a piece of muffin,
brings it to Diane. She puts a
piece of muffin in Diane mouth,
and yet another amazing world of
taste envelops Diane.*

RUTH (CONT'D)

What do you think of the glazing?

DIANE

It's... perfect...

RUTH

It was my dad taught me to bake. Mom taught me to cook, but Dad taught me how to *bake*. He loved baking. Always said baking for people was the closest thing to making happiness you could do. Just the smell of the bread made people smile. He would get up at four in the morning to light the ovens, mixing dough... and that smell...

RUTH (CONT'D)

on cold mornings folks would be lined up in the snow by the time the doors opened just to get hot, fresh... my Father never got out of prison. After the raid on the meeting they just kept him in jail as long as they could. They never even charged him - it wasn't against the law to be a Communist. And when time came when they had to let him go, suddenly they said he'd tried to escape! Two more years in prison. And when those two years were up, they said he'd tried it again - five more years. Went on like that for seventeen years, until finally he realized he was never coming home, and he just gave up. We used to visit him, and you could see it in his eyes, each time, slowly, like a wall was going up between him and the world - (Taps her head.) A wall in here. Don't tell me you know what Fascism is, I'll tell you: it's when they beat you down, throw you in a hole, when they take everything from you, and the People... cheer. Because they've been made to feel so scared of you and your ideas, so frightened that they will let your rights and their rights be buried in a prison cell so they can feel... safer. The People will let you die innocent and alone, chained in a hole not because soldiers are goose-stepping down the street, or because some dictator ordered it, but because you ask the one question they've been made to fear more than anything in their lives: What if we are wrong? What if this whole system *is* built on greed and oppression, what if the elections are fixed, what if there *is* a class war - but only one side is fighting, what if the media *is* a tool of the corporate elite, imprisonment a way to keep black men from voting, foreign policy dictated by oil companies, no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, or Iran, what if we're only in Afghanistan to build a pipeline, what if Capitalism really, really is just a big Ponzi scheme, run by brutal gangsters who will destroy anything - anybody who gets between them and Profit... it's all just too scary. So... rather than deal with the question, people just shut their eyes and minds, and are glad when anyone who asks the question is made to shut up. By any means necessary.

Pause.

RUTH (CONT'D)

That's Fascism.

Pause.

HELEN (OFFSTAGE)

(whispered)

Power to the People... Power to the People -

Ruth unlocks the door, and Helen and Lillian enter. Helen is carrying a duffle bag and a box. Lillian pulls an afro-puff wig with big, colorful bows, out of the bag, followed by big, floppy shoes. Helen pulls out a kazoo trombone, and toots a short tune as Lillian pulls a clown nose and rubber chicken out of the box. Ruth re-locks the door.

DIANE

Now do you believe me?

RUTH

Having a rubber chicken doesn't make you a clown! Anybody can have one of those!

LILLIAN

I don't have one. (to Ruth) Do you?

Pause.

JANICE

(to Diane)

Do a show!

RUTH

What?

JANICE

She should do a clown show - right now, here!

RUTH

How is that going to -

JANICE

Look, we don't have anything else to go on!

HELEN

If she's good, and she is a clown, maybe the rest of her story is true, too.

DIANE

I'll do it!

RUTH

But she -

DIANE

You want Sweetie Dimples, you got Sweetie Dimples!

RUTH

But I don't want Sweetie Dimples!

JANICE

All in favor of Diane putting on a show to prove she's a clown?

Helen, Lillian, and Janice raise their hands.

JANICE (CONT'D)

All opposed.

Ruth raises her hand.

JANICE (CONT'D)

(To Diane) What do you need?

Ruth points the gun at Diane.

RUTH

Alright... untie her. (To Diane) And you... don't try anything funny!

They all look at Ruth.

RUTH (CONT'D)

You know what I mean!

Janice unties Diane, as Helen and Lillian bring box and bag of props to Diane, who pulls out wig, Red Nose, gloves and a tiny hat with a big flower sticking out of it. She starts getting dressed.

DIANE

Okay, what kind of party do you want?

HELEN

What kind -

DIANE

The party! I'm a party clown - I do parties: bar mitzvahs, store openings, birthdays-

LILLIAN

A birthday party!

DIANE

Which of you is the birthday girl?

RUTH

(grimly)

I am...

Ruth sits down facing Diane, followed by the other women, forming an audience.

DIANE

And how old are you?

Ruth stares at her.

DIANE (CONT'D)

It doesn't really matter.

By now Diane has become Sweetie Dimples. She ducks down behind a chair and assumes her cute character voice and demeanor.

DIANE (CONT'D)

And now... are you ready for the best show in the world?

JANICE

Yeah!

RUTH

No...

DIANE

Are you ready for the most fun you've ever had?

JANICE

Yeah!

RUTH

No!

DIANE

Are you ready for the greatest clown -

RUTH

Fer Christ's sake, get on with it!

Diane jumps up and takes out toy trombone, and plays "Goodbye my Coney Island Baby" as she marches in a circle around women, ending in front of them.

DIANE

Ta-dah!

Janice applauds.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Now, I am here because today is a very special day, a day that is marked in the annals of time. The birthday of a very special person! Someone we all love and respect... And that very, very special person is, of course... Me, Sweetie Dimple!

JANICE

No, whoa, I thought it was Ruth's -

DIANE

What?

LILLIAN

It's Ruth's birthday -

DIANE

What are you saying?

RUTH

They said it's my birthday!

DIANE

Your birthday? No, no, no, that's impossible. Today is my birthday, you are my guests, and this is my party! Now... what's the first thing that always happens at a birthday party?

Janice puts her hand up.

JANICE

Play games?

DIANE

Before that.

Lillian raises her hand. Diane points at her.

LILLIAN

Is it sing a song?

DIANE

Before that! Right at the beginning!

The women shrug.

DIANE (CONT'D)

I'm surprised at all of you. The first thing that always happens at all the best birthday parties is... the clown shows up!

HELEN, LILLIAN, JANICE

Oooohhh...

DIANE

So where's my clown? Where is she? Have you seen her?

JANICE

No...

DIANE

Well, it can't be a birthday party without a clown! (to Ruth) Hey, I have an idea! Do you want to be my birthday clown?

RUTH

No. No, I don't.

DIANE

(dropping clown character
for a moment)

Normally I use the birthday kid for the act -

RUTH

Get away from me or I'll kill you.

*Diane resumes character, points at
Helen.*

DIANE

Okay! How about the tall girl in the back? What's your name?

HELEN

Helen...

DIANE

Let's give Helen a big round of applause!

*Lillian and Janice applaud as
Helen joins Diane.*

DIANE (CONT'D)

Helen... a very nice name... but a little strange for a clown. What's your clown name?

HELEN

I don't -

DIANE

You don't remember? Then we'll have to come up with one.
Now, what's a good name for a clown?

Janice puts her hand up.

JANICE

Sean Hannity!

DIANE

What?

LILLIAN

How about Paul Ryan?

DIANE

Wait a minute -

HELEN

I don't want to be Paul Ryan!

DIANE

No, wait -

JANICE

Sarah Huckabee!

LILLIAN

J. Edgar Hoover!

JANICE

Betsy DeVos!

LILLIAN

Kissinger!

RUTH

Nixon.

DIANE

What?

RUTH

Nixon. It's my party. I want her named Nixon. Nixon the
Clown.

HELEN

Works for me.

DIANE

Okay! The amazing, magical, mystical Nixon the Clown! And now, Nixon - the stage is yours!

Diane sits among the women, and claps wildly.

DIANE (CONT'D)

This is gonna be great!

HELEN

Ummmm...

DIANE

What's wrong?

HELEN

I... I don't...

DIANE

Oh no! You forgot your act too? What are we going to do?

LILLIAN

I don't know!

DIANE

I know, I'll help her! I've seen her act before! It was in the Himalayas, in the throne room of the Dalai Lama -

RUTH

You paid for school with this crap?

JANICE

Shhh!

DIANE

Oh mighty Nixon, this is your chance to show once again the amazing powers of your mind! First you must have your magic wand... Oooooooooo...

Diane gets the women to join her in her "Oooooooooo..." again.

ALL

Oooooooooo...

DIANE

Here it is -

*Diane hands Helen a black wand,
which transforms into a bouquet of
bright flowers.*

DIANE (CONT'D)

Ohmigosh! Did you see that? How did you do that?

HELEN

No idea!

DIANE

She's so magical she can do it without even trying!
Amazing! Now, Nixon is going to use her mysterioso clown
powers to read someone's mind! She will pluck out of
someone's mind the very thought they are having. And she
can do this because she is - Amazing! First, I must whisper
the magic clown words to her...

*Diane goes to Helen, and leans in
very close for a moment.*

JANICE

This is so cool!

RUTH

The pothead thinks this is cool.

DIANE

Now, oh magical Nixon, leave the room and meditate! And no
peeking!

Helen goes into the kitchen.

DIANE (CONT'D)

While she's gone Ruth I want you to pick an object in this
room. I want you to point out something, anything in this
room. Don't say it out loud, just point...

Ruth points at gun in her hand.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Are you sure you don't want to pick something... else?

Ruth slowly shakes her head.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Great... Okay, Nixon, you can come back in.

Helen enters, stirring a mixing bowl.

HELEN

Frosting...

DIANE

Alright now, concentrate, Ruth, concentrate! Oh, mighty, mystical, telepathic clown of the magical realm, tell me, tell us, yes or no, did Ruth point to this chair?

Diane touches a chair.

HELEN

No.

DIANE

Was it this lamp?

Diane touches a lamp.

HELEN

No.

Diane silently touches various things around the room, each time followed by Helen saying "No." Finally, ever so carefully, she starts to point at the gun in Ruth's hand. Clearly she's scared, and everyone but Diane is frozen. Just before she touches it Helen speaks.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Yes!

LILLIAN, JANICE

Oooooooooo...

JANICE

That is amazing!

RUTH

How'd you do that?

DIANE

There are some things that a clown keeps secret -

Suddenly Ruth is up, with the gun pointed at Diane.

RUTH

Is that one of the things they teach you in spy school? How to get into our heads?

HELEN

Ruth!

RUTH

HOW DID NIXON KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING?

HELEN

It's just a trick! When we put our heads together she whispered to me that whatever she touched after the couch was that thing you'd pointed at!

Ruth stares hard at Diane for a moment, then returns to her seat.

JANICE

And thanks for spoiling the whole trick, birthday girl! Jeez!

RUTH

Well, if that's all ya got, Dimples -

DIANE

Oh... no, no! I'm sure Nixon here has some games to play, too! Don't you Nixon?

HELEN
(getting into it)

Yes!

DIANE
I know the perfect game! First, we need a ball...

*Helen puts bowl of frosting down,
gets a ball out of the box.*

DIANE (CONT'D)
Everybody stand in a circle...

The women form a rough circle.

DIANE (CONT'D)
Here's how we play: we pick a category, and every time you catch the ball you have to name something from that category. Then you throw the ball to the next person, who has to name something else from the same category! For example, if the category was sports toss the ball to Lillian, who says...

LILLIAN
A sport!

DIANE
You would name the sport.

LILLIAN
I'm not that into sports.

DIANE
And if she couldn't name a sport she would be out of the game, and the rest keep playing until only one person is left! Now, what should we start with?

JANICE
How about towns?

HELEN
Countries!

LILLIAN
Socialist countries!

RUTH
(threateningly)
Fascist dictatorships...

LILLIAN
Revolutionaries!

RUTH
(threateningly)
Dead Revolutionaries...

LILLIAN
Members of the Committee of Public Safety during Year One
of the French Revolution!

HELEN
You are such a history teacher.

JANICE
Women revolutionaries!

RUTH
That sounds good!

DIANE
Okay, everyone in a circle... here's the ball. I'll start:
Emma Goldman!

She throws the ball the Lillian.

LILLIAN
I was going to say Emma Goldman.

HELEN
So was I.

DIANE
(taking back ball)
Okay, let's start again. And everybody think of someone who
isn't Emma Goldman, okay? Ready? Emma Goldman!

She tosses the ball to Janice.

JANICE
Angela Davis!

*After each name the ball is tossed
to the next person who speaks.*

Rosa Luxemburg!

RUTH

Judi Bari!

LILLIAN

Sojourner Truth!

HELEN

Sojourner Truth wasn't a revolutionary.

RUTH

Any woman who challenges the status quo to bring a new
class to power is a revolutionary!

HELEN

Okay, then: Mary Wollstonecraft!

RUTH

Elaine Brown!

DIANE

Nadya Krupskaya!

LILLIAN

Erika Huggins!

JANICE

Mother Jones!

RUTH

Winnie Mandela!

HELEN

Lakshmi Bai!

LILLIAN

Who?

HELEN

Led a rebellion against the British in India.

LILLIAN

JANICE

Oooh! Janice Joplin!

RUTH

What? How the hell did you get to her?

JANICE

Well, she challenged the idea of a woman rock star -

RUTH

She was a hop-head white girl who tried to sound black!

JANICE

Hold on, what?

RUTH

Who's next - Ethel Merman?

JANICE

Fascist!

RUTH

Ethel Merman was not a fascist!

JANICE

I was talking about you!

DIANE

Okay! That's enough of the games. Wow, that was fun! But now... one last feat of prestidigitation so inexplicable that grown men have wept at its sheer awesomeness! And for this Nixon will need another volunteer -

JANICE

Ooo, me! This time me!

RUTH

I'll do it.

JANICE

But -

RUTH

It's my party. I'll do it!

DIANE

Great! Come on up, stand right here... and now, from this perfectly ordinary box, I pull two perfectly ordinary handkerchiefs! Oooooo...

Diane gets the women to join her in her "Ooooooo..."

ALL

Oooooooooo...

DIANE

Ruth would you please tie the ends of the handkerchiefs together?

Ruth does it. Diane gets the women to join her in her "Ooooooo..."

ALL

Oooooooooo...

DIANE

And, oh magical Nixon, wave your wand over them... And Ruth, tuck the knot into your belt in front while we hold the ends...

Ruth does it.

DIANE (CONT'D)

And on the count of three all of us are going to say the magic word "Chickenpotpie," Nixon and I will pull our ends, and the handkerchiefs will magically untie! Ready? One, Two, Three!

ALL

Chickenpotpie!

Diane and Helen pull the handkerchiefs, which pull out of Ruth's belt, but instead of untying a big pair of granny panties are strung between them. All the women except Ruth crack up.

DIANE

Hmmmm. I Guess that was the wrong magic word! Maybe it was chickenfriedsteak!

RUTH

That's not funny.

LILLIAN

It's funny from out here!

HELEN

I thought your underwear would have little hammers and sickles on them -

RUTH

Stop it!

JANICE

What's the matter, Ruth? Don't have some story from the past about this?

RUTH

Shut up, Janice!

JANICE

(announces year as Ruth as newsreel)

1947! That was the last time I had my panties snatched off like that! It was during a collective meeting in a coal mine -

RUTH

Stop laughing!

JANICE

Hey, Ruth - you know who else didn't have a sense of humor about their underwear? Stalin!

RUTH

That's it!

Ruth pushes Diane out of the way and lunges at Janice. Somehow Diane has ended up with the gun, which she points at all of them.

DIANE

Hey!

The women all stop and look at Diane.

JANICE

Aw, shit.

DIANE

Okay, um, all of you, over there!

Diane is clearly almost as frightened as the other women as she gestures with the gun to the couch.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Sit - sit! (to Helen) You... hand me my backpack!

Helen hands it to her.

LILLIAN

Diane...

DIANE

Sit down!

The women sit on the couch as Diane fumbles through her purse, finally pulling out her cell phone, dials.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Hello, Sid? Yeah... no, no... I got held up for a little while, but it's under control now... yeah, in the room with me. All of them. Did you get it? You tell 'em I'll be there in a little while... no, I can handle them by myself. Out.

Diane hangs up, starts to pack up.

LILLIAN

So... do we wait here?

DIANE

What?

LILLIAN

Do we wait here, or do you take us in?

DIANE

In where?

RUTH

The pen, the Big House, the slammer -

DIANE

I'm not taking you anywhere!

RUTH

She's going to shoot us!

JANICE

Oh, God!

LILLIAN

In my living room!

DIANE

I'M A CLOWN, YOU IDIOTS!! Clown, clown, clown!

HELEN

But, but it sounded like -

DIANE

CLOWN! I, me, Sweetie Dimples! Has gig later! Sid wanted to know if I had my props with me! So paranoid -

LILLIAN

We're not paranoid -

DIANE

You're fucking psychos! I mean, put a gun in my face, tie me to that lumpy, stinky, ugly ass chair -

LILLIAN

It's part of a set!

DIANE

Threaten to kill me, and dump me in the ocean, because I said "The nose is in the box with the chicken?"

JANICE

How were we supposed to guess?

DIANE

How about you don't guess? How about you don't listen in on phone calls when you're crazy old nutbags!

RUTH

How do we know this isn't all part of your act, Sweetie?

DIANE

Crazy, crazy, crazy!

RUTH

All those calls - right when Helen went to do the transfer -

JANICE

How else could the Feds know about the money?

HELEN

How do we know this, what's his name, Sid Clark, how do we know he isn't another agent at the Bureau?

DIANE

I can't believe I, anybody, admired you! You're pathetic!

LILLIAN

You don't have to be rude!

DIANE

You're just scared, bourgeois old ladies sitting up in your big-ass house, with the Prius in the drive way and the free Mumia sticker on your bumper, wearing berets and playing at revolution!

RUTH

What do you know about revolution, clown girl?

DIANE

Ah ha! You admit I'm a clown!

HELEN

So real revolutionaries would have just killed you?

DIANE

You sure as hell wouldn't have sat around feeding me pie!

RUTH

Hey, I wanted to kill you right away.

JANICE

You didn't like the pie?

DIANE

(shouts)

ENOUGH ABOUT THE PIE!

HELEN

Are you going to tell the cops?

DIANE

What - that some old bakers took me prisoner? That'd be more embarrassing than telling people I'm a clown.

LILLIAN

At least we're trying to do something, Diane! We do try! What do you do, Sweetie?

DIANE

I gotta get outta here before I'm batshit insane like the rest of you!

Diane has finished packing up her stuff. She's still shaking as turns to Ruth.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Keys!

Ruth holds up keys, Diane snatches them from her. She looks at the Baking Circle one last time, then goes to the door, unlocks and opens it, then stops.

JANICE

What?

Diane is struggling with something. Finally she looks back at the women.

DIANE

How... did she know... his last name was Clark?

HELEN

What?

DIANE

I never said Sid's last name was Clark. How did you know?

HELEN

You must have said it -

DIANE

I don't think so...

Diane closes door, locks it, points gun at Helen.

HELEN

On the phone, you must have said it.

DIANE

I didn't say it.

HELEN

Well, I guess, during the background check-

DIANE

You said you all didn't know I was a clown. And Sid Clark is the booking agent for Sweetie Dimples.

HELEN

Well, I must have gotten it from somewhere...

Pause.

DIANE

Lillian, how did you and Helen meet?

LILLIAN

What are you -

DIANE

How did you meet?

LILLIAN

It was at a silent auction fund-raiser for the Zapatistas.
She bid on my cobbler.

JANICE

Mango Lemon -

DIANE

Who's idea was it to stop donating the money -

LILLIAN

Helen's...

HELEN

To save it all up - have bigger impact!

RUTH

Except... that never happened, 'cause the money's gone...
seized by the Feds...

HELEN

Wait are you saying, you think I'm -

DIANE

And who picked that particular bank in the first place?

RUTH

Helen did...

JANICE

She said she had a friend who worked there...

HELEN

I told you - Phil!

LILLIAN

The one whose son works for Dominos!

Fascists!

JANICE

Stop that!

RUTH

This is ridiculous!

HELEN

Were... were you listening in on my cell phone? Is that how you knew Sid's last name?

DIANE

Or did your buddies at Homeland Security do the background check for you?

RUTH

(to Helen, frightened)

Helen... tell them how you knew his name.

LILLIAN

It... it was...

HELEN

Helen...

LILLIAN

Does she have a cell phone?

DIANE

Yes...

LILLIAN

Where is it?

DIANE

(to Helen)

Helen is silent.

Why?

LILLIAN

Check the calls... see who she's been talking to...

RUTH

DIANE
(to Helen)

WHERE IS IT?

*Suddenly Helen lunges for Diane,
struggling to get the gun. The two
scuffle.*

RUTH

Hold on a second...

*Ruth reaches into her purse, pulls
out another gun. She points it at
Helen.*

RUTH (CONT'D)

NO PASARAN!

*The fight stops. Diane takes the
gun.*

JANICE

Where *did* you get that purse?

RUTH

Sears - 1957!

*Diane pulls out her own cell
phone, hands it to Lillian.*

DIANE

Dial her number.

Lillian dials.

HELEN

Listen to me... she's getting you all whipped up, she's
trying to turn us against each other -

*A phone starts to ring in the
kitchen.*

JANICE

It's in the kitchen. You were in there a lot -

RUTH

Always checking on your cake -

LILLIAN

I'll get it.

Lillian leaves.

JANICE

Woah... do you think that's how Nixon knew you pointed at the gun?

RUTH

You're not helping!

Lillian re-enters with the phone.

DIANE

Check the messages...

HELEN

No!

*Lillian pushes some buttons,
listens, starts to cry.*

DIANE

Put it on speaker.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

- had some gaps regarding the background of subject Lillian Blum. We need more on years 1982 to 1986 - especially her contacts in groups supporting rebels in Central America. Your reports on the activities of the others are fairly complete, but we still have questions about -

Lillian turns the phone off.

HELEN

Lillian...

LILLIAN

What... what did you...

HELEN

I didn't tell them about us!

LILLIAN

Us?

HELEN

We're safe! We're all safe! Nobody knows it was our money!

JANICE

Safe?

HELEN

It was an anonymous tip -

LILLIAN

You told them...

HELEN

I didn't say who! Just an illegal account under a phony name -

JANICE

You stole our money!

HELEN

I didn't steal it! The... government has it -
But they can't trace it to us, I made sure of that! My
report says we gave the money away, just like before!

LILLIAN

(stunned)

For... how long?

HELEN

Lil -

LILLIAN

HOW LONG!

HELEN

I was assigned... Since 9/11 they needed reports on any
groups, anybody that seemed subversive. So I was ordered -

LILLIAN

Ordered...

HELEN

But I didn't tell them anything! I just reported we were raising little bits of money, that we were... harmless.

DIANE

Why?

HELEN

Because I met Lillian.

RUTH

If we're so harmless why are you still here?

HELEN

They probably don't know what else to do with me. It's all not as organized as you think. And I want to stay. I do... this is not - Lillian, listen: I love you -

LILLIAN

Why?

HELEN

Because you're -

LILLIAN

WHY DID YOU DO IT? Helen... this... this was all lies! You were... lies! You didn't believe any of it!

HELEN

I believed in us!

LILLIAN

Us? You lied... I told you... I - oh, god! (Lillian begins to sob) I want... I ... Helen!

*Lillian runs into the kitchen,
sobbing.*

RUTH

Just following orders -

HELEN

(angrily explodes)

It's all so clear for you, isn't it Ruth? The government, the corporations, the military - we're all so bad, part of the machine! But we're just people, trying to do the right thing!

JANICE

Spying on people, coming into our homes, into our -

HELEN

We can't tell which group is going to be peaceful and which is going to be the Panthers! But I told them you're just baking! I - I stopped you from giving away money... you're not hurting anyone, scaring anyone -

RUTH

We must be scaring somebody.

HELEN

You're not Antifa, or Occupy, or Black Lives Matter! You're not running the streets screaming revolution! You're not some ghetto revolutionary cracking a white lady on the head on her way home because I worked for The Man! Never mind the marches I went to, protests, the rallies... You're not Weathermen, calling in bomb threats in to my precinct because we were all pigs, weren't we! They were stockpiling weapons, for God's sake! You're not the Panthers! So of course we infiltrated them, destroyed them - we had to! If you were the government wouldn't that be your job - protecting the public from wild, gun-waving revolutionaries!

Pause. Lillian re-enters, picks up Helen's bowl of frosting, exits into kitchen.

JANICE

Oh my god! Diane!

DIANE

What!?!

JANICE

I just thought of something!

RUTH

What is it?

JANICE

What *do* you like to bake?

DIANE

I...I...what?

JANICE

Cookies? Donuts?

RUTH

Shut up, Janice!

JANICE

I want to know!

RUTH

It doesn't matter!

JANICE

You know who else didn't think it mattered, Ruth? Stalin!

DIANE

Lasagna!

JANICE

What?

DIANE

Lasagna! I like to bake lasagna.

Pause

JANICE

Lasagna...

*Lillian enters from the kitchen.
She is calm. On an ornate platter
she holds Helen's finished
chocolate cake. It's beautiful.*

LILLIAN

In his junior year Lloyd told me something.

JANICE

Who's Lloyd?

RUTH

Hush!

LILLIAN

He was leaving school. This beautiful, passionate boy wanted to be part of the "real fight." I told him violence wasn't the answer, and he said it wasn't about violence, it was about ideas. The government wasn't afraid of the guns, he said. "Ideas, Miss Blum. Most Americans live like they're asleep, and the idea of Revolution is waking them up."

Lillian carefully cuts a generous slice of cake, and puts it on a small dish with a fork.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

That was the last time I saw him. He was killed that summer after graduation. Resisting arrest. They didn't say what he was being arrested for, just that he pulled a gun. And maybe he did. But maybe he felt it was life or death, that he didn't have a choice.

HELEN

Lillian -

LILLIAN

And that's why you're here, Helen, why they sent you. Because in our little way we're trying to wake people up.

Lillian places the small plate with the slice of cake in front of Helen.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

So we must be a little scary, too.

*Helen looks at the piece of cake.
Pause.*

JANICE

Well, if you're not going to eat it -

She moves to the cake, getting a generous finger-full of icing. But before she can put it in her mouth Lillian grabs her wrist.

LILLIAN

No! This is Helen's cake. *She* has to eat it.

JANICE

That's messed up!! She ate my pie, why can't I -

Ruth's eyes widen with realization.

RUTH

Janice!

Ruth whispers something to Janice, who gasps. Janice wipes the icing off her finger in horror as Helen looks at the slice of cake.

LILLIAN

I can make anything in my kitchen, can't I Helen. It's all about having the right ingredients...

JANICE

Where did she get -

LILLIAN

I've got a little bit of everything in there, remember?

HELEN

They'll - they know where I am! They'll come looking for me!

DIANE

(confused)

What?

RUTH

(Scared, but determined)

We'll tell them that you and Lillian had an argument, and she broke up with you.

HELEN

Lil -

LILLIAN

Turned out you were in love with me.

HELEN

I am.

LILLIAN

But I didn't love you.

DIANE

What's happening?

RUTH

Don't worry, clown girl. We'll take care of you.

LILLIAN

And you couldn't accept that... couldn't take the rejection, didn't have anything to live for -

*Diane realizes what's happening,
moves to the door.*

DIANE

This is crazy!

RUTH

It's not crazy, it's the Revolution.

*Diane stops, looks at Ruth and the
women. Ruth and Janice cross to
her.*

JANICE

Besides, you're one of us, now.

HELEN

They won't believe it. They'll investigate -

LILLIAN

But why would they suspect the Morning Glory Baking Circle of anything? Didn't you tell them that we were... harmless?

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

Eat your cake, Helen. It's all you have left. You can't go back, can you?

HELEN

No...

LILLIAN

And you can't stay here.

RUTH

No.

LILLIAN

So... eat up...

Lillian gets up and joins the other women as they all watch Helen in the chair. Ruth lowers her gun as Helen slowly picks up the fork, cuts a piece of the cake. All watch with rapt intensity as Helen brings the fork up to her lips.

JANICE

Lasagna...

RUTH

Hush!

LILLIAN

Go on, Helen. Eat up...

RUTH

Power to the People...

Pause.

JANICE

Lasagna's an entree...

DIANE

Yes...

JANICE

Well -

Pause

JANICE (CONT'D)

That'll be different!

Helen takes a bite.

Blackout.

End of Play