

ACT TWO

Scene One

(Two weeks later. About 10:00 p.m.)

(The Trivial Pursuit game is in progress. OLIVE, VERA and MICKEY are on one side of the table, RENEE and SYLVIE on the other. An empty chair, presumably FLORENCE's, is on SYLVIE's team's side.)

(The appearance of the room is decidedly different than in the first act. It is sterile, spotless and shining. No laundry bags around, no newspapers on the floor or old magazines, no dirty dishes.)

(MICKEY tosses the dice, then moves her marker six paces.)

MICKEY. Entertainment!

OLIVE. My meat. Go ahead.

RENEE. *(Looks back towards kitchen.)* How long does it take Florence to make coffee?

OLIVE. Well, first she has to go to Colombia to pick the beans. Come on, come on. What's the question?

SYLVIE. *(Reads from card.)* ... "In the 1940s, who was known as the 'Queen of Republic Pictures'?"

OLIVE. Oh. Oh. Easy. I know that. Don't tell me. It's er... what's her name? ...Oh, Christ, I know it. Big blonde. Lousy actress. I think her husband owned the studio.

VERA. Give us a hint.

OLIVE. NO!! No hints. I don't want hints... Alright, give us a hint.

SYLVIE. She had the same name as a cereal.

MICKEY. A cereal?

VERA. ...A cold cereal or a hot cereal?

(MICKEY and OLIVE glare at VERA. FLORENCE appears from the kitchen. She is wearing a frilly apron. She carries a tray with glasses, food and linen napkins. After putting the tray down, she takes the napkins one at a time, flicks them out at full length and starts to lay them out on each player's lap, one at a time from left to right around the table.)

MICKEY. *(To SYLVIE.)* What do you mean? Like Grape Nuts?

VERA. There's no actress named Grape Nuts. I would remember.

(FLORENCE continues spreading the napkins on them as they play.)

OLIVE. No... It's the name of the company. Kellogg. Kitty Kellogg... Nabisco... Nora Nabisco.

(FLORENCE pours a Pepsi into a glass with ice in it.)

FLORENCE. An ice-cold Pepsi for Mickey. *(She crosses to MICKEY.)*

MICKEY. Thank you.

FLORENCE. *(Holds back glass.)* Where's your coaster?

MICKEY. My what?

FLORENCE. Your coaster. I just bought a beautiful new set of plastic coasters.

VERA. *(Holds up a brown coaster.)* Here. I thought they were big chocolate mints.

FLORENCE. Always try to use your coasters, girls... Sherry on the rocks?

SYLVIE. *(Raises her hand.)* Sherry on the rocks. *(Holds up coaster.)* And I have my coaster.

FLORENCE. (*Crosses back to food tray.*) I hate to be a pest but wet glasses eat right through the polish. Ruins the finish.

OLIVE. (*Still on the game.*) Farina? (*To VERA and MICKEY.*) Is it Farina?

VERA. Wasn't Farina in the *Our Gang* comedies?

MICKEY. Right. The cute little black girl with a circle around her eye.

FLORENCE. Aaaaand we have a clean ashtray for Sylvie...

SYLVIE. Thanks.

OLIVE. ...It's three names. Something something cereal.

FLORENCE. Aaaaand a sandwich for Vera. (*She wipes the bottom of the dish with napkin and places it in front of VERA.*)

VERA. That smells wonderful. What is it, Florence?

FLORENCE. It's crab salad with curry sauce and a little dash of dill on Swedish rye.

VERA. You went to all this trouble just for me?

FLORENCE. It's no trouble. Honest. You know how I love to cook.

(*VERA is about to bite in when FLORENCE pushes VERA's head forward.*)

I just vacuumed the rug, try to eat over the dish...
Olive, what did you want?

OLIVE. Peking duck for seven! ...Can't you see I'm trying to concentrate?

FLORENCE. Gin and tonic. I'll be right back. (*She starts for kitchen, stops at metal box on table.*) Who turned off the Pure-A-Tron?

MICKEY. The what?

FLORENCE. The Pure-A-Tron. (*She turns it back on.*) Don't play with this, girls. I'm trying to get some of the grime out of the air. (*She flicks the air with her napkin.*)

OLIVE. (*Losing patience.*) You're purposely doing this, aren't you? You're trying to distract me so your team can win.

FLORENCE. No, I'm not. I don't even know the question.

MICKEY. Who was the Queen of Republic Pictures?

FLORENCE. Vera Hruba Ralston.

(She goes into kitchen. OLIVE yells.)

VERA. Ralston! *That's* the cereal.

OLIVE. *(Stands and shouts.)* THAT'S NOT HER QUESTION!!! THAT WAS MY QUESTION!!! ...I did all the hard work and she gets the fun of saying Vera Hruba Ralston!!! *(She throws her napkins down on the table.)* Goddam it! ...Mickey? What would it cost me to hire a hit man?

SYLVIE. *(Gets up.)* I can't take this anymore. In three hours we haven't got past four questions... I can't think. I get nervous she's going to sneak up behind us and shampoo our hair.

RENEE. *(Holds throat.)* I can't breathe. That lousy machine has sucked all the air out of here.

VERA. *(Tastes sandwich.)* This is delicious. The toast is crisp without being dry.

MICKEY. You know what I hear? I hear Sidney looks terrible. Sends out for Chinese food every night. Stanley saw him on the street with soy sauce on his mouth.

VERA. *(Still eating.)* Everything on the sandwich is so fresh. Where does she get fresh crab?

OLIVE. We raise them in the bathtub.

SYLVIE. Is that hotel in Florida still open? I think I may go.

RENEE. *(Indicating Pure-A-Tron.)* I'm telling you that thing could kill us. They'll find us here in the morning with our tongues on the floor.

SYLVIE. Do something, Olive! She's turned a nice friendly game into the Christian Science Reading Room.

VERA. I was just in the bathroom. The towels are so clean and fluffy. And they smell so good. Does she do that too, Olive?

OLIVE. No, she sends them to India and they beat them on rocks.