

Casserole Casanova

Herbert McCollom



ArtAge
Publications



ArtAge supplies books, plays, and materials to older performers around the world. Directors and actors have come to rely on our 30+ years of experience in the field to help them find useful materials and information that makes their productions stimulating, fun, and entertaining.

ArtAge's unique program has been featured in *Wall Street Journal*, *LA Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *American Theatre*, *Time Magazine*, *Modern Maturity*, on CNN, NBC, and in many other media sources.

ArtAge is more than a catalog. We also supply information, news, and trends on our top-rated website, *www.seniorthatre.com*. We stay in touch with the field with our very popular e-newsletter, *Senior Theatre Online*. Our President, Bonnie Vorenberg, is asked to speak at conferences and present workshops that supplement her writing and consulting efforts. We're here to help you be successful in Senior Theatre!

We help older performers fulfill their theatrical dreams!

ArtAge Publications
Bonnie L. Vorenberg, President
PO Box 19955
Portland OR 97280
503-246-3000 or 800-858-4998
bonniev@seniorthatre.com
www.seniorthatre.com

NOTICE

Copyright: This play is fully protected under the Copyright Laws of the United States of America, Canada, and all other countries of the Universal Copyright Convention.

The laws are specific regarding the piracy of copyrighted materials. Sharing the material with other organizations or persons is prohibited. Unlawful use of a playwright's work deprives the creator of his or her rightful income.

Cast Copies: Performance cast copies are required for each actor, director, stage manager, lighting and sound crew leader.

Changes to Script: Plays must be performed as written. Any alterations, additions, or deletions to the text must be approved.

Permission to Film: You do not have permission to film, record, or distribute the play in any medium. You are also not allowed to post on electronic services such as, but not limited to, YouTube. Exceptions must be granted by written permission from the publisher.

Royalty: Royalties are due when you perform the play for any audience, paying or non-paying, professional or amateur. This includes readings, cuttings, scenes, and excerpts.

The royalty for amateur productions of this show is posted online. It is payable two weeks prior to your production. Contact us for professional rates or other questions. Royalty fees are subject to change.

Insert the following paragraph in your programs:

Performed with special permission from ArtAge Publications' Senior Theatre Resource Center at 800-858-4998, www.seniortheatre.com

Casserole Casanova © 2015 by Herbert McCollom

CASSEROLE CASANOVA

by

Herbert McCollom

CAST

ROGER: Retired engineer, recently widowed, naive socially.

FRED: Divorced retiree, across the street neighbor, friend, and occasional blowhard.

MONIQUE: Any age from fifty on up. French ancestry, friend of Roger and late wife. Classy dresser. Flirts without meaning anything by it.

TRUDY: Any age fifty on up. German ancestry, friend and former client of Roger's. Wagnerian mannerisms, but romantic teaser.

VALENTINA: Any age fifty on up. Latina ancestry. Roger's former secretary. Rapid, precise gestures. Spicy.

LORETTA: Any age fifty on up. Italian ancestry. Roger's late wife's hair stylist. An unrefined drama queen with comic overtones.

PEGGY: Any age fifty on up. Asian ancestry. Owns Roger's favorite restaurant. Quiet, reserved woman who probably knows many martial arts.

Place

Roger's living room.

Time

The present.

SCENE 1

Setting: A typical living room. The front door is Up Right. A curtained window is Up Left. A large sofa is Down Left with a coffee table in front of it. Other living room furnishings are at director's discretion as long as audience has unobstructed view of the front door, sofa, and a flat screen TV. A Down Left arch leads to other rooms.

At Rise: Roger and Fred are standing at Center working on a bottle of scotch. Fred repeatedly refills Roger's glass after each sip Roger takes. Roger is quite drunk.

FRED: Here you go, Rog. Down the hatch.

ROGER: (*slurs*) If I didn't know you for the cheapskate you are, I'd think you're trying to get me drunk. (*twists Fred's wrist to read the label of the bottle*) With very expensive scotch. Thank you, Fred.

FRED: Damn, foiled again. Now why would I try to get my best friend plastered two weeks after he buried his wife?

ROGER: Because you're my friend?

FRED: That has a lot to do with it. You need sleep.

ROGER: I know.

FRED: Suck up. There's still another shot or so in the bottle.

ROGER: I think I've had suff...(beat) suff...(beat) had 'nuff.

FRED: That's an order, sergeant!

ROGER: Yes, sir! I'll have a little more, Lieutenant, sir.

Fred pours the remaining shot into Roger's glass.

FRED: I want you to sleep it off tonight. I don't think you've had a good night's sleep in a month since Pat's stroke.

ROGER: (*slurs*) Prolly right.

FRED: I'm heading across for home now. I want you to go to bed the minute I shut the door. Okay?

ROGER: What if I wanna wash TV?

FRED: Whatever. I'll call you in the morning. Late morning.

ROGER: *(gives a feeble wave to Fred)* 'kay. Bye.

FRED: *(Picks up a jacket off the sofa and walks to the front door.)* G'night, buddy.
(exits)

ROGER: Night.

(Roger puts his glass on a table, walks to the sofa to pick up a remote control from the coffee table and unsteadily turns to face a large TV. The doorbell chimes. Roger looks with surprise at the TV, then to the remote. He shrugs, then concentrates on the remote again. The doorbell chimes again. Roger slowly turns to face the front door. Again the doorbell chimes. Finally understanding, Roger stumbles to the door and opens it. Monique, dressed like a fashion model, stands outside)

MONIQUE: Hi.

ROGER: Hi. *(beat)* Monique.

(They stare at each other)

MONIQUE: May I come in?

ROGER: Oh! Oh, sure.

(He lurches aside as Monique bends to lift a large kettle and bag, then enters)

MONIQUE: I hope you won't think I'm being forward, but I brought you a bouillabaisse. Pat told me you love seafood. And I butter my croissants twice before baking.

(Walks with difficulty as the pot is heavy)

ROGER: Nice. Thank you. Can I help carry?

MONIQUE: (*appraises Roger's inebriation*) That's okay. I noticed in your window that you had company, so I waited in my car. Can I set this on your coffee table?

ROGER: Sure.

(*Monique places the pot on the coffee table, the bag on the floor, then sits at the end of the sofa, slowly crossing her legs. Roger stumbles to a chair*)

MONIQUE: Come sit beside me, Rog. I want to explain something.

ROGER: 'kay.

(*He struggles back to his feet, walks to the sofa and plops at the far end from Monique*)

MONIQUE: No, sit next to me. I want to show you something.

(*Roger moves over closer to Monique an inch at a time as she encourages him*)

ROGER: Mmmmmm! Smells good.

MONIQUE: (*laughs coquettishly*) That's my perfume. Wait 'til I take the lid off. Try that.

ROGER: Somethin' smells fishy.

MONIQUE: Oh, dear! I hope that's okay. Pat frequently told me how much you enjoy seafood.

ROGER: Do. Love seafood.

MONIQUE: Have you ever had a bouillabaisse before?

ROGER: What's that?

MONIQUE: That's what this is called. It's a recipe I got from my grandmother in Marseilles. Bouillabaisse d'epinards. It's a spinach seafood dish. I hope you like it. See the spinach?

ROGER: Uh-huh.

MONIQUE: Just warm this when you're ready to eat. If you bring it to a boil, the spinach will get too soft. Almost slimey.

ROGER: 'kay.

MONIQUE: Do you have a good wine to go with this?

ROGER: (*proudly*) Got three bottles. Cherry, concord grape, and dandelion.

MONIQUE: (*stunned*) I think you may do better with a Pouilly-Frisse'.

ROGER: 'kay.

MONIQUE: Have you ever tried bouillabaisse?

ROGER: Maybe. Can't 'member.

MONIQUE: (*beat*) Pat was English, wasn't she?

ROGER: (*slurs*) She was born in Rishmun. Rishmun, Virginia.

MONIQUE: Yes, but where did her family come from before they came to this country?

ROGER: Cornwall. England.

MONIQUE: I thought so. (*takes Roger's hand*) Now do you know what to do with this bouillabaisse?

ROGER: Sure. Eat it.

MONIQUE: And what should you do when you re-heat it?

ROGER: Don't boil.

MONIQUE: That's right! And what would be good to drink with it?

ROGER: (*strains to remember*) Pwee fwee.

MONIQUE: (*beat*) Just ask for a chardonnay.

ROGER: 'kay.

MONIQUE: *(releases Roger's hand and rises)* I'll be going now, but I'll be back every day with something for you to eat. Pat was a dear friend and I'm sure she's looking down at you and worrying that you may not be eating properly.

ROGER: Yeah. *(beat)* Oh, say hi to Bill.

MONIQUE: *(in shock)* Oh, Roger, I guess Pat never told you. Bill and I were divorced about eight months ago.

ROGER: Didn't know. Sorry.

MONIQUE: It was for the best. He was more married to his job than he ever was to me. *(Roger is having difficulty standing and she moves forward to give him a hug)* I'm sorry that you didn't know. That wasn't nice of me to burden you with my old news after what you've just been through.

ROGER: *(grinning)* What's that wonderful perfume?

MONIQUE: *(breaks the hug and steps back)* It's called 'Surrender.' I'll be back tomorrow with more food. You could stand some cheering up. *(she turns and walks to the door while Roger nearly falls)* Better put that pot in the fridge if you aren't going to eat it now.

(Monique waves and exits, shutting the door behind her. Roger stumbles to the sofa, plops onto it face down and passes out)

Blackout

SCENE 2

At Rise: It is late morning. The doorbell chimes. Roger remains inert on the sofa. An arm twitches. The doorbell chimes again. Roger groans. Now pounding begins on the door in addition to the doorbell chiming repeatedly.

ROGER: Okay! Okay. I'm coming. *(With considerable effort he pulls himself erect, grunting with each stiff and awkward step, to open the door and see Fred. The pot of bouillabaisse remains on the coffee table.)*

FRED: Jeez! I was beginning to wonder if I killed you. *(he enters and heads for the sofa and sits)*

ROGER: Wish you had. I have an ice axe imbedded in my skull.

FRED: Sorry. To show my sympathy I won't charge you for draining my eighteen-year-old single malt.

ROGER: Thanks. You're all heart.

FRED: *(pointing at the pot)* What's in the pot? Did you barf last night?

ROGER: No. Monique came over and brought me some French dinner.

FRED: *(impressed)* Monique? Smoking hot Monique came here last night?

ROGER: Yeah. Right after you left.

FRED: *(pulls off the lid, looks and sniffs)* My God, that's bouillabaisse!

ROGER: Yeah, that's what she called it. Why, is that something special?

FRED: Hell, that's gourmet cooking. Don't they teach anything at M.I.T. but engineering?

ROGER: Gourmet? You're kidding.

FRED: *(sniffs again)* Still smells good. You gonna eat all that?

ROGER: Doubt it.

FRED: Let's have some. I can eat that cold.

(Fred continues sniffing as Roger leaves the room and returns with bowls, utensils and a ladle)

ROGER: We better eat all this as she said she's coming tonight with more food.

FRED: She's coming again? Tonight? Hot Monique is coming tonight?

ROGER: That's what she said.

FRED: Tell you what. While we eat lunch I'll fill you in on Monique.

ROGER: No need to fill me in. She already told me Bill and she split up. I hadn't seen him in about three years.

FRED: That's not what I meant. I heard right after they separated, she hired an attorney who milked poor Bill for major bucks which she used for plastic surgery and a forty-pound weight loss. Mark my words, she's looking hot now, but to snag a new man.

ROGER: She looked the same to me as she did years ago.

FRED: Well, yeah, she was thin back then and she is again now. Tell me is she really hot or is she trying to hide something under shapewear?

ROGER: She felt thin when we hugged.

FRED: (*agape*) You and Monique hugged?

ROGER: Yeah.

FRED: Oh, my God!

ROGER: What's the big deal?

FRED: She's targeted you! She's hot for you, man!

ROGER: Oh, come on. We're old friends.

FRED: An old friend whom you don't see for three years who comes in and gives you a passionate hug?

ROGER: Who said it was a passionate hug? We used to see them every week in church, but they stopped going and then Pat began some cardiac therapy and we lost touch.

FRED: She's got it for you. (*Roger shakes his head negatively*) Listen to me. Women hug men for only two reasons. One, the guy's a relative and two, to test if they can turn on a non-relative guy. It's a game for them.

ROGER: Ridiculous.

FRED: Ridiculous? Then tell me why ten to thirteen-year-old girls want a horse more than anything in the world?

ROGER: Because they like horses, I guess. What's that got to do with Monique?

FRED: Bear with me. Young girls want a horse because it's practice leading something bigger and stronger by the nose.

ROGER: Of all the stupid ideas you've...

FRED: Bear me out! Bear me out. It's instinctive. Millions of years of evolution have imbedded DNA codes in women that create the urge to boss around a horse.

ROGER: Come on. Where did you get that crazy notion?

FRED: I heard it on a reality TV show.

ROGER: Did that show happen to explain how leading a horse has anything to do with Monique?

FRED: Yes, evolution. Women got the notion they could get something bigger and stronger to work for them. Men couldn't do that then. We were busy hunting. Women were gathering.

ROGER: Gathering what?

FRED: Horses, among other things. Pass the bouillabaisse.

ROGER: You are full of so much shit.

(Roger hands Fred a bowl and ladle as Fred scoops out a generous serving)

FRED: She pressed in real tight with that hug, didn't she?

ROGER: I don't know. I was drunk, remember?

FRED: She's coming tonight, right?

ROGER: Just to drop off some food.

FRED: That should take four minutes. Tops. I'll bet she stays more than an hour.

ROGER: You're betting?

FRED: Gentleman's bet. Ten bucks says she stays here longer than sixty minutes.

ROGER: You're on.

(They shake hands)

FRED: What you got to drink with that bouillabaisse?

ROGER: Cherry, concord grape, or dandelion wine.

FRED: *(shudders and grimaces)* I'll get my vodka. You can make me a dirty martini.

(Fred rises and walks to the door.)

Blackout

SCENE 3

At Rise: Later that afternoon. The doorbell chimes and Roger enters the room walking to the front door. He opens it to Trudy standing with a large paper bag in her hands.

ROGER: Trudy! What a surprise! How good of you to come.

TRUDY: Ja, of course I would come. You and Pat were our dearest friends. I was so saddened to read of your loss.

ROGER: Come in, please.

TRUDY: I really shouldn't. I just wanted to bring over some food for you. I know you're a computer whiz, but I remember Pat saying that you couldn't boil water.

ROGER: I'm not quite that bad a cook, but I remember the wonderful meals we had at your farm. Please! Come in.

(She takes a tentative step just over the threshold)

TRUDY: Okay, but I can only stay a few minutes.

ROGER: I won't hear of you standing. Please sit down.

(She moves carefully to the sofa and sits on the edge of the cushion.)

TRUDY: Well, all right, I don't want to impose. I just wanted to give you some food so you won't starve. You probably just had a bowl of cold cereal today. You'll love my dumplings.

ROGER: Actually, I had some pretty good seafood.

TRUDY: Ha! I think you are teasing me. I think maybe you had a tin of sardines. How I would love to cook for you. Here, let me show you what I brought. *(begins pulling out plastic bowls filled with food)* Here's some red cabbage. Some corn chowder with dumplings. Some wiener schnitzel, a bottle of Gruener Veltliner, and a slice of Bavarian chocolate cake.

ROGER: That's awfully kind of you. Quite a feast. May I pay you for this?

TRUDY: Herman and I loved you and Pat. It was your design of a better milk house that turned our marginal dairy into one that is profitable. We owe you, Roger.

ROGER: That milk house was my first project as an engineer. I'm so happy it worked out for you and Herman. *(beat)* How long has it been since the accident?

TRUDY: *(lowers her head)* It will be seven years next May since he passed away.

ROGER: That long? Where does the time go?

TRUDY: I think what a joy it is to have a man around the house. *(playfully jabs Roger in the ribs)* Especially one who knows how to fix things. This German woman loves American engineering... *(laughs at her comment)*

ROGER: I was glad I could be of help. *(beat)* I wish I could have done something that would have prevented Herman's death.

TRUDY: It could not be avoided. A cow got loose during a thunderstorm. Herman thought she'd wander onto the road and be killed by a car, so he jumped on the tractor and went after her. He drove by the manure pit but the weight of the tractor caused the bank to crumble and the tractor rolled into the manure pit with Herman and he drowned.

ROGER: *(beat)* Yes, it was a horrible way to die. *(beat)* Was he cremated?

TRUDY: No, he was interred.

(Roger, suddenly aware of the double entendre, sputters and works to stifle laughing)

ROGER: Excuse me. Throat tickle.

TRUDY: I'll bring some more food tomorrow. Sausage, cheeses, a beef noodle soup with dumplings. You'll love my dumplings.

ROGER: That's so very kind of you. What a sweet person you are.

TRUDY: And you must be starved for conversation. I'll bring our lunch and we can sit and talk for hours and hours.

Blackout

SCENE 4

At Rise: Roger and Fred are seated on the sofa in animated conversation. It is one hour later.

FRED: So you say this lusty, blonde German was saying she wants to bring lunches for you both just so she can talk to you?

ROGER: For hours and hours, yes, but I don't recall describing her as lusty.

FRED: Roger, wake up. The woman's hot for you.

ROGER: You said that about Monique.

FRED: Then she is too.

ROGER: So she could lead me like a horse? In your dreams.

FRED: Why are you so blind? Let me spell it out for you. You are not that far apart in age from either woman. They are single. You are single. To them, you're a rock star.

ROGER: You're near their ages. You're single. Why aren't women hot for you?

FRED: (*freezes, looks about, coughs*) They are, but you're a recent widower. Your case gets priority.

ROGER: How come this is the first I heard about women having the hots for you?

FRED: A gentleman is discreet.

ROGER: Then please be discreet in your assessment of my sexual attraction to those women I think of only as friends.

FRED: Right! Like you never had a sexual thought about Monique last night.

ROGER: I was drunk. I couldn't have had a sexual thought about anyone.

FRED: You were stone cold sober when Trudy began pushing her voluptuous breasts against you a while ago.

ROGER: When did I mention anything about her breasts?

FRED: You didn't have to.

ROGER: What? I don't follow.

FRED: You said she was blonde and German. I can picture her.

ROGER: You read too many comic books.

FRED: You say she wants to feed you and talk to you for hours. You're my best friend and I can stand to talk to you for about forty minutes. Why aren't you awake to the clues that she wants sex with you?

ROGER: Senator Brian Schneerhausen wants to feed me and talk to me and he just wants a campaign contribution. He doesn't want sex with me.

FRED: I don't know. I always wondered about Brian.

ROGER: You'll soon be able to see how wrong you are when you lose the bet about Monique.

FRED: What time will she get here?

ROGER: She gets here when she gets here. How am I to know? I don't set these things up.

FRED: You are absolutely right, my friend. You don't set them up. She does. She's a clever, hot, sexually driven woman.

ROGER: Right! And I'm George Fucking Clooney.

FRED: Okay, okay, I get it. You think you don't have the look that drives women nuts.

ROGER: Ah, you had an epiphany.

FRED: You are male, single and breathing at age 74. Ergo, you are hot. Well, for the over 60 demographic anyway.

ROGER: Are you snorting cocaine?

FRED: Very funny. Why are you in denial? These women are placing a carrot in front of you now instead of putting it before a horse.

ROGER: No, I don't buy that. Anyway a carrot couldn't excite me enough to even get me out of bed.

FRED: *(becomes animated)* Good, now keep the image of bed in mind. See, instead of a carrot, these women have decided to use...uhm...other...uh...

ROGER: Okay! Okay! I get the picture.

FRED: And, oh man! Are they good at it!

ROGER: I get it! I get it. C'mon, I'm about as sexy as a welcome mat.

FRED: Yes, that's it! You accept and welcome everyone and when a woman is a senior citizen and thinks she's lost it and nobody lets her know she's attractive, here comes Roger to accept her. No wonder the women go nuts over you.

ROGER: You just did a one-eighty on your argument.

FRED: What?

ROGER: Never mind, it's getting near time Monique may arrive. Don't you want to go?

FRED: What? And miss winning my bet?

ROGER: More likely you'll lose. Don't you see that your presence here will put a damper on her sex drive and she will shorten her visit?

FRED: *(beat)* Okay, I'm out of here. *(he rises and goes to the door)* Save some of her food for me, though. *(He exits)*

Blackout

SCENE 5

At Rise: The doorbell chimes. Roger enters from the archway, crosses to the door. The pot of bouillabaisse is gone. He opens the door to Monique who, again, is dressed in high fashion and carrying a basket.

ROGER: Hi, Monique, come on in.

MONIQUE: I can't stay. My grandson is in a third grade play and I promised him I'd go see him.

ROGER: Good for you.

MONIQUE: I'm in kind of a rush, so I only brought a Croque Madame, a baguette, some Saint Agur cheese, and a bottle of Alsatian Gentil. I know that sounds like a bad food mix, but trust me. The acids in the Gentil neutralize the butter perfectly. It's a 2010, their best year.

ROGER: It sounds fantastic. Thank you so very much.

MONIQUE: *(hands the bag to Roger)* Bye, I have to run.

(She gives him a peck on the cheek)

ROGER: Bye, Monique.

(Monique turns and exits. Roger watches from the door then shuts it and walks to the sofa. The front door bursts open and a wild-eyed Fred enters)

FRED: You bastard! What did you say to her? No way are you getting ten bucks. I think she's imprinting you.

ROGER: What hare-brained theory are you talking about now?

FRED: Not hare-brained. This is science.

ROGER: Like your horse theory?

FRED: Darwin showed an evolutionary link between women, horses, and leading around a man. Want proof? What do we call it when a woman keep telling us and telling us and telling us to do something?

ROGER: Nagging.

FRED: *(slaps his hands together)* Bingo! Nag. Another name for a horse.

ROGER: So what's this implanting thing you say Monique is doing?

FRED: Not implanting. Imprinting. Karl Lorenz did the study of imprinting. He found that if you keep appearing before a baby goose, that bird thinks you're family and it will follow you everywhere.

ROGER: What's that got to do with Monique?

FRED: Bear with me. Young girls get used to the idea of having a horse follow them around. About the time they enter middle school they notice that boys follow them around.

ROGER: That connection I can understand.

FRED: That switching of interest is called transference. Years go by and she and a guy imprinted each other and she expects that boy to follow her the rest of her life.

ROGER: I see.

FRED: So when that boy becomes an old man and kicks the bucket, this creates a void in her life. A vacuum. And I'm sure engineers know nature abhors a vacuum so...

ROGER: So she rushes to fill the void.

FRED: Exactly.

ROGER: I must be brain damaged. Your theory actually has a thin thread of logic to it.

FRED: Reality. You learn a lot on reality television.

Blackout

SCENE 6

At Rise: The next morning. Roger and Fred are seated at the sofa, reading the morning newspapers, drinking coffee, and sharing the baguette and cheese.

FRED: This cheese is excellent. Thanks for having me over. I think I'll pay you the ten bucks. This was worth it.

(He reaches for his wallet, pulls out a ten and hands it to Roger)

ROGER: Thanks. Tonight's meal will be continental. Some French. Some German.

FRED: What's it like having two women competing for you?

ROGER: *(sighs, shakes his head sadly)* They're friends. Pat and I have known them for years. They haven't the remotest interest in me.

FRED: You are so naive. French food is automatically sexy. And red cabbage is a known aphrodisiac, even though it makes me fart.

ROGER: If she brings me any more I'll save it for you.

FRED: I don't need it. I'm always ready for a jump in the hay. But you? You have two horny women fighting over you and you don't see it. What'll it take to wake you up? A third?

(The doorbell chimes. Roger rises, goes to the door and opens it. Valentina, Roger's former secretary, a striking Latina, stands there)

VALENTINA: Hi, Roger.

ROGER: Valentina! What a surprise. Won't you come in?

VALENTINA: Thank you. *(she enters)* I was so sorry when I read of your loss. I felt so badly that I couldn't attend the funeral. I'll miss Pat terribly.

ROGER: Valentina, this is my friend and neighbor, Fred. *(Makes a half effort to rise)*

FRED: Hi.

VALENTINA: Hello, sir.

ROGER: Valentina was my secretary the whole time I was with Hoskins Construction.

VALENTINA: Roger was everyone's favorite. I was under him for twenty-seven years. *(turns to Roger)* I want to do something for you. Would it be all right if I prepare some meals for you? I can't imagine you can even think about food yet, but you still have to eat.

ROGER: You don't have to do that. That's awfully nice of you, but really, I'm going to be okay.

FRED: He's not being honest. I doubt he's had more than a cup of coffee in three days.

(He points to Roger's cup as Roger stares, jaw agape, at Fred)

VALENTINA: Aha! Just as I thought. You can expect a delivery of island treats this afternoon. *(she moves to embrace Roger)* All of us feel so sad for you. Everyone from the old gang loves you. *(she releases her embrace)* I must go. *(she places a hand on Roger's shoulder)* You mean so much to us.

(Valentina and Roger walk to the door. He opens the door, she exits, turns and blows a kiss to Roger)

VALENTINA: Bye. *(Roger waves back, she turns and Roger closes the door)*

FRED: So, Mister-Nobody-Loves-Me! Add a hot Latina to the mix. Now will you believe me? *(Fred rises and mimics Valentina's embrace to empty air)* Everyone from the old gang **loves** you. You mean **so** much to all of us. *(he stops the impersonation)* I assume 'everyone' includes Valentina. 'Us' definitely includes Valentina. Why do I get the vibes that Valentina is hot for you? And she says she worked directly **under** you? *(he holds out his arms, begging)* How much more graphic proof do you need?

ROGER: I've known you for fifty years or so. You're always thinking someone is hot for someone else.

FRED: When was I wrong? Don't you recall all the romances and affairs we've heard of or saw?

ROGER: This is different. I think their attention is only because I lost my wife. I can't believe these women are husband shopping.

FRED: And I believe they are. But I'm also sticking with my theory that they may just want a roll in the hay with you. By the way, is Valentina married?

ROGER: Yes. *(beat)* Well, was. Her husband was career military. He died in Iraq in the Gulf War.

FRED: *(points to Roger)* Uh-huh! Uh-huh! This is what I'm talking about. *(checks his watch)* I gotta go. They're doing a re-run of the Victoria's Secret special. *(he turns, walks to the door, opens it then turns back to Roger)* Call me when the food is delivered, okay buddy? *(exits, shutting the door behind him)*

Blackout

SCENE 7

At Rise: Later that afternoon. The doorbell chimes and Roger rises from the sofa, goes to the door, opens it. Monique, glamorously clad, is there.

MONIQUE: Hi.

ROGER: Hi. Come on in.

MONIQUE: *(bends to pick up a bag, then enters)* I brought you a piperade.

ROGER: Sounds exciting. What is it?

MONIQUE: It's a specialty of the Basque. An open faced omelette garnished with onions, sweet peppers, tomatoes and ham.

ROGER: Something like a western omelette.

MONIQUE: Oui. But made French. I butter my croissants twice before baking and brought a chilled bottle of Dom Perignon. May I join you? There is just enough for the two of us.

ROGER: Uh, I guess so. Sure. That will be fine.

(She sits on the sofa, placing the bag on the floor)

MONIQUE: Let's sit and talk a bit. It's too early to eat.

(The doorbell chimes. Roger goes to answer the door)

ROGER: Excuse me for a minute.

(He opens the door to see Valentina)

VALENTINA: Surprise! You didn't think I was going to send food and just let you eat alone, did you?

ROGER: Uh, come on in.

(Valentina enters, stopping when she sees Monique, then continues into the room)

VALENTINA: You have company.

MONIQUE: *(icy)* Not company. A lifelong friend. I'm Monique. And you are...?

VALENTINA: Valentina. I was Roger's executive secretary. I was under him for twenty-seven years.

MONIQUE: Ah, an employee. How nice.

VALENTINA: If you'll excuse me for a moment, I'll go bring in the treats now instead of later. There's a bit of a chill in the air and some spices may help warm my blood.

(She strides to the door and exits)

MONIQUE: Perhaps we should eat now, while the piperade is still warm.

ROGER: Uh, should we see how Valentina feels about eating now?

MONIQUE: It shouldn't matter now or later for her. Tex-Mex reheats well. I'm afraid I don't have enough of mine to share with her.

ROGER: Perhaps I should call Fred over.

(The door opens and Valentina re-enters carrying a large cardboard box. She strides to the sofa and plops the box on the coffee table)

VALENTINA: We'll start with the empanadas, then go for the carne asada a la islas Caribbeana, finish it off with Abuela Maria made with Galletas Maria, guava, and cream cheese. *(she glances smugly at Monique then back to Roger)* I've never known you to refuse a margarita, so I brought two bottles, ready mixed. For you and me.

ROGER: I'm calling Fred. *(he taps Fred's number into a cell phone)* Fred, can you come over right now? Good. *(hangs up)*

MONIQUE: Roger suggested we eat now. You can do whatever you want. Now or later. Fred will be coming over any minute and may want to join you.

VALENTINA: You seem to know Fred very well. He should eat with you. Since I was under Roger eight hours a day, five days a week for twenty-seven years, I clearly know him better. I shall dine with Roger.

(The front door bursts open. Fred enters)

FRED: Hi, everybody. Hey, Valentina, back again?

VALENTINA: Yes, and many more times to come.

MONIQUE: Any trouble crossing the border?

VALENTINA: *(glares at Monique)* I was born right here on the 4th of July, Madam!

(The doorbell chimes. Roger opens the door to see Trudy holding a box)

ROGER: Oh, hi Trudy.

TRUDY: I brought you some...*(stops on seeing the others)* oh, you have company.

ROGER: Yes, it's okay. Come on in. Have you met Monique and Valentina?

(She looks at Monique, then Valentina and turns to Roger)

TRUDY: I was so hoping to see you alone this evening. I have so many things I want to say to you. Perhaps it would be better if I came back another time when we could be alone.

ROGER: No, now is fine. Please come in.

(She takes a tentative step inside the door)

TRUDY: I so wanted to talk to you about memories we shared, about things we know together. Your other friends wouldn't know those names and they would feel left out.

ROGER: Oh, I'm sure they'll understand.

TRUDY: I was so hoping it would be you and me. We've been friends for so many years. Look, in the box. There's Stuttgart chowder with my dumplings, potato salad, chocolate cake, and a bottle of liebfraumilch. Why don't you eat? I go now.

ROGER: No, please stay. I want you here.

TRUDY: Well, maybe for just a little while. I don't want to impose upon you. *(beat)* Oh, I don't know. Perhaps I should go.

MONIQUE: Either stay or leave. Make up your mind. Roger, let her go. The piperade is getting cold.

(An abrupt change overcomes Trudy. She hardens like steel)

TRUDY: Shut your mouth, Frenchy! One more word and I'll kick your skinny ass onto the street.

(Monique shrinks back into the sofa as Trudy turns back to Roger and sweetly continues)

TRUDY: No, liebbling, you enjoy your time with your friends. I'll phone for another time, schnuchiputzi. *(pinches Roger's cheek)* You've been so good to me and I just want to spend hours and hours and hours with you.

(Trudy continues smiling at Roger. The doorbell chimes. Roger numbly goes to the door, opens it and sees Loretta holding a large bag in her left hand. She has a foot long cigarette holder in her right hand which she uses to punctuate her speech)

ROGER: Loretta!

LORETTA: Ciao, Roger. *(she looks about the room)* Are you holding a wake?

ROGER: What? Oh, no, these are friends. Everyone, this is Loretta Viccenza, my late wife's hair stylist.

MANY VOICES: Hi. Hello.

TRUDY: Ja! She's a good hair stylist. I know Loretta. She is my stylist.

LORETTA: Trudy! My God. I had no idea you knew Roger. (*turns to the audience*) Shit! (*turns to Roger*) I'm so sorry about your loss. I loved Pat. She was a lady. A really nice lady. I brought you some osso buca alla milanese and a bottle of Brunello di Montalcino.

ROGER: Thank you.

LORETTA: (*puts the bag on the floor*) So how are you holding up? Are you eating or just microwaving? You know, we Italians settle many of our problems with food. Some day we should go to my house I could whip up some scungili marinara or marsala vitello washed down with a bottle or two of good fruli.

FRED: While you're at it, could you whip me up some for me?

LORETTA: Sure, Fred. You gonna pay me? I'm a hair stylist, not Giorgio Armani. (*turns*) Roger, you look like hell.

ROGER: I guess I've been over-stressed lately.

LORETTA: I don't mean just your face. Although (*beat*) some cucumber slices could tighten the bags under your eyes. Perhaps a touch of guy-liner would help make you look more alive. (*she takes a step back and studies Roger*) No, it's your wardrobe. Who's your designer?

ROGER: Levi Strauss.

LORETTA: Look, here's my business proposal. You could be a real charmer if you had more clothing sense. You get yourself some Zanetti slacks, some Corneliani shirts, a few Armani suits and you'd be a presentable stud.

ROGER: (*laughs*) Loretta, stop kidding! What would Carlo say if he heard you talking like that?

LORETTA: Oh, didn't you know? Carlo don't hear so good. He sleeps with the fishes. Capisce? He got behind in our protection payments.

ROGER: You can't be serious!

LORETTA: (*sighs*) No, I'm kidding. He left me for a biker chick. But you...me. We'd be quite a team with the right clothing. Women would flock to my salon just to be in the same room with you.

FRED: See? See, Roger? See what I've been saying?

(The doorbell chimes. Roger goes to open the door and Peggy Wu enters carrying take-out boxes and a bottle)

ROGER: Peggy! What a surprise! *(to the group)* This is Peggy Wu, our friend who owns the Asian Confucian Fusion Restaurant.

PEGGY: Hello. Is this a bad time? I brought you our entree I told you about that is named after your late wife.

ROGER: How thoughtful of you. What is it?

PEGGY: Lobster with cellophane noodles and shredded pork.

ROGER: And you named this for Pat?

PEGGY: Yes, for her. Pat Anna on our menu, but in Chinese it's called Lung Ha Fun See. Would you like to try it? I brought one for each of us and it goes best with shaosing wine.

MONIQUE: Hey, just a damned minute. Get in line! Roger, may I use your microwave to warm the piperade? Though I'm afraid my croissants are past their prime. The rest of you should leave. Roger and I have a dinner date.

VALENTINA: Excuse me! I was under Roger for twenty-seven years. He's having dinner with me.

LORETTA: Whoa! Wait a minute! No way!

TRUDY: Wait your turn, Guinea!

LORETTA: German pig!

FRED: You tell her, babe!

VALENTINA: *(trying to calm them)* Girls! Girls!

MONIQUE: Shut up, you wetback bitch.

FRED: Whoa! That had to sting!

VALENTINA: *(whirls to face Monique)* Slut!

FRED: Woo-hoo! Major score!

TRUDY: Girls! Let's settle this like women. To the victor go the spoils. Dinner with Roger!

(Trudy reaches into the bag she brought and begins hurling dumplings at Monique who retaliates with a poorly thrown croissant that strikes Valentina)

FRED: Yes! Food fight! *(he suddenly panics)* Don't throw the cheese! Don't throw the cheese!

(The battle continues with each woman yelling, throwing and getting hit with food for several seconds)

ROGER: Girls! Girls! I get it. You can all have me. You may share me. We can have a *(counts on his fingers)* un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six...a menage a' six!

(The women freeze. They are shocked, offended)

VALENTINA: I can't believe what I just heard you say! I thought I was here to help a friend, not a perverted beast.

MONIQUE: Sex? Is that all you men think about?

(The women cluster together and bond against the common enemy, Roger)

LORETTA: Forget about my business offer. You're disgusting!

TRUDY: I feel shame that you ever set foot in my house.

(The women have been picking bits of food off their clothing and popping it into their mouths)

PEGGY: Do not enter my Asian Confucian Fusion Restaurant ever again!

(Monique stands still, a bit of thrown food in her hand)

MONIQUE: Loretta, your osso buco is the best I've ever tasted. What is your secret?

LORETTA: Really? I just add some saffron threads to the risotto. I'd be glad to share the recipe with all of you.

TRUDY: Monique, I know you think your croissants have waited too long, but even this late they are flakier than anything I've ever tried.

MONIQUE: Thank you, Trudy. It's all in the dough mixing. I'd be happy to show you. But I'd give anything, Valentina, to know how you got coconut flavor into the carne asada a la isla Caribeana when there was no sign of coconut anywhere.

(Valentina laughs)

PEGGY: You sauteed the steak in coconut oil, didn't you? That was in my cookbook.

VALENTINA: Busted! That was the secret. Why don't we pick up what's left of our dinners and go to my house where we can all share recipes?

(The women nod, agree, pick up their food bags and leave. As the door shuts, Fred turns to Roger)

FRED: Did you save any of Monique's Saint Agur cheese?

Blackout

SCENE 8

At Rise: One day later. Roger and Fred are on the sofa discussing the other day.

ROGER: Honestly, I'm still freaked out. I couldn't have imagined such an event in a million years. What got into those women?

FRED: Several things came together at just the right time to create the perfect storm.

ROGER: What came together? Five female friends suddenly turned on me.

FRED: Back to Darwin. Evolution can go in either direction. You take a cuddly house kitten, throw it into the woods for a few years with no human contact, and it will become a sly, cunning, killing machine.

ROGER: So?

FRED: In the same way, you take a domesticated, pleasant, educated woman, make her a widow and stick her in a decaying home for a few years and she will go feral. There is nothing more ferocious than a feral woman. Nothing.

ROGER: So you're saying that what happened yesterday was because they...

FRED: They're all feral women.

ROGER: I've been a widower less than three weeks and I'm already half afraid of women. How can that be? Have women gone mad?

FRED: No, it's biology. As we age, our male bodies produce less and less testosterone. And therefore the little bit of estrogen we have becomes more and more in charge. You heard of Methuselah?

ROGER: Sure.

FRED: The Lah ending is a women's name. After 900 years, all he had left was estrogen. His name as a young man had the masculine ending. Methuseloh.

ROGER: *(sighs)* You need help. I didn't realize you have a hyperactive bullshit gland.

FRED: So. What are we having for dinner?

ROGER: I have no idea. What the women didn't take with them was on the floor and I threw that out.

(Fred picks up his cell phone)

FRED: Once more, it's Fred to the rescue. *(he taps the phone once)* I got pizza on speed dial. You want anchovies?

THE END