

At rise, 58 year old MARILYN CASEY is on the phone. SHE is
pacing back and forth as SHE
talks.

MARILYN

(Talking into the phone)

How do you stay in business doing stuff like that? I've never
heard of anything so stupid... What sort of bank lends someone
that much money without asking what it's for...? No! Of course

MARILYN (continued)

he didn't tell me what it was for; I'm his wife for god
sakes...! Well I know now! He bought a boat...

(BARBARA CASEY rushes in from
the back yard carrying a half
empty casserole dish of lasagna.
SHE hands the dish to an un-
expecting MARYILYN.)

BARB

A bowl, I need a bowl.

MARILYN

(Talking into the phone, SHE
watches Barb, confused.)

I said he bought a boat.... What I want to know is, why would
you re-mortgage my house so he could buy the damn thing...? He
had a life insurance policy, but that wouldn't come close to
paying it off.... I don't know -

(BARB grabs a bowl of candy from
the coffee table and empties it in
the trash.)

MARILYN (continued)

Hold on a minute.

(Covers the phone and addresses
Barb.)

What in heaven's name are you doing?

BARB

Dog, dying, backyard - water, I need water - the hose!
(Races out the back door with the
bowl.)

MARILYN

Let me get back with you... I said I'd get back with you....
Next week, after we bury the bastard!

(Hangs up and yells out the
back door.)

Barbara, what are you doing?

BARB

(Enters with the bowl)

He's gone. I hope he'll be alright.

MARILYN

Who are you talking about?

BARB

Rover.

MARILYN

I assume Rover is a dog.

BARB

I don't know if Rover is his real name, but he is a real dog.

MARILYN

So, what's going on with Rover?

BARB

Well, I was feeding him the lasagna casserole Mrs. Barrymore brought over...

MARILYN

You fed Mrs. Barrymore's casserole to a dog?

BARB

Have you tasted her lasagna?

MARILYN

I haven't had the chance.

BARB

Well, even Rover didn't like it. He took one bite and started gagging and choking. I thought he was going to die.

MARILYN

Has Rover recovered?

BARB

I don't know. I came inside to get him some water, but when I got back he was gone.

MARILYN

If he left under his own power I'm sure he's fine.

BARB

I hope so. I'd feel bad if I killed him... Is Ellen back yet?

MARILYN

(Picks up a paper sack and empties it on the couch. Piles of paper fall out. SHE begins to rummage through them.)

Not yet, but I expect her anytime.

BARB

What are these?

(Crosses to the table, picks up a cheese puff, takes a small bite, and then puts the uneaten piece back on the tray.)

MARILYN

They're cheese puffs. Mrs. Barrymore just brought them by.

BARB

Oh, that's terrible! - The lasagna, these cheese puffs. - She's trying to kill us.

MARILYN

Nobody is trying to kill anyone.

BARB

Oh, god I'll bet I've just eaten a poisoned cheese puff.
(Begins spitting out the cheese puff)

MARILYN

They're not poisoned.

BARB

You don't know that. You've never eaten a poison cheese puff before.

MARILYN

And you have?

BARB

Just now I did.

MARILYN

Barbara Casey, use a napkin.

BARB

I don't have one.

MARILYN

(Takes a tissue to BARB)

Here! - And don't leave half eaten food on the tray, you know better than that.

BARB

I wasn't going to leave it.... She hates us you know?

MARILYN

Who hates us?

BARB

Mrs. Barrymore.

MARILYN

She doesn't hate us. She hated your father.

BARB

I remember that time when she was mowing her lawn and bagging the grass. He yelled over and asked her if she was packing her lunch.

MARILYN

She's a sweet lady, she wouldn't hurt a fly.

BARB

You think you know her, but you don't know what goes on in her head. Have you seen the way she looks at me?

MARILYN

What way is that?

BARB

The way people look at you when they hate you. Like this.
(Demonstrates by glaring
sternly at Marilyn)
She's probably figured out I'm the one who killed her cat.

MARILYN

You killed her cat?! Barb, why would you kill her cat?

BARB

It was an accident. Her snotty grandson drove by while I was working in the garden, and called me gimpy girl. I meant to throw the rock through his car windshield, but I missed and hit her cat.

MARILYN

She thinks her cat ran away.

BARB

No, I killed him. Then I buried him in the garden out front.

MARILYN

Well, I don't think she's poisoning us because you killed her cat.

BARB

Then why *is* she poisoning us?

MARILYN

She's not poisoning us. She's just a lousy cook.

BARB

You don't have to be a good cook to poison someone.

MARILYN

Look, just don't eat the cheese puffs or lasagna.

BARB

It's too late, I'm already poisoned.

(beat)

Are you afraid of death, Momma?

MARILYN

That depends on whose death you're talking about.

BARB

I don't think I am.

MARILYN

Well, you should be.

BARB

I don't think I'm afraid of death, but I am afraid of dying.

MARILYN

What's the difference?

BARB

Death is where you're going; dying is the trip you take to get there.

MARILYN

No, dying isn't the trip you take to death, life is.

BARB

Death is kind of a funny thing isn't it? People talk like it's something you can hold or touch. You know, "death is around the corner", "death is in the air", but it's really just a state of mind.

MARILYN

You don't think people really die? You think it's just all in their heads?

BARB

No, that's not what I mean. It's just that people are afraid of death, but they don't really know what it is. - Unless they're already dead.... What are you doing there?

MARILYN

I had a life insurance policy on your father around here somewhere.

BARB

Mother, do you think we're doing the right thing?

MARILYN

Of course we're doing the right thing. Besides, we don't have a choice.

BARB

I know you're right, but -

MARILYN

Barb, we've talked about it and this is best.

BARB

You sound so sure. How can you be so sure?

MARILYN

Who said I was sure?

BARB

Then how can you say it's best?

MARILYN

Okay, it's not best, it's the worst, but it's done so we have to live with it.

BARB

We could tell the truth.

MARILYN

We could eat those cheese puffs too, but we're not going to. We agreed this was what we should do. Barb, we've lived with secrets all our lives, what's one more.

BARB

It's just so hard.

MARILYN

Of course it's hard. It's hard for me too, but don't worry about it. I'll help you. Like always, you and me.

BARB

We're a good team aren't we?

MARILYN

None better.

BARB

Mother, don't ever die. I couldn't survive a single day without you. I'd fall apart I know I would. Promise me you won't die.

MARILYN

I promise.

(beat)

BARB

You're lying.

MARILYN

Nothing's going to happen to me, and even if it did, you can take care of yourself.

BARB

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

MARILYN

Did you order flowers?

BARB

Carnations, right?

MARILYN

Unless they had something cheaper.

BARB

Have you decided on the casket or the head stone?

MARILYN

For the headstone, we paint his name on a brick. For the casket, we line a cardboard box with toilet paper.

BARB

Mother, you really have to decide. They keep calling from the funeral home.

MARILYN

You seem to be consumed with the idea of death, you do it.

BARB

I don't like to talk to that guy from the funeral home. He has such a scary voice. He talks so soft and slow, "Have you chosen a slumber box for your loved one yet?" He gives me the creeps.

(CHRISTY FURGESON enters from upstairs. SHE is twenty years old, her dress is a little more affluent than MARILYN or BARB, and it sets her subtly apart.)

MARILYN

You and Christy do it.

CHRISTY

Do what?

MARILYN

Casket, headstone, flowers - Barb can fill you in. I need to find some papers.

BARB

Momma, you need to help us.

MARILYN

Keep the casket cheap and headstone small. I'll be right back.
(Exits to the kitchen)

CHRISTY

She's not taking this too well, is she?

BARB

I guess I hadn't noticed.

CHRISTY

She just seems to be - well... upset. - That sounds stupid doesn't it? Her husband falls down the stairs and breaks his neck; of course she's upset.

BARB

So, are you all settled in?

CHRISTY

Just like when I was ten, and mom and I would come spend the weekend.

BARB

I used to love that!

CHRISTY

The only thing missing is a coke float, and a game of scrabble.

BARB

Scrabble, that'd be great. With everybody back it would be like old times. We should do that. What do you say?

CHRISTY

With coke floats?

BARB

Coke floats for us, for your mom and grandma, vodka stingers.

CHRISTY

I say let's do it... Would you think I was morbid if I told you I was looking forward to these next few days?

BARB

What to you mean? Why would it be morbid?

CHRISTY

It's just that I don't get to see you, or Grandma, or even Mom very often, and well... We're all here because Grandpa died, and I'm sad, but at the same time I'm happy.

BARB

Don't feel bad about Grandpa. We're all happy. - So, when's the last time you saw your mom?