

PAULA. Why are you attacking me?

MILES. Why do you see this as an attack? On the contrary, I have nothing but admiration for the shrewdness of your whole enterprise. You convince people they're dependent on you for their happiness and then you charge them for that dependency. It's brilliant.

PAULA. That is not what I do!

MILES. Oh, I've touched a nerve. I'm sorry. Have you tried the eel?

PAULA. No.

MILES. You should. (Pause.) Go ahead, try it. (Pause.) Try it.

(SHE reaches for it. HE smiles. SHE sets down the sushi.)

PAULA. All right, Miles. All right. I think we've talked about me quite enough for one evening. I'd like to hear about you. Why don't you tell me what kind of dreams you have?

MILES. You're interested in my dreams?

PAULA. Very.

MILES. (Pause.) All right. (Pause.) There's one I have where I'm in my office above the city, and there's a document in the computer that I can't get out. So I look in my desk for the key to the computer and it looks like a knife, or a letter opener, it's quite sharp, but just as I'm about to put it into the computer, a white rat comes along and steals it out of my hand. So I chase it up and down the halls, and then I hear it behind me, so I turn, and hold out my hand, and the knife is in it—the key, I mean—but it's a different rat, a black rat, only now she's covered in blood

by Theresa Rebeck

e stabbed her. Because I had the key all along. Usually, I've had that dream several times.

.. Really.

Do you know what it means?

.. No. No. I have no idea. (SHE stares at him. IT.)

Scene 5

Gina's apartment. While once again the table is the centerpiece of the room, this space is cluttered, swamped, with knitted items, piled on the floor, hanging from the ceilings. It is a maze, a jungle of knitting. All the WOMEN stand in the midst of the knitting, looking about. Tableau. As the LIGHTS change, the WOMEN start to turn, taking in the spectacle with wonder.

LIZ. Wow, Gina, this is—you been knitting a lot lately, huh?

GINA. I've had some extra time on my hands.

LIZ. I guess so.

GINA. Lily, this is that stitch I wanted to show you—

(SHE picks up a sweater from a pile and shows it to LILY, who takes it gingerly.)

LILY. Why, yes, oh, it's lovely—

PAULA. Gina, when did you do all this?

GINA. Last week. This week. The past couple weeks.

PAULA. Yes, but—

MARGIE. I could knit twenty-four hours a day, and I'd still ...

LIZ I don't know, Gina, this is—

GINA. Are we knitting or not? I thought you guys came here to knit.

*(Pause. SHE knits. THEY watch her.)*

LIZ. To tell you the truth, I'm not sure why I'm here, Gina.

MARGIE. Gina—how are things?

GINA. Fine.

MARGIE. Really?

GINA. Oh, sure.

PAULA. How's your family? How's work?

GINA. Work? Oh, come on, Paula. I'm through with all that

LIZ. All what?

GINA. Everything.

*(THEY all look at each other uneasily.)*

GINA. What? What is the matter with you guys? This is America. No one starves in America. Look at the news, would you? Do you ever see starving people on the news? Well, okay, you do, but they're somewhere else. Ethiopia. Calcutta. Americans, Americans take care of each other.

LIZ. They do?

LILY. Liz.

GINA. You see it on television all the time. Someone will take care of you. Peter Jennings. The lady from

Citibank. Your mother. You don't have to worry. You live in America. Maybe you live in a cave, but you also live in America. And that makes it all right. I mean, is there anywhere else in the world where you could be more free? If you were more free, you would die. Right?

LIZ. Well, when you put it that way.

LILY. Gina—do you have any juice, any apple juice or something? My throat's a little dry.

GINA. Oh—I'm sorry. Of course. Does anyone else—

LIZ. No.

MARGIE. I'm fine.

PAULA. I'd like some juice, too.

GINA. Okay. Great.

*(SHE exits to the kitchen. The OTHERS speak quickly, furtively.)*

LIZ. What the fuck is going on?

LILY. Look at this place—

LIZ. Paula, I think you should handle this—

PAULA. Handle what? I don't know what's—

MARGIE. Well, something's wrong—

PAULA. That is not my—

LIZ. Paula—

PAULA. WHAT? She is not one of my clients! And even if she were, I don't know if I—just because I have a fucking degree does not mean I have all the answers to everybody's problems, all right? All right? I don't have answers to anything. I don't have answers to shit.

GINA. *(Calling from kitchen.)* I can hear you.

LILY. What?

PAULA. *(Quiet.)* I'm sorry. I'm not myself today.

GINA. (*Off overlapping.*) I can hear you talking about me!

LILY. Oh, no, we were just admiring all the work you've—

PAULA. (*Overlapping.*) I had a bad night last night, and right now I don't think I'm the person to handle this. I mean, look at this place! I can't solve this!

GINA. (*Reentering.*) I don't need to be solved. I'm a lot happier. And I've been getting a lot of knitting done.

MARGIE. Well, it's just—okay, look. I'm a little slow, all right. So what's going on? Did you get fired or something?

GINA. Oh, no. I didn't get fired. I was let go. They let me go. Like a balloon.

(*SHE hands drinks out. THEY all watch her.*)

LIZ. When did ...

GINA. IT DOESN'T MATTER. (*Pause.*) I don't care. We're streamlining the department, see, and that's just that. I put my time in, eighty hour weeks, I work hard, my research is better than anybody's, and I'm the only person in the entire building who knows how to run the computers. And it doesn't matter. They don't care. You want to know why the city is falling apart? Because they fire everybody who knows what they're doing. It's policy. If you know what you're doing, you get fired.

LIZ. But don't they have to ...

GINA. They don't have to do anything. They only have to do what they want. And Morrison doesn't like me because I'm a woman. It's also because I know what I'm doing, but she'd be able to handle that if I weren't a girl.

She's one of *those* women, you know, one of the ones who only likes men? What am I talking about; we're all the same. You're all, the first thing you think is that I screwed up somehow, that's the way the logic works. Women are the worst, and that's the truth. We're always watching each other like sharks; they don't have to do it to us anymore because we're only too willing to do it to ourselves. And who comes into the picture but little Mr. Harvard Law. The kid's killing time! Everybody knows it. In six months he's going to land a spot with Debuvoise and Plimpton, whatever, he's out of here, he's doing his public service time so he can have a nice little mark on his CV. We're a SLOT on his RESUME and she thinks he's God's gift. I don't care. If I were black, you can bet it would be different. I'm sorry for being a racist, Paula, no one wants to be a racist but these morons making the decisions don't leave you any choice! Davenport stays because he's black, and Mr. Harvard Law stays because he's Mr. Harvard Law, and I go because I'm a single white woman in my thirties and it doesn't mean shit what I do. Let's face it. We're the most useless group of people history has ever heard of; we're a bunch of fucking spinsters, that's what we are. I wish I was married. I wish I was black. Or no, you know what I wish? I wish everybody who got in—you know, everybody who got in—would turn into white men. All of them. Those Asian women newscasters, and those sleazy black male weather guys, all those snappy little white girls who look great in power suits—I wish they would just turn into white men over fifty. I wish all of them would turn into Bill Buckley. Because then we would *know*. We would know who the good guys were, and who the bad guys were. We would

just know who was who and what was what. (*SHE starts to unravel her knitting.*) But it's fine, okay? Everything is fine. If this were, you know, India or something, *Iran*, maybe then I'd be in trouble. Not only would I be out of a job, I'd have to wear one of those stupid black things over my face. Right? But this is America. It's better here than anywhere in the world. Everything is fine.

LIZ. Gina, when did this happen? How long have you been out of work?

GINA. I don't know. A few weeks. Three weeks. Something.

MARGIE. Why didn't you tell us?

GINA. I thought I did. I don't know. I forgot.

MARGIE. We could've helped, Gina.

STOP GINA. But I don't come here for help. I come here to knit. (*SHE continues to unravel her sweater.*) This yarn is beautiful. Isn't it? It's so beautiful I can't stand to finish this sweater, so I keep pulling it out and knitting it over and over. Someone else did that, didn't they? Some woman. Knitting the same thing, for years and years?

PAULA. Penelope.

GINA. I understand her now. I think I really understand her.

LIZ. We'll get you a lawyer.

GINA. I am a lawyer.

LIZ. Well, then you should know what your fucking rights are.

GINA. I do.

LIZ. Gina, you have to fight.

GINA. Why?

LILY. Liz—

LIZ. No! Christ! This is our problem, anytime someone steps on us, we go, I don't want to make waves, it's too much work, it's not worth it. Well, the perfect man is not going to come along and make this all right! We have to do it ourselves!

GINA. God, you are so full of shit, Liz.

LIZ. I am not—would you, goddammit, would you put the fucking knitting down for a half a second and deal with reality; this is your life I'm talking about, you stupid woman—

(*SHE grabs the knitting in Gina's hands and tries to pull it away from her. GINA hangs onto it.*)

GINA. Leave me alone. LEAVE ME ALONE.

LILY. For God's sake, Liz, leave her alone!

(*LILY pulls Liz away. GINA shrouds herself in her yarn.*)

LIZ. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. (*Pause.*) I'm sorry, Gina. (*LIZ sits, confused.*)

(*Pause.*)

MARGIE. Well, I think I finally figured out this sleeve! Lily, look. I mean, I had to take it apart about fifty times but I finally got it! Sort of like Penelope, huh, Gina?

(*GINA does not respond.*)

LILY. It's beautiful, Margie.