

IN THE BEDROOM

*Ruth is putting groceries away, ignoring, or trying to, Matt who has appeared in the doorway. She puts milk in the refrigerator and stares into it for a long time, trying to decide what to do. He can feel her judging him. Finally, having resolved something in her mind, she closes the refrigerator door—revealing, taped to it, several newspaper articles on the case, gathered by her, no doubt, including one with a picture of Frank.*

MATT: How did it go today?

*(She doesn't answer.)*

MATT: Something wrong?

*(She doesn't turn around.)*

RUTH: Wrong? Like what, Matt? What could be wrong? She continues "straightening up", starts recklessly washing dishes.

*(Matt doesn't leave.)*

*(A plate SHATTERS in the sink. This stops her. She stares at it, then feels his presence. She turns around.)*

RUTH: What do you want?

*(He looks unsure of himself.)*

MATT: I want to know what's going on.

RUTH: Right.

MATT: You're obviously upset. If there's something you want to talk about ...

RUTH: Talk? Who, us? Oh, you mean each other? What if somebody walked in? They wouldn't recognize us. They'd think they had the wrong house.

*(Matt takes this in. He breathes deeply.)*

MATT: Do you want to talk or not?

RUTH (*searching*): Talk, talk...oh, you must mean about our dead son. No, we haven't before, why should we bother now?

(*They stare at each other across the kitchen.*)

MATT (*slow burn*): What can I do, Ruth?

(*Ruth looks at him for a long time.*)

RUTH: Forget it, Matt. Why don't you just go...

MATT (*building*): What do you want from me?

RUTH: I want you to stop acting like nothing's happened! That's what I want.

MATT: Why? Because I'm not bouncing off the walls?

RUTH: No, Matt, that would require feelings. We don't want you to hurt yourself.

MATT: Do me a favor, Ruth. You want to have a grieving contest, go find someone else.

(*He starts to turn.*)

RUTH: Yeah, I know how you grieve. Go have another beer.

(*He spins back*)

MATT: WHAT DO YOU KNOW? WHAT? You know nothing! You know nothing about me. What I go through – every day – every lousy, stinking day.

RUTH: No, I don't know Matt. I don't know what you go through, or if you go through anything. But that's your choice dear, not mine...

MATT: You're goddamn right it is. My choice is to not scream at the world. Maybe one of us has to be reasonable here, did you ever think of that?

RUTH: Reasonable? Gee, Matt, I don't know about you, but I miss my son. I'm glad you have time for reason. That's what you imparted to Frank, that sense of reason – Oh, he thought you were very reasonable.

MATT: What the hell is that supposed to mean?

(*She is about to say something, but stops short.*)

RUTH: Nothing.

(*She turns back to the dishes. He moves in on her, seething.*)

MATT: What are you really trying to say anyway?

(*She says nothing, picking up broken plates.*)

MATT:...that I'm the one responsible?

*(She drops the pieces back in the sink and exits.)*

*(He's fast on her heels. She heads for the bedroom.)*

MATT: Let me tell you something. Let me tell you something!

*(She throws the door closed behind her, but he bangs it open with his palm.)*

MATT: You got it backwards. I know what you think. That I was too lenient, that I let him get away with...

RUTH: Everything. Everything!

*(She re-enters from bedroom.)*

MATT: Oh, really?!? Why do you think he never came to you?

RUTH: He wouldn't talk to me, Matt. He didn't trust me. You made sure of that.

MATT: Why would he talk to you, Ruth? You never listened!

RUTH: No. But you did. You were winking at him the whole time. You encouraged him. You wanted what he had. Her.

MATT: You've got to be kidding...

RUTH: You know it. Come on. You wanted it, and you couldn't get it – that's why you didn't stop him – so you could get your kicks through your son. You know that's what happened. And now you can't cope with it. You can't admit the truth – to me, or to yourself. You can't admit that he died for your fantasy piece of ass.

*(Matt, stunned, reels for a second – and then, finally, explodes.)*

MATT: You want to know why our son is dead, Ruth? He wasn't with her because of me, he went there because of you. Because you were so controlling, so overbearing, so angry that he was it, that he was our only one.

RUTH: That is not true.

MATT: It is! From the time he was little you were telling him why he was wrong. Everything he did was wrong. What was wrong with him, Ruth?

*(She stares at him, dumbfounded.)*

MATT: You are so unforgiving. You are. That's what he said. And you're playing the same shit out with me. That's a horrible way to be! Horrible. You're bitter, Ruth. You can point your finger at me all you want – but you better take a good look at yourself first.

RUTH: I just wanted to talk about what happened, Matt.

MATT: You expect me to open up to you? Embrace you? You scare me. How can I talk to you? I can't even look at you.

*(They suddenly become of the doorbell ringing over and over. They watch each other, both reeling, both out of breath. The doorbell continues. )*

MATT: That's probably...the police.