

# **Playing the Food**

A One-Act Play

by

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Theatre Professionals:

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SETTING:

The entire set consists of the dingy interior of a gray, stuffy, one-room apartment, dimly-lit by one pale light bulb in a desk lamp. The only other potential light sources are the faint neons that force themselves tiredly through the blinds tacked tightly against the single window, and a garish overhead fluorescent that burned out long ago and had never been replaced. A bed occupies the middle of the room; perhaps a fifties-style one with a pink high-gloss finish, now marred and dusty from age. The bed is unmade. To one side of the bed, an old desk leans against the wall straining under the weight of a large plaster cat. A telephone shares the desk top. The chair beside the desk has been made out of an entirely different type of wood and should in no way match the design or texture of the desk. Somewhere on the desk side of the bed sits a small dorm-style refrigerator, with a hot plate and a few cans of beans and tuna perched on it. On the other side of the bed is a cardboard box overflowing with clothes and dirty dishes. Next to that is the door, which leads out into the hallway to the stairs.

AT RISE:

Evening. A light snow falls outside—the first snowfall of the year—which has accumulated one inch and promises at least two more. RANDI sits at the desk, fingering the telephone. If the blinds were torn away from the window frame, she would see the new snow; she stares at the plaster cat instead. Beside her sits an empty bowl, dirtied from supper. She rises slowly and painfully, picking up her bowl. She hobbles over to the doorway, peering out the peephole for a moment. Putting her hand to the doorknob, she prepares to open it and go down the hall to wash her bowl, but soon the sound of footsteps and pounding on another door interrupts her. She hesitates, putting her eye to the peephole again. Then she turns away from the door and drops the bowl into the box of clothes, where it lands against other bowls

with a clink. She limps back to the desk, and lowers herself into the chair. Glancing at the doorway again, she picks up the telephone receiver and dials quickly. Before it finishes ringing she drops it back into the cradle. She stares into the window again for a while, then picks up the plaster cat, carrying it over to the bed. With the cat in her arms, she begins stroking it lightly with her fingers. As she does, faint light comes up on the window showing the silhouette of a man with a real cat sitting in his lap. He, too, strokes his cat throughout the scene.

FIGURE

You know he's not there.

RANDI

Thought maybe he'd forget.

FIGURE

Hoped?

RANDI

Thought. Maybe.

FIGURE

Maybe.

RANDI

(After a pause)

Everyone forgets. My mother even forgot my birthday.

FIGURE

Hmmm.

RANDI

Did you even hear what I said?

FIGURE

No.

RANDI

Maybe he won't forget. Better not.

FIGURE

Has he ever missed a day at the crisis line?

No. RANDI

Is he there right now? FIGURE

No. RANDI

Is he supposed to be there right now? FIGURE

Yeah. RANDI

Then did he forget? FIGURE

No. (Putting it all together) RANDI

(Pause)

Doesn't mean he'll come.

(A longer pause with silence)

Hear the mice nibbling in the walls? What are they eating in there?

(Turns to him)

Why don't you come in?

I am. FIGURE

No. In here. RANDI

(RANDI sets the cat down and approaches the window. She puts her hand on the edge of the blind and hesitates)

You know no one's out here. Your imagination's running away -- again. FIGURE

I have to see. RANDI

Go ahead. FIGURE

(The light fades, and the FIGURE begins to fade with it)