UNSPEAKABLE ACTS

A full-length play based on historical events

by Mary F. Casey

Mary F. Casey
1420 Camden Avenue #15
Los Angeles, CA  90025
mcplywrt@aol.com
(310) 444-7794
CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARTHA DEANE
A professor of Physical Education in her mid-fifties, charismatic and dynamic.

ROSALIND CASSIDY
A professor of Physical Education also in her mid-fifties, scholarly and sardonic.

RUTH FULTON
Assistant Professor of Physical Education in her mid-thirties, fish out of water in academia.

DAVID DOWD
An ambitious university dean in his mid-forties.

PHYLLIS DOWD
Housewife, helpmate to David Dowd, in her early forties.

ROBERT GORDON SPROUL
Powerful, self-assured President of the University of California, in his fifties.

SETTING

The action of the play occurs between 1952 and 1955 in Los Angeles, California.

Stage Right is the outdoor patio of Martha’s small but cozy 1940’s modern home. There are patio chairs, plants and a well-stocked bar. Stage Left is David’s office on campus with an appropriately large desk, chairs and appropriately impressive framed photos on the walls.

In between, or above, Martha’s and David’s respective spaces is a third space, flexible and liminal. With different lighting, this can be a gym floor, a small insurance office, David’s study or a plot of land.

NOTE ON PHYSICAL MOVEMENT

Three of the characters are professional Physical Education teachers and thus acutely aware of human movement. Their movements should reflect a grace and comfort with their physical selves. This ease is in contrast to David Dowd’s physical awkwardness; he’s a man out of touch with his body.
NOTE ON HISTORICAL SOURCES

“Unspeakable Acts” uses both history and fiction to tell the story of UCLA Professor Martha Deane’s real-life fight to save her position and her good name.

Archives utilized in the creation of the play include the Library University Archives and the Library Center for Oral History Research, both at UCLA. Particularly informative were the oral histories of professors Martha Deane and Rosalind Cassidy, and Dean Paul Dodd.

A nationally recognized dance educator, Prof. Deane taught at UCLA for twenty-six years prior to the events described in the play.

Rosalind Cassidy was a distinguished Physical Education professor and scholar at Mills College and at UCLA.

University of California President Robert Gordon Sproul’s long and distinguished career is well-known.

The character of Ruth Fulton is based upon the real-life UCLA Assistant Professor of Physical Education who lived with Martha Deane at the time the play opens.

Though a fictionalized composite, the character of David Dowd was inspired in part by the life and career of a UCLA administrator of the time. David’s wife, Phyllis, is a character of fiction.

The published work of Professor Kathleen Weiler of Tufts University provided historical background and important perspective on Martha Deane and her milieu.

While the events surrounding Martha Deane’s suspension from UCLA and her fight for reinstatement are accurately represented, dialogue between characters and certain situations have necessarily been invented. However, the historical record does suggest Martha and Ruth ultimately enjoyed a long life together up on the Tiger Tail.
ACT ONE

The stage is dark.

MARTHA DEANE (O.S.)

Ladies!

SPOT UP on Martha Deane, a charismatic U.C.L.A. Physical Education professor in her mid-fifties. It is the autumn of 1952.

MARTHA (continuing)

Ladies, welcome to your bodies. Yes, your bodies, ladies. That amazing conglomeration of muscle, skin, bones and sensations that has got you this far. Rule number one in preparing for a career in Physical Education – never forget you have a body. Rule number two: Consider carefully what it tells you. Chances are, it’s right.

And allow me also to welcome you to your first day of training in your career as an instructor of Physical Education in the California school system. This will be the twenty-sixth year I have facilitated the Introduction to Teaching Methodology class. I assure you, you have made a choice you will never regret.

Your job will be to teach young ladies in junior and senior high schools across the state, many of them unaware they even have a body. You will teach them by offering each girl a series of experiences through which she will discover her own relationship to human movement. In so doing, in a larger sense, you will be helping her experience her own essential humanity.

While some people today question the place of Physical Education in the university, our philosophy is that Physical Education is a science as profound and complex as physics or medicine. What could be more important to the world today than teaching what it means to live and move in the world as a human being?

SPOT OUT on Martha.
Scene: The patio of Martha’s house in Los Angeles. Small but cozy, it’s ideal for modest indoor/outdoor modern California living.

At Rise: It’s nearing sunset and a party is in progress (O.S.). Martha offers a martini to her best friend, ROSALIND CASSIDY. Also a professor, Rosy is in her mid-fifties, a respected scholar.

ROSALIND
I’m sure it’s delicious, Martha. But one was more than enough.

MARTHA
Don’t tell me I am in the presence of an academic with common sense.

ROSALIND
The world is ever full of possibilities, dear.

MARTHA
I’ve always feared women who could hold their liquor.

ROSALIND
Rather subversive these days, isn’t it?

MARTHA
Oh, everything’s subversive, to hear the Republicans talk.

ROSALIND
I wouldn’t let the Democrats off the hook so quickly.

MARTHA
Well, I don’t recall Roosevelt looking for spies and microfilm in a pumpkin patch.

ROSALIND
He’s been dead since 1945. Surely you’ve noticed.

MARTHA
Only because you keep reminding me.

ROSALIND
Oh, I suppose I’ll vote for Stevenson like every other egghead. But he won’t win. Not while McCarthy rules.

MARTHA
I’d like to think we’re safely out of that madness, but the Un-American Committee is practically next door.
ROSALIND
Home on the range. Where the deer and the antelope name names.

MARTHA
You’re altogether too clever and too sober for your own good.

RUTH FULTON enters, a strikingly attractive assistant professor in her mid-thirties. She’s carrying a drink tray.

RUTH (to Martha)
Martha, what on earth did you say to Jim Barton?

Martha moves to help her re-fill glasses.

MARTHA
Not a thing that wasn’t warranted.

RUTH
He practically bit my head off in the driveway. (To Rosalind) He’s put in this swimming pool next door --

MARTHA
I don’t know which is worse -- the noise from the motor or having to admit we now live next door to someone who owns a swimming pool.

ROSALIND
You mean that sound like a freight train outside the living room window?

MARTHA
I told him the noise was unacceptable.

RUTH
Martha!

MARTHA
Well, it is.

RUTH
All right. Yes, it is. You win. But did you have to bring out all the artillery? Now you’ve really made him angry.

MARTHA
Let him be angry!
RUTH
He lives fifteen feet from us!

MARTHA
All the more reason he should respect the eardrums of his neighbors.

RUTH
Oh, why do I even bother to argue with you?

ROSALIND
You may have noticed, Ruth, everything’s a matter of justice to Martha.

MARTHA
There’s another way in the world?

ROSALIND
Complacency, I suppose.

MARTHA
Appeasement.

ROSALIND
If only you’d been at Munich instead of Chamberlain.

RUTH
The swimming pool motor is not a Nazi tank, Martha. Sometimes it’s okay to compromise. In Nebraska, we called it getting along.

MARTHA
Your preference is to live in Nebraska?

Ruth touches Martha affectionately.

RUTH
My preference is to live with Martha Deane and take my lumps.

MARTHA
It can be a bit lumpy sometimes, can’t it?

ROSALIND
Ruth’s mid-western politeness doesn’t allow her to tell you you’re a bull in a china shop, Martha dear. It’s a wonder the swimming pool isn’t littered with broken crockery.

MARTHA (to Ruth)
How’s the party going?
David Dowd is telling us all about his last trip to some country in Africa to recruit an anthropologist.

And Phyllis?

Riveted.

A brave soul, Phyllis.

Courageous.

Ever sacrificing.

Ever sacrificed.

To Phyllis!

Shhhhh. He’ll hear you.

Ears ever alert for the slightest inchoate mutiny. You’re very tolerant to invite the Dowds, Martha.

I’m trying to kill him with kindness. And my canapé recipe.

So, maybe he won’t cut the P.E. Department’s program –

-- if he tastes your hors d’oeuvres?

You both know me too well. I am nothing if not strategic.

She takes drink tray from Ruth
As an apology, let me take these in.

Dowd’s probably still talking.

Consider it a gift.

Excuse us, Rosy.

Sorry –

Quite all right. It’s your home.

You’re very broad-minded.

You forget I’ve worked in women’s Physical Education departments all my adult life. I must say I prefer displays of tenderness to screaming fights over boyfriends.

Ruth exits with drink tray.

She’s a trouper.

She makes you happy. And she’s lovely.

Do I say thank you? When you say that to a man about his wife, he’s supposed to be complimented.

So be complimented.
I am happy.

But --?

Does it sound like there’s a “but”?

Something is making you uncomfortable and you won’t talk about it unless I browbeat you sufficiently.

I’m not saying there’s a “but”, Rosy –

But if there were?

If there were, it would be that I live in terror of having to admit I’m too old for her.

Oh stop it, Martha.

It’s twenty years --

She doesn’t seem to care. That’s what matters.

I don’t know if it’s the actual years so much as the experience of them. Not that I’m wiser – by any means. But I’m not afraid. Ruth and her generation are cautious in a way ours isn’t. Oh, when we were her age did we have a time, Rosy. Eleanor Roosevelt was in the White House –

And there was mass poverty and millions of people went hungry. You have a selective memory.

We got through the Depression somehow, Rosy, thank God. The War was horrible, of course, but it did open up all kinds of possibilities for women --
ROSALIND
Which have all but disappeared now. No more Rosie the Riveter, the last I looked. They want us back in the kitchen where we belong. And those of us lucky enough to have careers make less than our male colleagues. Is it any wonder Ruth has caution radar?

MARTHA
The pendulum will swing back. She just hasn’t seen it swing as many times as I have. I must seem like a relic to her, a throw-back.

ROSALIND
You’ve got past the first year with flying colors. Surely by now all your secrets have been revealed. She’s seen you unwashed and unkempt. She’s heard all of your stories at least once, many twice. She’s tolerated innumerable faculty parties, including the likes of David and Phyllis Dowd, for God’s sake. Martha, I think it’s safe to say the girl isn’t going anywhere.

MARTHA
Knock on all the wood you can find.

ROSALIND
It must be nice to have someone to come home to every night.

MARTHA
At my age it would be nice to think that part of my life is settled.

ROSALIND
Well, my life is certainly settled, I suppose. But in a different way.

MARTHA
What about the new fellow in architecture?

ROSALIND
Married. Well, separated. Very touch and go. The wife doesn’t understand him, etc. etc. etc.

MARTHA
I knew I shouldn’t have wasted the good silver on him.

ROSALIND
You need to accept my obvious spinsterhood, Martha dear. God knows I have. I love teaching and having a career and that truly is enough for me. And that’s a good thing because it’s damn hard to find a man willing to marry an intelligent woman over thirty.

MARTHA
For all intents and purpose, I suppose we’re both spinsters. As far as the world knows.
ROSALIND
Your spinsterhood, however, appears to be significantly more satisfying than mine.

POLICE SIREN (O.S.)

MARTHA
Oh, for heaven’s sake!

ROSALIND
Barton again?

MARTHA
Who else would complain about the noise made by a group of addle-pated academics?

ROSALIND
I’m almost flattered he finds us a nuisance.

MARTHA
Don’t tell that to Ruth or she’ll have your head.

ROSALIND
You’ll be polite to the nice officer?

MARTHA
When have you known me to be anything but the soul of discretion?

They laugh.

LIGHTS DOWN.

LIGHTS UP SL on David Dowd’s office on the campus of U.C.L.A.

PHYLLIS DOWD, a woman of gentle strength in her forties, looks at the framed photo on the desk while her husband, Dean DAVID DOWD, rummages through some papers. Once a man on a fast-track ascent, he finds himself now in his mid-forties, engine idling.

PHYLLIS
Gad, David. Where did you find this?

DAVID
What’s wrong with it?
PHYLLIS
The angle. I look like I’m a hundred and ten.

DAVID
Hardly.

PHYLLIS
We’ve got all those Hawaii pictures. Put one of them in.

DAVID
I like that one, Phyllis. I like looking at you at the Boardwalk.

PHYLLIS
With the wind howling and the water spraying. Please, David. All your colleagues must think I’ve let myself go.

DAVID
I’m the only one who looks at it.

PHYLLIS
All the more reason.

DAVID
What brought you by today, Phyllis?

PHYLLIS
I can’t just drop by spur of the moment to have lunch with my handsome husband?

DAVID
You haven’t been here in months.

PHYLLIS
All the more –

DAVID
Why?

PHYLLIS
You know why, sweetheart.

DAVID
You can stop worrying about me.

PHYLLIS
You’re tired all the time. Distracted --
I work hard –

DAVID

Too hard.

PHYLLIS

Now is my chance to –

DAVID

-- move up. Yes, I’ve heard all this before, David.

PHYLLIS

I’m fine, Phyllis.

DAVID

You need a vacation.

PHYLLIS

We just got back from Hawaii.

DAVID

That was a year and a half ago.

PHYLLIS

Okay, okay. Let me pencil you in.

DAVID

Dorothy says they’re looking for a Chancellor at one of the teachers colleges --

PHYLLIS

No.

DAVID

David, maybe you should consider it.

PHYLLIS

U.C.L.A. is my home.

DAVID

I know it wouldn’t be as prestigious --

PHYLLIS

I am moving up, Phyllis. You know that. It just takes –
PHYLLIS
A fresh start might be just the thing.

DAVID
-- time.

PHYLLIS
It couldn’t hurt to think about it.

DAVID
It just takes time.

PHYLLIS
You seem tense. You’re fighting with Martha again, aren’t you?

DAVID
She’s got forty teachers all doing Group Process, whatever that is. If I had my way –

PHYLLIS
Yes, I know. You’d cut her program.

DAVID
It’s an educational –

PHYLLIS
-- frill. So I’ve heard.

DAVID
Do I really talk about it that much?

PHYLLIS
Yes, constantly. But I don’t think that’s what’s really bothering you.

DAVID
Nothing’s bothering me.

PHYLLIS
David, listen to me. It’s just a rumor, what that Regent supposedly said.

DAVID
What?

PHYLLIS
It doesn’t mean anything. To me or to anyone else. He’s just an ignorant fool.
DAVID
Will you stop bringing that up, Phyllis!

She stares at him in surprise, silent.

DAVID (continuing)
Oh, I’m sorry, dear. You’re right, I am tense these days.

He kisses her.

PHYLLIS
What about France this year, David?

The phone rings.

DAVID
France?

He picks up phone.

PHYLLIS
We’ve never been.

DAVID (on phone)
Oh, hello, Mr. President.

PHYLLIS
You’ve always wanted to.

DAVID (on phone)
Yes, of course.

He hangs up.

DAVID (to Phyllis)
Another time.

PHYLLIS
You don’t want to go? Why not?

DAVID
Talk about it, I mean. Another time.

PHYLLIS
It’s just, you’ve been so –
DAVID

I’m fine.

PHYLLIS

So. How is President Sproul?

DAVID

He’s in town from Berkeley.

PHYLLIS

And he needs to speak with you. Right now.

DAVID

It’s highly confidential.

PHYLLIS

It’s always highly confidential with him. You drop whatever you’re doing, he swears you to secrecy on some important thing he wants you to take care of and you can’t sleep for a month.

DAVID

That’s not true, Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

He may be the President of the University of California, David, but you don’t owe him your heart and soul.

DAVID

It will be quick, dear. Do you mind?

PHYLLIS

Does it matter?

DAVID

Of course it matters.

PHYLLIS

But Robert Gordon Sproul matters more.

DAVID

He pays the bills. And for the trip to France.

PHYLLIS

So he does. I’ll wait outside.
Thanks, honey.

Phyllis exits.

He picks up phone.

DAVID (on phone)

Please send him --

Long-time President of the University of California, ROBERT GORDON SPROUL, enters. A middle-aged man, he has retained the dynamism of youth. His presence is imposing.

Mr. President.

SPROUL

Phyllis is looking well.

DAVID

Oh, you bumped into her -- ?

They shake hands. Sproul walks around the room restlessly. He looks at the photo on David’s desk.

SPROUL

Windy that day, wasn’t it?

DAVID

Very.

SPROUL

How do you like Adlai’s chances?

DAVID

It would be nice to have an intellectual in, for a change.

SPROUL

He’s as good as Stalin to the Regents. I’d have my hands full. Look, Dave, there’s a situation down here. I’ve been talking to the Regent’s counsel about taking care of it. Your name came up.

DAVID

A situation -- ?
An unfortunate one.

David

I’d be happy to handle it --

Sproul

It could get messy.

David

Fair warning.

Sproul

Odd times we live in these days. They say Communists are infiltrating your school paper now. Just how I want to spend my time – investigating the Daily Bruin.

David

The situation -- ?

Sproul

It’s regarding Martha.

David

Martha Deane?

Sproul

I don’t like putting you in this position. Investigating a colleague is never easy. We’ve both known her for years.

David

She was the campus representative to –

Sproul

-- my twentieth anniversary dinner. Yes, and she gave a marvelous speech. Some would say she’s still the most powerful woman on campus – certainly when Clarence Dykstra was still alive.

David

She’s quite an advocate for the women’s P.E. program.

Sproul

Bulldog, I think you mean to say.

David

Has there been a complaint of some kind?
Complaints.

From students?

No.

Parents?

Neighbors.

Neighbors? Martha’s neighbors?

Look, I know you’ve seen a lot of the world, Dave. That war service in Washington, all the traveling you’ve done. As a dean, you deal with people a lot. You’ve read the Kinsey findings? Well, skimmed it – no one reads the whole thing.

I’ve glanced at it.

I’ll stop beating around the bush. You know as well as I do it’s not just Communists they’re letting go at the State Department. I’ve heard they’re firing a homosexual a day right now. I suppose it was bound to hit the academy sooner or later.

I’m not sure that I’m following –

There have been complaints from neighbors about Martha’s activities.

At her house. A young woman. A roommate.

Inappropriate activities?
SPROUL

Seen through an uncurtained window. I don’t want to go into it further. The implication for the university -- well, it’s most unfortunate. The neighbor’s an alum. He contacted the head of the alumni committee – he’s got a daughter in Martha’s department – and he says he’ll go to the papers if we don’t get this taken care of right away.

DAVID

I’ll look into it, Mr. President.

SPROUL

You have the authority to take whatever action is necessary to facilitate the investigation and to protect the University.

DAVID

She’s tenured, of course.

SPROUL

I’m well aware of that. We all know there are very few reasons tenure can be revoked – Look, Dave, I have known Martha Deane for over twenty years. I consider her a friend as well as a colleague. She is a particular favorite of Mrs. Sproul.

DAVID

I understand the difficulty for you.

SPROUL

Sometimes our jobs have unpleasant but unavoidable aspects. If I could, I would let this one die on the vine. But we don’t have that option. I just ask that you allow her to retain her dignity as much as possible.

DAVID

I’ll talk to her today.

SPROUL

About the roommate --

DAVID

Oh, yes.

SPROUL

A young graduate student or assistant professor or something. Quite striking girl, as I recall. I remember her creating a certain stir when she arrived.

DAVID

I believe I know who you mean.
Talk to her first.

DAVID

All right.

SPROUL

Have you done this kind of investigation before? I assume in your labor work or at the War Board… Now I’m not suggesting Tailgunner Joe tactics. The girl’s new here. From Iowa, I believe. She’ll probably just quietly resign. You’ll have more trouble with Martha.

DAVID

Could I get more details -- ?

Sproul opens a briefcase and hands David a file.

LIGHTS DOWN on David’s office.

BASKETBALL FURIOUSLY DRIBBLING (O.S.)

LIGHTS UP on Martha’s patio, later that day.

Ruth stands tensely dribbling a basketball. She tosses it away, then begins to pace the room, adrenalin pumping.

Ruth stops at the bar and tries to pour herself a drink, but her hands are shaking too much. She paces more.

ROSALIND (O.S.)

Martha?

Ruth does not answer.

ROSALIND (O.S.)
(continuing)

Did I get the time wrong?

Ruth tries to light a cigarette, but can’t. Back to pacing.

Rosalind enters patio.

ROSALIND (continuing)

Oh, Ruth. I’m sorry. Martha said to come by after 4:00 –
Ruth tries to pour herself a drink again.

ROSALIND (continuing)

What on earth?

She moves to bar.

ROSALIND (continuing)

Here. Let me.

She pours drink for Ruth.

ROSALIND (continuing)

What on earth is wrong, Ruth?

Ruth takes sip of drink, puts it down, starts pacing again.

ROSALIND (continuing)

Ruth!

Rosalind stands in front of Ruth and puts her arms on her shoulders, stopping Ruth in her tracks.

ROSALIND (continuing)

Tell me what is going on!

RUTH

Martha…

ROSALIND

What about Martha? What’s happened to her? Is something wrong with Martha?

RUTH

She’s with Dowd.

Ruth sits down, tries to sip drink again.

ROSALIND

Martha’s with Dowd? Well, I suppose that is enough of a horror on its own –

RUTH

He knows.
ROSALIND
He knows what, Ruth? What are you saying?

Ruth cries out, gets up again. Rosalind stops her.

RUTH
Let me up, Rosy.

ROSALIND
Tell me what’s going on.

RUTH
I can’t.

ROSALIND
I’ve known Martha forever, dear. She’s my closest friend in all the world. If something’s wrong with her, you have to tell me.

Ruth forces Rosalind’s arms away from her as she rises.

RUTH
Dowd knows about us. About Martha and me. He brought me into his office –

Damn!

ROSALIND

RUTH
He asked me…he asked me…I just wanted it over.

What did you say?

ROSALIND

RUTH
I could hear ringing in my ears.

ROSALIND

RUTH
Ruth –

I couldn’t hear what he was saying and his mouth kept moving and all I heard in my head was talking and then he was waiting, he was waiting for me to talk and all I could say was –
ROSALIND

Stop!

RUTH

Martha! All I could say was Martha.

ROSALIND

It’s all right now, Ruth. It’s over.

RUTH

It’s not over. You don’t understand.

ROSALIND

Ruth, I certainly understand how you must have --

RUTH

No you don’t! How could you? You’re not like us.

Beat.

I suppose you’re right.

ROSALIND

I’m sorry, Rosy –

RUTH

No, you’re right. As much as I may think I understand, it isn’t the same for me. I don’t suppose I’ve ever really thought about it. It’s rather like discovering there’s always been an open chasm between you and someone, but you just never saw it.

ROSALIND

Forgive me, Rosy. I’m not angry with you –

You’ll find another job.

RUTH

No, I won’t. Not in teaching. I don’t love the university life. I don’t love teaching and I certainly don’t love the politics. But it’s losing Martha I’m worried about. Oh Rosy, I can’t lose Martha! Do you understand?

ROSALIND

You didn’t tell Dowd anything?
Ruth shakes her head.

ROSALIND (continuing)

Nothing?

RUTH

No.

ROSALIND

Good girl.

RUTH

I just resigned.

LIGHTS DOWN on patio.

LIGHTS UP on David’s office.

Martha enters holding a large paper bag.

DAVID

Martha, hello.

She hands him bag.

MARTHA

Phyllis’s dessert dish. It was nice seeing you both the other night.

DAVID

Look, Martha –

She notices framed photo on desk.

MARTHA

I had forgotten you went to Hawaii last year. Phyllis looks so happy on that boat. Perhaps you should buy her one, David. You know I’ve often thought I’d like to go to Hawaii myself --

DAVID

There’s a matter of some urgency –

MARTHA

Oh, for heaven’s sake, David. Is this about department staffing again? Really, let’s just call a truce and have done with it, shall we? You agree not to cut my budget and I agree not to go behind your back and get it reinstated. Deal?
DAVID
This isn’t a budgetary matter, Martha.

MARTHA
Well, I’m relieved to hear that. Sorry, David. I didn’t mean to jump down your throat –

DAVID
I’ve just been talking to Ruth.

MARTHA
Ruth. Fulton?

DAVID
Yes.

MARTHA
Beat. Martha knows something’s up.

DAVID
She didn’t mention it.

MARTHA
I just saw her now.

DAVID
Oh, you did.

MARTHA
I asked her to come in to answer some questions.

DAVID
Questions.

MARTHA
Look, Martha. This is very difficult for me. You and I have been colleagues for many years.

DAVID
Yes, we have, David.

MARTHA
Phyllis and I have spent a number of lovely evenings in your home.

DAVID
I’m glad you’ve enjoyed yourselves.
I don’t relish having to do this –

Don’t relish doing what?

I want you to understand that.

Get to the point, David. Is there a problem with Ruth?

Actually, the problem is with you.

A beat. Not what Martha was expecting.

What do you mean?

The university will be initiating an investigation regarding you, Martha.

What on earth are you talking about?

Your activities.

My “activities”? I am a tenured professor. I have been at this institution longer than you have. What exactly am I being investigated for?

The details are confidential, Martha. I’m sorry.

I’m being investigated but I’m not allowed to know what about?

In a general sense, your fitness to teach.

My fitness? I’m healthy as a horse, David, so you can’t possibly mean my physical health.
DAVID
Your overall fitness. Mental, psychological. Moral.

MARTHA
This is an outrage! If you don’t back off immediately, David, I will make an official complaint about you to Bob Sproul --

DAVID
The Privilege and Tenure Committee will be making a recommendation on your overall fitness to teach here.

MARTHA
Privilege and Tenure – I am on that committee.

DAVID
Oh, yes, of course.

MARTHA
I was one of its original members.

DAVID
We’ll need to have you step down until this is settled.

MARTHA
Step down!

DAVID
This is very difficult for me to say, Martha, but it’s necessary for the university to have you step down from your teaching as well.

MARTHA
I will not “step down”, as you keep saying, just because you have the temerity to question my ability as a teacher.

DAVID
You will do as I say, Martha. Effective immediately, you are suspended from the university.

MARTHA
Have you lost your mind?

DAVID
I will be preparing a report on the investigation for Privilege and Tenure. Once they’ve reviewed it, a decision will be made at that time whether to reinstate you and continue your salary –
MARTHA
Reinstate?

DAVID
-- or proceed with the termination process.

MARTHA
You’re telling me I am suspended without pay indefinitely?

DAVID
Yes.

She picks up the phone on his desk.

Who are you calling?

DAVID (continuing)

MARTHA
Bob.

DAVID
Put the phone down, Martha.

MARTHA (on phone)
Yes, hello, Roberta? Fine, thanks. Yes, nice to hear your voice, too. Is President Sproul in?

DAVID
I advise you not to speak with President Sproul right now.

MARTHA (on phone)
When will he be in, then?

DAVID
He authorized the investigation, Martha.

MARTHA (on phone)
Yes, I would. Just ask him to call Martha at his earliest convenience. Thank you.

She hangs up.

MARTHA
What’s going on, David?

DAVID
Ruth admitted…well, certain things about your relationship --
MARTHA
What things, David?

DAVID
She said very little, actually.

MARTHA
We’re roommates. Neither of our salaries allows us to live alone. I wasn’t aware that would be of concern to you.

DAVID
Aren’t you a bit more than roommates, Martha?

MARTHA
No. We’re not.

DAVID
You are entitled to seek legal counsel –

MARTHA
For what reason? What charge am I defending myself against?

DAVID
I believe you know there are very few actions that can break tenure. Unprofessional conduct is one of them --

MARTHA
You can’t be serious, David! I’m no more guilty of unprofessional conduct than you are.

DAVID
I am truly sorry.

A beat. A hundred angry retorts run through Martha’s mind. She controls herself with effort.

MARTHA
So am I, David. So am I.

She exits.

David moves agitatedly around his office, stopping to stare at the photo of Phyllis.
LIGHTS UP on Martha’s patio. It’s twilight now and Ruth sits in the half light smoking and slowly sipping a drink.

The front DOOR SLAMS loudly (O.S.)

Martha enters and stops. She and Ruth stare at each other for a moment, gauging the other’s response. Martha holds out her arms.

MARTHA

Oh, darling.

Ruth runs to her and they embrace.

RUTH

I’m so glad you’re home, baby. I was worried.

Are you all right?

MARTHA

RUTH

I don’t know. It’s all so…strange. Like a nightmare. I keep thinking it’s not happening. Hold me closer…How are you?

MARTHA

Oh, I’m fine. I can’t believe it, Ruthie. I can’t believe that pompous little ass had the nerve to suspend me. Suspend me! I have been at this university longer than he has. He has no right to do this to me!

She disentangles from Ruth and exits to living room.

RUTH

Where are you -- ?

MARTHA (O.S)

He’s lucky I didn’t get hold of Sproul on the spot. I’ve always thought he was incompetent.

Martha enters with phone and long cord. The cord keeps getting tangled and she irritatedly jerks it after her.
MARTHA (continuing)
But I tried to give him the benefit of the doubt. Idiot! Privilege and Tenure will never agree to this. They will never back David Dowd.

RUTH
Let me help you, baby.

Ruth easily untangles cord.

MARTHA
I’ve got to get Mac. Employment law is his specialty.

RUTH
What did you say to Dowd?

MARTHA
I never imagined in a million years I would need legal advice.

RUTH
Martha, what did you say to him?

MARTHA
Not a damn thing. I will fight that man to the grave, Ruthie.

RUTH
We need to talk a minute.

MARTHA
Hopefully his and not mine.

RUTH
Before you call Mac.

MARTHA
If he thinks he can destroy my program by destroying my reputation, then he’s got another –

RUTH
Damn it, Martha!

Ruth takes the phone out of Martha’s hands.

RUTH (continuing)
Will you just listen to me!
MARTHA
We have to speak to Mac!

RUTH
I have to speak to you!

MARTHA
We have to do something. Right now. I can’t just stand here and --

RUTH
I resigned.

MARTHA
You what?

RUTH
I resigned, Martha. Mac needs to know that.

MARTHA
Oh no, Ruthie.

RUTH
I tried to call you but they said you were already in his –

MARTHA
And I’ve been going on and on. I just assumed --

RUTH
That I’d put up a fight? I’m not you, Martha.

Martha hugs her.

MARTHA
Why didn’t you just tell me to shut up?

RUTH
Well, you were right. We do need to call Mac.

MARTHA
Dowd had no right to ask either of us about our private life. We don’t owe him an answer, Ruthie. Our private life is none of his business.

RUTH
You know that and I know that. But we’re not the ones making the rules.
MARTHA
If I went by the rules I’d be a housewife in Wilkes-Barre. What did Dowd say to you?

RUTH
I don’t know if I remember. I know I don’t want to remember. Something about living with you, what you mean to me – the room started to spin and my stomach...I knew what was coming suddenly and I could feel my body tense, all the muscles in my back and along my shoulders. And then he was asking questions and I couldn’t say anything, Martha. I was so...so embarrassed...and humiliated. David Dowd asking me that kind of question – David Dowd!

MARTHA
Bastard.

RUTH
And I thought of my mother and my father and my poor grandfather and the way his face always lit up when I came in the room –

MARTHA
He won’t get away with this. Don’t worry.

RUTH
I felt like a bad child, like I’d been caught stealing candy and now the whole world would know and I would be punished and my grandfather would never smile at me again.

MARTHA
I’m so sorry.

RUTH
I just wanted it over, Martha. I thought if I resigned they would leave you alone. I can’t imagine what you would do if you didn’t teach, sweetheart. And I can’t imagine what I would do if I didn’t have you.

MARTHA
I can’t imagine that either.

They kiss. Ruth breaks it off.

RUTH
Is it okay for us to -- ? I mean...

MARTHA
It’s our home. If it isn’t safe here --

RUTH
It must have been Barton. Who went to Dowd, I mean.
MARTHA
Yes, I suppose it was. God knows what he saw or thought he saw.

RUTH
I think it was that time last month, when it was so hot and the window was open and – I feel like he’s watching.

MARTHA
He can’t see us on the patio. Come here.

They embrace again, trying hard to make it feel natural.

MARTHA (continuing)
We’ll get through this, Ruthie. Don’t worry. You’ll get another job. Privilege and Tenure will reinstate me.

RUTH
How can you be so sure?

MARTHA
Because…Because the sun keeps coming up every morning. Because it’s how I see the world. Because I have you.

RUTH
I’m glad you’re not a housewife in Wilkes-Barre.

MARTHA
Are you sure?

They kiss, neither relaxed. Martha leans over and turns off the light.

LIGHTS DOWN on patio.

LIGHTS UP on David’s office, later that evening.

David stands staring out the window.

PHYLLIS (O.S.)
David?

He doesn’t notice her.

PHYLLIS (O.S.)
Honey, I saw you through the window as I was walking up. Open the door, David.
He still doesn’t notice.

PHYLLIS (O.S.)

David!

He rouses himself to open the door.

Phyllis enters. She goes to hug him but he moves away from her.

PHYLLIS (continuing)

What’s happened, David?

DAVID

Oh, sorry, Phyllis. Hard day at the salt mines. Did you come for a visit?

PHYLLIS

We were going to meet for dinner, remember?

DAVID

Oh, yes. That’s right.

PHYLLIS

You stood me up for lunch.

DAVID

Yes, yes. It’s all coming back –

PHYLLIS

And then you had another meeting.

DAVID

Yes. With Martha.

PHYLLIS

And we agreed we’d meet in the Village at 8:00 for dinner.

DAVID

Yes, well and here you are.

PHYLLIS

Yes, well and it’s nearly midnight and I never heard from you.

DAVID

Oh, forgive me, dear. It’s been a very complicated day.
PHYLLIS
What’s going on, David?

DAVID
Nothing’s going on.

PHYLLIS
Am I a fool not to think you’re having an affair?

DAVID
An affair? What are you talking about?

PHYLLIS
It just doesn’t seem like you, but you’re so distracted, missing appointments, hardly remembering your own name –

DAVID
I’m not having an –

PHYLLIS
Then what is it, David? You’re not being honest with me about something.

DAVID
It’s just this position. You see, Phyllis, sometimes –

PHYLLIS
-- you forget I’ve heard all this before, David. “It’s just this position. You see, Phyllis, sometimes there are things I can’t tell you. Confidential things.”

DAVID
Is that what I say?

PHYLLIS
Over and over. This is about Martha, isn’t it?

DAVID
How did you know it was about Martha?

PHYLLIS
Most things about Martha upset you.

DAVID
I’m not upset –

PHYLLIS
You’re pretty upset for someone who’s not upset.
I’m tired.

DAVID

Is there a new problem with Martha?

PHYLLIS

Some complaints.

DAVID

It must be more than that.

PHYLLIS

He wants me to investigate.

DAVID

Investigate Martha? We just had dinner at their house.

PHYLLIS

He has no choice, Phyllis. He has to maintain the university’s reputation.

DAVID

And Martha somehow threatens it? Martha Deane?

PHYLLIS

You probably think I’m jumping for joy, but I’m not.

DAVID

Wasn’t she the campus’s representative at his twentieth -- ?

PHYLLIS

Yes, yes. That was before any of this came to light.

DAVID

Gad, she’s been here forever. You would think all the skeletons would be out of the closet by now. What could be so horrible you have to drop what you’re doing and investigate her right now?

PHYLLIS

She and Ruth Fulton have apparently had an illicit relationship for some time.

DAVID

And President Sproul wasn’t aware of this? There have been rumors about Martha for years. He’s not deaf. Why all of a sudden are you -- ?

PHYLLIS
DAVID
The complaints allege unspeakable acts observed through uncurtained windows.

PHYLLIS
Oh, you can’t be serious! What on earth is an “unspeakable act”? Oh, I’m sorry, honey, I’m embarrassing you. It’s just hard to imagine, even in this day and age, that the University has you investigating two women through a window.

DAVID
You don’t understand how important –

PHYLLIS
It just seems so beneath him, David, and you. She’s always been a complete lady when she’s been around me.

DAVID
Why are you defending her?

PHYLLIS
I’m not. I just hate to see you brought in as a hatchet man to do someone else’s bidding.

DAVID
I’m not a hatchet man!

LIGHTS UP on Martha’s patio, simultaneous. Rosalind and Martha are in a heated discussion.

Intercut scenes.

ROSALIND
You should listen to Mac. He’s an attorney for goodness sake.

MARTHA
I listened to him.

ROSALIND
In one ear and out the other.

MARTHA
It’s his job to advise. It doesn’t mean I have to take his advice.

ROSALIND
You’re digging your heels in.

MARTHA
I’m considering his counsel.
ROSALIND
He’s right. Consider mine, too.

MARTHA
I need time to think. You can’t expect me to decide something like this without at least talking to her –

ROSALIND
Then talk to her. Now.

MARTHA
No.

ROSALIND
Mac says you can’t wait. Do it now. Tonight. Before something happens.

MARTHA
It’s easy to give advice from the sidelines, isn’t it? When it doesn’t affect you one way or the other.

ROSALIND
Your life affects mine every day, Martha. I’m sorry, I know it could be a few months until Privilege and Tenure –

MARTHA
A few months! You say that as though it’s nothing.

ROSALIND
Listen to me, Martha. You two can’t risk being seen together. You don’t know what kind of cameras or surveillance –

MARTHA
Surveillance! My God, am I Alger Hiss suddenly? Ethel Rosenberg? Have I committed some horrible crime?

ROSALIND
Apparently to some, you have.

MARTHA
I need Ruth with me, Rosy. Now more than I ever have. This whole investigation, this insanity, is about us, our relationship, who we are to each other. You can’t expect me to give her up – that’s doing exactly what they want. That’s letting them win.

Ruth enters wearing a robe and with a towel over her head from a shower.
It’s temporary.

MARTHA

It’s too much to ask. I’ll take the risk.

ROSALIND

Don’t be a fool.

MARTHA

Too late.

ROSALIND

Oh, you are so aggravating sometimes.

Rosalind stalks past Ruth to the door and exits.

RUTH (lightly)

I’m sure I don’t know what she means.

She kisses Martha on the cheek.

RUTH (continuing)

It feels good to be clean finally. What were you and Rosy fighting about?

MARTHA

Nothing.

RUTH

You and Rosy were fighting about nothing?

MARTHA

We weren’t fighting.

RUTH

I’ve never seen you two even raise your voices at each other before –

MARTHA

Forget it, Ruth.

RUTH

Stop protecting me, Martha.

MARTHA

I’m not –
RUTH
You are. I know that tone in your voice. What did Mac say to you?

MARTHA
He thinks Privilege and Tenure will vote to reinstate.

RUTH
That’s wonderful news, baby –

MARTHA
We just have to get through the next five or six months.

RUTH
It could take that long?

MARTHA
David Dowd is nothing if not thorough.

RUTH
What else did Mac say?

MARTHA
Don’t let’s talk about it right now, all right?

RUTH
Fine… When, then?

MARTHA
Later.

RUTH
When you’ve decided it’s the right time?

MARTHA
Oh, darling. Don’t let’s fight.

RUTH
I’m not fighting with you. Just like Rosy wasn’t.

MARTHA
Will you let us have just a moment’s peace. We haven’t had a chance to really hold each other since this whole thing blew open.

Martha opens her arms to Ruth, who doesn’t move.
Tell me what Mac said, Martha.

MARTHA

Leave it alone, Ruthie. I’m asking you.

RUTH

We’re in this together.

MARTHA

He thinks I have a chance.

RUTH

But -- ?

MARTHA

But it’s a hard road to hoe.

RUTH

Because of me.

MARTHA

No. Not exactly.

RUTH

Because of our…relationship.

MARTHA

Please, Ruth –

RUTH

Because of how it looks with us living together –

MARTHA

All right – yes, damn it! Mac thinks it would look better during Dowd’s investigation if we didn’t see each other.

RUTH

Not see each other!

MARTHA

I didn’t say I agreed with him –

RUTH

Not see each other for six months!
Back to David Dowd’s office.

PHYLLIS
What is President Sproul’s hold over you, David? I’m not understanding this.

DAVID
Well, he didn’t come right out and say it…

Beat.

PHYLLIS
Oh, my God. Forgive me.

She hugs him.

PHYLLIS (continuing)
I’m sorry, David. I’ve been thoughtless.

DAVID
But I’m sure it’s on his mind.

PHYLLIS
No, no, sweetheart. You’re wrong. The President asked you because he trusts you and he knows you’ll do a good job. Not because he’s trying to test you –

DAVID
Don’t let’s talk about it any further.

PHYLLIS
But we have to, don’t you see? Not talking about it is what’s eating you up – eating us up.

DAVID
It’s been a long day, Phyl. Did you park the car near?

PHYLLIS
It’s just outside. Please don’t shut me out, David.

Back to Martha’s patio.

MARTHA
I’m not arguing with you! I told him six months was impossible. That’s why Rosy’s angry.

RUTH
I can’t imagine a day without you, Martha, let alone six months.
MARTHA
You know I feel the same way.

RUTH
I’m in love with you. Your life is so much a part of mine I don’t even know where one ends and the other begins.

MARTHA
I haven’t a clue either. I need you right here beside me during this. We need each other.

RUTH
What did he say, then?

MARTHA
You mean after I told him I was going to ignore him and take my lumps with you?

RUTH
Yes. What did he advise?

MARTHA
Oh, you know lawyers and their advice.

RUTH
You’re doing it again. You’re protecting me from something you think I shouldn’t hear. What did he say after that? I’m asking you –

MARTHA
And I’m asking you not to ask me.

RUTH
Why?

MARTHA
Because I need you to stay. More than anything.

RUTH

MARTHA
Then please, please, leave it at that, Ruthie.

Back to David Dowd’s office.

DAVID
I’m tired.
Speak to me!

DAVID
You take the car. I’ll make my own way home.

He moves toward the door.

PHYLLIS
David! Are you crazy? You’re letting a piece of gossip tear you apart.

I don’t want to talk about this!

DAVID
Well, I do.

He opens door.

PHYLLIS (continuing)
I don’t care if that Regent thinks you’re a homosexual. He’s wrong. I should know, for heaven’s sake.

DAVID
The word he supposedly used was “pansy.”

PHYLLIS
Forget it, David. You don’t know he said it. Even if he did, who cares? It doesn’t matter.

DAVID
You’re wrong, Phyllis. It matters. That one word matters more than anything else about me. More than all the professors I’ve recruited from all over the world, all the budgets I’ve balanced, the classes I’ve taught, the students whose hands I’ve held through one crisis or another over the last twenty years. I thought I knew what mattered, Phyllis. Hard work. Effort. Experience. But now my whole career, my chance for advancement, the respect of my peers – it all boils down to that one word. Don’t tell me it doesn’t matter.

He exits.

She starts to follow him, then stops.

Back to Martha’s patio.
RUTH
Oh my God, Martha. I just realized why you won’t tell me.

MARTHA
Slow down, sweetheart. You’re getting upset --

RUTH
He told you to get another lawyer, didn’t he?

MARTHA
I’ll fix you a drink.

She moves toward bar. Ruth stops her.

Didn’t he?

RUTH (continuing)
I’ll fix us both drinks.

MARTHA
But he said you wouldn’t be able to find one, right?

Martha does not respond.

RUTH (continuing)
Because as long as I stay in this house, you have no defense. Isn’t that what he said, Martha?

MARTHA
All right. Yes, damn it! That’s what he said.

Ruth exits to living room.

MARTHA (continuing)
Where are you going? Ruth, please. We need to talk this through.

Ruth enters with suitcase and some clothes.
She begins to pack hurriedly.

RUTH
Six months! Martha, I can’t imagine being away from you for six months.

MARTHA
Then stop. We’ll figure something out. Don’t go, Ruth.
But I can’t just stand here and watch you lose.

I won’t lose.

Don’t be so damned stubborn!

This is outrageous! They can’t do this to us, to me –

They can and they have. Let’s just not make it any worse, Martha.

Stop it, sweetheart. Stop packing. I wish I’d never told you –

You should have told me the minute you got off the phone with Mac. I’m not that twenty-one year old wide-eyed Midwestern girl you met in 1938. I’m not one of your students any more. I stand toe to toe with you, baby, whether you like it or not. I’m your friend, your companion, your confidante. But most of all, Martha, I’m your lover.

She kisses Martha with passion, then pulls away.

She exits. Martha moves to follow, then stops.

LIGHTS DOWN

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

The stage is black.

ROSALIND (O.S.)

Ladies!

SPOT UP on Rosalind as she addresses a class of P.E. students. It is Spring, 1953.

Ladies! May I have your attention. I’ve asked you to assemble today so that I could meet you each personally and as a group. Miss Deane, who has handled these duties so well for so many years, continues to be on a leave of absence to handle some compelling family matters. We’ve all missed her presence over the last six months and I know we all hope things will be quickly resolved. Were she here, she would tell you at this juncture that you are on the noblest of paths and one which you will never regret, as she has not. She would tell you to listen to your body – and you would laugh, wouldn’t you? Because it’s funny and odd and very Martha Deane. But in time I think you will come to see her point – the importance of listening to and observing the body and understanding it.

The scientific study of the body’s muscles and their movement has been a practice since the time of Aristotle and Archimedes. However it was only recently, with our society’s eagerness to name every last concept, creature, malady and human act, that we have a scientific word for it. Kinesiology. As we begin to explore kinesiology this semester, you will start to notice how people live – or don’t live – in their bodies. Who is comfortable…and who is not.

(CONTINUED)
ROSALIND (continuing)
You will study body language: people who talk with their hands…people who slouch in dejection…people who invite our interest. You will study how people’s bodies mirror what they feel…and who they are.

Many people outside our field – some even in academia – see the study of Physical Education as a lesser field, something vaguely about calisthenics, unworthy of actual academic significance. But through Physical Education we study so much more than sports – we are actually exploring the individual and his relationship to himself, his body and his world. What better occupation for any of us in these difficult times than the study of humanity and its betterment.

SPOT OUT on Rosalind.

LIGHTS UP on Martha’s patio, night.
It is the spring of 1953.

Rosy watches as Martha brings the telephone from another room and plugs it into the wall. Martha places the phone right next to her, willing it to ring.

ROSALIND
What time did Mac think the committee vote would come?

MARTHA
An hour and twenty minutes ago. Drink?

ROSALIND
Yes, thanks.

Rosalind notices that Martha keeps glancing at the phone.

ROSALIND (continuing)
Perhaps there’s hope for Ike after all.

MARTHA
Olive?

ROSALIND
Please.

MARTHA
What’s he said? I haven’t been following the papers.
ROSALIND
He called McCarthy “a pimple on the path of progress.”

MARTHA
Apt enough.

ROSALIND
Oh, it won’t take long now, his public demise.

MARTHA
You’re awfully optimistic.

ROSALIND
They’re in office now so the Republicans don’t need him.

Martha hands her drink.

MARTHA
You’re trying to distract me by talking about politics.

ROSALIND
Well, clearly it isn’t working.

MARTHA
Engage me, then.

ROSALIND
Any suggestions?

MARTHA
Something meaningful.

ROSALIND
How’s Ruth enjoying insurance?

Beat.

ROSALIND (continuing)
Well, you’re engaged now, aren’t you?

MARTHA
Indeed. Well, she loves it. She’s a natural. It runs in the family, apparently. I suspect she’ll do quite well.

ROSALIND
It’s a talent. I couldn’t sell ice cream to Eskimos.
MARTHA
They probably make their own.

ROSALIND
Does she visit?

MARTHA
We were advised not to see each other.

ROSALIND
You were advised not to do many things, as I recall.

MARTHA
Occasionally even I follow the rules, Rosy. We write, we call. Daily. Sometimes hourly.

ROSALIND
I think I’m uncomfortable talking about this, for some reason.

MARTHA
You’re worried you’re invading my privacy.

ROSALIND
Am I?

MARTHA
If I had privacy to invade, you would be.

ROSALIND
It must be difficult for you both.

MARTHA
Difficult! It’s excruciating. Pretending to the world we have no feelings, no needs. Isn’t it all rather baffling – that half the world thinks we have no sexual feelings at all and the other half thinks we have nothing but?

ROSALIND
It’s all Kinsey’s fault, and Freud before him. Sex didn’t exist before 1948 and now it’s everywhere.

MARTHA
I do miss the quieter days, Rosy. When you could live happily with another woman and no one batted an eye.
ROSALIND
You mean in 1893?

MARTHA
It wasn’t that long ago, was it? It seemed like after the War, everything changed somehow. There’s all this bother now about masculinity and femininity and men feeling threatened if their wives work.

ROSALIND
Well, your neighbor was certainly anxious living next door to two spinsters.

MARTHA
Ah, yes. And one so young and attractive – what a waste. Must get those perverts out of the neighborhood.

ROSALIND
Times do change, Martha.

MARTHA
But love is eternal. At least that’s what I’m hoping.

ROSALIND
I’ll knock on all the wood I can find.

The telephone rings. Martha quickly picks it up.

MARTHA (on phone)
Hello, Mac?

She listens attentively. Her face breaks into a smile.

MARTHA (continuing)
Yes! Thank God!

She hangs up phone.

MARTHA (continuing)
It’s over, Rosy.

LIGHTS DOWN.

LIGHTS UP on David Dowd. He’s sitting in his darkened study, next to a telephone.
PHYLLIS (O.S.)
It’s over now, David. You did the best you could. It’s not your fault you couldn’t get any witnesses –

DAVID
There were witnesses.

PHYLLIS (O.S.)
You mean that neighbor?

DAVID
Yes, that neighbor who saw Martha and that young woman --

Ruth Fulton.

PHYLLIS (O.S.)
-- through the window.

DAVID
Phyllis enters wearing an apron.

PHYLLIS
That wasn’t enough for the committee, apparently.

DAVID
It should have been.

PHYLLIS
It’s over, David. You can have your life back – all those things you’ve put on the back burner. Even better, we can have our life back. We’ve put off France for months now –

DAVID
It’s not over.

PHYLLIS
What do you mean? Privilege and Tenure –

DAVID
It’s an incompetent committee.

PHYLLIS
But you’ve always supported its decisions.

DAVID
I’ve told President Sproul I think the committee’s verdict should be over-ruled.
Over-rule Privilege and Tenure?

They’re all Martha’s friends.

This is Sproul’s idea?

He agrees.

So it’s your idea. Can’t someone else take this on?

She refuses to resign.

An attorney? The Regent’s counsel? Surely a legal person should –

The committee was spineless.

-- take over. Martha will fight you tooth and –

Someone has to protect the University’s interests.

-- claw. Tooth and claw. The University could lose. You could lose, David.

I have to do this!

She stares at him for a beat.

Why, David?

Because it’s the right thing to do. I’m convinced of it, Phyl. You know, at first I thought the neighbor had gone a bit overboard with the complaint and all. I thought, who really cares what people do in their own home? But I could see this was serious to him. He wanted to be sure his family was safe.
PHYLLIS

From Martha?

DAVID

Yes, from Martha. From things that frightened him, things he didn’t understand. You know what it was like living through the Depression. The fear you wouldn’t have enough to eat or you’d lose your house. We all remember. We all just want to keep what we have and not go backward. The times are different now, thank God. But the fear doesn’t go away.

PHYLLIS

You don’t have to do this, David. There are other ways to show you’re as tough and smart as any of the rest of them. Let President Sproul or the Regent’s counsel or Staff Warren handle this.

DAVID

Please understand, Phyllis. I have to see this through.

Beat.

PHYLLIS

All right. How much longer will this take?

I don’t know.

DAVID

Six months? A year?

I said I don’t know.

PHYLLIS

It’s my time, too, David. You’ve forgotten my life gets put on the back burner right next to yours. We are in this together, at every point, lock-step. Husband and wife. I need to know how much time it will take until I have you back.

He does not respond.

PHYLLIS (continuing)

It’s cold now.

DAVID

What?
YOUR DINNER.

She exits. He picks up the telephone.

LIGHTS DOWN.

MARTHA (O.S.)

To justice!

LIGHTS UP on Martha’s patio.

The phone has been moved back into the living room. Rosy and Martha are clinking champagne glasses. An open bottle of champagne sits in an ice bucket.

ROSALIND

To reinstatement.

MARTHA

To having Ruth home!

ROSALIND and MARTHA

To Ruth!

MARTHA
How long until that giant scarlet letter on my forehead fades?

ROSALIND
No one cares, Martha.

MARTHA
Everyone cares. It’s titillating. I’m a topic of conversation.

RUTH (O.S.)

Martha!

ROSALIND
The girl drives quickly.

The phone rings (O.S.)

MARTHA
Tell Ruth I’ll only be a minute.
You think it’s Sproul?

He’s overdue.

Martha exits. Ruth enters.

I don’t know when I’ve been so happy.

She hugs Rosalind.

I have my Martha back.

I do, too, thank God. I can’t tell you how little I like teaching there without her. It’s complete chaos on the best of days.

You’ve been a good friend to her, Rosy.

I’ve been a horrid pain in the ass is what I’ve been. The mark of a true friend.

She thinks the world of you.

When she doesn’t curse my name for lecturing her unabashedly and at regular intervals.

Rosy, there is one thing. I lost my temper with you back in the fall –

Forget it. I have.

No. It’s important. I hurt your feelings.

You pointed out the obvious.

I didn’t mean –
ROSALIND

-- that I’m not part of the club?

RUTH

It doesn’t matter.

ROSALIND

No, it matters. It makes all the different in the world, in fact. You were right. David Dowd would never have called me into his office, sat me down and interrogated me about my relationships. It would never have happened, Ruth. Through no fault of my own, I am apparently incapable of committing unspeakable acts. Lucky me.

MARTHA (O.S.)

That bastard.

Martha enters. Upset, she picks up a champagne glass and throws it across the room. She sits down and puts her head in her hands.

ROSALIND

Martha, what on earth has happened?

MARTHA

I haven’t had a minute’s peace and now it’s going to just keep on --

RUTH

But Privilege and Tenure –

MARTHA

Dowd’s over-ruled them.

ROSALIND

What?

MARTHA

He’s continuing the investigation.

ROSALIND

That sanctimonious little ass.

RUTH

Does Sproul know?

MARTHA

He’s blessed it. I can’t believe it, Rosy. I’ve known Bob Sproul for twenty years.
Ruth hugs Martha. Gently, Martha pushes her away.

MARTHA (to Ruth)

You’ll have to leave now.

ROSALIND

What kind of investigation?

RUTH

No, Martha --

MARTHA (to Rosalind)

Witnesses, oaths, depositions. The whole nine yards.

ROSALIND

I’d love to wring his smarmy little –

MARTHA (to Ruth)

Please, Ruth. Go now.

RUTH

We haven’t even had a moment alone --

MARTHA

We can’t be seen together. Mac says it’s even more important now than before.

Rosalind sizes up the situation, hugs Martha.

ROSALIND (to Martha)

Call me later, dear.

RUTH

Then you’re going to keep fighting this?

Rosalind exits.

MARTHA

Tooth and claw. He’s trying to ruin me! I have to fight back. I have no choice.

RUTH

It is always about justice for you – Rosy’s right.
MARTHA
Justice! Of course it’s about justice. It’s about standing up and doing what’s right. If this were happening to someone else, I would be just as outraged. But it’s also about me, damn it, living my life. Ruthie, if I stop now, I have nothing. No job, no income, no pension –

RUTH
You have me.

MARTHA
What a catch I am these days! Savings run through now, legal bills –

RUTH
I would support us both.

MARTHA
I know you would, darling, but this would always be hanging over my head. “The Martha Deane Scandal.” I can’t let him run my name into the ground. I don’t care what it takes!

RUTH
Oh, Martha, don’t do this! You could waste years – you could waste the rest of your life trying to get justice from David Dowd and the Board of Regents. It’s not going to happen.

Why do you say that?

MARTHA
They hold all the cards.

RUTH
They’re in the wrong!

MARTHA
Sometimes that doesn’t matter, Martha! Do you think McCarthy is in the right? Look how many lives and careers he’s destroyed.

RUTH
So we turn our backs and let him triumph?

MARTHA
Of course not –

RUTH
I’m going to fight this, Ruth. You can be by my side –
RUTH
No, I can’t! That’s the whole point. Why won’t you get it through your stubborn head -- if you fight this, I have to disappear again for – what, months? Years? I have to pretend we’re not lovers, that I don’t have my whole world wrapped around you. I need you, Martha. Doesn’t that matter to you?

MARTHA
Of course it matters. But I can’t let them do this to me --

RUTH
Well, I can’t let them do this to me, either.

Martha does not respond.

RUTH (continuing)
I mean it. The last six months have been unbearable for me. And now, not to know how much longer –

MARTHA
We’ll get to the end of this together Ruth. I promise.

RUTH
Together?

MARTHA
Yes, of course, together.

RUTH
When?

MARTHA
Later. When it’s over.

RUTH
It may never be over. I can’t wait that long.

MARTHA
Well, damn it, maybe you should just go then. Go on and make a new life for yourself. Find someone who’s less difficult for you. Someone your own age.

RUTH
That’s a cheap shot.
MARTHA
You’re at the beginning of your career, Ruth. Starting over is different for you. I’m at
the height of mine. I have seven to ten good years left when I can really accomplish what
I want. Leave my mark. I can make it all matter. To give up that chance – not to fight to
clear my name -- you ask too much of me.

RUTH
I never thought you would pick something – anything -- over me.

MARTHA
You’re the one who’s forcing me to choose.

RUTH
We can start over together, Martha. Leave California – maybe it would be easier in New
York or Europe --

MARTHA
This is my home. Why should I leave it? I’ve done nothing wrong. I am a good person,
a sane person, a moral person – regardless of what David Dowd and the Regents may
think of me. My darling girl, I love you more than I can say, but I have to do this. Rosy
says I’m just an old fool, and maybe she’s right. But I have to do this. They have no
right to treat me this way!

Beat.

Damn you!

RUTH
She hugs Martha fiercely, then exits.

LIGHTS DOWN.

LIGHTS UP on David’s office, the next day.

He sits at his desk, distracted.

There’s a KNOCK (O.S.)

DAVID
Yes?

Rosalind enters.

DAVID (continuing)

Ah, Rosalind.
Rosalind.

David.

Sit down. Thank you for coming by.

You did call.

Yes, yes. You’re probably wondering why.

I am assuming it’s not because you wish to interrogate me about my private life. Which is much less sordid than I would prefer, I must say.

No, of course not.

Well, one can’t take anything for granted these days, can one?

He gives her a look, then continues.

Look, Rosalind, I’ve been speaking with Ben Miller and, well, it would be most helpful if you could take over the leadership of the women’s P.E. program.

Why, David?

Why?

I’m not sure I’m following you.

Well, you know as well as I do you’re the obvious choice. You’re the senior professor now in the department, you’re tenured, your scholarship is recognized nationally –

What about Martha?
DAVID
The program lacks leadership right now, Rosalind. It’s a bit adrift. We wanted to bring in a rudder.

ROSALIND
I suppose I should be flattered. I’ve never been called a rudder before.

DAVID
So you will accept the chairmanship?

Certainly.

DAVID
That’s marvelous, Rosalind. We both thank you –

On an interim basis.

DAVID
Why interim?

ROSALIND
Until Martha returns.

DAVID
That may well never occur.

ROSALIND
Well, once the whole thing is resolved, we can speak again, then.

She rises.

DAVID
Wait. Professor Cassidy, the University badly needs your assistance. This is a very difficult time. We are all aware of your allegiance to Miss Deane, but what matters here is the program and the girls we are bound and obligated to teach. I urge that you strongly consider the situation.

ROSALIND
I have strongly considered it, Dean Dowd, and my answer remains the same: I would be honored and happy to take over on an interim basis, pending the long-awaited return of Miss Deane.

DAVID
You assume she will return.
ROSALIND
Oh, I assume nothing. Believe me.

DAVID
All right. Perhaps we can address some of the issues that may concern you. We are all aware that the chairmanship of a program may require significant time above and beyond a teaching and research load. Additional compensation is certainly to be considered here.

ROSALIND
David, I understand the pressure you are under. It must be formidable. I understand you and Ben want to do what’s right for the program and I appreciate the offer of the chairmanship. But Martha Deane is my friend.

That is not relevant.

ROSALIND
But it is. She recruited me down here from Mills. She helped me find a place to live. She introduced me to Clarence and to Bob Sproul and made me feel welcome. Her friends were my friends. Martha is the reason I came here and the reason I have been successful here.

DAVID
Your loyalty is commendable –

ROSALIND
-- but I am paid to do a job, is that what you were going to say?

DAVID
We all work at the University’s pleasure.

ROSALIND
The pleasure has gone out of my University work.

DAVID
You must separate your own feelings from your duty as a professional.

ROSALIND
Then let us both agree that I must do what is best for the young women for whom I am responsible.

DAVID
Agreed. I am glad we have reached the point of amity, Rosalind.
ROSALIND
As am I, David. So, in that case, I will be the interim chairman of the program until the matter with Martha is resolved.

DAVID
You are every bit as impossible as she is!

I consider that a compliment.

DAVID
Professor!

Beat. David slowly wilts physically, his body too exhausted to fight another battle. His voice is now oddly gentle, calm. He is for a moment the man Phyllis fell in love with.

DAVID (continuing)
Rosalind. I do understand your dilemma. Like you, I value friendship more than gold. In many regards, Martha is a fine woman, an excellent teacher. A good cook, too, as we both know. A wonderful conversationalist. All of these things can remain true at the same time we acknowledge that for certain reasons she can no longer be a part of the University.

ROSALIND
Certain ridiculous, foundationless “reasons” --

DAVID
I won’t argue the point with you – Rosy, isn’t it? That’s what Martha calls you, I know. This whole matter has quite exhausted me and I have no fight left. In good faith I have tried to do what was asked of me. Perhaps in your eyes I have failed. Certainly in my wife’s eyes I have come up short. It is a painful time for me and one I do not think I will ever look back on without regret. If you will agree to be the interim chairman, I am sure Ben will be pleased. Thank you, Rosy.

Beat.

ROSALIND
I appreciate your candor, David. I know this is not easy for you. Regarding the interim chairmanship, I hope that perhaps an interim salary adjustment might be possible in light of the extra duties you’ve mentioned. I support my mother, you know, as well as myself.

David pulls himself together, his old demeanor quickly returning.
DAVID
I will discuss the matter with Ben. I should forewarn you, however, the department’s budget remains tight.

Rosalind exits quickly.

LIGHTS DOWN.

LIGHTS UP on Martha’s patio at dusk. She is sipping a drink listlessly and watching the sun set.

Phyllis enters, startling Martha.

Hello, Martha.

Phyllis.

The back door was open.

I was watering the flowers.

I’ve tried to call you.

I’ve been in and out.

I wanted to talk to you.

It’s not a good time.

I’m sorry for how this has turned out.

You really must go.

He’s not himself these days. It’s the stress.
MARTHA
You’ll excuse me.

PHYLLIS
Whatever you may think, Martha. It isn’t personal.

MARTHA
That’s a relief. Why are you here, Phyllis? Why did you call me?

PHYLLIS
I want this all to stop as badly as you do.

MARTHA
No one could want this to stop as badly as I do.

PHYLLIS
Then stop, Martha.

MARTHA
It’s hardly that simple.

PHYLLIS
They’ll give you money.

MARTHA
It isn’t about money.

PHYLLIS
Listen to me, Martha! I don’t condone what David is doing. I think you know that on some level.

MARTHA
If you don’t condone it, then your conversation should be with your husband, not me.

PHYLLIS
I think this whole thing is a witch-hunt. It’s the pressure from the regents that’s making David keep on.

MARTHA
He should learn to resist pressure.

PHYLLIS
Well, he can’t.
MARTHA
And you want me to stop this whole thing because he can’t, because he won’t.

PHYLLIS
I suppose that’s what I’m saying.

MARTHA
Then talk to him, Phyllis.

PHYLLIS
I have.

MARTHA
And?

PHYLLIS
And he’s a man. You know how it goes with men. Well, I mean –

MARTHA
I know what you mean.

PHYLLIS
It’s like a bear fighting a bull. You’re both locked in this mortal combat.

MARTHA
I prefer to think of myself as the bear, in that case.

PHYLLIS
But those kinds of fights don’t stop until one or the other – or both -- are dead.

MARTHA
I didn’t begin this, Phyllis. Your husband did. He could have stopped with Privilege and Tenure’s decision, but he didn’t. No, this is his fight. As much as I might take it personally, this is not about me. I understand that now. It’s about him. It’s about his career. This fight will either make it or break it.

PHYLLIS
I know.

MARTHA
Why did you come to me?

PHYLLIS
Because –
I’m a woman?

Phyllis nods.

MARTHA (continuing)
And you think women are more likely to back down.

We’re more sensible.

MARTHA
Indeed we are. Now would you please leave before I fly into a sensible but very loud rage?

Phyllis exits. LIGHTS DOWN on patio.

Rosalind, the spring of 1954.

ROSALIND
Ladies, thank you for coming tonight. Special thanks to Josie for providing the living room and the coffee. I know we all feel safer exchanging information here than in the ladies room in Royce Hall. We just hope that Josie’s neighbors are less inquisitive than Martha’s.

Speaking of Martha’s neighbors – we understand that some of them have now come forward with their concerns about her and are being interviewed by David Dowd and his people. Dean Dowd continues to refuse to speak with any of us in a civil manner regarding any of this. We have been told repeatedly and in no uncertain terms that the Martha Deane case is not to be discussed on campus in any way and that it is purely an administrative matter.

I know you are all wondering about how Martha is doing, how she is holding up throughout this difficult and crazy time. Most of you haven’t seen her since she left campus nearly two years ago. In many ways, I think you would find her the same old Martha – fit as a fiddle, still passionate and opinionated about everything. I saw her (CONTINUED)
ROSALIND (continuing) last week and she was so very appreciative of the checks you continue to send. That is what is sustaining her now, your help and your friendship. She thanks you for your support and she knows how difficult this is for all of you, her friends. She understands very well the consequences you might face in openly showing support for her.

POLICE SIREN (O.S) startles Rosalind. It takes her a moment to continue.

ROSALIND (continuing) If anyone had ever told me I would be meeting in shrouded secrecy like nothing so much as an underground cell, I would have laughed them out the door. But times change – sadly, often – and we do what we must. Let’s hope that by this time next year it’s Martha who is addressing us and celebrating her return to the University.

LIGHTS DOWN on Rosalind.

LIGHTS UP on patio. The patio is virtually bare now. Dressed in robe and slippers, Martha stacks a last box on a pile. Three boxes remain on the floor.

The DOORBELL RINGS (O.S.).

MARTHA Rosy?

SPROUL (O.S.) No, Martha. It’s me, Bob.

Martha stops in her tracks. With effort, she pulls herself together.

MARTHA Bob. What a surprise. You’re alone?

SPROUL (O.S.) No. Hoover and Nixon are here with me.

Martha smiles despite herself.

SPROUL (O.S.) (continuing) Forgive my poor attempt at humor.
Haven’t I always?

Touché. I’m alone. Ida’s in the car reading Sunset.

How is Ida?

Hale and hearty. She sends her best.

The door’s open, Bob. Tell Hoover and Nixon they can wait on the step in the heat.

Forgive my appearance. I’ve been under the weather a bit lately.

Was that a television set I saw in the living room? I never took you for a tv viewer.

Rosy suggested I might enjoy the hearings.

I hadn’t realized the Senator from Wisconsin was a particular favorite of yours.

So we’re off the record?

Regent’s Counsel was told only that I was considering contacting you in some fashion. Casual attire and feeble attempts at a light ambiance were not discussed and would not have been encouraged.

He looks around the patio.

It’s a good market to sell in, I hear.

The scotch and gin are packed away. Sorry.
You know why I’m here, I suspect.

SPROUL

You were in the neighborhood?

MARTHA

That’s right.

SPROUL

So you thought you’d drop by.

MARTHA

Exactly. Go on.

SPROUL

Let me guess. You’ve been thinking it over now for quite some time.

MARTHA

That I have.

SPROUL

We’ve been colleagues and friends for many years, you and I, and you’ve been President of the University for many years. This has presented for you an irresolvable conflict and you have been forced to delegate to others duties you wish you had been able to retain. You have not been at all times been pleased with the results.

MARTHA

That’s right, Martha.

SPROUL

You want this resolved now. You have the authority to end it today – if we are in agreement. And if I sign on the dotted line whatever document you have in your briefcase.

MARTHA

There’s full back pay.

SPROUL

A resignation?

MARTHA

The university would not contest your right to your pension.
MARTHA
Which I’ve been paying into for years.

SPROUL
No more interviews, no more depositions.

MARTHA
No more allegations that I solicit my students and set fire to orphanages.

SPROUL
You would have your life back.

MARTHA
My life teaching? No, of course not... So what do you think my response will be to your kind offer?

SPROUL
My official thoughts? I think you’ll see the light of day, take the offer, allow the department to give you an appropriately moving send-off and allow the Regents to do something other than tear their hair out at every meeting.

MARTHA
And your unofficial thoughts?

SPROUL
Off the record? I think you’ll throw me out of here on my ear – but politely and without obvious undue anger. Your parting words will be to tell me to give your regards to Ida.

She smiles. Gets out handkerchief and dabs eyes.

MARTHA
Excuse me. Allergies. You know I won’t resign, Bob.

Yes, I know that.

SPROUL

MARTHA
So why -- ?

SPROUL
Look, Martha, the Regents are for the most part very successful businessmen. They didn’t get that way by being patient and reasonable. Regent’s Counsel told me this morning they’ll take the offer off the table if you don’t come around soon.
MARTHA
So I should take what I can get before the offer goes away, is that it?

SPROUL
I will not denigrate our friendship by telling you I am here solely out of concern for you. Clearly, I am not. But I did think you had a right to know the current thinking among the Regents. Dowd, incidentally, is unaware of it.

MARTHA
As he is of so many things.

SPROUL
An odd man, David Dowd. I had no idea. Regent Pauley can’t stand the sight of him.

MARTHA
So the rumors go.

SPROUL
As to why he didn’t get the Vice Chancellorship?

MARTHA
I try never to repeat gossip.

SPROUL
High minded of you. Truly, Martha, it was never my intention to release the dogs of war upon you.

MARTHA
They descended upon me nonetheless.

SPROUL
Yes, they did. But they haven’t been able to defeat you.

MARTHA
Why does it feel like you’re patronizing me?

SPROUL
Because you don’t trust me any more.

MARTHA
Hoover and Nixon must be getting parched.

SPROUL
Thank you for your always gracious hospitality.
MARTHA
You know it would help me if you would stack that box over there.

SPROUL
My pleasure.

He moves the box with effort. It’s heavier than it looked. Martha smiles.

MARTHA
Those, too. Thanks.

These two boxes are heavy, too, but Sproul moves them. When he’s done, he grins a bit ruefully and holds out his hand for her to shake. Game over.

SPROUL
Goodbye, Martha.

Goodbye, Bob.

He moves to exit.

MARTHA (continuing)
Be sure to give Ida my regards.

I will.

SPROUL
He exits.

LIGHTS DOWN on patio.

LIGHTS UP on Ruth. She sits at a desk doing paperwork, talking on the telephone. It’s a nice office. She’s doing well.

Rosalind enters and watches her for a moment until Ruth looks up. It is early fall, 1954.

ROSALIND
Hello, Ruth.

RUTH
Rosy. What a nice surprise.
They hug.

ROSALIND
You’re looking well.

RUTH
So are you.

ROSALIND
You’re lying, but I appreciate the thought. The hallowed halls are not a pleasant place to be these days I am afraid.

RUTH
How’s the program?

ROSALIND
Wobbly.

RUTH
I’m sorry to hear that.

ROSALIND
The insurance business, on the other hand, appears to be booming.

RUTH
Looks can be deceiving, but it’s going well, Rosy.

ROSALIND
A mutual friend of ours always thought insurance would suit you.

RUTH
Well, the level of politics is considerably lower than in academia. I can work independently. And there’s a reasonable correlation between effort and reward.

ROSALIND
Quite different from my line of work.

RUTH
How is our mutual friend?

ROSALIND
As you might expect, I suppose. And you?

RUTH
Me?
You are well?

Well enough.

Still playing basketball?

Every Saturday. A little golf now and then. And you would be proud of me, Rosy. I’ve joined the League of Women Voters.

Ah, our mutual friend’s influence?

Let’s just say I’m starting to see the world a little differently. Perhaps a bit less selfishly. But the main thing is I’ve bought a piece of land up on the Tiger Tail. That’s taking all my extra time.

Oh, I’m envious!

A few acres. I’m going to build on it.

I remember you always were handy.

Has she been able to keep the house, our mutual friend?

Rosalind shakes her head.

She loves that house! Look, I would be happy to loan her –

There’s no point. Living there would always remind her of what she’s lost.

Is there any chance -- ?
She’ll win in court?

Rosy shakes her head no.

My poor Martha.

Mac says you can’t win these kinds of cases. He thinks she should settle before the Regents pull their final offer. She’s had it a few months now and they’re running out of patience.

Settling would be hard for her.

She’s successfully fought them to a draw – which in this case everyone knows is the same as a victory.

Everyone but Martha.

You know her well.

Only Martha would --

Would what? Jeopardize her entire future security on a matter of principle?

She doesn’t see it that way.

Oh, you always take her side.

She doesn’t see it that way, either, I’m afraid. Why haven’t I heard from her, Rosy?

You walked out on her, Ruth, as I recall.

Didn’t she tell you --?
ROSALIND

No. What?

RUTH

The next day I realized what an ass I’d been, leaving her when she really needed me. I called her. The phone just rang and rang. I called her in the middle of the night and even then she never picked up. So I wrote. And wrote. But the letters just came back to me. Over and over I tried to reach her. Nothing. No response, Rosy. No damned response. I assumed she was so angry she never wanted to speak to me again.

ROSALIND

I wish you had told me. I just assumed, after a year or more –

RUTH

-- fifteen and a half months --

ROSALIND

-- I just assumed you had…gone on with your life.

RUTH

Well, that’s true enough, I suppose. What was the alternative?

ROSALIND

To be honest, Ruth, I thought perhaps you’d met someone else.

RUTH

Met someone else! When would I have done that? In between crying and screaming and slamming basketballs against the floor?

ROSALIND

I’m sorry. I didn’t know.

RUTH

Well, I’d be lying if I said that trying to meet someone else hadn’t crossed my mind after awhile.

ROSALIND

I don’t know how that sort of thing works in your world.

RUTH

It works about as badly in my world as it does in yours, Rosy. Particularly if you’re still in love with someone else.

ROSALIND

Yes, that can be a problem.
RUTH
I had dinner last month with a perfectly nice social worker from Van Nuys. Funny, kind, lovely, intelligent. From the Midwest, even. At the end of the evening she smiled and said I talked so much about Martha that she felt like she was dating her and not me.

ROSALIND
That would actually be something of an improvement over some of the dinners I’ve had with men. At least you were allowed a word in.

RUTH
So is that why you’re here, then? To see how I still feel about Martha?

ROSALIND
I wouldn’t make a very good secret agent, would I?

RUTH
Is she sleeping much?

Rosalind shakes her head.

RUTH (continuing)
That was always the first thing to go with her.

ROSALIND
She barely eats. Some days she doesn’t get out of bed.

RUTH
Oh my God.

ROSALIND
Ruth, I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t important. Mac says they’ll pull the offer on Monday if she doesn’t take it. The rest of us have tried to talk to her, but I think you are the only person she’ll listen to.

RUTH
She won’t even talk to me, Rosy, why on earth would she take my advice?

ROSALIND
It’s very simple, dear. She loves you. And no matter how hard she may try not to let you know, she always will.

Beat. Ruth is too moved to speak.

RUTH
It was lovely seeing you.
You, too, Ruth.

ROSALIND

She turns to exit.

ROSALIND (continuing)

Invite me to the ground-breaking.

Rosalind exits.

LIGHTS DOWN on Ruth.

LIGHTS UP on Martha’s patio, that evening. Martha sits drinking and staring out at her garden. The patio is bare now.

Ruth enters.

Hello, Martha.

RUTH

Ruth.

MARTHA

Rosy suggested I come by.

RUTH

Beat.

MARTHA

I finally had to give up on the fruit trees. I just couldn’t seem to keep them going. I’m sorry. I know how much you loved them.

RUTH

I’d like to talk to you, Martha. But if you want me to leave, I’ll go.

MARTHA

I never wanted you to leave, Ruthie.

RUTH

I never wanted to go.

MARTHA

It all seems so long ago now. A lifetime.
RUTH
I was wrong, Martha. I know that now.

MARTHA
No, no! You had to do what was right for you –

RUTH
I didn’t understand. My feelings were hurt.

MARTHA
Of course they were.

RUTH
Martha, you were courageous and brave and strong and all I saw was my own pain.

MARTHA
I put you through so much –

RUTH
I should have stood by you, taken my lumps –

MARTHA
Not everything’s about justice.

RUTH
But this was. You were right to fight with everything you had.

MARTHA
Well, it didn’t get me so very far, did it? All my rantings and ravings.

RUTH
You’ve fought them to a draw. No one else could have done that.

MARTHA
Well, now they’ve made me a final offer. They say a final, final.

RUTH
Rosy told me.

MARTHA
The neighbors are probably snapping photos right and left. Recording all those unspeakable acts.

RUTH
Do you want to take it?
MARTHA
I want my life back, I know that. My old life.

RUTH
It was a terrific life, Martha. Teaching, directing the program. You were loved and valued and respected. And you were very happy.

Yes, I was.

So was I.

Beat.

RUTH (continuing)
I think you’re supposed to ask how I’m doing these days.

Rosy already told me.

She gets around, I see.

MARTHA
You bought some property up on the Tiger Tail. Several acres. You’re going to build on it --

RUTH
Martha, it’s too much space for one person.

Perhaps you’ll find a room-mate.

Perhaps.

Martha gets out her handkerchief and dabs her eyes.

My allergies.

You don’t have allergies.
MARTHA
Can’t you leave me any illusions?

RUTH
If I can’t have them, neither can you.

MARTHA
They took away my life, damn it.

RUTH
They took your career. They took your money. They’ve even taken your house. But they did not take your life. You still get to wake up every morning and be Martha Deane, the most marvelous woman I have ever known.

MARTHA
Perhaps you should go now, Ruthie.

RUTH
Why? Because we’re finally getting a chance to talk?

MARTHA
Because I’m too old to start over!

RUTH
Don’t be ridiculous!

MARTHA
I am old, Ruth. Do you hear me? I am old and unemployed and cantankerous –

RUTH
-- and stubborn --

MARTHA
-- and you deserve someone who can make you happy.

RUTH
Damn it, Martha! Why didn’t you return my calls, my letters -- ?

MARTHA
You left me!

RUTH
All right, I was wrong! But you wouldn’t talk to me!
MARTHA
I couldn’t think straight! I felt like I was being attacked on all sides. I stopped knowing who I was, much less who you were.

RUTH
We would be building the new house the first year or two. There really wouldn’t be much time for you to think about being old or anything else, for that matter.

MARTHA
You’re not listening to me!

RUTH
You’ve always wanted to spend more time with the League of Women Voters and do some acting again in Pasadena. Travel more – you always wanted to go to Hawaii.

MARTHA
Damn you, stop it!

RUTH
Do you want me to leave, Martha?

Beat. Ruth turns toward the door to exit.

MARTHA
I was tenured faculty, Ruthie!

Ruth moves to her and they embrace.

RUTH
I know, baby, I know. …Take the offer, Martha. Start a new life.

MARTHA
How can you ever forgive me, sweetheart? I put you through so much over this.

RUTH
It’s you who needs to forgive me.

MARTHA
I suppose we’re both human, when you get down to it…As well as notorious lesbians, apparently.

RUTH
That’s how we will live out our days, then. Notorious lesbians on the Tiger Tail, living lives of quiet dignity behind tall trees.
MARTHA
Very tall trees…Don’t go, Ruth. Don’t ever go again.

They kiss.

LIGHTS DOWN on Martha’s patio.

LIGHTS UP on David’s office. It’s early in 1955.

DAVID fusses busily with things on his desk.

There’s a KNOCK at the door (O.S.)

Sproul enters.

SPROUL
Hello, Dave.

DAVID
Oh, Mr. President.

SPROUL
I just wanted to come by to thank you –

DAVID
A chair?

SPROUL
-- no thanks. To thank you personally for the hard work you did with the Martha Deane case. I know it was a long and difficult process. We’ve finally got all parties signed off and the papers filed.

DAVID
Thank you, sir. That means a lot.

SPROUL
Phyllis is well?

DAVID
Off to France.

SPROUL
France? You’re meeting her there?
DAVID
No. No indeed. She’s off with a cousin. I encouraged her to go. So much going on here, you know.

SPROUL
Well, it’s over now.

DAVID
There’s always plenty to do here. I’m looking forward to getting back to my regular duties.

SPROUL
Oh, about that.

DAVID (hopefully)
Sir?

SPROUL
The Regents are very grateful for the role you’ve played. They’re eager to see Ray Allen do well as the new Chancellor.

DAVID
Oh yes, Ray. I’ve known Ray for years.

SPROUL
It would be a big help if you could smooth the rails some for him if there’s a problem.

DAVID (deflated)
Smooth the rails. Yes, of course.

SPROUL
He’s a good man.

DAVID
So, it is over, then? The Deane case.

SPROUL
Yes. She’s formally accepted the Regent’s Counsel’s final, final offer.

DAVID
Back pay?

SPROUL
Yes.
DAVID

Pension, of course.

SPROUL

At the level current at suspension. She’ll miss the bump from last year. Bad timing for her.

DAVID

Yes. Too bad the whole thing couldn’t have waited a year or two, you know. What will she do now?

SPROUL

I don’t know. Mrs. Sproul is still in touch with her. Perhaps I’ll ask. Is something troubling you, Dave?

DAVID

No, not really.

SPROUL

Good.

DAVID

It’s just we had that sworn statement from the neighbor. About what he’d seen. Yet I never could get Martha to admit she’d done anything, anything inappropriate.

SPROUL

Don’t let it trouble you. You were just doing your job.

DAVID

Yes. A difficult one it was, you know.

Sproul looks at his watch.

DAVID (continuing)

I suppose we never will resolve it further now.

SPROUL

Resolve what, exactly?

DAVID

Oh, I don’t know that it matters. What she did, what they were doing. Would you say the Regents won, Mr. President?

SPROUL

I hadn’t thought about it all in quite those terms.
DAVID

But if you did?

SPROUL

Martha beat us, Dave. Between you and me, I don’t think it’s a bad outcome. Now I can’t guarantee you Martha agrees with me – she has a tremendous amount of pride. But my guess is in time she’ll see it.

DAVID

Regent Pauley would agree with you, then?

SPROUL

Why the interest in Regent Pauley? Not much you can do about his opinion. I wouldn’t worry too much about it. Life goes on.

DAVID

Thank you –

SPROUL

Interesting times we live in. The Senate finally voting to censure Joe McCarthy.

DAVID

End of an era. I wonder what happens to him now, do you suppose? Now that the tent’s packed up and the circus is over.

SPROUL

I don’t know, Dave. I really must go.

Sproul exits.

DAVID picks up the telephone.

DAVID (on telephone)

Oh hello. Yes, I was hoping to call a number in Paris, in France…The number is…

LIGHTS DOWN on DAVID.

The stage is black.

MARTHA (O.S.)

Ladies!
SPOT UP on Martha as she addresses a group of friends on Tiger Tail Road a few months later. Healthy, full of vitality, she’s dressed in a Hawaiian shirt.

MARTHA (continuing)
Thank you all for joining us today for the Tiger Tail ground-breaking ceremony. You’ll find Polynesian drinks on the bar. Rosy will be doing that new dance craze, the hula, for us later. No? Oh, excuse me. Dr. Rosalind Cassidy will be doing a scholarly analysis of the hula for us. That should be fascinating.

I want to thank you all for the support you’ve given me over the last two and a half years. I have no words to express my gratitude. I am both happy and humbled to be able today to return to each of you the money you loaned me during that difficult time. I have checks for each of you, with interest and with my deepest thanks. It was the only income I had for many, many months.

For years I told my students at UCLA that becoming an instructor of Physical Education was a choice they would never regret. I still believe that, deeply. As you all know, it has been difficult for me to accept that the days of teaching are behind me now. You know that was not my choice. But I am proud of the program we built together and of every single young woman who passed through it on her road to her career. I celebrate them.

Indeed, life goes on. And so do I. As many of you know, Ruth and I recently returned from Hawaii. Thus the party theme. While we must wait for Dr. Cassidy’s scholarly analysis to fully understand the significance of hula, I thought we might begin with a demonstration for those new to it. As I used to tell my first year Physical Education students in the Methodology of Teaching class, you’ve got to learn to listen to your body and hear what it’s telling you. Mine tells me I am older, but not old. Wiser, but not yet wise. Happy but not as happy as I will become. Lord knows I will undoubtedly hula until I drop.

HULA MUSIC begins (O.S.).

Imagine a pink sunset sky on an exotic island. You’re with the person of your dreams. You have a drink in one hand and not a care in the world. The worst is behind you and you have your life ahead. Ah, imagination rules the world.

She begins to dance the hula, rather well as a matter of fact.

MARTHA (continuing)

We begin with the hips.
LIGHTS slowly DOWN on Martha.

Hula music continues (O.S.)

Blackout.

END OF PLAY