Fifteen

Liberace begins to sing for us.

Louder than he's yet been.

Lights up on the kitchen.

Annie has set up a table with her best silverware and china. There are wine glasses, a bottle of Gallo red wine.

The whole place is as romantic as Annie can make anything.

And Annie—we've never seen her dolled up like this. She wheels Paul to the table.

ANNIE. I hope you like it.

PAUL. This looks wonderful.

He takes one.

And you look very pretty.

Annie starts to reply, is too embarrassed, stops.

ANNIE. *(Delighted, almost shy.)* Well I'm not going to tell you what you can say.

The awkward silence goes on.

PAUL. Where did you get a dress like that?

ANNIE. It was my mother's. It's old-fashioned.

PAUL. I like it, it's modest.

ANNIE. It is modest. I don't mean to pry, but I read in *People* magazine that you were seeing that model who does those disgusting jeans commercials. And I said it can't be true. Paul Sheldon would never waste his time with a trampy woman like that.

PAUL. Well, you can't believe everything you read in *People* magazine.

ANNIE. I knew it. I knew it wasn't true.

Beat.

PAUL. You know, when I was a kid, nurses were my heart's desire.

Annie is dumbfounded, cannot speak.

The uniform was part of it, I'm sure, but not just that. Who knows, maybe I just wanted someone kind to take care of me. The way you're taking care of me now.

After a moment—

I bet you were something in your nurse's uniform.

Annie, again, cannot speak. They eat. There is awkward silence as they chew.

Wine?

He lifts the bottle, and begins to fill her glass with red wine. Annie blushes and tries to put her hand over the glass.

ANNIE. Oh no, no, no, no.

Paul succeeds in pouring her a large glass of wine. Annie sheepishly accepts. He pours himself a glass. They look at one another. Paul smiles. Then he takes a bite of food.

PAUL. I have never, not in all my life, eaten meatloaf to compare with this—WOW—

ANNIE. Well, I have a secret—I only use fresh tomatoes—and to give it that little extra zip, I mix in some Spam with the ground beef.

PAUL. You cannot get this in a New York restaurant, that's for sure.

She is thrilled, does her best to hide it.

ANNIE. It was my mother's recipe.

PAUL. You must have been very close with her.

ANNIE. Yes, I was. In my whole life, she was the only person who never let me down. Well, her and Misery.

PAUL. Annie?

She manages to look at him.

I think we should have a toast.

ANNIE. A toast?

PAUL. Yes. To Misery.

ANNIE. To Misery.

PAUL. No, wait—let's do this right—do you have any candles?

ANNIE. I don't know—I think maybe somewhere I do—

She gets up, hurries out the door.

The instant she's gone, Paul pulls out the envelope filled with Novril powder. He empties it into her glass of wine as he talks.

PAUL. It's great to see the rest of the house. I'd imagined it was lovely but I didn't expect this. Did you study decorating or do you just have a flair?

ANNIE. *(Out of the room but we can hear her clearly.)* You fooler—but I guess you could say I picked things up over the years.

PAUL. Well, it certainly says you. *(Louder.)* Listen, if you can't find any, it's OK—I just thought it might be nice.

Annie reenters now with a candle.

ANNIE. Are you kidding?—if anyone ever told me that there would come a day when I'd be having a candlelit dinner with Paul Sheldon—and in my own home—well I would have checked both legs to see which one was being pulled.

She holds the candle out toward him.

Will this do?

PAUL. It's perfect.

She puts the candle on the table, lights it.

Paul raises his glass to toasting position.

To Misery and to Annie Wilkes—who brought her back to life.

Annie raises her glass now.

ANNIE. Oh Paul...

There is just an instant before they touch glasses—

—and she knocks over the candle—

—accidentally knocks over her glass—

—spilling the wine.

(Wiping up the spilled wine with her napkin.) Oh God Paul, what

have I done? *(Humiliated.)* I ruined your beautiful toast—can you find it in your heart to forgive me? *(Reaches for the Gallo.)* Let me pour another glass. *(She does.)* Can we both please pretend this never happened? *(Toasting position now.)* To Misery.

PAUL. Misery.

They drink their wine.

Liberace sings on.

Lights dim.

