

CLAIRE

Look, I have some gum, would you like some gum? Isn't that supposed to be some sort of substitute?

ANNE

No, thank you.

CLAIRE

I'm just trying to find something we can both live with. Until we figure out how to get you out of the room.

ANNE

Don't hold your breath.

CLAIRE

*(indicating ANNE's cigarette)* Looks like I'm going to have to. I'm not going back out there. Not yet, anyway.

ANNE

I know.

CLAIRE

I need a break from – Did you see Marlene and Joel?

ANNE

I did. We had a nice conversation.

CLAIRE

Jesus Christ, he is such a fathead.

ANNE

I know.

CLAIRE

And I wonder if there's actually a person under all that make-up she wears.

ANNE

I know.

CLAIRE

What did you talk about with them?

ANNE

I don't know. Edgar, of course. Their daughters.

CLAIRE

I don't know how you do it.

ANNE

What?

CLAIRE

Talk to idiots so comfortably. I don't have the stomach.

ANNE

It does not require much effort. Politeness. *(Pause)* Johann seems very, um, placid.

CLAIRE

He is holding it together, absolutely.

ANNE

He looks well.

CLAIRE

Away from home for the first time? Naturally, it agrees with him.

ANNE

Mm. Does he know what he'll major in?

CLAIRE

He's taking some linguistics, God help him. But there's still time to change his mind.

ANNE

For him to change his mind, or for you to change it for him? *(CLAIRE shrugs.)* I'm sure you'll get what you want, don't worry.

CLAIRE

Where's Aaron?

ANNE

Detroit, a conference. I didn't want him here anyway.

CLAIRE

Really.

ANNE

He'd just be uncomfortable.

CLAIRE

That's nice of you. Concerned with your husband's comfort.

ANNE

*(after a hesitant moment)* ...Yes?

CLAIRE

Nothing, I genuinely find it nice!

ANNE

You can hardly blame me for expecting you to be harsh, I've known you every day of my life.

CLAIRE

I need a drink. *(starts to leave; at the door:)* Please don't smoke in here. In fact, why don't you consider this a no-smoking shiva.