

SOB SISTER. Where the U.S. Radium Corporation demands a postponement—

REPORTER. While plaintiff's attorney Raymond Berry makes a shocking disclosure!

SOB SISTER. Showing that the company lied to the Department of Labor!

REPORTER. Showing that it distorted the results of a Harvard study!

SOB SISTER. Concealing the ill effects of its product!

REPORTER. Read all about it in the Ledger!

SOB SISTER. Read it in the Graphic! We care. Because you care.

*(Above covers transition to:)*

### SCENE 7

*(The parlor in Roeder's house. MRS. ROEDER is reading a newspaper as ROEDER enters with a bottle of Radithor and pours out two glasses—as if drinking it has become a nightly ritual.)*

ROEDER. Very bad?

MRS. ROEDER. You didn't read it?

ROEDER. I make a point not to, these days.

MRS. ROEDER. If only other people would do the same. Mrs. Mitchell from across the street. She walked right past me this morning, didn't say a word to me. I know she saw me. And the women at the market. And the green grocer...the way they glance at each other...and at the club, Mrs. Middleton and the other ladies. The whispers.

ROEDER. Why don't you put that away? Read the Journal. I saw it here the other day. Why don't you read that?

MRS. ROEDER *(overlapping)*. At the club today, someone actually had the nerve to say to me: Is it true? Is it true, she said? Did your husband poison those women? I said: "Mrs. Cowles. If you think it is true, then why would you speak to me at all? I certainly would not associate with a woman whose husband did such things."

ROEDER. Why do you go there, then? If that's the way people are.

MRS. ROEDER. I've been a member for years.

ROEDER. What do you want me to say, Diane? I knew we were poisoning people, but we didn't want to stop because we were making too much money. Is that what you want me to say?

MRS. ROEDER. I certainly don't want you to say such a thing.

ROEDER. Even if it were true? *(A silence. In the silence lies a suspicion that ROEDER has never felt before.)* Or especially if it were true?

MRS. ROEDER. Is it true?

ROEDER. Is that what you think?

MRS. ROEDER. What would you like me to think?

ROEDER. For God's sakes, Diane. Don't you see what's going on? It's Von Sochocky. He's behind all this. He's jealous of our success. He's feeding information to the Consumer's League—so they can railroad us.

MRS. ROEDER. Why would the Consumer's League—

ROEDER. Bunch of radical women—do-gooders—half of them are Reds probably—Socialists! That's what they are. Same thing with that club you belong to.

MRS. ROEDER. What?

ROEDER. You women think you can go around and fix the world's problems.

MRS. ROEDER (*overlapping*). I can't. I'm sorry—

ROEDER (*overlapping*). —while your husbands go out and make a living. You're going to quit that club.

MRS. ROEDER. Quit the club!

ROEDER. And stop talking to that idiot Mrs. Middleton. // She doesn't know anything.

MRS. ROEDER (*overlapping on //*). You're not making any sense.

ROEDER. None of those women know anything!! You don't know anything. (*Silence.*)

MRS. ROEDER (*quiet determination*). Did you lie to the Department of Labor?

ROEDER. What? (*MRS. ROEDER holds out the newspaper. He takes it, looks at it.*)

MRS. ROEDER. Did you lie?

ROEDER. I didn't lie. I just... Didn't agree with Drinker's results.

MRS. ROEDER. Arthur.

ROEDER. I have a fiduciary duty to the company.

MRS. ROEDER. I can't listen to this.

ROEDER. Diane! I have documents— I have articles— People with tumors the size of baseballs. Radium therapy—the tumors disappear. Diane.

MRS. ROEDER. I'm tired. I'm going upstairs.

ROEDER. We save lives. We make lives better—mild radium therapy—invigorates. You can't really think I'm a liar. Diane. You can't really believe I would set out to poison people. Can you? Diane?

MRS. ROEDER. No.

ROEDER. Do you think I would ever do anything to hurt you? Or to hurt Harriet?

MRS. ROEDER. Certainly not.

ROEDER. Then?

MRS. ROEDER. Thirteen girls have died.

ROEDER. People die every day. The newspapers are full of death notices—young, old—infants. Children, younger than Harriet. Die every day.

MRS. ROEDER. But they worked for you!

ROEDER. They also worked other places. Diane. I have a report from Columbia University—an expert in industrial hygiene, just like Drinker—who says there is no connection between our plant and these illnesses. Would you like to see the report?

MRS. ROEDER. Then. What...what could the cause be?

ROEDER. I don't know. Diane. I really don't know. I've done everything I could to find out. No one knows. (*Beat.*) Please say you believe me. If you don't believe me, there's no point to anything.

MRS. ROEDER. Artie. (*She goes to him. With relief he embraces her.*)

ROEDER. You remember the day I told my father I wasn't going into the ministry? What you said to me that day?

MRS. ROEDER. You can do as much good in a boardroom as you can in a church.

ROEDER. You remember.

MRS. ROEDER. You think I would forget?

ROEDER. I was such a scared kid. And he—he was an icon. If it weren't for you. I don't think I could have stood up to him.

MRS. ROEDER. I'm sure you would have, Artie. I know you would have.