



RECONSTRUCTION

By Barbara Kimmel

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RECONSTRUCTION

A Play in One Act

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RECONSTRUCTION

CHARACTERS:

PATIENT. Female, early-50s. Anxious, organized, strives to do what's right. In most scenes, she is holding a notebook(s.)

HUSBAND. Male, early-50s. Easy-going, rational, loyal.
Perhaps carries a briefcase.

DOCTOR. Female, any age over 30. Professional. Wears white lab coat and/or stethoscope.
Perhaps carries clipboard with papers.

WORKER. Male, any age. Professional, focused on his job.
Perhaps carries clipboard with papers.

SETTING:

Center Stage: Kitchen.
Stage Right: Doctor's Office.
Stage Left: Bedroom.

SYNOPSIS:

A woman faces breast cancer while her home is falling to ruins. Both require immediate attention. She struggles with her own anxiety and a dizzying amount of information, as both situations become comedically intertwined.

At Rise: Dawn. Stage is dark except spotlight front center on PATIENT, in nightgown, standing on a chair holding a plastic trashcan beneath a dripping ceiling.

PATIENT

Help! *Helllllllp!* Something's leaking!

HUSBAND, barefoot, in sleeveless white undershirt and Batman pajama pants, runs in, sliding on wet floor.

HUSBAND

Oh my God! Why is it *raining* in the basement?

PATIENT

What do we do?!

HUSBAND

Head upstairs and call the plumber. I'll get some towels and dry up this mess.

HUSBAND exits. PATIENT enters Kitchen. Opens top cabinet revealing shelves of labeled notebooks and pulls out a notebook.

PATIENT

Here it is. *Plumber.*

PATIENT opens notebook, then pulls out phone and calls number. Talks into phone while walking around Kitchen, examining floor.

Water's pouring through the basement ceiling. Looks like from the kitchen... maybe from the new dishwasher... but we didn't run it last night... (*Pause/Listens*) Really?

PATIENT hangs up, then rummages through a drawer, pulling out a new notebook and office supplies. HUSBAND enters, arms full of wet towels.

PATIENT

Plumber's on his way. Says the dishwasher may have been dripping for days, even weeks, and we didn't know.

HUSBAND

Glad we caught it before it caused too much damage. (*Beat*) A new notebook?

PATIENT

Yep. Color-coded tabs, divider pockets, and a business card page. I'll label this... *(Pauses while writing cover label, then proudly holds up notebook)* "Dishwasher Leak."

PATIENT and HUSBAND join
DOCTOR in Doctor's Office.

DOCTOR

I'm so sorry, but... *(HUSBAND reaches to hold PATIENT's hand)*...it's back, in the same spot.

PATIENT

No. No-no-no. It's tiny. You said the tip of a needle.

DOCTOR

(Looking at computer or paper report) What adds to the puzzle is now *both* your sisters have had breast cancer at young ages, pre-menopausal. But none of you have any genetic markers.

PATIENT

Should that make me feel *better*?

DOCTOR

Not sure what to make of that. What I do know is that each recurrence gets angrier, so we must act swiftly.

HUSBAND

So... what do we do?

PATIENT pulls a notebook out of
her bag and begins taking notes in it.

DOCTOR

(To PATIENT) Well, since you haven't had radiation on your breast, we can do a lumpectomy, remove the cancer and save the breast.

HUSBAND

But isn't that what she did before?

PATIENT

(Angry)

Yes! And then took tamoxifen, the *miracle* drug, for five years.

DOCTOR

This time we'll be more aggressive and follow the surgery with several weeks of radiation.

PATIENT

Weeks... of radiation! I am so sick of this *(looks down at her chest)* of *these!* *(Sarcastically)* How 'bout we just get rid of them and call it a day?

DOCTOR

Well, that *is* your other option. A mastectomy. Remove the breasts, followed by reconstruction with implants. Saline, silicone, or –

PATIENT

What! This will cost a fortune –

DOCTOR

Don't worry about the money. Insurance will cover it.

PATIENT

I wish. None of my doctors are in our new network so we're paying out-of-pocket for everything, including you.

HUSBAND

(*To PATIENT*) Let's not get too far ahead. We can at least *talk* to doctors on our new insurance.

PATIENT

(*To DOCTOR*) Is there another choice? Some sort of vaccine? A new drug? *Flaxseed*?

DOCTOR

No, these are our options. Both procedures have the same survival rates, so this really comes down to a personal decision.

PATIENT puts head in hands and leans on desk shaking her head.

PATIENT and HUSBAND enter Kitchen. Patient slams notebook on table, then paces.

PATIENT

Keep 'em or lose 'em! Pretty big decision and it's *my* call. *She* went to med school! Why can't *she* tell me what to do?

HUSBAND

We'll do some research, get second opinions, carefully examine the pros and cons –

PATIENT

Pros! What *pros*? This is crazy. George Washington's *mother* had breast cancer! Shouldn't there be better choices by now? Get rid of this *teensy speck* through *radiation*... or total *mutilation*. Doesn't sound much better than the arsenic and poison hemlock they used in George's day.

HUSBAND

(*Rushing as he picks up briefcase to leave*) Let's approach this rationally. For starters, we need to postpone the home repairs and focus on the cancer.