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## CAISSE'S QUEST

### ***PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:***

RENE M. CAISSE (A HIGHLY SPIRITED, IDEALISTIC AND COMPASSIONATE CANADIAN NURSE)  
FRISELDA (POTVIN) CAISSE (RENE'S STRAITLACED, WISE, PRACTICAL, AND REPRESSED MOTHER)  
MARY MCPHERSON (RENE'S YOUNGER FRIEND; KEEN, INTELLIGENT AND LEVEL-HEADED)  
DR. ARNOLD FISHER (AN ESTEEMED ONCOLOGIST AND RESEARCHER)  
DR. FREDERICK ("Sir") BANTING (RENE'S ARCH NEMESIS; HEAD OF THE CANCER COMMISSION)

### ***SUPPORTING CHARACTERS:***

AUNT MIREZA POTVIN (RENE'S HUMOROUS, BRAVE, AND STRONG-WILLED AUNT)  
MRS. THOS LEYMAN (A PROMINENT AND WEALTHY SOCIALITE OF BRACEBRIDGE)  
JAMES SUMMERWILL (A CANADIAN GENTLEMAN AND SCHOLAR)  
MAYOR WILBERT RICHARDS (LONG-TIME MAYOR OF BRACEBRIDGE)  
DR. A.F. BASTEDO (A RESPECTED LOCAL PHYSICIAN OF BRACEBRIDGE)

***(THE ENSEMBLE: THESE CHARACTERS SERVE THE PLAY AS VARIOUS CAMEO ROLES, AS VISION DANCERS, BRACEBRIDGE TOWNSPEOPLE, NURSES, HOSPITAL PATIENTS, CANCER PATIENTS, DEMONSTRATORS, NEWS REPORTERS, AND FUNERAL ATTENDEES-- IN VARIOUS SCENES):***

### MEN:

RIVER EAGLE/ CHARLES MCGAUGHY  
AARON /DR. NOBEL  
DR. CLIFF ARNOLD/ DR. McCULLOUGH  
PREMIERE MITCH HEPBURN/DR. CALLAHAN/ POLICEMAN  
DR NORWICH/DR. MOSELY

### WOMEN:

YOUNG LAURA/ ANNIE BONAR  
OLD LAURA/DR. EMMA CARLSON  
DR. STOCK /MINISTER FAULKNER

**Cast requirements: Ten men, nine women**

## AUTHOR NOTES

*Caisse's Quest* is loosely based on the real life story of the Canadian nurse Rene Caisse and her quest to enlighten people about the benefits and possible curative properties of Essaic tea. I must stress that this production is a creative endeavor; it is mixture of dramatic imagination and real-life biography. *Caisse's Quest* takes history and embellishes it for the sake of dramatic intensity, suspense, romance and action-- while incorporating concrete historical and medical facts. It is a story that examines both the personal, professional and public aspects of a special woman's life, and how her professional life ultimately affected her private one. *Caisse's Quest* illuminates how Rene Caisse ultimately grew from a naïve young nurse to a scientist of great stature and courage. *Caisse's Quest* examines this story from a feministic point of view, and it provides strong and deeply psychological roles for female characters, where it highlights a woman's passions, dreams, desires and pain. It is with the greatest pleasure and upmost respect that this author writes this play as a testament of a true humanitarian heroine, the late Rene Caisse.

### ***ACT ONE, SCENE ONE ("Vision Quest")***

**CAISSE'S QUEST BEGINS AT A MINING CAMP IN NORTHERN ONTORIO, CANADA. THE YEAR IS 1895. THE SOUND OF BUSY MINING EQUIPMENT IS HEARD IN THE FAR DISTANCE. IT IS NIGHTFALL AROUND A CAMPFIRE AND THE WEATHER IS COLD AND HARSH. IN THIS SCENE THERE IS A SENSE OF MYSTERY, CONNECTIVENESS, AND SPIRITUALISM AS THOUGH A REMARKABLE AND FATEFUL MOMENT OUT OF TIME WAS ABOUT TO PRESENT ITSELF. ATMOSPHERICALLY THERE IS AN AURORA BORELIS THAT CAN BE SEEN OVERHEAD AT A DISTANCE, AS THE GENTLE FLICKER OF THE FIRELIGHT ILLUMINATES THE STAGE. AN OLD MEDICINE MAN IS SITTING BY THE FIRE, BREWING SOME TEA. THE STEAM FROM HIS CONCOCTION EMERGES FROM HIS CUP, AND HE MOVES HIS HAND OVER IT FOR PROTECTIVE WARMTH. HE IS LOOKING UP AT THE HORIZON, GAZING AT THE STARS, AS THOUGH CONNECTED TO THE VAST ENERGIES OF THE UNIVERSE.**

### **RIVER EAGLE**

**(AS THOUGH COMMANDED BY SOME HIGHER POWER THAN HIMSELF HE BEGINS TO CHANT AND DANCE AROUND THE FIRE. HE SHAKES A RATTLE-TYPE INSTRUMENT IN RHYTHMIC PATTERNS. SLOWLY, THE ESSENSE OF GHOSTLY VISIONS DANCE GRACEFULLY AROUND HIM, AS HIS DANCE GROWS MORE INTENSE AND PURPOSEFUL. SUDDENLY, HE SMILES AND PEERS OUT BEYOND THE FIRE AS THOUGH EXPECTING SOMEONE WHO IS NOT YET THERE. THE OLD OJIBWA MEDICINE MAN SITS DOWN AND WAITS PATIENTLY).**

**[THE ENGLISH PROSPECTOR AND HIS WIFE ENTER THROUGH THE SHADOWS]** They look incredulously at River Eagle, as though they are both intrigued, yet at the same time, suspicious of the strange old man.

**AARON**

(Covertly to his wife) Dear . . . just try to keep an opened mind. This man knows what he's doing.

**YOUNG LAURA**

(She is extremely fatigued and distrustful, gazing suspiciously at River Eagle). My husband sent me out here against my better judgment. I don't believe in all this voodoo medicine.

**AARON**

Please Laura, be polite.

**YOUNG LAURA**

I didn't want to come out here to the wilderness, but my husband wanted to prospect.

*(Eagle River presents her with a glass of his brew, and Laura angrily rejects it. As she pushes it away, it lands on the floor, and she grabs at her right breast in pain)*

Oh!

**AARON**

Please dear, don't spill it.

**RIVER EAGLE**

(Compassionately) How long have you had evil spirit in your chest?

**YOUNG LAURA**

It has been swollen for some time. Surgery was the only hope. I don't have too long. (She stares at the stars hopelessly).

**RIVER EAGLE**

(Calmly and steadily gazing into her eyes) I can cure you. I have ancient medicine passed down from my ancestors.

**AARON**

I am afraid we have no money, but we can trade something you might need.

**RIVER EAGLE**

I don't need your money. I do want to learn English. You have English books?

**AARON**

Yes, we have some books.

**RIVER EAGLE**

You can teach me English. Sharing knowledge is good trade.

**AARON**

(Smiling) Excellent! I will teach you to read, and you will help my wife. (Covertly to Eagle River) Please, she is all I have left in this world.

*[River Eagle shakes his head in agreement, and he carefully presents the tea to his wife again. From a separate cup, he takes the herbal brew to his lips and drinks it. He looks at the wife and he smiles broadly. Laura looks at him for a long time, and suddenly she smiles. With newfound trust and respect she accepts the drink, and she starts to sip it very slowly, never taking her eyes off the medicine man. They drink the tea together. Much relieved, the prospector kneels down beside her, and places his head on her lap. River Eagle and Laura are still gazing at each other with intensity, their faces flickering in the firelight--as the stage lights begin to fade out].*

**[FADEOUT]**

**ACT ONE, SCENE TWO ("The Fateful Moment")**

**ACT ONE, SCENE ONE THE YEAR IS NOW 1922. THE LOCATION IS THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE, HALLEYBURY HOSPITAL, IN NORTHERN ONTARIO). IT IS A ROMAN CATHOLIC HOSPITAL THAT TREATS MINERS WITH INJURIES, BURNS AND TYPHOID FEVER. LAURA IS NOW VERY OLD, AND AARON IS DECEASED.**

**[Rene Caisse enters. She is dressed neatly in a blue and white gingham uniform with a bib and apron. She also wears a smart organdy cap, black lisle stockings, and high black-laced shoes which complete her nurse's uniform. Although Rene looks plain at first sight, she is anything but ordinary. She is an extremely dynamic character with piercing dark eyes, and great intelligence. Rene Caisse is an extremely spirited and passionate woman who wears her heart on her sleeves. Rene is scientifically brilliant; however, she lacks sophistication and social intelligence, since she begins the play rather naïve and trusting of people. Unfortunately, Rene has an eating disorder due to her grief of the loss of her father, and unresolved psychological issues with her mother Friselda. Rene should be portrayed**

as a lonely woman who attempts to fill her need for love and acceptance through her obsessive scientific quest and her addiction to food. This quest is so obsessive and important to Rene, that it almost destroys her. Rene tirelessly seeks validation from the male medical establishment in order for her to relieve and soften her inner torments, by engrossing herself in scientific discovery --until she learns an important lesson about love, life, acceptance and herself.

**RENE**

(She is looking quizzically at the frail old woman, who is lying in a hospital bed. Rene is bathing Laura with a washcloth and she notices that there isn't any incision scar). Very . . . interesting. There is no incision scar. How odd. (Puzzled) Where did you get this mark on your breast?

**OLD LAURA**

(Saucy) Do you want the real answer or a fake answer?

**RENE**

Well, an honest answer will suffice.

**OLD LAURA**

(She smiles with a glint in her eyes) Alright, but I warn you, the truth is dangerous. Thirty years ago I had a malignant tumor on this breast. I thought I'd die, but an Indian cured me. I drank his medicine tea and my tumor became hardened and then a bizarre fluid spilled out. Later, it diminished, and then disappeared altogether. It was miraculous!

**RENE**

(Skeptically) Well, I've never heard of tumors just disappearing. (She curiously examines the spot again) Did you remove it from surgery?

**OLD LAURA**

(Slightly annoyed) No. Thank God! I didn't do the surgery. Instead, a medicine man cured me with a special concoction.

**RENE**

Currently, if I am not mistaken, there is no cure for cancer. (Smiling) At least, that is what doctors and scientists tell us.

**OLD LAURA**

(Now completely upset) Do you think I'd make this up?

**RENE**

(Soothingly) I didn't want to upset you. Please, calm down.

**OLD LAURA**

Eagle River gave me knowledge. With his help, he restored my health.

**RENE**

(Growing curious) How did you manage this?

**OLD LAURA**

I took the medicine man's brew for six months! I have been cancer free for twenty-one years. This is a fact! (Sadly) I want to get out of this hospital!

**RENE**

Oh, no, you are not going anywhere. Can you tell me about this miracle drug?

**OLD LAURA**

It is not a drug. It is a cure.

**RENE**

Please, get back into bed. I am not a doctor, but I would like to understand. What did the medicine man give you?

**OLD LAURA**

An Indian medicine man gave me a mixture of burdock root, sheep sorrel, turkey rhubarb root, and slippery elm bark.

**RENE**

That is an interesting recipe. I am always reading medical books, trying to learn. (Reflecting) Not that any doctor seems to appreciate it. (Laughing) Rather, they feel that reading can only overburden a nurse's brain with useless knowledge we would surely forget!

**OLD LAURA**

How very sad for you.

**RENE**

(Laura's last comment impacts Rene heavily) No, they want to be in charge of the pure medicine. Therefore, nurses learn how to apply bandages or they assist in the birthing of babies—which is one aspect of nursing I really love.

**OLD LAURA**

Well, what women would not like that part?

**RENE**

Yes, very true. (Seriously) And, doctors don't mind if nurses work in Red Cross Hospitals aiding them when epidemics occur.

**OLD LAURA**

When have women ever gotten the easy jobs?

**RENE**

(Connecting emotionally with Laura) That is true. (Serious) It seems that their strict rules do not allow for innovation.

**OLD LAURA**

(Reflectively) I did not respect my Indian healer, either. (Back to Rene) Their rules are too rigid.

**RENE**

Yes, I find it hard to comply with their wishes. (Pause) Well, I will write these ingredients down. I am not sure I can use it on any patients, but if I ever develop cancer, I will certainly try it.

**OLD LAURA**

(Curtly) That is a pity!

**RENE**

(Dubiously) Well . . . it is doubtful that doctors will give me permission. (She looks at Laura's disappointed face). However, I could ask.

**OLD LAURA**

(Smiling now) Please write down the ingredients exactly. This is ancient knowledge. You are not to deviate from anything I teach you.

**RENE**

(Suddenly mystified) I promise to keep an open mind. (The two women gaze intently at one another)

**OLD LAURA**

I believe that it is fate that we met. (Rene's eyes widen in wonderment)

**[FADEOUT]**

**ACT ONE: SCENE THREE ("The Fire")**

*[It is a couple of days later, October 4, 1922. It is late in the afternoon at the Sisters of Providence Hospital in Haileybury. A terrible fire has started, and everyone is fleeing for their lives].*

**RENE**

(Frantically) Laura, it is time to go!

**OLD LAURA**

What is going on?!

**RENE**

It is a fire! We must get out! (She helps Laura out of her bed)

**OLD LAURA**

Mercy! I can't breathe.

**RENE**

Let me guide you. (Both women are coughing)

*[There is general chaos in this scene. Nurses are heroically rescuing patients. Doctors are shouting giving orders to everyone. Everyone is running outside, and the hospital is ablaze].*

**RENE**

(Finally they are outside. Gasping) It is horrible! Just horrible!

**OLD LAURA**

Oh, my god! (Laura starts to collapse, and Rene catches her from the fall).

**[SHORT FADEOUT]**

*(There is a bright orange glow in the distance. It is the aftermath of the fire, the next day. They are in a make-shift tent).*

**RENE**

(Exasperated) I am so upset Laura has died. (Rene holds back her tears, and tries to remain professional)

**DR. CLIFF ARNOLD**

She was just too old to survive with so much smoke, Rene.

**RENE**

(Upset) Doctor, is there anything else you require? (In the background there are fire victims screaming in pain)

**DR. CLIFF ARNOLD**

Boil these rags for me. I just don't know how we are going to help all these fire victims. There is not enough room in here.

**RENE**

(Looking outside) Wait a minute, doctor. Perhaps we could use these old streetcars for shelter?

**DR. CLIFF ARNOLD**

(Thinking a moment) That is an excellent, idea. Let's do it!

**RENE**

Well, I guess that is the end of our hospital, doctor.

**DR. CLIFF ARNOLD**

I doubt the diocese will be able to rebuild it.

**RENE**

All the records are lost! (She looks in her pocket, and takes out the formula Laura gave her) Oh, good, something is saved.

*(Rene carefully places the recipe for Essaic back into her pocket. Dr. Arnold looks at her quizzically).*

**DR. CLIFF ARNOLD**

What was that, Rene?

**RENE**

Oh, it is nothing. It's . . . just a family recipe.

**ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR (“The Secret Recipe”)**

**(IT IS NOW 1924. RENE HAS GONE TO FRISELDA’S HIGH-PARK HOME IN PETERBOROUGH)**

**[We meet Friselda, Rene’s mother. She is a prim and proper woman who dresses simply and neatly. Her style is slightly old-fashioned for the time, and she dresses in muted colors. Friselda is a very repressed woman who has lived in the shadow of men with complete, but unhappy acceptance of that fact. She has never pursued her own personal dreams and she has remained a faithful housewife and mother all of her life. Friselda should look fit and slender for her age and she is not overweight like her daughter. Friselda has always been very attractive and pleasing to men and she resembles an attractive middle-aged doll. Nothing should ever look out of place on Friselda, and she strives for perfection in her manner and dress which is practical. Friselda is a domineering mother, but she loves Rene to the depths of her soul, although she never outwardly shows it. Upon first sight Friselda should seem cold and detached emotionally. Of course, this preoccupation with social propriety and polite manners soon dissolve with the winds of change as Friselda breaks free of her repression and she learns to love and accept people unconditionally].**

**FRISELDA**

(Sternly) I have taken my sister out of the Brockville Hospital to stay with me. I was not very happy with her treatment there.

**RENE**

Oh mother, how is Auntie?

**FRISELDA**

I have hired Dr. Fisher, an esteemed oncologist to look after Mireza. (Worried) Somehow I will manage the expense.

**RENE**

What happened at Brockville hospital?

**FRISELDA**

She had an operation, but her liver was so corrugated with cancerous disease, they simply closed her up, and left her to die. Ludicrous! If she is going to die, it will be in my home. (Angry) I had to insist they discharge her!

*(Rene starts to go into the bedroom from the outer foyer)*

Now, Rene, try not to disturb your Aunt. (She exits)

**RENE**

(Dutifully) Yes, mother.

***(Rene waits for Friselda to leave, and then, she goes into her Aunt's room despite Friselda's request).***

***Aunt Mireza is a middle-aged woman who is warm and compassionate. Rene absolutely adores her Auntie. She is also humorous, and she tries to see every rainbow of joy in life, even when it is very bleak and dismal, which sets up wonderful incongruities. She has been very proud and close to Rene, much to the jealousy of Friselda, who has not been able to relate with her daughter very well. Aunt Mireza has filled the gap of love that Rene has not felt with her own mother. Unfortunately though, Aunt Mireza acts on her emotions, and she doesn't always think about the consequences of her speech or her actions, much to the dismay of Friselda who is desperately protective of Rene. Aunt Mireza means well, but she sometimes lacks a certain intelligence and sophistication, and she inadvertently causes major problems. She has certain idiosyncrasies which make her appear rather eccentric, but that is part of her charm).***

**AUNT MIREZA**

(Delighted to see Rene) Rene, you are the best niece! (She hugs Rene) I guess Friselda has told you.

**RENE**

Yes, Auntie.

**AUNT MIREZA**

Dr. Fisher was kind to offer his care.

**RENE**

Yes. What were your treatments in the hospital, Auntie?

**AUNT MIREZA**

I've taken all the conventional treatments, and they have not worked. I've been subjected to surgery, radium and ex-rays, but nothing is helping. (Mireza whimpers)

**RENE**

I am so sorry Auntie.

*(She hugs her. There is a silent moment).*

***(AN ONCOLOGIST, DR. R.O. Fisher enters. Dr. Fisher is a careful and intelligent man who is very passionate about his work, although he is shy and awkward in regards to his personal relationships with Rene or others that he meets. He is slow to warm up and trust people because he has been hurt in the past, and that emotional scar has not yet healed. Underneath his veneer of emotional protection that has been established by loss and grief--lies a complex and mysterious man who is fearful of commitment, but at the same time, desires commitment. Dr. Fisher is a good, moral man who sees Rene as a brilliant scientist. He is Rene's mentor and wise medical protector. He is enamored by Rene's spirit and drive, but he is reserved and thoughtful, and even suspicious of people and their motives. He is Rene's opposite; her foil. Where Rene is full of overt exuberance and naïve trustfulness, Dr. Fisher is the epitome of cautious control, where his secret inner life--is simmering with latent passion that is finally revealed at the end of the play).***

**DR. FISHER**

Hello. *(He looks at Rene)* How are you feeling today?

*(He checks for fever, and listens to her heart with a stethoscope).*

**AUNT MIREZA**

*(Starting to cry, but trying to hold back her tears. She speaks in a low muffled voice).* I'm alright, doctor.

**RENE**

Dr. Fisher, it is so good to meet you. I am Rene, Friselda's daughter. May I speak with you privately?

**DR. FISHER**

Yes, of course. *(To Aunt Mireza)* Excuse us a moment.

***[They both exit to the guest receiving room in Friselda's house]***

**RENE**

(Desperately blurting) Doctor, I believe there is an alternative treatment we could use on my Aunt. It's a combination of herbs that Ojibwa natives used successfully on their people!

*(She takes out the wrinkled recipe from her pocket).*

**DR. FISHER**

*(Dr. Fisher is entranced by Rene immediately)* I don't . . . know Rene. Your Aunt is terminal. I need to think about my reputation.

**RENE**

Please doctor, she is in a bad way. Since my Aunt's case is absolutely hopeless, it is no reflection on you!

**DR. FISHER**

Well, yes, that is true . . .

**RENE**

*(Interrupting)* Then, please let me treat her with this alternative. It will not hurt her!

*(Rene gazes at him with intensity in her eyes)*

**DR. FISHER**

Well, alright . . . since there is nothing medical science can do for your Aunt, I will give you my permission. However, there are some conditions.

**RENE**

(Anxiously) I will meet them, doctor.

**DR. FISHER**

Your clinical discoveries must be reported to me.

**RENE**

Of course, doctor. I will tell you everything I know.

**DR. FISHER**

Also, she needs to stay here at Friselda's home. If she shows improvement in a few weeks, you can administer the herbs longer. I can't make any long-term promises, however.

**RENE**

(Excited) Yes, doctor.

**DR. FISHER**

Also, we must keep this a secret.

**RENE**

*(Shouting, then catching herself)* Thank you so much! I will not tell a soul!

**DR. FISHER**

I hope so Rene. There is danger in experimenting with human beings. I will deny all.

**RENE**

*(Seriously)* I will take the blame, doctor. It is my responsibility.

**(FADEOUT)**

**ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE (“The Human Experiment”)**

***(IT IS LATE AT NIGHT AND RENE IS WORKING IN A MAKE-SHIFT BASEMENT LABORATORY IN HER MOTHER’S HOUSE. THE YEAR IS 1926. THERE IS A CAGE WITH A MOUSE INSIDE IT).***

**RENE**

(She is reading her notebook out loud). I have clinically experimented with my oral formula on mice for two years, and miraculously, my Auntie is still alive. I call it Essaic, which is my last name spelled backwards. I have inoculated mice with rous sarcoma, and human carcinoma. With the rous sarcoma, they managed to live 72 days. However, with the human carcinoma, the malignant growth regressed until it was no longer invading living tissue after nine days. Dr. Fisher suggested intramuscular injections. However, we made one terrible mistake in this process.

**[The following action is a flashback tableau. A man is being injected with Essaic in the tongue by Rene and Dr. Fisher. The man starts to violently spasm and thrash, his tongue begins to swell, and Dr. Fisher tries to save the man by clearing his airway. It is a horrific scene, and Rene and Dr. Fisher are frightened. When the man is able to breathe, he screams in anguish].**

**RENE**

We soon learned that Essaic was a powerful deterrent of cancer, and all we needed to do was remove all proteins from the injections. This refinement reduced the growth of cancer, destroying the man's dead and infected tissues, while purifying his blood. I believe that Essaic supplies the glandular deficiency with a secretion that is undiscovered by scientists. I call this gland XOX. When, this deficiency is repaired, the pancreas returns to normal health and cancer cells fail to metastases.

*(Mr. Smith is now smiling and walking out of the clinic of hope almost fully recovered)*

Before treatment, Dr. Fisher thought he'd be dead in a week. *(Rene hides the recipe in her pocket)*

**(FADEOUT)**

**ACT ONE, SCENE SIX ("The Villain")**

[This scene occurs in the year 1928 in Dr. Banting's office. It is at the Christie Street Hospital in Toronto, Canada. Dr. Fredrick Banting (an influential and highly respected research scientist) is the head doctor of Veteran's hospital which specializes in the treatment of diabetes. Dr. Banting is very intelligent, proud, egotistical, calculating and very ambitious. He has taken credit for isolating insulin for diabetes in the past, and he feels he is the ultimate authority in all medical matters, and he lives by a medical code of ethics that is unshakeable. Dr. Banting believes in pure science, and thus, he appears cold, clinical and unemotional and he is filled with unbridled hatred. Dr. Banting does not respect nurses, and he feels they are his emotional and intellectual inferior, due to his secret hatred of his own domineering mother. Dr. Banting is a villain, who has the pretense of goodness].

**RENE**

(With great respect) It is an honor to finally meet you! Dr. Fisher recommended I work with you.

**DR. BANTING**

It's probably because of your recent mishap. I am both intrigued and mortified. However, I can see that you are quite a capable nurse. (He looks intently at an x-ray)

**RENE**

(Glumly) Thank you, sir. (Guilty) I have made some errors, but that is all in the past.

**DR. BANTING**

(Proud) Well, no more. We have stricter protocols and controlled research. (Rene frowns) Interesting! These x-rays are indicating that Essaic activates the pancreatic gland into normal functioning for diabetes.

**RENE**

(Already knowing) That is so interesting, sir.

**DR. BANTING**

Well, yes it is. (Clears his throat) You have tremendous evidence of a beneficial treatment for cancer. However, I am feeling pressure. I believe that radium and the use of x-rays will be the sanctioned medical treatment by the Ministry of Health.

**RENE**

Why is that?

**DR. BANTING**

(Thinking hard) Well, it has . . . been thoroughly tested before human trials. Why on earth did you inject Essaic into the poor man's tongue?

**RENE**

(Guilty) Well, Dr. Fisher and I didn't know that proteins needed to be removed for any intramuscular injections.

**DR. BANTING**

Well, experimenting on a human subject is very risky.

**RENE**

You were not there!! It was horrible!! We were desperately trying to stop the hemorrhaging in the poor man's face.

**DR. BANTING**

(Looking at the case file unconvinced) I see. How very unfortunate for Mr. Smith. It says in this report that his tongue swelled and he nearly choked to death, and he suffered from chills and fever.

**RENE**

Yes, but the massive sores started to heal. He lived for five more months. He died of pneumonia, not cancer.

**DR. BANTING**

(Calculating) Exactly! Consequently, you should quit your nursing job and concentrate on this discovery with me. Naturally, I will head the experiments. Now, you will need to provide me with the ingredients of the Essaic tea, the proportions of the formula, and the methods of preparing it.

**RENE**

(Quietly, but firmly) I cannot tell you, sir.

**DR. BANTING**

What do you mean, you cannot tell me? Why not?

**RENE**

(Very nervous) I am afraid that you will either archive my discovery, or claim it for your own.

**DR. BANTING**

I would never do that Rene. (He flinches) You know you can trust me.

**RENE**

(Suspiciously) Can I, doctor?

**DR. BANTING**

I have to go through the appropriate channels, Rene.

**RENE**

(Instincts taking over) I don't believe that you are thinking of those dying patients, doctor!

**DR. BANTING**

(Firmly) Rene, you need me. You are not a doctor of my reputation, and you don't have any power.

**RENE**

Actually, I am a nurse, and a very GOOD one.

**DR. BANTING**

(Relishing the word “nurse”) You are a respected and capable nurse. I would hate to think you could lose that.

**RENE**

(Seething with anger) I will not surrender my discovery to you! Good day!

**(FADEOUT)**

**ACT ONE, SCENE SEVEN (“The Green-Eyed Monster”)**

*[It is several days later in Friselda’s High Park home in Peterborough. The year is 1930. Rene is sick in bed, and Mary McPherson has come to visit. Mary is an attractive young woman who is very level-headed for her age and level of experience. She has lived through dysfunctional family situations, and she is searching for an emotional connection with a new family. Mary has an innate sort of wisdom where she can see what others cannot, due to her living through past turmoil].*

**FRISELDA**

(Very concerned) You are a good friend, Mary. How is she doing? (Rene is asleep on her bed)

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Her doctor said that her exhaustion and stress was the cause of her pneumonia.

**FRISELDA**

(Caringly) I hate it when she works with all those sick people and their infections.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

I agree. (Thoughtfully musing) Besides, Rene is a romantic; she loves fashion, flappers, unrequited love and the indecency of the dress in young women.

**FRISELDA**

(She is a bit jealous) My daughter would never enjoy such frivolities!

**MARY MCPHERSON**

You are her mother, and you know her better than I! (Friselda frowns at her)

**RENE**

(Stirring incoherently) Do you love me doctor?

**FRISELDA**

(Frowning) Who is this doctor?

**MARY MCPHERSON**

I promised not to tell! (Friselda looks at her annoyed). (Registering Friselda's worry) I will go and get some more ice packs for her fever.

**FRISELDA**

Yes, thank you Mary. (Mary exits worried) Rene, you are home, dear.

**RENE**

(Sadly disappointed) Oh, home.... (Friselda strokes Rene's forehead) Mother, my word has spread. Nine doctors want me to do independent research . . . but I so tired.

**FRISELDA**

Well, what do you expect, Rene? You are exhausted! You work for hours in that hospital, and then, you work all evening in my cold basement.

**RENE**

The other night a complete stranger knocked at the door wanting treatment.

**FRISELDA**

(Disturbed and protective) I will have a locksmith put a dead bolt lock on my door TODAY.

**RENE**

(Ignoring her remark) Perhaps, Dr. Banting is right. I should quit nursing so that I can dedicate more time to research.

**FRISELDA**

More time? (Suspiciously) And, who is this Dr. Banting? Why is he so interested in you? (Rene stares blankly at her mother)

**RENE**

(Defiant) He is a renowned and highly respected doctor, mother! He co-discovered insulin for the relief of diabetes!

**FRISELDA**

Who cares! Look around you. Everything is falling apart. It's a depression! I can barely pay the rent!  
(Upset) My family grew up in this house!

**RENE**

But, mother . . .

**FRISELDA**

Wasn't it bad enough I lost your father's house in Bracebridge! You . . . we, need your salary at the hospital.

**RENE**

(Passionately) I think this is more important. I will find a way to take care of us.

**FRISELDA**

(Disappointed) You . . . are just like your father, a stubborn dreamer.

**RENE**

No, I am a capable nurse! (Sensitively) Did you love him?

**FRISELDA**

(Coldly) I made my choice, Rene. Life is about hard choices.

**RENE**

(Disappointed) Yes, mother. I know.

**[FADEOUT]**

**ACT ONE, SCENE EIGHT ("Threat of Arrest")**

***[MARY MCPHERSON IS VISITING RENE IN FRISELDA RENTED HOME IN PETERBOROUGH].***

**RENE**

(Ecstatically) It is amazing Mary! Nine doctors have signed a petition expressing the benefits of Essaic tea to the Department of Health and Welfare.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Rene, that is amazing! Well, so much for secrecy.

**RENE**

They expressed in their petition that the treatment will not do anyone any harm, and that it relieves pain.

*[There is a loud knock on the door, and it makes the women jump). Dr. Arnold and Dr. Norich, are at the door. They are from the Ministry of Health. Rene bravely answers the door, although Mary signals Rene not to open the door].*

**DR. ARNOLD**

Are you Rene Caisse?

**RENE**

Yes, what is the meaning of this intrusion?

**DR. NORICH**

I have been given instructions to arrest you for practicing medicine without a license.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(Calmly standing between Rene and the two men) What?! Rene has been helping cancer patients with several doctors. You have no right to barge in here!

**DR. ARNOLD**

(Interrupting her) Rene, you have five minutes to gather some belongings. You must come with us at once!

**RENE**

(Bravely) You cannot arrest me. I have a letter from the Ministry stating that I can operate if I don't charge my patients! Therefore, if you arrest me, you will also have to answer to them.

**DR. NORICH**

(To Dr. Arnold) I suppose we should first check out her story with the boss.

**DR. ARNOLD**

(To Rene, gruffly) Rene, I suggest you stay close to home. We will be back with the police.

**RENE**

(Toughly) Oh, I intend to stay put, doctors! After all, I have my patients to treat! (Mary is physically holding Rene back. The two men stare angrily at them).

*[Rene and Mary square off with the two doctors in a mental tug-o-war, and after a long pause, the two doctors both exit].*

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(After a moment of recovery) Rene, I didn't know you had it in you.

**RENE**

(She slams the door shut behind them). Neither did I Mary, neither did I! (The two women suddenly stare at each other in fright)

**(FADEOUT)**

**ACT ONE, SCENE NINE ("Hope is Born," The Clinic of Hope)**

*(The year is 1935. The Depression now has its complete grips on Canada. Rene has fled from Peterborough. She is at the British Lion Hotel. It is an old and run down hotel).*

**RENE**

I left Peterborough due to the threat of a \$500.00 fine or six months in jail. How embarrassing, it is my mother's home town!

**MAYOR WILBERT RICHARDS**

Don't worry! You are safe here at the British Lion Hotel. As mayor, I have power in this town.

**DR. BASTEDO**

The city has repossessed this hotel due to back taxes, and now they want to give their town something to brag about!

**MAYOR WILBERT RICHARDS**

Well, Doc, I think a cure for cancer might give Bracebridge a sense of civic pride, don't you think? (Dr. Bastedo nods) And it will only cost you \$1.00 a month!

**DR. BASTEDO**

Well, it helps that Mr. Vanclieaf wants the clinic for his prostate cancer. Old money!

**RENE**

It seems too good to be true. It is so huge!

**MAYOR WILBERT RICHARDS**

Forty-rooms! The main floor will have a reception room, a furnished office, a dispensary, and five treatment rooms. (He lights up a pipe).

**DR. BASTEDO**

I guess the upstairs rooms will remain empty for now. (Rene's eyes light up).

**RENE**

Mayor Richards, could I use some of the upstairs rooms? You see my mother and my friend need a place to stay.

**MAYOR WILBERT RICHARDS**

Hell! You can have the entire second floor! And, the people of Bracebridge will help you furnish it.

**RENE**

It is rather embarrassing to admit, but I have . . . nothing. I had to leave so quickly.

**MAYOR WILBERT RICHARDS**

Well, we can only help you with a place to live. However, I am sure the good people of Bracebridge will help you with your other needs.

**RENE**

That is most kind Major Richards, but I am not accustomed to charity.

**DR. BASTEDO**

Wilbert let me handle this. (To Rene) It would not be charity, Rene. You are giving us a service.

**RENE**

(Biting her lip) Yes, doctor. Thank you both for your kindness and generosity.

**DR. BASTEDO**

Now, your patients will submit to you their written diagnoses from their doctors, to me, and then, you may treat them. However, I will not assume any responsibility.

**MAYOR WILBERT RICHARDS**

(Cautioning) Also, you will not be able to charge them for their treatments. Rather, you can trade your services for butter, vegetables, or hand-sewn kitted articles of clothing. (Rene looks at them dubiously)

**DR. BASTEDO**

Other donated funds can purchase your medical supplies.

**MAYOR WILBERT RICHARDS**

(Frowning) Remember, this clinic is not approved by the Ministry of Health, but I will deal with them.

**DR. BASTEDO**

Yes, Wilbert has his ways with politics (He smiles broadly at her) Yes, Rene. I have learned to graciously accept a chicken, a homemade pie, or any money or produce they can give.

**MAYOR WILBERT RICHARDS**

(Cautiously) You will not be allowed to advertise your clinic, either. (In wonderment) This old hotel, which has so many fond memories, will now be transformed into a clinic of hope. It is a great thing that you do, Rene.

**RENE**

Thank you, sir. I just wish the government was more open-minded.

**DR. BASTEDO**

Give them time, Rene. They need time.

**RENE**

(Perplexed) Why? Do they want more people to die?

**(FADEOUT)**

**ACT ONE, SCENE TEN (“Illegal Operation”)**

*[It is November, 1935, and Rene’s clinic has been operating illegally for several months. Mary McPherson is helping Rene brew tea in the background. James Summerwill enters. He is bold and intellectual in his demeanor and he tends to shock people with his wit, because he says and does things without regard to what anyone thinks. James is always dressed to the nines and he should look like a gentleman of stature and certain grace and gentility. James has inherited money, and he likes to flaunt his wealth by peacocking his attire and white gloves, but he is always likeable and caring to others. At the start of this scene two strange men are lurking around the clinic].*

**JAMES SUMMERWILL**

*(He looks at the two men) May I help you? (They leave mysteriously) How strange! (Rene enters and he excited. He is speaking anxiously, with rapid-fire talk) I believe everything is in order. I have brought my physician’s report, and here is my personal application. It is malignant, but I kindly hope that you will consider treating me, since I have my doctor’s consent. Please . . . look.*

**RENE**

*(Growing amused, but trying to be professional. She takes his documents and quickly reads a bit of information). That is quite satisfactory, Mr. Summerwill. We will start treatments today.*

**JAMES SUMMERWILL**

*(He shakes her hand) I have heard UNBELIEVABLE stories about you, Rene. I feel so relieved to be here! (He sits down on a chair, and kicks his legs up on the table).*

**RENE**

*(Smiling) Well, thank you sir. I do my best.*

**JAMES SUMMERWILL**

You should be allowed to advertise, and charge money for your discovery. (Forgetting all social decorum, he hugs Rene very hard).

**RENE**

(Laughing) Well, I wish everyone felt the way you do, Mr. Summerwill!

**JAMES SUMMERWILL**

Well, when do we get started on treatment? I plan to make a full recovery. (He rushes to the treatment room).

**RENE**

(She looks at Mary with glee) I will be right there, Mr. Summerwill! Mercy, me! (She wipes her forehead)

*[Mrs. Theo Leyman enters through the front door. Mrs. Leyman is an extremely rich socialite. She is a middle aged woman of means and her costume should reflect money, money, and more money. Mrs. Leyman is sophisticated, deliberate, snooty, and conniving busy-body who relishes gossip on the outside, but she has a sweet interior which she shows to Rene. She has been around the world, seen everything, done everything, and she appears to know everything, and she lets others assume this by her stature. Nothing rattles her, and she loves to complain about her husband, who she married only for his money. An astute business woman and politician, Mrs. Leyman knows how to play political games with sheer bravado, and she relishes drama and the fight because it lifts her spirit from her usual state of ennui and boredom].*

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Rene will be right with you. Please sit down. (She exits)

**MRS. LEYMAN**

Thank you, you are so kind. (She anxiously stands looking for Rene)

**RENE**

(She is wiping her hands on a rag) I am Rene. Can I help you?

**MRS. LEYMAN**

Thank goodness! My name is Mrs. Leyman. (She is suddenly very dizzy and weak, and she can hardly breathe).

**RENE**

Please, Mrs. Leyman, sit down here.

**MRS. LEYMAN**

Here is my doctor's proper diagnosis. *(She feebly hands Rene the paperwork)*

**RENE**

*(She looks at the report with shock and compassion)* It seems that you have a large mass in your chest, Mrs. Leyman. This is very serious.

**MRS. LEYMAN**

Yes, I am terminal. *(She coughs miserably)*

**RENE**

I have treated others with your condition. I wish you came to me earlier.

**MRS. LEYMAN**

Well, I practically had to choke the written diagnosis out of him! Money helped!

**RENE**

*(Sighs)* I may be able to extend your life. *(Deliberating)* Can I ask you a personal question, Mrs. Leyman?

**MRS. LEYMAN**

Yes . . . please.

**RENE**

Well, I was wondering if your husband has ever smoked cigarettes . . . or a pipe?

**MRS. LEYMAN**

Yes, he's smoked a pipe for years. He prides himself on the quality of his tobacco. *(Coughs)* Why?

**RENE**

*(Grimaces uncomfortably)* It seems that smoking only propagates the scourge of cancer in my experience.

**MRS. LEYMAN**

Really, but my doctor said it was caused by a horse kicking me in the breast.

**RENE**

That is very unlikely. I believe there is a chemical cause of Cancer that is not yet widely understood.

**MRS. LEYMAN**

(Intrigued) That explains why I have felt steadily worse throughout the years with that husband of mine. Rene, I am a very well-connected woman.

**RENE**

Mrs. Leyman, I will treat you with no strings attached. Please come.

**MRS. LEYMAN**

(Pause) Lately, I appreciate the smallest things. (She gazes reflectively out of the window)

**RENE**

Time becomes more precious, doesn't it?

**MRS. LEYMAN**

Yes, Rene. At least I love my Grandchildren. (She wipes her eyes with her handkerchief)

**RENE**

(Holding back a tear) You can count on me to give you more time, Mrs. Leyman.

**MRS. LEYMAN**

By all accounts, I trust you implicitly.

**[FADEOUT]**

**ACT ONE, SCENE ELEVEN ("The Great Opportunity")**

*[It is July 23, 1936, at Dr. Banting's office at the Christie Street Hospital. He enters and kindly shakes Rene's hand]*

**RENE**

Dr. Banting! Thank you for inviting me here again. I am sorry for my unprofessional conduct as of late.

**DR. BANTING**

(Manipulating) No, please Rene. I was unfair, rude and feeling under the weather. Please, call me Fred.  
(Carefully) Look, we both want the same thing, so I want to offer you a second opportunity. Rene, again, I have discussed the necessity of testing Essaic further in a scientific setting.

**RENE**

I assure you my lab was scientific, except for the lack of inoculated animals for testing.

**DR. BANTING**

Yes, Rene. Now, you will not have this problem! This is what we propose. We will provide you with mice inoculated with mouse sarcoma, and chickens inoculated with Rous sarcoma. These animals will be at your disposal in my laboratory. Also, you will not be asked to divulge any secret concerning your treatment.

**RENE**

(Skeptical) That is true although you'll be working with me?

**DR. BANTING**

(Manipulating) Rene, I reached my pinnacle of inventiveness years ago! (Suddenly serious) That is what my mother said . . . (Flashback: Dr. Banting is now a young boy now, and his mother is scolding him at the dinner table to sit up straight and obey; he is crying, and she slaps him cruelly on his face for accidentally spilling his food, and she insults him for being incompetent).

**RENE:**

(Concerned) Dr. Banting . . . are you alright?

**DR. BANTING:**

(He takes a moment to get out of his daze. He clears his throat. Suddenly, he is seething with anger).  
Anyway, your results must be submitted to me for my approval before you take your information to the newspaper or medical journals.

**RENE**

When do I work in my clinic in Bracebridge, sir?

**DR. BANTING**

(Pause) Oh, you will have to give that up for now.

**RENE**

What? I should give up working on human patients, so that I can work with mice and chickens?

**DR. BANTING**

Well, that is a strange way of putting it, but yes. We need your level of enthusiasm and inventiveness.

**RENE**

(Drawn in) Thank you, but . . . I feel that your lab should be set up for human subjects.

**DR. BANTING**

I am afraid that is impossible Rene. The Ministry of Health will not allow it.

**RENE**

I cannot leave my clinic. My mother is ill with gallstones, and her heart is too weak for surgery. I am treating her with Essaic.

**DR. BANTING**

(Warmly) This is a great opportunity, Rene. You should seriously consider the impact of your decision.

**RENE**

Yes, doctor. Couldn't I do both, doctor? Work in my clinic and yours?

**DR. BANTING**

(Suddenly cold) No. This opportunity will expire soon. Choose wisely.

**RENE**

I understand. I am not willing to let people die while I do it.

**(FADEOUT)**

**ACT ONE, SCENE TWELVE (“The Letters”)**

***[It is a sunny afternoon at the Ministry of Health. The following scene should have a sense of comedy and lightness, although the situation is serious]***

**MINISTER FAULKNER**

I cannot believe it! Rene Caisse has been operating her clinic for months without our permission.

**PREMIERE MITCH HEPBURN**

The audacity of that woman! What pluck! We have both given our objections to no avail.

**MINISTER FAULKNER**

I am tired of dealing with Mayor Richards!

**MITCH HEPBURN**

She has not even cooperated with Ontario’s cancer commission!

**MINISTER FAULKNER**

It seems that Bracebridge loves her clinic and she is quite popular! The letters keep pouring in! Who are you, do you have an appointment?

**JAMES SUMMERWILL**

***(Smiling broadly and ignoring his last remark)***

As a scholar and a gentleman I thought I would come here to hand deliver my letter to you from Bracebridge.

***(With white gloved hands, he passes the letter to them)***

**MRS. THOS LEYMAN**

(Smiling broadly) Yes, and as a prominent member of Bracebridge I took the opportunity to provide you with my letter, a tribute to Rene Caisse.

**MINISTER FAULKNER**

That is all very nice, but . . .

**JAMES SUMMERWILL**

Also, we have brought OTHER letters for your perusal. (Major Wilbert Richards and Dr. Bastedo enter with two large sacks of letters. They dump the letters on the floor while they smile).

**MINISTER FAULKER**

(Shocked) What is the meaning of this intrusion?!

**MITCH HEPBURN**

Yes, get out at once!!

**MAYOR WILBERT RICHARDS**

(With authority) Not quite yet. As a public servant for the people of Bracebridge, we want you to understand how we FEEL. (He starts to walk out to bring another letter sack)

**MINISTER FAULKNER**

Mayor Richards, I want to speak with you, about. . .

**MAYOR WILBERT RICHARDS**

(Smirks nastily) I am through TALKING . . . (he goes out to get another sack of letters).

**DR. BASTEDO**

(Smiling broadly) Yes, our Mayor is a man of ACTION, not words. (Shouts) Right, Wilbert?? (Suddenly serious) And, as the family practitioner of Bracebridge, you should read ALL of these medical letters about her. (He leaves to get another sack of letters).

**MRS. THOS LEYMAN**

I couldn't have said it better myself, true, James? Gentlemen, these sacks contain twenty-eight THOUSAND signed petitions that politically rally for Essaic in Bracebridge.

**JAMES SUMMERWILL**

(Mayor Richards and Dr. Bastedo continue to drop sacks of letters into their office as this dialogue continues). As you can see, gentlemen, Rene's cancer treatments are a political success. (He points to the letters)

**MRS. THOS LEYMAN**

(She quickly takes out a newspaper from her purse) And, the *Bracebridge Gazette* printed a story that strongly suggests that Rene be made a medical doctor.

**JAMES SUMMERWILL**

Oh, and Premier Hepburn, as a gentleman, I am ashamed of you! You must be chastised for your . . .  
(searching for the right word)

**MRS. THOS LEYMAN**

(Helping him finish) Incompetence, James.

**JAMES SUMMERWILL**

Yes, your incompetence. You promised to act on Rene's behalf, but you FAILED to keep your gentleman's pledge to her. She is now threatening to close her clinic, which is NOT acceptable.

**MRS. THOS LEYMAN**

(She waves her finger at him) We hate to badger you, but that is reprehensible to us. I will be contacting several distinguished politicians.

**MINISTER FAULKNER**

Madam, don't wave your finger at me!!

**JAMES SUMMERWELL**

(All characters are now facing each other. With sarcasm) WE respectfully ask your EMINENCE to pass a permit for Miss Caisse to distribute her cancer serum widely.

**DR. BASTEDO**

Here is her application to practice medicine in the treatment of cancer (he throws the application on the desk).

**MAYOR RICHARDS**

As mayor of Bracebridge I speak for all the farmers, gentlemen, housewives, laborers, and the elderly who have received treatments from Rene. Stop being . . . contentious!!!!

**DR. BASTEDO**

(Proudly) You tell him, Wilbert!

**JAMES SUMMERWILL**

(He takes off his white gloves and throws them onto the floor) We have thrown down the gauntlet, gentlemen. You have been officially scolded!!

**MRS. THOS LEYMAN**

(She smiles at James) Oh, and as the only woman present, I feel that I should have the LAST words. My ridiculous husband never does, so why should you??

***(ALL FOUR OF THESE BRACEBRIDGE CHARACTERS SAUNTER OUT WITH ANNOYED GRIMMACES ON THEIR FACES. MINISTER FAULKNER AND PREMIER HEPBURN ARE SHOCKED)***

**ACT ONE, SCENE THIRTEEN (“The Panic”)**

*[It is the next day. Friselda walks down the stairs of the clinic from her bedroom. There is a sense of heightened anxiety in this scene and lines are spoken rapidly].*

**FRISELDA**

Rene, your patients are in a complete panic. They are afraid you are going to leave Canada. (Drinks some Essaic tea distastefully) Are you sure my doctor told me to drink this?

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Just drink the brew, Friselda! Your daughter knows what she is doing! (She takes off her apron and wipes her hands on it)

**RENE**

Thank you, Mary. I have made my decision not to work with Dr. Banting. It was a pretty agonizing decision, but the right one.

**FRISELDA**

I don't know, Rene. I am not sure you are right. Many doctors have been calling me up, including Sir Banting.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(The phone is ringing again) Rene, I will take that phone off the hook! (She displaces receiver)

**FRISELDA**

(Annoyed at that remark) They all say it is a marvelous opportunity. It would also pay you a salary, which we desperately need. (She is cold and she wraps her arms)

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Where a sweater, Friselda! I do! (She exits in a huff)

**FRISELDA**

(Annoyed again at Mary's last comment) We could move back to our old home, where you grew up. (Enthralled) Oh, there are so many memories there; living with your father, brothers and sisters. Dr. Banting has made a generous offer!

**RENE**

Oh, so you discussed MY salary with that man? It would be inhuman for me to give up treating my patients, while I am working with mice and chickens. It is absolutely absurd!

**FRISELDA**

You are giving up an incredible chance to gain credibility.

**RENE**

Why, mother? Is it because, I would be working with men?

**FRISELDA**

A woman can only facilitate so much notoriety.

**RENE**

How can you be so cold, mother? My patients are terrified!

**FRISELDA**

(Calmly) We have to be practical, Rene. You are just a nurse. I will call Sir Banting and tell him that you graciously accept his offer. (She starts to use the phone)

**RENE**

You will do no such thing, mother! (She slams down the phone)

**FRISELDA**

You are behaving unacceptably, Rene.

**RENE**

(Steaming) I don't care what you think, mother. I am distrustful of them!

**FRISELDA**

You need to be realistic! We cannot continue to live off meager donations, which have been steadily dwindling! Look around you!

**RENE**

(Intensely) I dare you to say that to my patients, mother. (Friselda looks away)

**FRISELDA**

(Gathering herself) Rene, I must object to your travels between Chicago and here. You need to make a choice where you will reside.

**RENE**

(Glumly) Mother, I don't want to talk about it.

**FRISELDA**

You are completely overworked, Rene. You need to rest!

**RENE**

I only go to Northwestern University on Mondays and Fridays. It's not bad, and I will have financial backing.

**FRISELDA**

(Curtly) Oh, really? So, to please a few influential doctors you are willing to compromise your health?  
(Rene doesn't respond. Exasperated) Why did I see you asleep in your chair yesterday?

**RENE**

Mother, really, I just needed a quick nap. I had a heavy meal.

**FRISELDA**

You should NOT go to Chicago to treat only six patients. You have over two-hundred patients in Bracebridge.

**RENE**

It is a demanding schedule, Mother, but I can handle it! I can prove my theories to American publications.

**FRISELDA**

Really, well, have you forgotten that there is to be no publicity? (Rene frowns at her mother).

**RENE**

(Quickly) You just want to appease the influential people of Bracebridge. Isn't that true, mother?  
(Friselda does not respond)

**FRISELDA**

(Surprised) It has nothing to do with politics, Rene. It has to do with your health and your....

**RENE**

What! My weight? Come now! You were always jealous of me!

**FRISELDA**

(Upset) Of what!

**RENE**

(Drilling the word in like a knife) Father.

**FRISELDA**

When are you going to settle down, Rene, and be a wife and mother like your sisters?

**RENE**

(Angrily) I am still a little girl to you, aren't I mother? You tell me how to act, what to wear, and when to eat.

**FRISELDA**

I have never cared that much about your physical appearance.

**RENE**

(Hurt) Oh, no! Not everyone is as perfect as you!

**FRISELDA**

(Hurt) Now, really, that is unnecessary . . .

**RENE**

I am so close to proving myself. I have to go to Chicago or they will lose interest in me, because my results are poor.

**FRISELDA**

(With sympathy) It is not worth your life! Can't you see that this ridiculous quest of yours is futile?

**RENE**

It's not ridiculous! It's is gravely important. (Glowing) I am finally being validated by men!

**FRISELDA**

(Trying to hold in her emotions) But look at you! You are obsessed! I feel that people are exploiting you, and you cannot even see it! Are these *humane medical authorities* really for you, or are they hoping you fail?

**RENE**

This thing is bigger than myself, mother. (She grimaces when she realizes her "wording") It is all about hope, and helping terminally ill people. No . . . I cannot break their trust. I just can't! I can't!!  
(Disturbed) I am so disappointed in you! (Rene storms out the door, and she slams the door as she leaves)

**FRISELDA**

(Holding back her tears) Rene, you are my little girl, and I love you . . . (*Friselda becomes frozen and stunned and she stares out at the bleakness of the room*)

**[END OF ACT ONE]**

**[FADEOUT]**

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**ACT TWO, SCENE ONE (“In the Spirit of Cooperation”)**

*[Rene is in Dr. FISHER’S OFFICE. Rene is meeting with several imminent doctors]*

**DR. FISHER**

Rene, I asked everyone here so we could all work together in the spirit of cooperation, so that proper cancer legislation can be supported.

**RENE**

(To all the doctors present) Thank you, Dr. Fisher. It is time for the Canadian government to draft some legislation to test Essaic on human subjects.

**DR. BANTING**

Rene, you know that I have told the delegation that I cannot condone human trials.

**RENE**

Why? Haven’t you seen enough? People come to my clinic barely able to walk, and they leave on their own accord.

**DR. NOBLE**

Actually, Rene, I agree with Dr. Banting. I have also been aware of evidence that contradicts the efficiency of Essaic.

**RENE**

What do you mean, doctor?

**DR. NOBLE**

(He nods to Dr. Banting knowingly) Well, I have carefully documented all those patients who have died under your supervision and care.

**DR. FISHER**

(Suspiciously) Dr. Noble, is that why you created that new questionnaire?

**DR. NOBLE**

Well, I took Dr. Banting’s wise . . . advisement.

**DR. BANTING**

As doctor-scientists, we need to objectively look at all evidence without emotion.

**RENE**

(Bewildered) What are you talking about? What questionnaire?

**DR. FISHER**

Well, tell her, doctor.

**DR. BANTING**

We had our terminally ill patients supply information to use, in case the University lab should disprove of your treatments to them.

**RENE**

Is that why there were so many patients who were frustrated when you would not provide them with a diagnosis? I had to turn them away!

**DR. BANTING**

We feared reprisals. As a physician, we must protect ourselves from losing our medical licenses. Surely, you can understand that?

**RENE**

So, both of you kind doctors gathered evidence against me, and tracked the deaths of my terminal patients?

**DR. FISHER**

Gentlemen, this is despicable! Rene needs your encouragement, not your betrayal.

**DR. BANTING**

Our scrutiny is not about faith, love or healing. It is about the pure science. There can be no room for emotions or feelings in clinical investigations.

**RENE**

(Her anger is building) Dr. Noble and Dr. Banting, you seem to be under the misguided impression that I am a failure. Then, could you explain something for me? Why is my clinic full to the brim every day of every week? Why do I require more space to accommodate the dying and hopeful patients who beg me to treat them? Why do they travel great distances at their own expense to see me? Why do others do everything in their power to AVOID apex-ray, radiation, and chemotherapy? These are questions that you must ask yourself. When you refused to provide diagnosis to those many dying individuals, it was wrong! You were wrong!!

**(FADEOUT)**

**ACT TWO, SCENE TWO (“The Visit”)**

**[It is August 11, 1937 at Rene’s clinic. Many people have come down with polio in Ontario. During this scene many patients need assistance walking into the clinic or they are wheeled in with a wheelchair. However, as they are exiting they are stronger and able to walk on their own].**

**FRISELDA**

I cannot believe that Rene is now exposing herself to poliomyelitis. She may develop paralysis. It is simply frightful!

**AUNT MIREZA**

At least Bracebridge has only a handful of polio victims. It is amazing how chipper you look, Friselda. You are feeling better.

**FRISELDA**

It is more than amazing! My liver was a nodular mass. I told her it was gallstones. No use giving her more to worry about!

**AUNT MIREZA**

Friselda, after she examined you, she already knew.

**FRISELDA**

She did? (Annoyed) Well, I am here working with you. I cannot believe Rene is working with Dr. Bastedo at the Isolation Hospital! It’s dreadful!

**AUNT MIREZA**

Well, Rene feels gratitude to him, since he donated his old iron lung machine for her clinic.

**FRISELDA**

(Embarrassed) Oh, no! That iron lung machine is a monstrosity! (Forcefully, pointing outside) Have her put it in the back!

**DR. EMMA M. CARSON**

(Entering the clinic in amazement) Cars are everywhere! Hello, my name is Dr. Carson. I am from Los Angeles.

**AUNT MIREZA**

(Very pleasantly) Why, Rene will be delighted!

**FRISELDA**

You are an American doctor? (Quizzically) I didn't know women entered the profession.

**DR. EMMA. M. CARSON**

(Carefully) Why, yes, I am, and they do.

**AUNT MIREZA**

(Interrupting excitedly) Yes, you are head of the Federal research committee in America. Haven't you and Rene exchanged letters?

**DR. EMMA M. CARSON**

Why, yes we have. (Friselda looks at Aunt Mireza with some surprise and jealousy. Dr. Carson notices Friselda's annoyance.) However . . . I am a retired doctor who conducts research. (Looking outside and inside with amazement) My, how busy! (Sickly patients are still walking into the clinic and stronger patients are walking out)

**[Rene enters]**

**RENE**

(Excited and frantic, but trying to remain calm) Dr. Carson, it is so good to finally meet you!

**DR. EMMA M. CARSON**

Oh, no. It is my pleasure, Rene. Yes, this is exciting. (She looks around) I have heard so much about your alternative treatment, but I didn't know your clinic would impact me this way. I wish I could stay longer than a day!

**RENE**

(Nervously) Well, I hope you are not bored, with all the humdrum clinical routines.

**DR. EMMA M. CARSON**

Oh, no, Rene, I have looked forward to this visit, and I hope you will not mind me making a complete nuisance of myself, as I pick your brain for. . . .

**RENE**

(Interrupting, thrilled) Oh, that would be wonderful ---

**DR. EMMA M. CARSON**

It is amazing how calm everyone looks.

**FRISELDA**

(Prideful) Well, I have a simple theory about that, doctor. (Forcibly) Naturally, it is because my daughter has the CURE for cancer. That makes everyone very relaxed and uncomplaining.

**RENE**

(Totally surprised) Mother, I . . . I do not make the claim, that it is a cure, but rather, it will afford relief for....

**FRISELDA**

(Snapping) Oh, poppycock! Doctor Carlson will hear patient testimonials, and examine them physically. Please ignore the monstrous lung machine! (To Dr. Carson)

**DR. EMMA M. CARSON**

I am not here to find . . .

**FRISELDA**

(Interrupting, quick fire) Yes, and please ignore the clinic's strange odors.

**AUNT MIREZA**

Yes, and don't believe the other doctors when they describe Rene as a "Faith Healer Type" or a "Cancer Cure Woman." (Friselda looks annoyed at Mireza).

**DR. EMMA M. CARSON**

(Defensive) I am here to interview patients and document their case histories. I agree with Rene's ideas.

**AUNT MIREZA**

(Surprised) An imminent doctor who agrees! And, she is a woman!

**RENE**

(Relieved) Thank you, doctor. You have full access to my clinic.

**FRISELDA**

(Firmly and passionately) And, I will make it my personal mission to escort you around the premises, during your extended stay. Please. I insist! (Dr. Carlson looks at Friselda with a mixture of trepidation and intrigue).

**DR. EMMA CARLSON**

(Meekly) Why, thank you . . . for your hospitality.

**FRISELDA**

(Extremely polite) I am here to please.

*[Rene and Mireza are shocked, speechless and dumbfounded]*

**(FADEOUT)**

**ACT TWO, SCENE THREE (“The Cancer Commission”)**

*(It is a week later, and Friselda and Mireza are reading various newspapers about Rene’s work).*

**FRISELDA**

(Reading the newspaper) Dr. Carlson was very impressed with Essaic, it says here, and I quote: “I am thoroughly convinced Nurse Caisse has cured cancer.”

**AUNT MIREZA**

*(Excitedly leaning over reading the same paper)* Oh, look, she also says if the Ontario Medical Council remains indifferent . . . “it will be a crime against civilization.”

**FRISELDA**

(Happily) Yes, and here she states that she could hardly believe “that her brain was not deceiving her.”

(She claps her hands together in joy) However, Dr. Carlson did not keep her promise to....

**[RENE ENTERS NERVOUSLY. SHE STARTS CLEARING THE TABLE, AND DROPS A GLASS. SHE CUTS HER FINGER ON THE GLASS, AND SHE TRIES TO STOP THE BLEEDING WITH A NAPKIN]**

**AUNT MIREZA**

What is wrong with you, Rene?

**RENE**

(Angry) I cannot believe it! The College of Physicians and Surgeons are agreeing to work with the government and demand the secret formulae of all cancer serums in the providence. Dr. Banting is spearheading the effort. He has targeted the clinical testing of Dr. Hett's serum, Dr. Koch's Glyoxylide, and Dr Kingston's Ensol. Also, Dr. Glover's anti-cancer serum is being tested by the Department of Health.

**FRISELDA**

I am seeing a pattern here. Let me guess: he is offering doctors his laboratory in exchange for the revelation of their formulas?

**RENE**

Yes! When Dr. Hett refused Banting's offer, he lost his medical license!

**AUNT MIREZA**

(Serious) Oh, my. He was a wonderful doctor! How horrible!

**RENE**

I will close my clinic before allowing them to gain access to my notes and clinical trials. (Irritated) I am not about to give up my formula to a group of doctors who never did anything to earn it!

**FRISELDA**

I agree with you but . . .

***[DR. BANTING ENTERS. RENE AND FRISELDA DON'T NOTICE HIM]***

**RENE**

(Interrupting her) It is ridiculous that the government asks a person who has worked for years with inadequate means to work with those who had everything, every opportunity to make discoveries, and yet, they found nothing!

**FRISELDA**

(Comforting) Please, you need to calm down, Rene. (She notices Dr. Banting, and she stops dead in her tracks)

**RENE**

(Lost in the moment, still not realizing Dr. Banting is there) I have indisputable proof of a cure, and yet, they want to go back and treat mice. (Suddenly, Rene is surprised that Dr. Banting is standing there)

**DR. BANTING**

(Politely and carefully) Good evening Rene, Friselda, Mireza. I am afraid that the government is already passing the Cancer commission bill as we speak. The Minister of Health will be able to command all formulas. (Calculating, to Aunt Mireza) It is unfortunate that your niece does not allow reputable doctors to help humanity.

**AUNT MIREZA**

(Outraged) What! Actually, Rene has the political authority since there is a twenty-eight thousand signature petition that supports her handling of her discovery. (Friselda frowns at Mireza)

**DR. BANTING**

(Calculating) That is very . . . interesting. I do not believe that the Minister of Health or the Prime Minister will care much about the Bracebridge petition. The Health Department is already nominating me to act as head the Cancer Commission. They have found my input, indispensable. However, I would gladly offer my assistance in this matter.

**AUNT MIREZA**

Rene doesn't need you, doctor! When she gains the right to practice medicine, American interests will finance \$1.5 million dollars to build HER a sanatorium in the Muskoka district.

**FRISELDA**

(Trying to diffuse the dangerous situation) Oh, I doubt that that will happen, Dr. Banting. My sister exaggerates! Please forgive her. (To Aunt Mireza) You look so tired. Won't you retire . . . DEAR?

**AUNT MIREZA**

(Stubbornly in Banting's face) No, I am feeling quite exhilarated! Presently, if a doctor refuses to give their written diagnosis, the cancer patient will still go to the clinic!

***(Rene and Friselda are both silently choking in the background)***

**DR. BANTING**

(Amazed) Really, that is very interesting. I was appointed by Hepburn to oversee this project. We will need to investigate fraud of this nature. Rene, you will be required to help us procure names . . .

**AUNT MIREZA**

(She blurts) She will do nothing of the kind!

**RENE**

I will leave Bracebridge, first!

**FRISELDA**

You would have to leave your patients! Why are you so stubborn? (To Banting) Rene will naturally do the right thing, Dr. Banting.

**RENE**

*(Completely ignoring her mother, and turning on Dr. Banting)* So, let's get this straight, shall we? You have been commissioned by political appointment to develop something which has already been developed years ago! The people will be expected to pay you, a tenured and respected professional, who, for personal profit will provide them with MY discovery.

**FRISELDA**

(Looking nervously at Mireza) Rene, perhaps it is best you turn over your recipe, so that the respected government officials are happy, the doctors are happy, and all patients may recover.

**AUNT MIREZA**

Friselda, you are my sister, and I love you, but stay OUT of this!

**[JAMES SUMMERWELL AND MRS. THOS LEYMAN ENTER]**

**JAMES SUMNERWILL**

(Oblivious to the noise that just transpired) Rene, exciting news! (He is hauling a cart with fourteen inch binders full of petitions). We have everybody who is anybody's name on this petition.

**FRISELDA**

*(Nervously)* James, can I talk to you in private? (James doesn't budge)

**MRS. THOS LEYMAN**

(Looking dubiously at everyone) Well, we hope we did not interrupt anything important, but it is essential that you get your doctor's license immediately. Funding depends on it!

**DR. BANTING**

It is highly doubtful that Rene will be granted a doctor's license, Mrs. Leyman.

**MRS. THOS LEYMAN**

I disagree, Dr. Banting. It will bring in money into to the community. (Rene is speechless and bewildered from the cross-fire of support and dissension coming from both sides)

**DR. BANTING**

That is immaterial. It will not come into fruition, Mrs. Leyman, since the Prime Minister Hepburn feels it's a contentious issue due to Essaic's "secretive" ingredients. He does not want blood on his hands.

**RENE**

(Bewildered) You discouraged him, didn't you, Dr. Banting! Why?!

**DR. BANTING**

I merely informed him that you lacked the necessary credentials. (Pause) I told you that you needed to work under my supervision. (Threateningly) Your mother is a wise woman, Rene. (Friselda looks down in shame) For her sake --you should follow her lead.

**[DR. BANTING EXITS]**

**AUNT MIREZA**

Lousy bureaucrat! (She slams the door behind him)

**[FADEOUT]**

**ACT TWO, SCENE FOUR ("The Cover Up")**

***[It is night time in the Rene's clinic. Rene, Friselda, Aunt Mireza and Mary are working on securing documents]***

**AUNT MIREZA**

(Ordering them around) Alright, we need to secure the most crucial information and shred the rest.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

This situation is getting spooky. (She looks out of a window)

**FRISELDA**

I cannot believe Dr. Banting! He doesn't recognize the impact of this failed bill. Many people will ....  
(She cannot continue, and she bites her lip)

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Die a horrible death. It is despicable.

**FRISELDA**

I can now see that I have been wrong.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Well, Friselda, it is about time you see reality! (Friselda grimaces)

**RENE**

(Proudly) You just had to give her time, Mary. (Looks out the window)

**MARY MCPHERSON**

There is something very sinister going on here. (Looks out of the window)

**AUNT MIREZA**

There is some underground way doctors are told to not approve of it.

**FRISELDA**

Yes, they refuse to write down their diagnosis, although they give it verbally. I fear we are being watched!

**RENE**

We cannot let Banting get a hold of these case files. They are too important!

**MARY MCPHERSON**

I think it wise that we close the clinic for now. I will tell your patients that you regret leaving them, but hope to reopen the clinic again soon.

**RENE**

(Searching) Perhaps I can persuade them to judge my treatment based on the results achieved.

**FRISDELDA**

(Sternly) I don't believe they are going to let you take credit no matter how you have revolutionized the treatment of Cancer.

*(Both women are silent, and they realize the impact of what Friselda has just said)*

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(Thinking quickly) I have an idea. We can hide the most important data in different locations, and leave the least important in plain sight.

**FRISELDA**

(Scared) This excitement is too much for an old lady. I need to retire (She goes upstairs, and she climbs the stairs stiffly)

*(The last three women divide all the materials up, and they go to their prospective bedrooms, each carrying several files of important documentation).*

*[Dr. Mosley and Dr. McCullough enter a darkened clinic. They are dressed in black. They rummage stealthily through the file cabinets and discover the two barrels of papers. They throw some other papers into the barrels from the file cabinet].*

**DR. MOSLEY**

Alright, you take that barrel, and I will get this one.

**DR. McCULLOUGH**

Let's take them outside and burn everything.

**DR. MOSLEY**

(Smugly) That takes care of that!

**DR. McCULLOUGH**

That should silence them. Bitches!

*[They exit in the shadows, as Rene, Mireza and Mary enter quietly and carefully]*

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Our worst fears are true! It is a conspiracy to repress Essaic!

**RENE**

It is best that we remain silent.

**FRISELDA**

(From the top of the stairs) Who would believe us?

**[The women look at each other in agreement]**

**(FADEOUT)**

**ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE ("The Demand")**

**[DR. FISHER and Rene are sitting in the entrance of the clinic of hope]**

**DR. FISHER**

Rene, I am concerned. I read in the Muskoka Herald that you were closing the clinic. You are too brave to quit!

**RENE**

(Sadly) I cannot take it anymore. I am going to close the clinic.

**DR. FISHER**

You can still carry on as you did before if you are careful.

**RENE**

(Secretly) No, I believe things have changed for the worse. (She gazes out the window to see if anyone is spying on her). The law has created a commission which has the power to demand my secret. (She rubs her forehead) It has been a hellish week. The newspapers keep tormenting me, and yesterday a dying woman was begging me to reopen.

**DR. FISHER**

Annie Bonar? Yes, I know. I believe that you are making a grave mistake, Rene. You have great public favor. The people . . . love you. (He gazes into her eyes longingly)

**RENE**

(Contemplating) You have always been very supportive and kind. Why is that?

**DR. FISHER**

(Repressed grief) Well, I remember my . . . (Evading) I have always believed in . . . your work, Rene.

**RENE**

(Burning with curiosity) Yes, but why? You had a wife, didn't you? (Dr. Fisher looks away with grief and doesn't answer her) But, what have you ever gotten out of it, but the scrutiny and criticisms from other doctors? They harass you!

**DR. FISHER**

Well, I am not complaining. I have enjoyed my working relationship with you.

**RENE**

Is that all I am to you, Dr. Fisher? (She looks hard at him).

**[CHARLES MCGAUGHY ENTERS QUICKLY, AND DR. FISHER FLINCHES WITH DISCOMFORT. CHARLES IS A BOSTEROUS AND CONFIDENT LAWYER WHO IS CHARMING AND OUTGOING. CHARLES IS A HIGHLY RESPECTED AND ETHICAL LEGAL MAN WHO HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE COMMUNITY].**

**CHARLES**

Excuse the interruption! Rene, I believe that it is important for you to patent your discovery legally and copyright it. As a lawyer, I have the power to help you do this.

**RENE**

Yes, I know, Charles, but if I apply for the patent, I must disclose the ingredients.

**CHARLES**

I realize there is a great deal of uncertainty about securing patents, especially with all the antagonism of the medical profession, but I am an expert. If we can start your own foundation, Essaic will be protected from commercial exploitation.

**[THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. MRS. THOS LEYMAN ENTERS IN A HURRY]**

**MRS. THOS LEYMAN**

Good morning, Charles, Rene (She forgets to address Dr. Fisher) I have some disconcerting news.

**RENE**

(Worried) What is it now?

**MRS. THOS LEYMAN**

I have heard that secret meetings are being conducted by the Commission.

**CHARLES**

What do they want? They are not going to get away with this!

**MRS. THOS LEYMAN**

The chairman wants Rene to come to this hearing tomorrow, with legal counsel.

**RENE**

Oh, my! Am I going to be put on the stand! (Crying) I cannot take it anymore!

**CHARLES**

I will help you, Rene. I am a lawyer! (He gives her a long hug. Smiling) I know! You can rent the ballroom at the Royal York Hotel, and we will invite patients to support you. You are a wonderful woman! (He kisses her hand. To Thos Leyman) I need to have this woman marry me! (Rene smiles) What do you say, Rene?

**RENE**

(She looks at Dr. Fisher, then looks away) Well, that offer sounds good, Charles. You are a fine man!  
**(DR. FISHER IS UPSET AND HE EXITS QUIETLY)**

**MRS. THOS LEYMAN**

Just what I was going to suggest, Charles! And, with such a huge event we'll gain credibility and discredit the Cancer Commission. (Joyous) Later, you two can get married!

**RENE**

(Upset, but trying not to show it) But, I don't really like the limelight! (Mumbling) Alright, I'll go. Where is Dr. Fisher?

**[Aunt Mireza quietly comes in, unnoticed. She is barely able to walk. Rene reacts with horror]**

**CHARLES**

(Ignoring her last remark) I believe that when they hear all these people's painful testimonies, their minds will change. Come on Mrs. Leyman, let's plan the event! (He exits with Mrs. Leyman)

**RENE**

(Confused, not noticing their departure she sees Mireza hobbling down the stairs) Auntie! (She runs to Mireza)

**AUNT MIREZA**

I have been in my room praying, Rene. Your mother and I were raised to love God and respect our fellow man, which is more important than riches. That is why you must go to this hearing and face them.

**RENE**

But Auntie, you are . . .

**AUNT MIREZA**

That doesn't matter. Remember my laughter, Rene. (Rene is frozen) You need to promise me that will never give up your quest. You will not desert your patients. You will not renounce your findings, or give up your formula.

**RENE**

(Crying) Mireza, I am sorry you felt so much pain.

**AUNT MIREZA**

(Comforting) I am a tough lady, dear. It is because of you I lived a full life. Now go to the hearing. Spread the good word.

**RENE**

I adore you, Auntie (She hugs her with emotion)

**(FADEOUT)**

**ACT TWO, SCENE SIX: ("The Interrogation")**

**[The year is now 1939. The Town of Bracebridge is ready to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee. People are worried about Hitler in Europe, and everyone is feeling uneasy. Rene is now fifty-one years old and**

she has been married to Charles for six months. Friselda is now eighty one years old, but she is still healthy and active. Rene's clinic is now under scrutiny by Dr. Banting's Cancer Commission. A hearing is called to order in the BRACEBRIDGE TOWN HALL. It is as though Rene is on trial. Many patients have travelled great distances from the rural communities surrounding Bracebridge to support Rene, although it is minus 41 degrees. They are all extremely cold, irritable, and tired. The cancer commission includes Dr. Banting, Dr. Callahan and Dr. W.C. Wallace. Dr. Fisher is at the proceeding in support of Rene, as well as Charles, Rene's husband. Rene is wearing a sling on her right arm due to painful bursitis and surgery to her shoulder].

**DR. BANTING**

Rene, why you have never divulged your formula for Essaic tea?

**RENE**

(Scornfully at Dr. Banting) The Ministry of Health prefers studying expensive treatments such as surgery, the use of radium, apex-ray, and emplastrums. They would scoff at simpler forms of treatment. (The crowd is now intrigued and alert)

**DR. NOBLE**

I see. (He jots down a quick note) Is it true Rene, that many of your patients did not have a doctor's written permission to gain access to your treatments?

**RENE**

Yes, well, in some cases, my patients could not get permission because their doctor refused. These patients were sent home to die. I treated them on the off-chance that I could help.

**DR. RICHARDS**

(Gravely) Did you tell them to falsify anything?

**RENE**

No, I did not. They made that choice themselves. (The crowd smiles at this)

**DR. CALLAHAN**

I see. Is it true Rene that you don't have any trained nurses at your clinic?

**RENE**

That is correct. I handle all the cases myself. Mary McPherson only assists me.

**DR. NOBLE**

And what were your procedures for treating patients with Essaic?

**RENE**

Well, I would inject the Essaic into the patients arm, leg, or hip muscle, and follow it with a glass of medicine to purify the blood. If there were open sores I would pack the area with gauze, and for hemorrhages I would use a solution to irrigate and stop the bleeding.

**DR. CALLAHAN**

Rene, I am interested in the treatments impact on malignant tumors.

**RENE**

(Looking at Dr. Banting fearfully) Well, the tumor would enlarge and harden at first, then a strange and odorous secretion would ooze from the affected cite. Then, the tumor would begin to shrink. Patients all commented that there was less pain, swelling and pressure.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

It gave them hope!

**DR. BANTING**

(Looks at Mary) Quiet! So, Rene, you are saying that you personally treated hundreds and hundreds of patients all by yourself? (He doesn't wait for an answer) That seems unbelievable! Now Rene, as you know, we have asked you for a list of patients categorized into three classifications: improved, cured, and fatal.

**RENE**

Yes, and I have provided you with that list in March.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(Shouting) Yes, and it was quite expensive for Rene! (Friselda quiets her non-verbally).

**DR. BANTING**

(Angrily) Quiet! (Calculating) Rene, I am mostly interested about what happened to your fatal patients. I have heard that they had terrible reactions from your formula, such as chills and fever.

**RENE**

Some of them did die, and they did experience side effects, but they received relief from pain, and they had extended their lives, and they were conscious almost till the end.

**DR. NOBLE**

That is interesting. So why did Mrs. Gilruth die under your care? You gave her a two cc injection and then, shortly after, she was pronounced dead in your clinic.

**RENE**

(Fearfully) I don't believe it was the Essaic. (She starts to choke under the pressure).

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(To the crowd) She had fainted earlier that day. Her family warned she might die of an embolism.

**DR. BANTING**

Silence!

**DR. FISHER**

Specifically, it was a clot in her pulmonary artery! I object to this question, sir! Rene took patients who were at death's door; because they had taken radiation and they had radium burns. There was proof that her patients did improve because I had clinical x-ray and pathological proof of the results. Her treatments caused a regression of the malignant growths in HUMANS.

**DR. BANTING**

Nevertheless, most of Rene's patients had received accepted conventional treatments such as radiation, before receiving Essaic? (The other commission doctors are surprised)

**RENE**

Well, yes doctor, but that doesn't mean . . .

**DR. NOBLE**

(Skeptical) Dr. Banting raises a keen question! Were there any patients who lived and were cured or helped by Essaic who did not receive a viable cancer treatment?

**DR. BANTING**

Exactly! Then, how do we know that the radiation and the chemotherapy that they had received prior to Essaic treatments –were not a significant factor in their temporary recoveries? (Rene is stunned by this question)

**DR. CALLAHAN**

You will need to answer this question, Rene.

**RENE**

(Stressed) Sir, all I know is that they were very sick, but after they took the formula . . . they improved.

**DR. BANTING**

(Smiling) Rene, did any of these cases where improvements were noted have a definite diagnosis through the use of biopsies?

**RENE**

Some of the patients did not have biopsies, but a few others didn't.

**DR. BANTING**

Therefore, for the ones who did not have biopsies, it is only fair to assume that they didn't actually have cancer.

**DR. FISHER**

Again, this question is ridiculous! All the doctors who treated Rene's patients gave a diagnosis of cancer. Biopsies were not necessary since they had visible tumors and other maladies.

**DR. CALLAHAN**

Dr. Banting does raise some interesting insights, Dr. Fisher. The treatment of Cancer was not initially started using Essaic on many of her cases, and pathological proof was indeterminate.

**DR. FISHER**

You absolute fools! (Angry) There was pathological proof in the X-ray reports for several patients!

**DR. BANTING**

I do not believe that a mere X-ray is an acceptable form of diagnosis! There are chemical tests to be done.

**DR. NOBLE**

In addition, I have noted that many of the two hundred and ten patients you treated who petitioned that they benefited by your treatment are now dead.

**RENE**

(Summoning courage) Your statistics are not right, doctor. Only thirty-two of these patients are now deceased. One of them was killed in a car accident, and the others foolishly went back for more radium treatments after I had to close my clinic. Two died after amputations due to radiation burns! However, one hundred and seventy eight ARE still alive!

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Well said, Rene! (Looking at the Cancer doctors) Not a bad percentage!

**DR. BANTING**

Silence! (He glares at Mary) Isn't it true that one of your successful cases, a Mr. James Summerwill is not a true cancer patient?

**RENE**

Well, technically Mr. Summerwill has a very serious condition called *lympho sacoma*, but that is an equally devastating disease.

**DR. NOBLE**

Therefore, Mr. Summerwill has had masses disappear that were not cancerous in nature?

**JAMES SUMMERWILL**

(Shouting) I was dying and Rene saved me! My doctor denied his own diagnosis when questioned by doctors like you.

**DR. BANTING**

(To the doctors) Highly unlikely! As a co-creator of insulin for diabetes patients, I was wondering why you have withdrawn this accepted treatment to your cancer patients. (Playing to the other doctors) I

guess your goal was to send them into diabetic shock? ...thereby putting them into a comma and then causing . . .

**DR. FISHER**

This is outrageous! (Going out on a limb) It's is because all patients who received Essaic were not only cleared of their cancerous growths, but they were cured of their diabetic problem as well! So, naturally, Rene used her formula to CURE, rather than to TREAT both ailments simultaneously!

**DR. BANTING**

(Frowning at Dr. Fisher) That factor doesn't account for every patient that Rene has lost, by them not completing their radiation and chemotherapy treatments, while experiencing frightful side-effects.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(Letting loose) Chemotherapy is a toxic poison!! Radiation is deadly. Her patients were deemed hopeless by the medical world, and they had given up on them. *(A few people in the crowd cheer Mary McPherson)*

**DR. BANTING**

(Looking at the crowd) Well, Rene, you will still need to supply us with a written report accounting for EVERY patient who has DIED under your care.

**FRISELDA**

*(Emboldened by Mary's display, she stands up)* Dr. Banting, you should be ashamed! My daughter has suffered because of men like you who sit on their ivory towers, and CRITICIZE. You have no right to make my daughter feel like a criminal and attack her. You are disgusting!

**DR. NOBLE**

Ladies, you need to be quiet during this evaluation!

**FRISELDA**

(Indignant) Oh, I have been quiet all my long life, sir. Like a pretty little doll I have listened to my father, my husband, and men like you, even when they were WRONG. I have lost count the number of times that Rene has been threatened with arrest, and she has been persecuted by the ignorant. She has been made to feel dirty, guilty and ashamed, when all she has done is help the terminally ill. I am appalled to

think that I was once a skeptic and I didn't . . . (Rene looks at her mother with love, and Friselda stops to notice her).

**DR. CALLAHAN**

(Interrupting) Friselda, we will remove you from these proceedings!

**FRISELDA**

(Boldly) THAT will be entirely unnecessary, doctor! Come on, Rene, we are leaving! (Friselda leads out Rene. Rene is numb).

**DR. BANTING**

(Smiling) This investigation will now proceed with testimonies from patients. As you can see, doctors, no real evidence of Essaic has been documented as a cancer agent, and it has NO medical rating. (The crowd of onlookers is shocked and seething with anger.)

**MAYOR WILBERT RICHARDS**

As mayor of Bracebridge, this good community will see about that! (He exits with Dr. Bastedo with scorn)

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Hypocrites!! *(As Rene's best friend, she stands her ground with the community)*

**JAMES SUMMERWILL**

Scoundrels!

**MRS. THOS LEYMAN**

*(She speaks to the Cancer Commission doctors. Smiling calming and calculating)* You can't HARRASS me, gentlemen. My husband never has the last word . . . so why should you?

*[The crowd of Bracebridge townsfolk suddenly cheers heartily. The cancer committee doctors stand up and they hastily leave very embarrassed. Next, Mrs. Thos Leyman leaves with James Summerwill with deliberation. Mary McPherson stands near the crowd and she reacts with the crowd while encouraging them to laugh].*

*Then, Dr. Banting walks up to Mary McPherson and they square off and stare at each other with absolute hatred. Suddenly, Dr. Banting smiles. There is a hush and silence, as he leaves].*

**[FADEOUT]**

**ACT TWO, SCENE SEVEN (“Desperate Measures”)**

*[Rene and Mary McPherson are working in the clinic. It is several months after the hearing in Toronto. Patients and the press are boisterously knocking on the doors wanting treatment. You can hear muffled voices from outside saying: Let me in! Please, I need help!!]*

**FRISELDA**

I think it is best we keep the clinic closed for now. (Feeling her age, she wraps herself up with a shawl and folds her arms together).

**RENE**

Yes!! If I have to turn one more person away, I am going to scream!

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Rene, I must speak to you about Annie; she keeps coming up the door for treatments, and I keep turning her away. It is dreadful.

**ANNIE BONAR**

(Screaming and knocking on the door) Friselda, I know you are there. Let me in! Please! PLEASE! I need more treatments!

*[Annie Bonar enters. Her left arm is blackened from radiation and she must hold it with her good arm]*

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(Looking to see if anyone is watching) What is it Annie?

**ANNIE BONAR**

I don't care what my doctor says. I need some more Essaic. The stress of that hearing has set me back. (Tearfully) After you left, my testimony meant nothing to them.

**RENE**

Annie, I don't know if I can treat you. I am being watched.

**ANNIE BONAR**

That makes two of us. Strange men keep following me around.

**FRISELDA**

(Peering intently) They could be members of the press, or someone much worse.

**ANNIE BONAR**

Rene, I am resorting to narcotics and pain pills again. My arm is starting to hurt! I don't want it amputated!

**RENE**

Of course not, Anne! You have to . . .

**FRISELDA**

Rene! (She signals Rene to move away from Anne) What can you do? (Protective) You cannot treat her. You will be arrested!

**MARY MCPHERSON**

*(She quickly slips Annie an ampoule of Essaic)* Annie, don't tell them where you got this! (She quickly hands Annie an ampoule of Essaic).

**ANNIE BONAR**

Thank you! I will not speak of it! (She slips out covertly)

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(Innocently) What? It is alright. None of you did anything wrong.

**FRISELDA**

Mary, now you've done it. Three strange men are coming to the door! One is a policeman!

***[Frightened, the women scatter to various areas of the reception room. A policeman enters authoritatively with Dr. Mosley and Dr. Norich following him. They walk around the clinic suspiciously looking for patients].***

**POLICEMAN**

We've heard reports that some patients were pounding on your front door?

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Gentlemen, you cannot believe everything you hear! (She laughs. Rene, Friselda and Mireza are stunned at Mary's pluck)

**DR. MOSLEY**

It's not what we heard, it's what we witnessed, officer!

**DR. NORICH**

It looked like Annie Bonar from behind.

**FRISELDA**

What if it was, gentlemen? Annie has the right to visit with us; she is our friend.

**DR. MOSLEY**

Officer, I think we should question Mary. Quick! Let's go!

**[ANGRILY THEY BOTH RUN OUT CHASING AFTER ANNIE BONAR. THE POLICEMAN HAS TAKEN OUT HIS BILLY CLUB]**

**DR. NORICH**

Bitches! **[DR. NORICH VIOLENTLY KNOCKS OVER A CHAIR ON PURPOSE AND HE RUNS OUT]**

**RENE**

Pull the drapes! Lock the door, quick!

*(All the women are paralyzed with fright, and showing shock in various ways. A woman is heard screaming in the background. It is Annie Bonar. The women are breathing hard, and then, there is sudden silence).*

**FRISELDA**

We are MOVING. Pack your things, NOW!!! [Mary and Friselda run or walk briskly up the stairs, except for Rene who is completely defiant].

**[RENE IS LEFT ALONE, AND SHE LOOKS AT HER BEAUTIFUL CLINIC FOR THE LAST TIME. SHE SITS IN A CHAIR, AND FOLDS HER HANDS TO HER FACE]**

**[FADEOUT]**

**ACT TWO, SCENE EIGHT ("The Gathering")**

*[Rene has now established herself in her new rented home. Everyone is bracing for the winter, and it is very cold. There is a howling storm which increases in intensity throughout the scene. It is now January,*

1941. Canada is in the grips of major depression, and Hitler has advanced in Europe, making everyone very tense. However, there is a sense of family bonding through all the adversity].

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(She is tired) James brought us a nice wild chicken today, and Mrs. Leyman gave us some green beans. I will cook supper. (She starts to leave, but Friselda grabs her arm)

**FRISELDA**

(Comforting) No. You are exhausted, child. I will cook it. (Mary is surprised at Friselda's comment)

**RENE**

(Worried) I wish Charles would come back from visiting his family.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Well, I guess all the excitement at the hearing was not good for him. (She realizes what she said was wrong)

**FRISELDA**

Charles has been a good . . . companion. (Rene looks at Friselda quizzically)

**[Dr. Fisher comes to the door dressed in a very warm coat. He is shaking and he is chilled to the bone. He has gone to great lengths to come to the clinic of hope in terrible weather, and he is looking out the window with some trepidation. There is a sense that the characters are bonding through adversity and their tensions are releasing throughout this scene. They have become family.]**

**DR. FISHER**

*(Rubbing his hands together, and watching the window)* I was worried about you ladies being alone. Charles wired the general store to let you know he wants you to go to North Bay. He said his heart was bothering him.

**RENE**

Oh, no! I need to go to him! *(Rene starts to grab her coat, and is heading directly for the door)*

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(Blocking her) Oh, no you don't! You will have to wait out this storm.

**DR. FISHER**

Mary is right. Many roads are heavily snowed in.

**FRISELDA**

(To Dr. Fisher) I can't believe that Charles would desert you in this weather, Rene.

**RENE**

(Guilty) He was very upset.

**FRISELDA**

(Comforting) It wasn't your fault. (She looks at everyone present) Family is important. (Concerned about Rene's stress) I will cook a nice dinner, and we will listen to the radio.

**RENE**

(Distraught) Why? No news is good news. The Second World War is raging, food is scarce, and no one has any money. I am tired of rationing what little food we have.

**DR. FISHER**

Rene, we will get through this. I can't say the same about Dr. Banting, however. He just died in an airplane crash ninety kilometers northeast of Gander.

**ALL THE WOMEN:** WHAT???

**FRISELDA**

(Nasty) Well, good riddance to bad rubbish!

**RENE**

(Sympathetic) Mother, Dr. Banting was a good doctor, but he was just caught up with his own ego and desire to be successful.

**FRISELDA**

Rene, I am surprised you can say that! That man was a royal pain in the . . . (she stops herself)

**MARY MCPHERSON**

ASS! I know that you wanted to say it. (Friselda smiles at her)

**DR. FISHER**

(Interrupting) Also, not to get too morbid, but Premier Mitch Hepburn died in his sleep after a heavy cold.

**FRISELDA**

What?!! You see, Rene, God is smiting down your enemies.

**RENE**

Mother, that is not appropriate!

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(Smiling coyly) Well, you were thinking it yourself! Admit it! (Friselda smiles)

**DR. FISHER**

(Laughing, then catching himself as Rene stares hard at him) Oh, yes. I mean, it is terrible. They were all so . . . professional. (Pause. Then, they all start laughing together very loudly)

**RENE**

My, that did feel good. I should be ashamed!

**FRISELDA**

(Suddenly serious) It is wrong to laugh about someone's death, no matter how they lived. (She notices how Rene is looking at Dr. Fisher) Well, Mary, would you like to help me start dinner? (To Rene) Why don't you relax with Dr. Fisher, Rene? (*Rene looks confused at her mother*)

**DR. FISHER**

(Turning on the radio) Let's listen to the news. (Sound: Hitler's army has advanced to Northern France, and the allied forces are now retreating. He quickly turns off the radio). Better still, let's relax and talk. (Sincerely) It is odd that Charles left so quickly. How has he been?

**RENE**

Oh . . . he has been a wonderful . . . lawyer. He has such a great law library, but . . . (Dr. Fisher looks away with discomfort)

*[JAMES SUMMERWILL ENTERS. HE IS COLD AND UPSET]*

**JAMES SUMMERWILL**

(Shaken with grief) Rene, I just learned some terrible news. I am so sorry. Charles has passed away.

**RENE**

Oh my god! (Dr. Fisher holds Rene, who cries uncontrollably. Rene is devastated)

**DR. FISHER**

(Holding her tightly and rocking her in his arms) It will be alright, Rene. You will get through this. We will get through this.

*[Friselda and Mary look in from the kitchen. It is apparent to Friselda and Mary that they are in love, and they can see their passion. James is too busy being engrossed in his grief over Charles' death].*

**(FADEOUT)**

**ACT TWO, SCENE TEN ("A Mother's Death")**

*[It is six months later. Rene has established herself in her small home on Kimberly Avenue. She is living with Friselda who has grown much frailer. Friselda is now ninety-one years old. Friselda is sleeping in a chair with a shawl draped loosely around her. Her gray hair is messy and her clothes are disheveled].*

**RENE**

Wake up, Mother. It is time for your medication. (Rene touches her but there isn't any response)

Mother, wake up!

**FRISELDA**

What? No! I don't want it! No more. How long has it been, Rene?

**RENE**

How long has what been, mother? (Frantically getting a pill out of pill bottle)

**FRISELDA**

You know. It has been eighteen years since you cured me. I have been ungrateful.

**RENE**

No, mother, you have been great. (Hands her a pill from her medicines) Here, mother...

**FRISELDA**

(Pushes pill away) I had a dream last night that I was talking to Mireza.

**RENE**

(Perplexed) You don't believe in your dream, do you?

**FRISELDA**

(Looking blankly) People visit you when its time. (She stares out into space as though focusing on Mireza)

**RENE**

(Concerned) Who? Mother, are you alright?

**FRISELDA**

(She looks around the room as though she is seeing Mireza's ghost) Yes, sister, she has positively impacted many people! They haven't forgotten.

**RENE**

Mother, what is wrong? Who are you talking to?

**FRISELDA**

(Shushes) Quiet! I am talking with your Auntie!

**RENE**

Mother, you are scaring me.

**FRISELDA**

Oh, look! She says Eva Peron is about to call you! She is dying!

*(The phone rings, and Rene jumps out of her seat, and she answers it slowly)*

**RENE**

(Shocked) Alright, I can help you. Please come to my clinic immediately. (Dazed) Mother, how could you have known?

**FRISELDA**

(Gazing about the room as though stricken with dementia) Clarity! Omniscience! (She stiffly sits on the armchair) It was wrong to try to hold you back. I can see you followed your life's path, the role of scientist and healer.

**RENE**

(Guilty) I know I wasn't the easiest daughter . . . I was spoiled and selfish. (She is longing desperately for affection, and she is worried). Mother, do you love me?

**FRISELDA**

(She smiles wistfully) If you don't know that by now . . . you never will.

**RENE**

(At first, speechless) You . . . are extraordinary, mother.

**FRISELDA**

No, I was raised to be ordinary. I never achieved much in my life, except raise good children, like—you. (She winces with a sharp pain. She looks at Rene with love, and she holds Rene's face in her frail hands). I guess living in the shadow of greatness was difficult for me.

**RENE**

No. But . . . I've always felt a terrible ...

**FRISELDA**

(Finishes her sentence) Void. I know. (Choking out a terrible confession) Please forgive me for poisoning your relationship . . . with your father. I felt so small. I thought he loved you . . . more.

**RENE**

Mother, please don't feel guilty about that . . . he didn't love you less . . .

**FRISELDA**

(Focusing intently on her daughter) I am so proud of you, Rene. I love you. I always will .... (Suddenly Friselda is spellbound by a light that is slowly rising. Friselda sees Mireza's ghost drifting across the room. She lifts up her hand and Mireza takes it. With her sister's touch, she dies. Mireza vanishes).

**RENE**

(Scared) You cannot leave me, mother! (Low steady sobs. Rene puts her head on Friselda's lap) No, mother, no . . . I have so much to tell you. Not yet! Please, please, don't go.....

**(FADEOUT)**

**ACT TWO, SCENE TEN ("EMPTINESS FILLED")**

*[It is now 1952. Rene is now older and she is moving more difficultly. Her right shoulder continues to plague her, and it is now it is painful. Rene has dark circles around her eyes from worry and fatigue].*

**RENE**

I was reading that many advances have been made in various branches of medicine. Dr. Banting's successors continue to improve his insulin.

**DR. FISHER**

Bully for him! Unfortunately though, cancer is still the scourge of humanity.

**RENE**

(She coughs) At least the Health Department is allowing me to treat my old patients.

**DR. FISHER**

They have been sending letters for nearly ten years to the Prime Minister, Leslie M. Frost.

**RENE**

(Pleased) That is dedication! They do love me. Why are you still here?

**DR. FISHER**

(He looks at her intently) For years you seemed to be the only one who didn't see . . . the love, Rene. (They both look at each other, and he looks away) Did you know that U.S. Publications are now interested in Essaic?

**RENE**

You don't say? Wonders never cease.

**DR. FISHER**

American doctors are saying that Essaic is not a cure, but they do say it is a benefit. Also, they describe a phenomenon about cancer growth localizing and regressing within itself.

**RENE**

Hah! That strangely sounds like something I said years ago. (She laughs)

**DR. FISHER**

You know, I have rarely heard you laugh. I like it. (Rene looks away)

**RENE**

(Evading) Things never change. Now, the National Cancer Institute in America is refusing their scientists laboratory mice at the Sloan-Kettering Institute. Animal autopsies would show everything.

**DR. FISHER**

Didn't you do that back in the 30's? Remember?

**RENE**

Yes, but who is counting? I think it's time to dabble in my crafts and set up my easel to paint!

**DR. FISHER**

No, I think you should approach the Sloan-Kettering Institute! You are brilliant, Rene. Never quit! (Touches her hair tenderly) So much time is has been—lost. (Finally admitting it) I have always treasured you, Rene.

**RENE**

I have always known. (Tenderly touching his brow) Let's make up for lost time. (They finally kiss)

**[FADEOUT]**

**ACT TWO, SCENE ELEVEN ("One Last Attempt")**

*[It is now April 4, 1974, and Rene is now eight-five years old. She has been contacting the Sloan-Kettering Institute for fourteen years, and she is now working with Dr. Stock, a female scientist].*

**RENE**

(Coughing) Dr. Stock. The way you conducted this test is sheer incompetence!

**DR. STOCK**

(Defensive) We grounded the leaves and stems to mortar, and suspended them in 60ml of sterile water through a double cheese cloth.

**RENE**

(Furious) And why did you strain it through a DOUBLE-LAYER cheese cloth? That destroys Essaic's chemical properties! Do you understand what chemicals are???

**DR. STOCK**

I have to insist that you refrain from your rudeness!

**RENE**

You might as well have injected sterile water during your experiments!!

**DR. STOCK**

(Annoyed) You are an impossible, stubborn woman!

**RENE**

(Disregarding his last remark) You have had my ampoules for fifteen years. The samples of formula were deteriorated!

**DR. STOCK**

I am reaching the end of my tether.

**RENE**

YOU are impatient! You injected the mice with animal sarcoma instead of human carcinoma! Why didn't you listen to me!?

**DR. STOCK**

You apparently wish for a test that we are not in the position to provide.

**RENE**

(Furious) I give you a CURE for cancer, and you tell me you are not satisfied with my methods!! (Trying to control her emotions)

**DR. STOCK**

The testing is now over, Rene.

**RENE**

I am sorry. I am sorry. I was wrong!! Please accept my apologies. You must still try to test the Essaic. Please! Please! You are right; I am just tired and grumpy old woman, but there is merit in this work!  
(Rene tries to follow her, but she moves too fast)

**DR. STOCK**

(Stressed) I must apologize, too. I cannot continue with everyone protecting their own turf; radiology, chemotherapy, surgery, and especially, the pharmaceutical industry. Rene, go home and rest.

**RENE**

No, but please. Please, listen to me. . . I beg of you! I was wrong! I will not complain, anymore! Please, please... (Rene crumbles to the floor in anguish. She is holding her painful shoulder. She rocks herself back and forth and looks at the heavens) I am a most capable nurse (She cries).

(DR. STOCK EXITS THE ROOM WITHOUT ANY EMOTION. RENE IS SPENT AND ALL ALONE)

**[FADEOUT]**

**ACT TWO, SCENE TWELVE ("The Realization")**

*(It is now December 26, 1978, the day of Rene's death. She is ninety years old and more vulnerable than before. Rene is now bedridden, and she is being visited by Mary McPherson, her good friend. She has broken her hip. She is in the hospital. She is very weak, but she puts up a good front)*

**RENE**

(Winching in pain from her hip) Thank you for coming to Florida.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(She holds Rene's hand) We have been through so much together. (She holds her hand) How is your broken hip?

**RENE**

The doctor's tell me I am suffering from complications. That describes my entire life! (Both women laugh)

**MARY MCPHERSON**

I heard that you are selling your formulae to the Resperin Corporation?

**RENE**

Yes, they promise to test one hundred volunteers for a six month trial. After that, I will reveal the formula and get paid.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Rene, is that a good idea? I heard that David Fingard is the head of that firm, and they are having internal strife.

**RENE**

I think in my condition, I need the money.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

What do they have to substantiate for the Ministry of Health, Rene?

**RENE**

Oh, them. I need to identify the active antineoplastic substances in Essaic.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Rene, they will tell Resperin that they do not conform to their quality control procedures.

**RENE**

(Shouting) Oh, why not! I have been agonizing over this decision, and I am tired!

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Understandably, you want to benefit from the fruits of your labors. However, do you really think that Essaic can be mass produced in some factory? It is a home care recipe!

**RENE**

What can I do, Mary? Look at me! I have been bedridden for weeks. The best I can do at this point is turn over my formula and hope for the best.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

You entrusted me with the formula years ago, and I know how difficult it is to create it. What if they put it in plastic containers or prepare it incorrectly?

**RENE**

(Realizing the truth in Mary's words) It is too late! I have signed over the formula to them. (Shaken to the core)

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(She grimaces) It is all bad politics, Rene! (Rene cringes)

**RENE**

Nothing has changed! (She pauses and looks at Mary with love) You know, I never had any children. I gave up so much of myself towards this quest, this bizarre medical cause. (Breaking down) I have been haunted by this nightmare all of my life. Did my life have any impact at all?

**MARY MCPHERSON**

Are you regretful, Rene? I hope not.

**RENE**

Never. How can anyone destroy what is in a woman's soul?

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(Tearfully) No one can! I will make sure that your formula is safe in the archives of the Town of Bracebridge. I will keep your legacy . . . alive.

**RENE**

I know. You are like the daughter . . . I never had. (Mary hugs Rene. Sadly) I hate to leave with unfinished business.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(Tearfully) I am so proud of you, Rene. You have stood by your principles.

**RENE**

“Well, I have given my life for it. I couldn’t give any more than that. Gods been good to let me live this long, to see it . . . used . . . and used by people. If I had listened to the medical world, I would have distributed it to animals. But I wanted it for human beings. I wanted them to have the benefit of it, so I fought for that for forty-years. That’s a long time.”

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(Moved) Yes. People everywhere still want Essaic tea. Surely, your work will live on . . . even with your . . . (She chokes, and stops herself before finishing).

**RENE**

Death? I hope my mother and sister, and Dr. Fisher--are proud.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

I KNOW they are proud. (Kindly) You were just ahead of your time, Rene.

**RENE**

I thought I was so old-fashioned! (They laugh quietly together, and then suddenly silent. Her eyes well up with tears) Will you stay with me? I am so scared.

**MARY MCPHERSON**

(Bravely) I will do everything in my power to make you comfortable. You taught me how . . . remember? (The two women gaze at each other with complete love)  
*(Rene sobs a bit, and Mary comforts her tenderly)*

**(FADEOUT)**

**ACT TWO, SCENE THIRTEEN, EPILOGUE (The Protest and Rene’s Funeral):**

*[It is March 1978, and Rene is now deceased. The political group FACT (an umbrella for the terminally ill cancer patients) is demonstrating in Canada. They have filed a law suit against the secretary of the Department of Health, and Education and Welfare. This scene can consist of many of the cameo or supporting players as long as they are disguised. This group is symbolic of all the nameless victims of cancer who were never heard throughout time. The news media of the Detroit WXYZ-TV has flown*

*into Bracebridge to cover the unfolding story. This scene should begin absolutely chaotic from the public's outrage, and then, dissolve and soften with Rene Caisse's funeral].*

**CANCER PATIENT #1**

I demand that the Minister of Health be fired for his incompetence!

**CANCER PATIENT #2**

I want to use Essaic again, and no one has the right to tell me otherwise!

**CANCER PATIENT #3**

I am allowed to smoke any number of cancer-causing cigarettes, so why can't I take Essaic!

**CANCER PATIENT #4**

Hey! No one has argued about me drinking alcohol, which endangers the lives of others. Essaic is a non-toxic substance, so why can't I drink it?

**CANCER PATIENT #5**

Why am I denied the freedom to drink harmless Essaic?! I will tell you why! Greed!!!

**CANCER PATIENT #6**

Essaic has been used for centuries by North American Indians. Are you going to tell them what to do!?

**CANCER PATIENT #7**

Why did you burn all of Rene's papers!! Bastards!!

**CANCER PATIENTS ALL TOGETHER**

WE DEMAND TO KNOW WHY?!!!

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH DOCTOR #1**

I am sorry, but your lawsuit complaint has been rejected.

**CANCER PATIENT #7**

Rejected! What? On what grounds?? (He throws garbage at the doctor)

**CANCER PATIENT #8**

We don't care if you test it!

**CANCER PATIENT #9**

You need to have the Resperin Corporation pay Rene's heirs!!

**CANCER PATIENT #10**

Pressure the Canadian government to finish Rene's patent trademark!

**CANCER PATIENT #11**

STOP the repression of Essaic NOW!

**CANCER PATIENT #12**

The Resperin Corporation stopped their human tests! They promised Rene they'd do this!

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH DOCTOR #2**

I am afraid you must all leave at once, or the police will arrest you. (Several policemen approach the protestors)

**ALL CANCER PATIENTS: DO IT! WE DARE YOU! (They shout with a unified anger)**

**(FADEOUT)**

*(It is now quiet after the storm, and everyone is at Rene's funeral. The rage of the demonstrators has now quieted into the love and tenderness of her mourners, and many are crying. It is a cold snowy morning. People are slowly placing flowers on top of Rene's grave)*

**CANCER PATIENT #1**

I loved Rene so much! She cured me of cancer of the bowel.

**CANCER PATIENT #2**

I never used chemotherapy, and now, look at me!

**CANCER PATIENT #3**

Her greatness will live on. She will be a legend.

**CANCER PATIENT #4**

She was a humanitarian and true healer.

**CANCER PATIENT #5**

Your dream will live in us, Rene.

**CANCER PATIENT #6**

I would have never been born, if it weren't for you (She pulls a black veil around her swollen eyes and face).

**CANCER PATIENT #7**

(Joyous) I have had beautiful children. I will tell them.

**CANCER PATIENT #8**

(A little child walks up to her coffin) I had leukemia, but now, I am cured. (She places a teddy bear into her coffin).

**MARY MCPHERSON**

**(Mary is now an old woman around seventy. She is speaking at Rene's funeral service. She is ready to cry, but she holds it back)** Rene Caisse was so special. She made me feel so special. I was like an orphaned child when I met her. She took me into her home and she loved me. Rene Caisse has left all of us her special legacy. She offered us all hope. She gave many of us who were afflicted in body and spirit—life. That was her legacy! She was devoted and unselfish. (Affectionately smiling) I will always remember her stubbornness. (A few in the crowd laugh. She takes a moment to gather her strength). I never had a mother, but if I did, it would be Rene. (Determine now) I will see to it that she is not forgotten. I will tell the world about her Essaic treatments. Such a woman cannot die in obscurity. (She breaks down a bit) Rene, may God give you more joy than you ever had in life. (Now crying) We will never forget you, Rene. God bless you. (She kisses a rose gently, and she places it on her coffin).

[Mystically, the ghosts of Rene's past eventually drift onto the scene like the gentle rustling of the wind, and the dead comfort the living. The first ghost to come onto the scene is **River Eagle**, who dances and rhythmically chants as he guides the spirits who were affected by Rene's life back down to Earth. The next spirit to enter is Laura who looks at River Eagle with the utmost respect, and then, she proudly welcomes the community members and patients of Bracebridge to follow: Thos Leyman, James Summerwill, Dr. Bastedo, Mayor Wilbert Richards, and Annie Bonar enter). Annie no longer has a blackened arm. The next spirits who enter are all members of Rene's family: Aunt Mireza is followed by Mary McPherson, and then, Rene's mother, Friselda. Friselda holds out her hand, and suddenly the brilliant spirit of Dr. Fisher appears. The living characters cannot see these ghosts, but they can sense their comforting presence as though connected with them; however, they are still filled with grief and sorrow. The living bows their heads in silence and the most profound respect. The ghosts feel no sorrow. Rather, they smile with joy as they look up at a brilliant white light that drifts upwards towards the heavens. It is Rene's spirit].

[There is now a close up shot of River Eagle's face that looks intently up at the sky; he is in a trance. As the camera pans back, we can see him holding up his hands to God. The camera points upwards to the heavens. The sky suddenly radiates the brilliant colors of the aurora-borealis]

**PROPERTIES LIST FOR CAISSE'S QUEST**

**NOTEPAPER  
BRACEBRIDGE NEWSPAPERS  
PENCILS  
RAG  
STETHESCOPE  
CANE  
AMPOULES OF ESSAIC  
INJECTION NEEDLE  
AMBER JARS  
ESSAIC HERBS  
SACKS OF LETTERS  
CAGE WITH A RAT  
CART WITH BINDERS (PETITIONS)  
PILL BOTTLE WITH PILLS  
WHEELCHAIR  
TEDDY BEAR  
FLOWERS  
TEA CUPS  
DEMONSTRATION SIGNS**