

THE MEMORY PLAY

excerpt

RUTH: So. She's transfixed.

CHARLIE: Miracle of television.

RUTH: Thank God for Disney.

MOTHER: It's a wonderful invention the VCR. I used to have to read to you kids before bedtime. That's why you could all read so early.

RUTH: Polly can read.

MOTHER: I know she can. Now, Ruth, don't take everything so—

RUTH: Sorry. Is there more coffee?

MOTHER: *[starting to get up]* Well, I can certainly make some.

RUTH: Don't bother, don't bother. I don't need it.

[Beat. She looks at CHARLIE who looks back quizzically.]

So, Mom, I talked to Joey.

MOTHER: Did you? You know I tried to call him, but I don't think that answering machine of his really— And he's never, ever in, or he's asleep or something. Of course, if I know Joey, he'll call the minute he needs something—

RUTH: Mom, Joey's going through— he's going through a bad time.

MOTHER: A bad time?

[RUTH looks at CHARLIE.]

CHARLIE: He's having— um— psychological problems.

RUTH: Not psychological problems exactly—

CHARLIE: Well, you talked to him—

RUTH: He's having— strange feelings. Physical feelings. Nervous— reactions. Body memories.

MOTHER: Body memories? I don't know what that means.

RUTH: It's when your body remembers something that you can't. So you have some sort of physical— manifestation— of it. His therapist thinks that maybe it's because of something that happened to him when he was a kid.

MOTHER: Happened to him? Here?

RUTH: Or at the old house. And he was wondering if you could— if you could— well, shed any light on it. If there was anything that you could remember that—

MOTHER: *[rising]* Well, I suppose a lot happened to him. A lot happens to us all— in this life— unless you're— unless you're locked away somewhere. I mean, it's all very well and good for some therapist to say— just to look at somebody and say, well, here's somebody and maybe something happened to him— when he was a child. And she doesn't even— or he doesn't even— whatever— this therapist— and I have my own experience with therapists, let me tell you— this therapist doesn't even know— doesn't know us— doesn't know our history— doesn't really know Joey— the way we— I mean, you know and I know that Joey— has always been— Joey— He's my son and I love him, of course, but you can't say that it's been— that there haven't always been— issues there— from the start, from the very start— And now he wants to come around and have some therapist say that somehow we're responsible—

CHARLIE: Nobody's saying—

MOTHER: I'm not saying that there weren't problems— Every house— every family— has its problems. But it doesn't follow, therefore, that if somebody's having— difficulties— in later life— that they are entirely the fault of Mother!

CHARLIE: Mom, nobody's blaming you—

RUTH: The point is, Mom, that what she's talking about, the therapist— is not just problems. It's pretty major. She seems to think that— whatever it was that happened— was pretty bad.

[MOTHER stares at RUTH a moment.]

MOTHER: Then he's better off not knowing!

[She walks out.]

CHARLIE: A mother's curse.