

# Cookie Ladies

Bea Kowalski	a woman in her sixties
Michael Kowalski	Bea's son
Leon Brown	Bea's tenant

**Narrator:** The time is April, sometime in the late 90's. We are in Newark, New Jersey in the kitchen of Bea Kowalski. It's a pleasant kitchen but plain. The entrance is upstage center, the door leading to the rest of the home is downstage left. As the lights come up, we see Bea and her son, Michael, eating lunch.

**Michael:** Have you had a chance to look at that brochure I brought you last week?

**Bea:** Yes. I took a look at it.

**Michael:** Well.....what do you think?

**Bea:** (Stiffly)It's very pretty.....for a nursing home.

**Michael:** Oh, mama.....it's not a nursing home. It's a senior residence.

**Bea:** What's the difference? It's a bunch of old people living together with nurses telling them what to do.

**Michael:** It's a residence for older citizens. You don't live together. You have your own apartments. You can cook if you like....or eat in a dining room.....with your friends.

**Bea:** Do I know any of these people?

**Michael:** Well, no....

**Bea:** Then they're not my friends.

**Michael:** Mama.....you don't have to eat with them if you don't want to. You'll still have your car. You can come and go as you please.

**Bea:** Why do you want to put me away, I'm sixty-eight not ninety-eight?

**Michael:** I don't want to put you away. I just want to keep you safe.

**Bea:** I am safe. In my own house I am safe.

**Michael:** It's not the house I'm worried about it's the neighborhood. There was another robbery last night. A convenience store clerk was shot on Bate Street.

**Bea:** So that's Bate Street not Booker. Anyway, who's going to buy my house if the neighborhood is so bad?

**Michael:** Not to worry.....I think I may have found a buyer.

**Bea:** (Suspicious)You have? Who?

**Michael:** The Police Department.

**Bea:** The police want to buy my house?

**Michael:** Well, not exactly. ...but they're looking at houses around here. One of my patients is a cop and he said they're buying houses in troubled areas to set up neighborhood police stations. Booker Street certainly qualifies. People used to care about each other when I lived here. They don't anymore.

**Bea:** That's not true. The Ketchum's are still across the street and Mattie and Gabriel are right next door. We watch out for each other.

**Michael:** Okay. That's four people. And all of them are over sixty.

**Bea:** Not Gabriel.

**Michael:** All right so I'm off by one. But Gabriel's what..... fifteen, sixteen?

**Bea:** Seventeen. He's a junior.

**Michael:** Then in a couple years he'll be gone, off to college, or prison, whoever gets him first.

**Bea:** Just because a place goes through bad times doesn't mean you give up on it. You're a doctor.....you ought to know that.

**Michael:** Booker Street is not a patient. It's a street..... and it's not safe. There are no children coming to your door for treats these days. You're not the cookie lady anymore. And you haven't been for a long time.

**Bea:** That's not true. Mattie likes my cookies and so does Gabriel. He's partial to Oatmeal raisin but he won't refuse a gingersnap....or two.

**Michael:** So, you're staying because of Mattie Morelli and her grandson? That's not a reason and you know it.

**Bea:** You're right. It's two.

**Michael:** (glances at his watch) Okay. I give up....

**Bea:** Good.

**Michael:** But I won't give up on the idea. I'll keep bringing the brochures. Maybe you'll change your mind.

**Narrator:** Michel sets the brochure down and someone knocks at the door.

**Bea:** Yes? Who's there?

**Leon:** It's Leon Mrs. Kowalski. Can I come in?

**Bea:** Oh....of course. (Goes to door. Opens it.) Come in, come in.

**Narrator:** Leon enters the kitchen. He is a brash young man in his late twenties. His left foot is in a walking cast.

**Leon:** Sorry, Mrs. K. I didn't know you had company.

**Bea:** Not company. This is my son, Michael....the doctor. He's works at the free clinic on Fridays. He comes for lunch.

**Leon:** (Shakes hands) Oh, yeah, we've met.....at the clinic. I came in after I broke my foot. You didn't take care of me though....some Indian dude put the cast on.

**Michael:** Dr. Singh

**Leon:** Yeeah, I guess so.....I got the walking cast this week. I was glad. I'm not much for sitting around. I like to keep moving.

**Michael:** Well, you look like you're moving pretty good right now.

**Leon:** Oh, sure. The girls like a guy who can move. Hey, Mrs. K?

**Narrator:** Leon grabs Bea and swings her around.

**Leon:** I bet you were a dancer in your time.

**Bea:** (Flustered ) Oh....oh my goodness. A long time ago maybe.

**Leon:** Oh, I bet you still have some moves in you. What do you think...Mike?

**Michael:** I think my mother can do pretty much anything she puts her mind to.

**Bea:** (Breathless, laughing , sits in chair)Not so much anymore. I'm out of practice.

**Leon:** Dancing takes practice. You gotta work at it....hey Mikey?

**Michael:** That's right. To do anything well takes practice. Okay....Mama....I really have to go now. I'll call you. What are you doing, Sunday?

**Bea:** I don't know. I might go to a matinee with Mattie.

**Michael:** Well, maybe later then. April and I can take you for a drive.....do a little sightseeing.....(waves brochure at her.)

**Bea:** Yeah....maybe. I'll call you Sunday .....after church. I'll know what's happening then.

**Michael:** All right. (Kisses her) Thanks for lunch, Mama. It was great. Nice to meet you , Leon. Take care of that foot. (Exits)

**Leon:** I'm sorry about that, Mrs. K. If I'd a known your son was over, I'd have waited until later to come down.

**Bea:** That's okay. What did you want to see me about? Is the sink clogged?

**Leon:** No. The sink isn't clogged but I do have a problem.

**Bea:** Oh? It's the toilet isn't it? You got a jiggle the handle sometimes.

**Leon:** No.....the toilet's fine.....but I'll file the tip about the handle. No, I came to ask for a favor.

**Bea:** Oh?

**Leon:** I have some money in this envelope. There's cash and a couple of checks. I'm going away for a couple of days, and I was wondering if you could keep it for me..... until I get back.

**Bea:** Why don't you put it in the bank?

**Leon:** I would If I could, but I can't. I'm late for a meeting and the banks will be closed by the time we're finished. Please, Mrs. K. I can't take it with me, and I don't want to leave it upstairs.

**Bea:** I.....I don't know. I don't like to be responsible.....

**Leon:** I wouldn't ask if I really didn't have to. There must be someplace in the house where you could put it. (Joking) You know.....a house safe maybe....or the place where you keep your furs and your diamonds.

**Bea:** Ha. My only coat is wool, and my diamond is on my finger. I never take it off. (Pauses) I do have someplace .....though.....someplace....I could keep it.

**Leon:** Great. I knew I could count on you.

**Bea:** It's just for a couple of days?

**Leon:** Two days.... three, tops. I should be back Sunday....maybe Monday.

**Bea:** Okay then. But....promise you won't make fun if I show you my secret place.

**Leon:** I'd never make fun of you Mrs. K. You're too nice a lady.

**Bea:** (Takes money) Okay.... just this once.

**Narrator:** Bea takes Leon's hand and leads him to the refrigerator.

**Bea:** I don't have a safe.....but I do have a freezer. I keep my grocery money here, sometimes. Peas, Beans, Spinach and Cauliflower. .... I'll put your cash with the Cauliflower.

**Leon:** (Laughs)It's a little unorthodox.....but for two days it should work. Thanks, Mrs. K. You're a doll. If I was thirty years older I'd ask you to marry me.

**Narrator:** Leon leaves and Bea looks after him smiling.

**Bea:** If I was thirty years younger I might.....I might think about it.

**Narrator:** Bea hums to herself as she gets the broom and begins to sweep the floor and the lights fade on Scene One.