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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

Are You Sure?

A Play in Two Acts

by Sam Bobrick

SAMUEL FRENCH

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SYNOPSIS

Are You Sure? is a case of shifting realities. How much is happening, how much isn't? Does David want to kill Caroline? Does Charley want to kill David? Does Caroline want to kill everyone? The play mixes comedy with high suspense as the audience tries to figure out what to believe and who to believe. One thing for sure, someone did it.

Are You Sure? premiered at the Back Alley Theatre, California. It was produced by Laura Zucker and directed by Allan Miller. The cast was as follows:

CAROLINE.....Lois Nettleton

DAVID.....Ronnie Cox

SIMON.....Jack Collins

STEFANIE.....Ellen Maxted

MARIE.....Catherine McLeod

CHARLEY.....Jeffrey Haddow

Set Design: Jim Billings
Lighting: Kraig Aaronson
Costumes: Hilary Sloane
Stage Manager: Michael Wymore

CHARACTERS

CAROLINE

DAVID

MARIE

STEFANIE

SIMON

CHARLEY

TIME & PLACE

Present.

Library of a wealthy home.

ARE YOU SURE?

ACT I

Scene 1

TIME: The present. Evening.

PLACE: An elegantly appointed traditional library in an obviously wealthy home. There is a fireplace and shelves filled with books. The set, built in front of a backdrop, is somewhat illusory. While Stage Center has a realistic core, both ends of the set disappear into a vagueness that allows the actors to enter and exit from the shadows. There are two sets of French doors, one set Stage Right, the other Stage Left. Stage Left at times serves as an exit to the terrace. (The Stage Left doors may be built into the backdrop.)

At Stage Center is a lovely antique sofa which separates two Queen Anne wing back chairs. Behind the sofa is a long, narrow table with room for a wine decanter, whisky decanter, glasses and several books.

CAROLINE OGDEN, a woman in her mid-forties, wearing a very chic lounging gown, sits curled up on the sofa, absorbed in a book. DAVID OGDEN, her husband, a very handsome man approximately Caroline's age, stands in back of one of the chairs with a nearly empty glass of wine, staring pensively at his wife. HE wears a sweater jacket over a shirt and tie.

DAVID. I love you. I've never loved anyone as much as I love you. It's a marvelous feeling loving someone as madly, as desperately, as I love you. (*During the following DAVID pours a glass of wine for Caroline, then takes a small vial from his jacket pocket, removes the top carefully and empties the liquid contents slowly into the glass. HE places the cap back on the bottle and returns it to his jacket pocket.*) I know most people still believe I married you for your money, but how wrong I've proven them, haven't I, darling? Of course, I have. (*HE offers the glass of wine to Caroline.*) Wine?

CAROLINE. (*Not looking up.*) No, I don't think so.

DAVID. It might relax you.

CAROLINE. I am relaxed, darling.

DAVID. It might relax you more.

CAROLINE. (*Looking up.*) I don't care for any wine right now, thank you, David.

DAVID. Drink it, Caroline. Do me a favor and drink it. Please.

CAROLINE. You've done something to the wine haven't you? Have you poisoned it again?

DAVID. (*In pain.*) Please drink the wine, Caroline. It'll be the last thing I ask of you. I promise.

CAROLINE. I know you've poisoned it, David. I'm not going to drink it.

DAVID. Why must you make me beg for everything?

CAROLINE. Do I? Perhaps you rather enjoy that. Some people actually do.

DAVID. It's fine wine, Caroline. A Chateau Margaux, '71. You won't be disappointed. I never am.

CAROLINE. Then why don't you drink it, David?

DAVID. You don't think I would?

CAROLINE. No. Your life with me can't be that unbearable.

DAVID. You don't think so? (*DAVID looks at her and then slowly, deliberately drinks down the wine.*) Are you satisfied?

CAROLINE. If you are.

DAVID. (*Laughs haughtily.*) Well, the joke's on you, Caroline. There was nothing in the wine. Nothing.

CAROLINE. Good.

(DAVID clutches at his throat and stumbles back to his chair and collapses. CAROLINE looks at him for a beat and then continues reading. SIMON ALDEN enters. He is Caroline's father and a man in his mid-sixties.)

SIMON. Hello, dear.

CAROLINE. Hello, Father.

SIMON. I thought I'd pick out a good book for the night. What are you reading?

CAROLINE. *Jane Eyre.*

SIMON. Again?

CAROLINE. I enjoy it. I know how it begins, I know how it ends. There's not the desperate uncertainty for me anymore. It makes things so much easier.

SIMON. Does it?

CAROLINE. Much easier.

SIMON. Then I'm happy for you. What's wrong with David? Drunk?

CAROLINE. Dead.

SIMON. (*Looks at David.*) My, my.

CAROLINE. He poisoned my wine and in the end drank it himself.

SIMON. I do hope you're not going to be too upset by this.

CAROLINE. I don't think I will be. As a matter of fact, I'm handling it much better than the last time, don't you think?

SIMON.Yes. Yes, you are. Much better. (*Takes a book.*) I think I'll try *Moby Dick* again. I love looking for the message. Good night, dear.

CAROLINE. Goodnight, Father.

(HE exits. CAROLINE reads for a few more beats, then looks over at David sighs, puts her book down and calls to him.)

CAROLINE. David! David! (*SHE goes to him and shakes him.*) David, you've fallen asleep again.

DAVID. Huh?

CAROLINE. You drink too much, you know that?

DAVID. I suppose so. But one has to have some pleasure in life.

CAROLINE. I've always thought you had too many pleasures.

DAVID. (*Pouring more wine into his glass.*) Have you? Well, we're all entitled to our opinions. Finished your book?

CAROLINE. No, not yet.

DAVID. *Jane Eyre* again, I suppose.

CAROLINE. You know it is.

DAVID. Still find it safe?

CAROLINE. Yes. Threatening at times but in the end, quite safe.

DAVID. They're dead, you know.

CAROLINE. Who?

DAVID. All the people in the book.

CAROLINE. Don't be silly, the main characters survive and live happily ever after.

DAVID. Nonsense. The book was written well over a hundred years ago. Even those who survive the story would now be considered dead for all practical purposes.

CAROLINE. I really don't care to think about it.

DAVID. But you should. It's part of life. Aging, death, funerals ... strokes, paralysis ...

CAROLINE. You try so hard to ruin everything for me, David.

DAVID. I love you. I'm concerned. I don't want you to be hurt.

CAROLINE. How could I possibly be hurt reading *Jane Eyre*, a story about a woman who, despite a miserable beginning, finds happiness.

DAVID. Have you considered that years after the happy ending she probably died childless, alone, a wretched, wrinkled, ugly old hag, toothless and sagging.

CAROLINE. You're really miserable with me, aren't you?

DAVID. I didn't think you noticed.

CAROLINE. And you never thought that possible.

DAVID. Never.

CAROLINE. I did.

DAVID. Good. Then you're not disappointed.

CAROLINE. In you? No, my life with you has lived up to my highest expectations.

DAVID. Then, my darling, you got your money's worth.

CAROLINE. Why does it always come back to money, David?

DAVID. It's possible that's all we have left.

CAROLINE. I'm going to bed. Are you coming?

DAVID. Later.

CAROLINE. Of course. You'd rather wait here for Marie, right?

DAVID. I've never understood hate with jealousy. I would assume that hate could stand quite nicely by itself.

CAROLINE. It can, David. It does. I'm not blind. I see the way you look at each other, you and the maid, David. An ordinary housemaid. Not to mention the vast age difference. It's disgusting.

DAVID. Is this really what you think?

CAROLINE. This is what I know.

DAVID. Is it? Well, then, the fact that I prefer her to you should reveal something, shouldn't it, Caroline? What is it she has that you lack? Could it be warmth, affection, respect ...

CAROLINE. If you find her so marvelous, why don't you leave me and run off with her?

DAVID. Perhaps one day I will.

CAROLINE. You never will. You're far too weak.

DAVID. I'm much stronger that the others.

CAROLINE. You're wrong. The others weren't as weak as you,

DAVID.. Not even Charley. Charley used you.

CAROLINE. Charley loved me.

DAVID. Where is he? If he loved you so much, where is he?

CAROLINE. (*Stunned.*) I ... I don't know.

DAVID. Good night, Caroline

CAROLINE. (*SHE holds him. HE remains aloof.*) What if I promised to change? To be warm and loving and tender?

DAVID. But for what reason?

CAROLINE. To start all over.

DAVID. (*HE frees himself from her hold.*) No, I'm sorry. That can't happen.

CAROLINE. (*Pursuing him.*) Touch me, David. I want you to touch me.

DAVID. (*Backing away.*) No ... No, I can't.

CAROLINE. (*Turning her back to him.*) Massage my neck, David. I know it will make me feel better.

DAVID. No. No.

CAROLINE. Put your hands on my neck, David. They're so warm. It relieves me so.

DAVID. (*Starts to massage her neck.*) No, I don't want to.

CAROLINE. Oh, that's nice. So nice.

DAVID. (*His hands start to clutch her throat.*) I can't stand to touch you. You know that.

CAROLINE. You always used to touch me. You used to love to touch me and hold me.

DAVID. No! No, I never did. (*Pulls his hands away from her; calling.*) Marie! Where is Marie?

CAROLINE. A maid, David. Why must you degrade yourself with a maid?

DAVID. Maybe you'd like to watch us make love. Maybe you'd like to see what you were capable of once. (*Calls again.*) Marie! Marie!

CAROLINE. I'm going to put a stop to this. I'm going to!

(CAROLINE picks up the letter opener lying on the table and plunges it into David's back. DAVID moans, staggers a little and falls to the floor.

STEFANIE, a beautiful girl in her early twenties, enters. She is dressed as a maid. SHE looks at David. SHE watches him gasp and fall to his chair. SHE sees the letter opener in Caroline's hand. SHE screams.)

STEFANIE. Oh, my God, Mrs. Ogden. You've done it!

CAROLINE. No, no, Marie. It's nothing. You'll see, it's nothing.

STEFANIE. He's dead. He said you would do this. He said you would.

CAROLINE. No. No, Marie. He lied to you. That's what he wanted you to believe. Besides, it's nothing, Marie. It's always nothing. You'll see.

STEFANIE. You're a murderer! Murderer! (*STEFANIE runs off in horror.)*

CAROLINE. (*Some doubt now.*) It's always nothing. (*CAROLINE lays the letter opener down, goes to David and apprehensively shakes him.)* David! David!

DAVID. Huh, oh.

CAROLINE. (*Relieved.*) See, I haven't done it. I knew I didn't do it.

DAVID. What?

CAROLINE. Kill you!

DAVID. Again?

CAROLINE. We had a terrible quarrel, and I plunged the letter opener into your back.

DAVID. Oh, my.

CAROLINE. Is that all? Is that your only response to your possible death?

DAVID. (*Filled with love and compassion for Caroline.*) But I'm not dead and you haven't done it.

CAROLINE. That's true. But it seems to be more realistic each time. This time I felt the blood on my hands, David. Look, it's not on them but I feel it. So real ... so wet. (*SHE holds up her hand. There is no blood on it.*)

DAVID. I'll bet you've forgotten to take your medicine. Haven't you?

CAROLINE. No, Marie hasn't brought it yet.

DAVID. Not yet? That's strange. (*Calling.*) Marie!

CAROLINE. It was so real. Each time it gets more real.

DAVID. You mustn't forget to take your medicine. darling.

CAROLINE. I'm sorry, David. It's not my fault.

DAVID. Of course not, sweetheart.

CAROLINE. You ... You're not angry?

DAVID. How can I be angry with you? You're just going through some bad times. I adore you.

CAROLINE. Yes, you do ... or so you tell me.

(DAVID looks at her for beat. MARIE, a uniformed maid in her mid-sixties enters.)

MARIE. Yes?

DAVID. Marie, you forgot Mrs. Ogden's medicine.

MARIE. No, sir. I brought it to her right before ten, when she always takes it.

CAROLINE. (*Looking at Marie curiously.*) You did?

MARIE. Yes.

CAROLINE. You're Marie?

DAVID. (*Soothing.*) Caroline.

CAROLINE. She's much older than before, isn't she?

DAVID. No, dear. Marie's been that age as long as I can remember.

MARIE. I did bring you your medicine, Mrs. Ogden. Mr. Ogden was asleep right there in the chair. You were reading.

CAROLINE. Did you?

MARIE. Yes. Of course.

CAROLINE. You'd like me to believe that, wouldn't you?

MARIE. No, ma'am. I did.

CAROLINE. Who are you, Marie? Who are you?

MARIE. Please, Mrs. Ogden.

DAVID. Easy, dear. You don't want to have another of your spells. You don't want to go through that again.

CAROLINE. (*A bit giddy.*) A spell? I've never had a spell, David. A hallucination, possibly, but something as outdated as a spell ... People don't use those terms any more. A seizure, even that's more current.

DAVID. If you like, Marie can give you a shot.

CAROLINE. A shot? Why not? Dope her up so that she can't see what's going on. Cloud her mind so that she can't tell reality from illusion. And afterwards the two of you can come down here and make love. He'll make love to you on that sofa, Marie, like he should make love to me.

MARIE. It breaks my heart to see her like this.

CAROLINE. You're doing this to me, David. I know you're doing this to me.

DAVID. You'd better bring another pill, Marie.

MARIE. Right away, sir. (*MARIE starts out.*)

CAROLINE. No, don't go. Don't go. I don't want to be left alone with him.

MARIE. (*Looks at her pathetically.*) He loves you, Mrs. Ogden. (*SHE exits.*)

CAROLINE. I don't want to be alone ... wretched ... wrinkled ... alone.

DAVID. (*Menacing.*) You don't have to, Caroline. There are ways to avoid all that. Simple ways. You do understand what I'm talking about, don't you, Caroline?

CAROLINE. I know what you're doing, David. I know and in the end, I'll beat you. You'll see. I will. I will.

DAVID. (*Picks up Caroline's book and looks at it.*) Edgar Allan Poe. I didn't think you liked tales of the macabre.

(STEFANIE enters as Marie.)

STEFANIE. Mrs. Ogden. Your pill.

DAVID. Oh, thank you, Marie. Take your pill, Caroline.

CAROLINE. (*Confused.*) I ...

DAVID. Please take your pill, darling, and everything will be better. I promise.

CAROLINE. But I ... I ... thought ...

DAVID. Caroline, dear Caroline. You're my whole world. The sun that warms me, the moon that poets write about. Please take the pill.

(CAROLINE takes the glass of water and the pill. STEFANIE goes to David and puts her arms around him.)

STEFANIE. We've got to finish it soon, David.

DAVID. We will.

STEFANIE. Now, David, now. What if she catches on? (*Kisses him.*)

DAVID. We will finish it soon.

(THEY kiss. CAROLINE watches them. THEY turn to her innocently.)

CAROLINE. I've taken the pill, David. I really think I do feel much better. Are you pleased?

(The stage dims slowly.)

End of Scene 1

Scene 2

The next day. Late morning.
The library.
SIMON is in the library, waiting. HE is wearing a suit. DAVID enters through the French doors with three books which HE places around the room.

DAVID. Hello, Simon. To what do I owe the pleasure?

SIMON. I've got to talk to you about Caroline.

DAVID. Really? Frankly, at this point, I find Caroline's life none of your business.

SIMON. David, I don't like what's happening.

DAVID. I'm sorry but there's nothing I can do about it.

SIMON. I don't believe that for a moment.

DAVID. She's spoken to you, hasn't she? Well, whatever she's told you is not the way things are.

SIMON. Then you tell me the way things are and let me decide for myself.

DAVID. You still love her, don't you? (*HE pours himself a glass of wine.*)

SIMON. I never denied that.

DAVID. Let go, Simon. You're in love with someone who doesn't exist anymore. Yesterday's shadow, yesterday's dream. She doesn't even faintly resemble the Caroline you married, a marriage, by the way, we both knew was doomed from the start.

SIMON. That never mattered. What mattered was having Caroline. She was something then. Young, vibrant, in love with life, everything your boyhood fantasies told you a woman was supposed to be.

DAVID. That was years ago.

SIMON. (*Recalling.*) She was only eighteen when we met. She was going through analysis, into father figures. The timing for me was perfect. Sure, I was shattered when it was over, but I had those wonderful years. I relish every minute I had with her. Just the same way I hate every minute I spend away from her.

DAVID. You're a lucky man, Simon. You can live with the memories. I live with the reality, and I don't know how much longer I can take it.

SIMON. *You are* in pain, aren't you?

DAVID. Pain is too kind a word.

SIMON. What I would give to feel that pain.

DAVID. And what I would do to be rid of it.

(THEY look at each other for a beat. MARIE enters.)

MARIE. Excuse me, Mr. Ogden. You have a call in the living room.

DAVID. Do you mind, Simon?

SIMON. I have nothing but time.

DAVID. Thank you, Marie.

(DAVID exits. MARIE stays behind.)

SIMON. Marie.

MARIE. Mr. Curtis.

SIMON. You're looking splendid, Marie.

MARIE. Thank you.

SIMON. I'm surprised. I never would have guessed you'd still be here.

MARIE. Some of us have an ability to hang on.

SIMON. That's an art in itself, isn't it?

MARIE. Besides, there's a great need for me now.

SIMON. Really?

MARIE. Yes. I find I'm much more useful than I've ever been and it is important to be useful.

SIMON. No matter what the purpose?

MARIE. *(A pensive beat.)* Excuse me. I must see to lunch. *(SHE starts out.)*

SIMON. Marie! *(MARIE stops and turns to him.)* In a way, I'm happy for you.

(MARIE looks at him for a beat, turns and exits. SIMON sighs and picks up a book on a nearby table and leafs through it. STEFANIE enters through the French doors.

SHE is now wearing a casual but revealing ensemble and carries a croquet mallet.)

STEFANIE. (*Calling.*) David! (*SHE sees Simon.*) Oh, I'm sorry. (*SHE starts out.)*

SIMON. Don't go. I love to look at a pretty face.

STEFANIE. How sweet.

SIMON. David is on the phone in the other room. I'm Simon Curtis, Caroline's first husband.

STEFANIE. I'm Stefanie, David's private secretary.

SIMON. David has a secretary? For what?

STEFANIE. I'm typing his new book.

SIMON. New book? I didn't know he had an old book. I didn't even know he was a writer.

STEFANIE. Well, he's not yet. But soon he'll write something and then he will be.

SIMON. And how long has this been going on?

STEFANIE. Monday will make it two months.

SIMON. It's a nice job.

STEFANIE. Yes, but not without its insecurities.

SIMON. Such as?

STEFANIE. I can't type.

SIMON. I have a hunch that isn't important. May I be candid?

STEFANIE. If you must.

SIMON. What does she think?

STEFANIE. Caroline? She's thrilled.

SIMON. Really?

STEFANIE. Oh, don't be an old fool. Of course, she feels terrible. She's hurt, she's worried, she's frightened of every minute he's with me. But those are the breaks of the game, aren't they? She's had her turn ...

SIMON. And now it's yours.

STEFANIE. Exactly. The old make way for the new.

SIMON. Seems to me I've heard that story before.

STEFANIE. Have you?

SIMON. Yes, and unfortunately they were speaking of me.

STEFANIE. (*Smiles.*) I've never met her second husband. Charley! I like that name. He was younger than she, wasn't he? Twelve years younger, I heard. Was it a scandal? It must have been.

SIMON. A scandal? Why does yesterday always seem so damn Victorian to the young? That liaison was more of a curiosity but Caroline found it exciting. She was different then. Free, uncomplicated, no conscience what-so-ever.

STEFANIE. I'm like that, you know.

SIMON. Yes, I think so.

STEFANIE. Free as the wind. Nothing to stop me; nothing to worry me. A basic toy. So simple. So fresh. So provocative. I don't mean to brag. It just happens to be a fact.

SIMON. I accept that.

STEFANIE. These are my days now, and I intend to make the most of them.

SIMON. Youth can be so cruel.

STEFANIE. Only when you don't have it.

SIMON. If David leaves her, he loses everything.

STEFANIE. We know that. It would be absurd to give up all this. But there are other ways. Other ways are sometimes the best ways.

SIMON. It's murder you're talking about, isn't it?

STEFANIE. I hope I wasn't that specific.

SIMON. It'll never happen.

STEFANIE. You don't know that.

SIMON. He's not strong enough.

STEFANIE. No? Would you like to kiss me?

SIMON. More than anything.

STEFANIE. Go ahead.

SIMON. Really? May I? I won't seem foolish or dissipated?

(STEFANIE kisses him. DAVID enters during the kiss and looks at them.)

STEFANIE. Memories?

SIMON. Yes.

STEFANIE. Painful ones?

SIMON. Very.

STEFANIE. Do you really think he's not strong enough?

SIMON. I don't know now.

DAVID. Do you like her, Simon?

SIMON. Yes.

DAVID. She's a lot like Caroline was, isn't she?

SIMON. Yes.

DAVID. I have to do something drastic, Simon.

SIMON. Why bother to tell me?

DAVID. Maybe I would enjoy the approval.

SIMON. I loved her. How I loved her.

DAVID. And what did it get you?

SIMON. That's the difference between us, David. I wasn't out to get anything.

DAVID. Well I'm out to get even.

SIMON. You haven't a chance.

DAVID. You're wrong.

STEFANIE. He says you're not strong enough.

DAVID. I will be when the time comes.

SIMON. Ha!

DAVID. She's not going to have it her way forever. You'll see.

STEFANIE. Good for you, David. (*SHE goes to him.*)

CAROLINE. (*Enters room carrying a croquet mallet.*) David?

DAVID. Yes.

CAROLINE. Who were you talking to?

DAVID. No one, dear.

CAROLINE. I heard you talking to someone.

DAVID. No, no one, dear.

CAROLINE. (*Curious.*) Are you all right?

DAVID. Yes, of course.

CAROLINE. (*Goes to French windows.*) It's a lovely day. I'd like to play some croquet.

DAVID. You know I despise croquet, Caroline.

CAROLINE. Well, I want to play, David, and if I want to play, then we shall play.

DAVID. Caroline, I'm important to you. I really am. People who know us have told me how much better off you are now that I'm here to watch over you.

CAROLINE. You look troubled, David. Is something wrong?

DAVID. No. Nothing.

CAROLINE. That's good. I wouldn't want anything to trouble you. My sweet, wonderful David. How lucky you are to be you.

DAVID. Yes.

CAROLINE. And we're such good friends, aren't we? We're such very good, good friends.

DAVID. I've tried to be.

CAROLINE. Yes, you have. You're not like the others. You would never do anything but be kind and thoughtful. Did you notice I didn't say grateful, David? I promised I wouldn't say it any more. I didn't say it. Coming David?

DAVID. Yes ... coming.

(CAROLINE goes off. DAVID turns to Simon.)

DAVID. You see why I must stop this? You see why I must find a way to stop this? (*HE takes Stefanie's croquet mallet and exits.*)

SIMON. I don't feel sorry for him. Not in the least bit. He's a weak fool.

STEFANIE. Weak? Yes. But unfortunately he's no fool which makes the situation even more difficult. Would you like to kiss me again?

End of Scene 2

Scene 3

Another day. Afternoon
The library.
CHARLEY BRADSHAW, a good-looking man in his mid-thirties, paces nervously in the library. HE is wearing a sports jacket and is tieless. MARIE enters.

MARIE. (*Coldly.*) Mrs. Ogden will be right down. May I get something for you while you're waiting?

CHARLEY. A new life. How's that, Marie?

MARIE. It's a little too late for that, I'm happy to say.

CHARLEY. I see you still possess that winning personality.

MARIE. Along with a very good memory.

CHARLEY. That's too bad. There are certain things everyone should forget.

MARIE. Some people have that ability. Some people don't.

CHARLEY. And some people are a pain in the ass.

MARIE. And some people have no damn class. (*SHE starts out.*)

CHARLEY. You know, Marie, at times I find you very hard to like.

(MARIE exits.)

CHARLEY. (*To himself, aloud.*) But then that's my problem, isn't it.

(CHARLEY lights a cigarette and then looks out the French doors. CAROLINE enters. SHE seems very much in control of herself. CAROLINE looks at Charley for a few beats. His back is to her and HE does not see her.)

CAROLINE. Hello, Charley.

CHARLEY. Hello, Caroline. I assume you're looking well.

CAROLINE. Are you afraid to look?

CHARLEY. (*Turns to her.*) Hello, Caroline. You're looking well.

CAROLINE. Caroline, you look ravishing. I would have liked that. Caroline, you look more beautiful now than when we were married. I would have liked that, too. Caroline, you look like a piece of crap. I think I would have even liked that. At least I would have known what you're really thinking. But Caroline, you're looking well. You could describe a house plant that way, couldn't you?

CHARLEY. (*A beat.*) Yes.

CAROLINE. (*Sighs.*) What kind of trouble are you in now?

CHARLEY. Just trouble. Isn't that enough?

CAROLINE. The last time it cost me thirty thousand.

CHARLEY. This time I need more. This time I need ... fifty.

CAROLINE. Fifty?

CHARLEY. I must have it. I must.

CAROLINE. No. No more, Charley.

CHARLEY. Fifty is nothing to you.

CAROLINE. When I made the ten thousands too easy, you asked for twenty. When I made the twenties too easy, you asked for thirty. You've progressed Charley. You're jumping right into fifty.

CHARLEY. It's nothing to you.

CAROLINE. No.

CHARLEY. You always start off saying "no," but you give it to me anyway.

CAROLINE. This time I mean it. No.

CHARLEY. They'll come after me.

CAROLINE. No, Charley. No more.

CHARLEY. They came after me once. You saw what they did to me.

CAROLINE. No more money, Charley. I won't be used anymore.

CHARLEY. I wouldn't ask if I weren't so desperate. You know that I need the money. It means nothing to you.

CAROLINE. No, Charley.

CHARLEY. You'll never see me again. Is that what you want?

CAROLINE. Yes.

CHARLEY. (*Grabs her.*) Look at me. Is that what you want?

CAROLINE. I don't know. I don't know.

CHARLEY. I'm warning you, Caroline.

CAROLINE. Hold me, Charley.

CHARLEY. The money first, Caroline.

CAROLINE. Will you hold me then?

CHARLEY. A check, Caroline.

(CAROLINE goes to the desk drawer, removes a checkbook and writes a check.)

CHARLEY. I knew you'd come through for me, Caroline.

CAROLINE. (*Dangling the check in front of him.*) Hold me now, Charley.

CHARLEY. (*Takes Caroline in his arms for a beat, then pulls the check from her and starts off.*) Thank you, Caroline.

CAROLINE. You promised.

CHARLEY. I always promise. I'll see you, Caroline.

CAROLINE. Why do you do this to me, Charley?

CHARLEY. You know very well why.

CAROLINE. I won't let you do it again, Charley. I'll be stronger next time.

CHARLEY. Don't fool yourself, Caroline.

CAROLINE. Where are you going?

CHARLEY. Where do you think?

CAROLINE. Back to your women. Who is it this time? Joanne? Suzy? Margo?

CHARLEY. I loved them. I don't love you.

CAROLINE. But you always come back to me. You come back to me when you're in trouble. You'll come back.

CHARLEY. Yes, I will. When I need you. Only when I need you. (*HE leaves through the French door.*)

CAROLINE. (*Calls out to him.*) I did something bad to you, Charley, didn't I? What was it? Tell me. You've got to tell me this time.

(There is no answer. CHARLEY is gone. DAVID enters. HE is in a suit and tie and carries an attaché case.)

DAVID. I'm going, Caroline.

CAROLINE. (*Upset.*) He was here again, David. He just left. I swear. Look, see. I gave him another check. It was for fifty thousand dollars this time. I gave it to him. I swear.

DAVID. (*Disappointed.*) Caroline, let's not go into this again.

CAROLINE. He *was* here, David. This time he was really here. (*Shows him checkbook.*) Do you want to see my checkbook?

DAVID. (*Ignores checkbook.*) I should be back in a couple of days.

CAROLINE. You don't care.

DAVID. Of course, I care but what can I do about it? If it gets too difficult, take the pills, all right?

CAROLINE. (*Composing herself.*) Yes.

DAVID. You always feel better after the pills.

CAROLINE. Yes.

DAVID. Good-bye.

CAROLINE. Wait, David. Please kiss me good-bye.

DAVID. All right.

(DAVID kisses her. THEY embrace.)

CAROLINE. That was good, David. That's the way it should be all the time, don't you think so? See, I *can* be warm and wonderful. And I'll bet I can laugh and make jokes and throw wonderful lavish parties again with everyone looking at me, admiring me, envying me.

DAVID. I've got to go, Caroline.

CAROLINE. Why can't it be like this all the time?

DAVID. I don't know.

CAROLINE. Yes, you do. You know perfectly well why.

DAVID. You're blaming me.

CAROLINE. No, I mean I'm trying not to.

DAVID. (*Angry.*) It seems to me you're not trying hard enough. (*HE breaks away from her.*)

CAROLINE. (*Desperate.*) No, no. Don't get angry. Charley gets angry. I can't bear it when you get angry too.

DAVID. Charley is dead, Caroline. Charley's been dead for eight years.

CAROLINE. He isn't.

DAVID. I don't know what to do anymore, Caroline. I can't even seem to conjure up sympathy.

CAROLINE. He was here. No ... No, I mean ... He isn't dead.

DAVID. Then he isn't. Okay? Does that make you feel better? He isn't dead. He's alive. And there's nothing wrong. And the world is filled with sunshine. And you're a happy woman, Caroline. A very happy, glowing, fulfilled, satisfied woman again.

CAROLINE. Yes, yes, that would be nice. That would be very nice. That's the way I really want it to be, and who knows, maybe that's the way it is.

(SHE looks out the French doors. STEFANIE enters. She is wearing an elegant yet provocative dress.)

STEFANIE. Mother?

CAROLINE. Mother?

STEFANIE. I'll drive David to the train, okay?

CAROLINE. I don't want to be left alone.

STEFANIE. Marie is here. Grandfather is here.

CAROLINE. *(Turns and looks at her.)* You're so young, so beautiful. I was like you once. I was exactly like you.

DAVID. Here we go again.

STEFANIE. Come on, David. You don't want to miss your train.

CAROLINE. It wasn't that long ago. My hair would hang down to my shoulders. And I would sit naked in front of a mirror and brush it. I'd brush it for hours.

STEFANIE. You told me this before, Mother.

CAROLINE. I did?

STEFANIE. Come on, David. (*SHE starts out.*)

CAROLINE. Wait. Tell me. Did you know Charley?

STEFANIE. Of course, I knew him, Mother.

CAROLINE. Did you know he's dead?

STEFANIE. Yes, I know he's dead.

CAROLINE. Is he really? How?

STEFANIE. How what?

CAROLINE. How did he die?

DAVID. Why do you do this to yourself, Caroline?

CAROLINE. How did he die?

STEFANIE. I ... I don't know.

CAROLINE. Then maybe he isn't dead.

STEFANIE. He is, Mother, He is. You know he is.

CAROLINE. David, come here.

DAVID. Caroline, I ...

CAROLINE. You're leaving, David. Kiss me good-bye.

DAVID. (*Looks helplessly at Stefanie.*) I did, Caroline.

CAROLINE. Kiss me again. In front of her.

STEFANIE. Mother.

CAROLINE. I want you to, David. I demand it.

STEFANIE. (*Going to her.*) Mother.

CAROLINE. You love him, don't you? Admit it, you love him. You'd like nothing better than to take him from me.

DAVID. For God's sake, Caroline.

CAROLINE. (*To Stefanie.*) You've slept with him, haven't you?

STEFANIE. (*Screaming.*) Stop it, Mother! Stop it!

CAROLINE. You hate me, don't you? Both of you. Sometimes I think I know why, and sometimes I don't ... I'll drive you to the train David.

DAVID. No!

CAROLINE. You're my husband, David. What do you see in this little tramp?

DAVID. All the things that you lack, Caroline. Warmth, kindness, compassion, admiration ...

CAROLINE. She admires you? Hah! Lucky for her they haven't made poor judgement a federal crime.

STEFANIE. (*Turns to David, determined.*) I have to leave here, David.

DAVID. Are you sure you want to?

STEFANIE. More than anything.

CAROLINE. No, please, don't. You can't.

STEFANIE. Why not? I love David and he loves me. I can't stay here any more. Surely you can see that?

CAROLINE. I won't have anyone then. And now Charley's dead, Charley's dead.

STEFANIE. How long do you think a man can love a mad woman, Mother?

CAROLINE. This isn't happening. This really isn't happening.

STEFANIE. Take me in your arms, David. I love you.

DAVID. And I love you.

CAROLINE. I've got to stop this.

(STEFANIE and DAVID embrace and kiss. CAROLINE picks up a letter opener.)

CAROLINE. This will change things. I know it will. It always has.

(CAROLINE plunges the letter opener into Stefanie's back. STEFANIE screams and drops to the floor.)

DAVID. (*Matter-of-fact.*) Not the letter opener again.

CAROLINE. (*Calmed down.*) I had to stop it. It always worked before. (*SHE drops the letter opener near Stefanie's body.*)

DAVID. I know.

CAROLINE. This time I was certain it was the real thing.

DAVID. But it wasn't.

CAROLINE. No, I'm quite sure.

DAVID. Good.

CAROLINE. I mean I'm fairly sure it wasn't ... Was she really my daughter, David?

DAVID. Couldn't you tell?

CAROLINE. Well, yes ... No. Not really. I know I like to have had a daughter ... someone.

DAVID. You could have been a wonderful mother.

CAROLINE. It may have changed everything.

DAVID. Perhaps.

CAROLINE. Yes. (*A beat.*) She's still lying there, David.

DAVID. She'll be gone soon.

CAROLINE. I hope so. Sometimes it's so frightening.

DAVID. (*Looking at the body.*) She is beautiful, isn't she?

CAROLINE. What if I shook her, David? That might do it.

DAVID. I've got a train to catch, Caroline.

CAROLINE. (*Shaking Stefanie.*) Stefanie, you've got to take David to his train. Stefanie. Stefanie, you'll be so disappointed if he leaves without you.

DAVID. Caroline, I've really got to go. You try to handle this one by yourself.

CAROLINE. She won't move, David. Are you sure everything will be right again, are you?

DAVID. (*Picks up book on table.*) *Crime and Punishment.* I liked it all but the ending.

(DAVID exits. CAROLINE continues to try to arouse Stefanie.)

CAROLINE. Come on, Stefanie. There's nothing wrong. You know I wouldn't hurt you.

MARIE. (*Enters.*) Mrs. Ogden. Your husband called from the airport. His plane came in early and he's on his way home. (*Notices the body.*) Mrs. Ogden. Oh, my God, Mrs. Ogden. What have you done?

CAROLINE. Nothing. Nothing.

MARIE. No ... No! (*Backs off in fright.*)

CAROLINE. What's wrong? (*SHE takes the letter opener in her hand.*)

MARIE. Your daughter. You've killed your daughter.

CAROLINE. Oh, then she really was my daughter. How nice.

MARIE. You've killed her. (*Looks at the letter opener in horror.*)

CAROLINE. No, I haven't. It will all go away I'm sure. It will all go away. It always does. It will again. Sit down, Marie. We'll wait for David together.

(CAROLINE sits down. MARIE sits next to her, weeping.)

End of Scene 3

Scene 4

Later. The same day.
The Library.
STEFANIE's body is still lying there. MARIE is seated, crying. Her white maid's apron is gone, her black dress is now adorned with pearls. SIMON stands next to her, his hand on her shoulder comforting her.
CAROLINE sits stunned. DAVID enters the room with CHARLEY who is now in a trench coat. CAROLINE does not take notice of either of them.

DAVID. (*Introducing Charley to all.*) This is Lieutenant Anderson.

(SIMON and MARIE nod. CHARLEY goes to the body and uncovers the face and then recovers it.)

CHARLEY. She's dead, all right.

DAVID. Yes, I told you she was.

CHARLEY. Sometimes they are, sometimes they aren't. Okay, let's have it.

CAROLINE. (*Looking up at Charley.*) Do I know you?

CHARLEY. I don't think so.

CAROLINE. I'm sorry.

CHARLEY. Okay, let's get the story.

DAVID. Well, they never did get along. She was jealous. Very jealous.

CHARLEY. Who?

DAVID. (*Indicating Caroline.*) Her!

CHARLEY. Of what?

DAVID. Of her youth, of her future, and of our relationship.

CAROLINE. Yes, yes, it must be.

SIMON. It is.

MARIE. It's a sickness.

SIMON. Yes, a sickness. You see there's money in the family so it has to be a sickness.

MARIE. It's definitely a sickness. Believe me, Lieutenant, our daughter would not do something like this if there wasn't a sickness.

CAROLINE. Your daughter. I am not your daughter.

SIMON. Caroline!

CAROLINE. I am not her daughter. She's the maid! Marie is the maid.

SIMON. Caroline, please, your mother is upset enough.

CAROLINE. She is not my mother.

MARIE. My poor, poor little girl.

DAVID. You see what you're dealing with, Lieutenant.

CHARLEY. I'd rather not take sides till I know more.

CAROLINE. Good for you.

CHARLEY. Now you are the ...

DAVID. The victim's husband.

CAROLINE. David!

DAVID. What?

CAROLINE. That's another lie. You're my husband.

DAVID. Oh, Caroline ...

CAROLINE. It's true. That much I know is true. No matter what changes you've always been my husband.

DAVID. I am Stefanie's husband. Can't you get that through your head once and for all, Caroline. I am Stefanie's husband.

CHARLEY. *Was* Stefanie's husband. (*Indicates body.*) I believe this makes it *was*. Sorry.

DAVID. There was a tremendous rivalry between the two. I can't help but feel I was to blame.

SIMON. Nonsense, David.

DAVID. I was. I was. You see, Lieutenant, I was going to marry Caroline till she brought me home and introduced me to her daughter.

SIMON. As a 1940 comedy it would have made a wonderful romp.

MARIE. It was love at first sight. I'll attest to that.

DAVID. We ran away and got married. Caroline said she forgave us, but it's obvious now she hasn't.

CHARLEY. Now let me get this straight. (*Indicates Caroline.*) This woman who you were going to marry is now your mother-in-law?

DAVID. Correct!

CAROLINE. (*Laughing hysterically.*) Your mother-in-law? Oh, that's a good one. Thank God. I'm your mother-in-law, David. The maid is my mother. You're my son-in-law. For a minute, only for a minute, I thought this might be reality. But it still isn't, is it, David? Oh, I feel so much better.

SIMON. Please, dear.

CAROLINE. Oh, please, Father, play it out! Play it all out! Go ahead, all of you, play it out. Although this is the first time I've seen some levity in it. You surprise me,

David. I never suspected you of having a sense of humor. (*Laughs again.*) Oh, I really like this one. I do.

CHARLEY. You know, I was kind of hoping this would be a simple "Who done it!" I'm not very good with whackos.

CAROLINE. Well, now. You think you're dealing with madness, do you, Lieutenant? You might very well be right. The question is, whose? That's what you don't know yet, but I think I do. Right, David?

CHARLEY. Oh, shit!

(THEY all look at Charley for a moment. CAROLINE tries to restore dignity.)

CHARLEY. Sorry.

CAROLINE. The truth is it doesn't matter. Soon this will all change. Soon we'll all be into something else. Everyone of us. You will be Charley again and Marie will be the maid again and everyone will be everyone else again. (*To David.*) All except you and me, David. You and I are always the same. Caroline and David. Don't you think that's strange? Always Caroline and David. That should be the tip-off, shouldn't it?

DAVID. It amazes me how far some people will go to avoid the gas chamber.

SIMON. I'm learning not to be surprised by anything.

CAROLINE. I'm sorry to hear that, Father. It takes a certain zest out of life.

CHARLEY. I have a feeling I won't be getting home for dinner tonight.

CAROLINE. Don't be silly, Lieutenant Anderson, or whoever you are ... You can do whatever you want because

this is only a moment which is sure to be replaced by another moment later on.

CHARLEY. Now wait a minute. There's been a murder here.

CAROLINE. I'm afraid not. Whoever is on that floor, will soon be gone and then come through a door as someone else because that's the way he's doing it.

CHARLEY. He?

CAROLINE. I'm getting on to this, David. Aren't you worried?

DAVID. Poor Caroline.

CAROLINE. No, shouldn't it be "poor Stefanie"? She's the one that's supposedly dead, right, David? Your wife, your stepdaughter, your lover. Where are the tears for her, David? There aren't any because nothing's really happened to her, has it? You cry when someone close to you dies, David. You cry. You didn't and I didn't.

DAVID. What makes you so sure you can?

CAROLINE. I can cry, David. I'm just not so sure what to cry about. (*Shakes Stefanie's body.*) Come on, Stefanie, get up. Up, up, up.

CHARLEY. Boy, that is sick, you know. Really sick.

DAVID. Sadistic is what I would call it.

CAROLINE. Of course, you would, David. The word suits you extremely well.

SIMON. Now, now, children, let's try to keep our dignity.

CAROLINE. (*To Charley.*) Lieutenant, may I talk to you alone?

CHARLEY. I don't know. (*To all.*) Is it all right? She doesn't have any more weapons on her?

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