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Samuel French Acting Edition

Love, Lies & The Doctor's Dilemma

An American Farce by

Michael Parker & Susan Parker

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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LOVE, LIES & THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA was first produced in the United States by Susan Fletcher Lyons at Ed Fletcher's Early Bird Dinner Theatre, Clearwater, Florida on May 7, 2016. The director was Toby Manion and the designers were Toby Manion, Mark Ogden, and Chris Koberna. The cast was as follows:

JOAN SCHELLER Tracy Borgatti
SANDY..... Peter J. Konowicz
VINNY “THE ENFORCER” Paul Palmisano
OLIVIA ST. CLAIRE..... Barbara Anthony
RACHAEL Selena Vela
CHRIS Eddy Ganim

LOVE, LIES & THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA was first produced in Canada by Sandy Fevens at Th'YARC Playhouse and Arts Centre, Yarmouth, Nova Scotia on May 12, 2016. The director was Judy Snow and the designers were Darren Deveau and Gerry Saunders. The cast was as follows:

JOAN SCHELLER Nicole LeBlanc
SANDY..... Dave Sarginson
VINNY “THE ENFORCER” Jamie LeBlanc
OLIVIA ST. CLAIRE..... Jessica DeMille
RACHAEL Camille Cramm
CHRIS Jeremy Watkins

CHARACTERS

JOAN SCHELLER – (45+) A middle-aged widow. She lives with her former gardener, Sandy. She is unconventional and free-spirited. In fact, she and Sandy grow small amounts of marijuana for their personal recreational use in a white-washed green house they call the “potting shed.” She doesn’t seem to care what others think of her, except her sister-in-law Olivia, who seems to dominate her in some strange way. Neither her son, Chris, nor Olivia are aware of Joan’s penchant for marijuana or her relationship with Sandy. As Joan interacts with each of the characters, she is quick-thinking and resourceful. Her seemingly innocent white lies create chaos and confusion throughout the play.

SANDY – (45+) An easy-going, mild-mannered guy who appears to be in love with Joan. He was, in fact, her gardener, and began working for her after her husband died. At the very beginning of the play, Sandy and Joan are kissing on the couch, when Olivia arrives unexpectedly and almost catches them. Joan, afraid of Olivia’s disapproval, introduces Sandy as Dr. Gardener her psychiatrist, and explains they were simply having a session. Joan has left him no choice but to go along with her deception. Little does he realize that he will be in great demand as a psychiatrist for the rest of the play.

VINNY “THE ENFORCER” – (40+) The quintessential Italian mobster: he dresses like one, he talks like one, and he carries, in a concealed shoulder holster, a magnum .45, which he does not hesitate to show to everyone. He is looking for Joan’s son, Chris, who has accumulated considerable gambling debts and is now on the run from the mob. Although he appears tough, we later learn this is all bluff and bluster as he turns out to be a sensitive pussy-cat. He has a rough “New Jersey” accent.

OLIVIA ST. CLAIRE – (40+) Joan’s sister-in-law. A wealthy, aging movie star, she never enters a room but always “makes an entrance.” A well-meaning but overbearing woman, she asserts her authority upon everyone, especially Joan, who she sees as weak and incapable of taking care of herself since her husband’s death. Joan, embarrassed to let Olivia know that her son is in debt to the mob, creates yet another deception and introduces Vinny as her security guard. Olivia appears to be quite taken with the rough and street-smart Vinny.

RACHAEL – (20+) Joan’s new neighbor. She seems to live in her own world, constantly being nosey and taking liberties. She continually refers to disastrous incidents in her life, and we soon see why they happened. With her flighty demeanor and malapropisms, you’re left to wonder how she ever survives in life. She is, however, a sweet, thoughtful, and kind woman.

CHRIS – (20+) Joan's son who is on the run from the mob. He is seemingly out of work and living a carefree life. He does not seem to take his situation very seriously. Joan, however, takes it extremely seriously and, fearful for his safety, persuades him to masquerade as her daughter, Christina. Later in the play, we discover that he, in fact, works for the FBI as an undercover agent.

SETTING

Joan's Suburban Home, Anytown USA

ACT I: Mid-afternoon

ACT II: The action is continuous

TIME

The Present

ACT I

(It is the living room of JOAN's suburban home. Upstage center is an archway leading to the front door, which is off left. There is a large potted plant in the entrance way. Downstage left are double French doors, leading to the garden and pool house. Above them on the left wall is a bar, with two stools on the downstage side. Behind the bar on the left wall is a window, which is open and large enough for an actor to get through. On the back wall of the bar are shelves with glasses, perhaps a small wine rack, bar decorations, and the key to the potting shed. Downstage right is an open archway leading to bedrooms and the rest of the house. Upstage right is a double-hinged door to the kitchen, which leads to the back door. Below it is a couch, with decorative cushions and an afghan; to its right an end table; and in front of it a low coffee table. To the left of the couch and slightly downstage is a low back easy chair. On the rear wall behind the couch is a door to a broom closet. The decor is bright and tasteful.)

(The curtain rises on an empty set. After a moment or two, JOAN enters from the kitchen. She is dressed in a casual skirt or pants and a colorful blouse. She wears little make-up. Her hair is loose and natural. She is carrying a small tray with a newspaper, two coffee mugs, and a small plate of brownies. She comes down and places the tray on the coffee table, then crosses left to the French doors.)

JOAN. (*Calling.*) Sandy, Sandy, coffee's ready. (*She heads back and sits on the couch right end.*)

SANDY. (*Enters from the French doors, leaving them open, and crosses toward JOAN. He is wearing khaki pants, a button-down collared shirt, and loafers. He is carrying a single rose.*) Good morning Joan. You're looking beautiful today.

JOAN. Thank you. You were up bright and early this morning.

SANDY. Well, I wanted to do a little gardening, I may not officially be employed as your gardener anymore, but I still take pride in how the garden looks. (*Hands her the rose.*) Here you go my dear, happy birthday.

JOAN. (*Puts the rose on the tray.*) Thank you love. The coffee is hot and the brownies are freshly baked this morning. (*Takes a bite of brownie.*)

SANDY. (*Sits on the left side of couch.*) Ah, our morning brownies, what would we do without them?

JOAN. Have a boring day I'd imagine. By the way, did you check on the marijuana plants in the potting shed while you were out there? I used most of what we had in these brownies. Do we still have any plants left?

SANDY. The plants are fine. I make sure that we have three or four small pots growing at all times. It's enough for us. (*Picks up a brownie and takes a bite.*)

JOAN. I know, I know, we really only need ten milligrams per batch, but I just don't want to run out. It's not like I can pick it up at the supermarket. By the way dear, I forgot to tell you, we have a new neighbor.

SANDY. Oh?

JOAN. She came over yesterday and introduced herself while you were in town.

SANDY. What's she like?

JOAN. Youngish, different. Her name's Rachael.

SANDY. Different? How?

JOAN. For starters, she never used the front door, walked right in through the garden. Scared me half to death.

Floated around here like a butterfly, poking her nose into all the rooms. To top it off, she took one of the brownies and ate it before I could stop her.

SANDY. Besides being different, was she nice?

JOAN. I suppose, though we had the strangest conversation, half the time I didn't have a clue what she was saying.

SANDY. Why is she a foreigner?

JOAN. Yes, she's from **[name a neighboring state or small town]**.

SANDY. (*Laughing.*) She sounds interesting, I'll look forward to meeting her sometime. (*Stands, hands JOAN the newspaper, and picks up the tray.*) My turn for kitchen duty, you just relax and read the paper. (*Exits to the kitchen.*)

(JOAN opens the paper and starts to read as VINNY appears in the French doors, which are open. He is dressed like a typical mobster. He wears a dark, double-breasted suit, white socks, yellow shirt, red tie, and a black fedora. Under the jacket he has a shoulder holster, with a huge magnum .45 automatic.)

VINNY. (*Steps into the room.*) Hey, you there, lady.

JOAN. (*Puts down the paper and stands.*) Who are you? What are you doing here?

VINNY. The name's Vinny.

JOAN. Vinny who?

VINNY. Vinny the Enforcer. I'm looking for Mrs. Scheller. I'd like to have a little chat with her.

JOAN. That would be me. What do you want?

VINNY. Good, sit down.

JOAN. (*Ignores him and continues to stand.*) Now look here, you can't just come barging into my house telling me what to do.

VINNY. (*Opens his jacket and shows her the gun.*) Listen little lady, when ya got "Big Bertha" here, you can do what ya want.

JOAN. You call your gun Bertha?

VINNY. Yeah, ain't she a beauty?

JOAN. Bertha or not, you need to remove yourself from my house.

VINNY. Or else what?

JOAN. I'll call the police.

VINNY. (*Wanders right.*) Now, that would be a bad idea, a very bad idea.

JOAN. And would you care to tell me why?

VINNY. When I came through the garden, I couldn't help but notice that little green house with the white-washed glass, and that big lock on the door.

JOAN. Oh, you mean our potting shed.

VINNY. Potting shed! Good one Mrs. Scheller, but ya know what I smelled lady? Weed, pot, grass, cannabis, call it what ya want, marijuana.

JOAN. You're wrong.

VINNY. Listen lady, when ya been on the streets your whole life, and you're in my line of work, ya know weed when ya smell it.

JOAN. Oh dear. (*Sits on the couch.*) It's only such a very little bit.

VINNY. We both know it ain't legal. So you still want to call the cops?

JOAN. I guess not.

VINNY. So, Mrs. Scheller, (*Starts to pace down left.*) ya gonna cooperate?

JOAN. By the way, how do you know my name?

VINNY. It's my business to know. I'm looking for your kid, Christopher.

JOAN. Why?

VINNY. Let's just say he's been a bad boy.

JOAN. It's not a woman again is it?

VINNY. It's not fast women, it's slow horses. He's been gambling on the ponies, and I represent the bookies. They want their dough.

JOAN. (*Stands.*) Well Mr. Enforcer, you've come to the wrong place. He doesn't live here and I haven't seen him or spoken to him in months. So I think it's best that you leave now.

VINNY. We got reason to believe your son's gonna come running to Mama for the money, so Mrs. Scheller, I'll just be stick'n around and drop'n in from time to time. The boys don't like it when they don't get paid.

JOAN. I think you're wasting your time, but the next time you do, would you kindly use the front door.

VINNY. In my line of work, we don't usually use front doors. *Ciao. (Exits through the French doors, but quickly sticks his head back in.)* Oh yeah, some friendly advice. Plant some strong scented something outside the greenhouse. Maybe some Jasmines, they have a real nice smell. (*Exits, leaving the doors open.*)

JOAN. Oh dear. (*Quickly moves to the kitchen door and calls offstage.*) Sandy, Sandy, come quick! (*Runs left to the French doors and looks into the garden.*)

SANDY. (*Enters from the kitchen and moves toward JOAN.*) Joan, are you alright? You sound upset.

JOAN. (*Quickly moves right, and they hug.*) You aren't going to believe what just happened. We're in trouble.

SANDY. Okay sweetie, come and sit down. Now tell me what's got you in such a state. (*JOAN sits on the couch right and SANDY sits on the couch center. They hold hands.*)

JOAN. It's Chris.

SANDY. Now what's he done?

JOAN. He appears to be in trouble with the mob. He's run up gambling debts and they've sent this guy called Vinny the Enforcer to take care of it. They think he's going to come here, so this Vinny guy is going to be hanging around waiting for him.

SANDY. Okay, that's not the end of the world. Chris hasn't been here in years, in fact, I've never met him. Even though it's your birthday, I doubt he'll show up.

JOAN. I agree, but that's not all. This guy, the Enforcer, knows about the potting shed.

SANDY. What?

JOAN. He says he could smell the pot.

SANDY. Who is this guy? He must have a nose like a bloodhound. What's he going to do?

JOAN. Actually, come to think of it, I don't think he's going to do anything, except hang around and wait for Chris to show up. (*Stands up.*) Oh my gosh. Oh no! Have you forgotten who's coming today? (*Rushes to the closet and gets the vacuum cleaner.*)

SANDY. Olivia? That's right, she's here for your birthday. What are you doing?

JOAN. What does it look like I'm doing. (*Leaving the vacuum cleaner just behind the chair, she moves behind the bar with the cord.*) Olivia's arriving and the house is a disaster. (*Bends down as if plugging it in, but doesn't get the chance.*)

SANDY. Looks fine to me.

JOAN. (*Pops up.*) Of course it does, that's because you're a man and not a woman. (*Moves right to the vacuum and frantically works the on/off switch, which doesn't go on.*)

It's not working.

SANDY. No kidding.

JOAN. Well, don't just sit there, do something.

SANDY. What do you want me to do? I don't know anything about vacuum cleaners.

JOAN. Well, couldn't you at least look at it? (*SANDY leans slightly to his left and stares intently at the vacuum cleaner.*)

You know I didn't mean that. Do something, please, she'll be here any minute now. (*SANDY stands and kicks the vacuum cleaner, then tries the switch. It still doesn't work.*)

Wait, I know, go get the manual. It's in that cardboard box in the closet. (*JOAN continues to fiddle with the vacuum.*)

SANDY. (*Moves to the closet door and enters, then turns.*) Are you sure it's plugged in? (*Disappears back into the closet.*)

(**JOAN** looks at the closet and then moves left behind the bar and bends down as if plugging it in. She moves right to the vacuum cleaner and tries the switch. This time it works.)

(Steps out of the closet.) What happened?

JOAN. It suddenly started working.

SANDY. Really? Just like that? (*Snaps his fingers.*)

JOAN. Yes.

SANDY. (*Comes up behind her and wraps his arms around her.*)

You know, for someone who's only recently taken up lying, you're showing a real flair for it. (*He kisses the top of her head.*)

JOAN. (*Steps away and turns toward him.*) Oh Sandy, I really wish Olivia wasn't coming today. I'm just not ready for her to be here.

SANDY. (*Takes the vacuum cleaner and leaves it in front of the right end of the bar back. He then crosses back to JOAN and takes her hand, leading her to the couch.*) I don't know why you're so worried, the house looks perfectly alright, but you look like a wreck. Come sit down and tell me what's got you so upset. (**SANDY** sits left and **JOAN** sits center.)

JOAN. You know, I tried to tell her she didn't have to come, but Olivia only listens to Olivia. Sandy, my love, I have to confess something to you. I know you've never met her, but Olivia is obnoxious, overbearing, pretentious, self-righteous, filthy rich, and a thousand other words I could use to describe her, but she is my late husband's sister.

SANDY. Oh come on, she can't be all that bad.

JOAN. You don't think so? Her idea of a bad neighborhood is if the local deli doesn't have valet parking. To be honest, she is the only person who makes me feel... well, inferior, and I don't want her to know that we live together. She will moralize till the cows come home, and it's just not worth it. She'll be saying, "Poor Joan, Poor Joan," all day. So please, just for today, can I tell her you're my gardener and not the love of my life?

SANDY. Poor Joan.

JOAN. Don't you start, I'm just not ready to answer questions about us yet, at least not to her.

SANDY. Poor Joan. (*JOAN hits him with a pillow.*)

Alright, love, what ever makes you happy. (*JOAN puts her arms around SANDY's neck and kisses him. SANDY leans into her and she scoots further down, with her legs up on the couch as they continue to kiss.*)

OLIVIA. (*Enters from the front door. She is wearing a tailored skirt and designer blouse. She has a matching hat, handbag, and shoes, and is wearing large sunglasses. Her hair is elegantly coiffured, her make-up is perfect, perhaps even a little overdone, and her nails are neatly manicured. She looks every bit the movie star she once was. She is carrying a gift basket with two bottles of wine and balloons.*) Hellooooo... (*At this point JOAN is lying on the couch, head right and feet left, with SANDY almost on top of her. In the two seconds it takes OLIVIA to round the corner from the front door and come downstage, SANDY leaps to his feet and is standing at the left end of the couch, leaving JOAN still lying down.*)

Joan, what are you doing on the couch? It's the middle of the day. Who is this man?

JOAN. (*Quickly stands up.*) Er, er...ah, the couch, yes...this man...yes.

OLIVIA. (*More demanding.*) Yes, what are you doing on the couch, and who is this man?

JOAN. (*Looks at SANDY.*) He's...er...er...he's my... psychiatrist!

SANDY. What?

JOAN. We were having a session.

SANDY. What?

OLIVIA. (*Deflated.*) Oh, I didn't know you were in therapy. Poor Joan. I just knew it would come to this. (*Hands JOAN the balloons and wine.*) Here, these are for you dear, Happy Birthday.

JOAN. (*Puts them on the bar back right side.*) Thank you, that was very kind of you.

OLIVIA. Nonsense. Now, are you going to introduce us?

JOAN. (*Comes down.*) Yes, of course, this is...er, er...Doctor Gardener.

SANDY. What?

JOAN. Doctor Gardener, this is my sister-in-law, Olivia St. Claire.

SANDY. (*Shakes hands.*) Hello Ms. St. Claire, it's a real pleasure to meet you.

OLIVIA. Of course it is. Please, call me Olivia. A psychiatrist who makes house calls, that's very unusual.

JOAN. Well, Doctor Gardener is a very unusual doctor. He likes to get out of his office. Sometimes he stays all afternoon just relaxing in the garden. Don't you Doctor Gardener?

SANDY. Er... I guess I do. (*Looks at JOAN.*) May I have a word with you?

JOAN. Sure. (*She and SANDY move downstage left a few steps, followed by OLIVIA.*)

SANDY. I meant we should be alone.

OLIVIA. (*Looks around.*) We are alone.

JOAN. What Doctor Gardner meant was...

OLIVIA. Well, as you appear to have nothing to contribute to this conversation, why don't you take this time to go and relax in the garden. I would like to have a private word with Joan.

SANDY. So would I! (*JOAN gives him a look.*) Right, I'll be in the garden.

OLIVIA. Good then, off you go. (*She ushers him out the French doors, turns, and goes to the bar.*) Well Joan, while I pour myself a drink, why don't you tell me why you need a psychiatrist. (*Goes behind the bar and pours herself a drink.*) You know you can always talk to me.

JOAN. (*Perches on the left arm of the couch, facing left.*) Actually, I...

OLIVIA. Poor Joan. I know how difficult it has been for you since my brother died. How are you coping?

JOAN. As a matter of fact I...

OLIVIA. Obviously not well, I mean if you need a psychiatrist and all. Is he any good?

JOAN. It's difficult to say, I...

OLIVIA. Well, I must say he is very attractive. You know, while I'm here, I think I'll arrange to have a session with him.

JOAN. I don't think...

OLIVIA. Poor Joan. It's quite obvious, that I've been neglecting you, so I decided that I would come stay with you for the next few weeks and keep you company. (JOAN *springs to her feet with a look of abject horror on her face.*) You, living here, all alone. Poor Joan. We'll have a grand time. Of course I will have to work on my autobiography while I'm here, but I'll make sure I leave time to spend with you.

JOAN. That's very kind of you but...

OLIVIA. Good, that's all settled then. Now which room will I be in?

VINNY. (*Enters from the front door and moves downstage.*) Ciao again. Ya know, Mrs. Scheller, you really should lock your doors, you never know who might show up.

OLIVIA. Joan, why is this strange man in your house?

VINNY. (*To OLIVIA.*) Who ya calling strange? (*To JOAN.*) Who's this?

OLIVIA. I'm Joan's sister-in-law, Olivia St. Claire, (*Moves right from behind the bar.*) and who are you?

JOAN. This is Vinny.

OLIVIA. Does he have a last name?

VINNY. I do, but I'm usually called Vinny the...

JOAN. Security guard. Vinny is my security guard, aren't you Vinny.

VINNY. Well, er...er...

OLIVIA. Joan, why do you need a security guard?

JOAN. Vinny, why do I need a security guard?

VINNY. Jeez, Mrs. Scheller, you know why, I gotta catch me a slimeball.

JOAN. What he means is, he is here to make sure the house is safe, isn't that right Vinny.

VINNY. Yeah, I gotta catch me a certain slimeball.

OLIVIA. There are slimeballs in your neighborhood? Poor Joan.

JOAN. Well as you can see there are none of those er... slime things here right now.

OLIVIA. Quite right, but my car is parked on the street. Come along Vinny, you can make yourself useful and escort me to my car. I need to move it and bring in my suitcase. *(She exits the front door as VINNY stands still in a state of shock. OLIVIA quickly re-enters.)* NOW VINCENT. *(She turns with a flourish and exits, followed by VINNY.)*

SANDY. *(Enters from the French doors.)* Joan, who was that guy?

JOAN. That was Vinny, the Enforcer. But Olivia thinks he's my security guard.

SANDY. Why does she think that Joan?

JOAN. Well, er...well, I kind of said he was. I can't let Olivia know he's a mobster looking for Chris.

SANDY. Wonderful. You now have a lover who's a gardener, a gardener who's a psychiatrist, and a mobster who's a security guard.

JOAN. Well I had to do something.

SANDY. Joan, this is getting out of hand. I think it would be better if you just came clean and told the truth.

JOAN. I can't.

SANDY. Why not?

JOAN. Olivia wants to have a session with you while she's here.

SANDY. Are you out of your mind! That's impossible! I can't have a session with her. I think in your delusional state you've forgotten... I'm not a real psychiatrist. I wouldn't have a clue as to what to say or do.

JOAN. Oh, that's easy... You just ask, "What's your problem?" and when she asks a question, you say, "What do you think?"

SANDY. I think you've had one too many brownies. YOU need a psychiatrist...a real one!

OLIVIA. *(Enters through the front door carrying two wigs on stands [see Authors' Notes], followed by VINNY, who is carrying a large suitcase.)* Come along Vincent, no dilly-dallying.

VINNY. Jeez, how many times I gotta tell ya, it's Vinny.

OLIVIA. Nonsense, Vincent is much more sophisticated and it's "How many times must I tell you."

VINNY. *(Drops the suitcase in front of JOAN.)* Boy, she may be a looker, but that is one tough sister-in-law ya got there. *(Looks at SANDY.)* Who's this?

JOAN. Doctor Gardener, may I introduce you to Vinny.

OLIVIA. Joan's security guard.

VINNY. Doctor Gardener?

OLIVIA. Joan's psychiatrist.

VINNY. You one of them shrink guys? Sorry Mrs. Scheller, didn't know you were a wacko.

OLIVIA. Poor Joan.

SANDY. Well I wouldn't exactly describe her as a wacko, *(Looks at JOAN.)* however, I can tell you she does have a tendency to exaggerate and stray from the truth.

JOAN. Well, isn't truth in the eye of the beholder?

SANDY. Then you should make an eye doctor appointment...soon.

OLIVIA. Instability and bad eyes? Poor Joan. It's a good thing I'm here. Now, come along, I want to look at the rooms and see which one would be appropriate for me. *(Exits down right, followed by JOAN carrying the suitcase.)*

VINNY. Listen Doc, this must be one of them serendipity things, cause lately I've been thinkin' I need to talk to someone, but in my line of work ya just don't do that. But I'm see'n an opportunity here, and you seem like

a regular kind of Joe. (*Moves right toward the couch.*) I'll pay the freight whatever it is. (*Sits in the middle of the couch.*)

SANDY. Vinny, I really can't do that.

VINNY. Jeez Doc, come and sit down. (*Pulls out a wad of bills.*) How much is it gonna cost me?

SANDY. (*Sits in the chair.*) Really Vinny, this isn't a good idea.

VINNY. Hows about five big ones. (*Lays them on the coffee table and lies down on the couch, head right, feet left.*) You know Doc, I've never done this before and I'm kinda nervous.

SANDY. Me too.

VINNY. (*Sits up.*) What?

SANDY. What I mean is, I'm not really a psychiatrist.

VINNY. And I'm not really a security guard, I'm an Enforcer. Now that I've told ya, I know ya can't divulge this to anyone, 'cause of that hippopotamus oath you guys take. (*Lies back down.*) Ya know Doc, you're a real smart guy, making me feel comfortable by telling me you're not a shrink. Boy, that's good.

SANDY. (*There is an awkward pause.*) Er... Er... So, what's your problem?

VINNY. The thing is Doc I don't really like my work anymore, I can whack 'em, grill 'em, and I'm really good at thumbscrews, but deep down, I just don't like it no more. Guess I'm just a big ol' softy. Do ya think I need more in life?

SANDY. Er...er... What do you think?

VINNY. Guess, I'm feelin' kinda lonely. I'm just not gettin' any lovin' in my life. What should I do Doc?

SANDY. (*Pauses.*) Er... What do you think?

VINNY. I don't think I got nothin' in my life that means anything to me, except for Bertha.

SANDY. Tell me about Bertha.

VINNY. Well, first off, she's one big mother. She's been with me for lots of years, and we've seen a lot of action

together. But she's just not enough for me no more
I've been thinking I need to settle down, get me a wife.
Do ya think that's a good idea?

SANDY. What do you think?

VINNY. Well, as long as I can keep Bertha

SANDY. You want a wife and Bertha?

VINNY. Yeah, why not?

SANDY. Well, wives don't usually understand about things
like Bertha.

VINNY. Jeez Doc. I can't give her up. I don't get no respect
without her. What should I do?

SANDY. Er...er... What do you think?

VINNY. Oh, you're good Doc. You're really good. Ya know,
I saw this shrink on the telly once, and he always
answered a question with a question.

SANDY. Listen Vinny, just for the record, I think that if
you're going to get a wife, you must get rid of Bertha.

VINNY. You could be right Doc. But, maybe I could keep
Bertha hidd'n away. Maybe in time the little wifey
would understand.

SANDY. You haven't had a lot of experience with women
have you Vinny?

VINNY. I guess not.

SANDY. Oh dear. How did I get into this mess.

VINNY. I mean I can't just discard Bertha, like she's meant
nothin' to me. She needs to be taken care of. She's
given me years of good service, and deserves better.

SANDY. Years of good service?

VINNY. Yes. What do I do with her Doc?

SANDY. Oh dear. I think...er... (*Looks at his watch.*) That's
it, times up, time for you to go. (*SANDY picks up the money
and hands it to VINNY.*) This one's on the house.

VINNY. (*Stands and puts the money in his pocket.*) Jeez, I
really owe you one Doc. Well, if ya ever need to have
somebody roughed up or somethin', I'm your man.

SANDY. (*Tries ushering him to the front door. Noises off, JOAN and OLIVIA from the bedrooms.*) I don't think that will be necessary.

VINNY. In my line of work we don't forget favors. (*Cracks his knuckles.*) You're no schmuck Doc, putting me at ease by telling me you're not a psychiatrist, then helping me decide to keep Bertha and get a wife. Mrs. Scheller's a lucky lady to have you for a shrink. *Ciao.* (*Exits through the front door.*)

SANDY. Oh dear, did I say that?

OLIVIA. (*Enters from down right, followed by JOAN.*) I will definitely need a lighted make-up mirror, and a few other things, but overall it will have to do. Oh, hello Doctor Gardener, has Vincent left already?

SANDY. Yes, but I have a feeling he'll be back.

(Enter RACHAEL from the French doors. She is dressed casually in a dress with a camisole slip underneath and tennis shoes. Her make-up looks natural and her hairstyle is casual. She is carrying an empty plate.)

RACHAEL. Hellooooo! Oh Joan, I'm so sorry, I didn't know you had company.

JOAN. That's alright, this is my sister-in-law, Olivia St. Claire and er – er – Doctor Gardener. This is Rachael, my new next-door neighbor.

RACHAEL. (*Waves the plate at them.*) Hi. Wow, you're a doctor? You must have an inedible brain [*see Authors' Note*].

SANDY. Let's hope so.

OLIVIA. Doctor Gardener is a psychiatrist.

RACHAEL. Really? I once had a psychiatric evacuation.

SANDY. Let's hope not!

RACHAEL. (*Almost ignoring everyone, she wanders around, looks behind the bar, opens the closet door and looks in, then has a quick look in the kitchen.*) When I was quite young, I thought I wanted a career in law enforcement, and guess what? I got into the police academy. It

didn't work out though because there was a teensy misunderstanding about a paper we had to write.

JOAN. Oh dear.

RACHAEL. It really wasn't my fault. The paper was on grilling tactics, but I accidentally wrote down techniques. I thought it was a little strange, but I wrote in great detail about how it was always best to go slow, and then gradually turn up the heat until the skin is seared, but not burned and to continue for as long as necessary.

SANDY. Oh dear.

RACHAEL. I thought it was a well-written paper, but when I got it back, they said they found my methods too extreme, and the fact that I enjoyed it was simply not acceptable. Before I could explain, they dropped me from the program and sent me for a psychiatric evacuation. Go figure.

OLIVIA. Astonishing.

RACHAEL. (*Stops in front of JOAN.*) Joan, I was wondering if you could spare a few brownies. I can't seem to stop thinking about them. I've never tasted anything quite so good.

JOAN. I'm afraid they're all gone.

RACHAEL. Oh, that's too bad. Maybe you could give me the recipe?

SANDY. I'm sorry, it's a secret family recipe.

RACHAEL. (*Turns to OLIVIA.*) Wait a minute, wait a minute, did you say Olivia St. Claire?

JOAN. Yes I did.

RACHAEL. As in Olivia St. Claire the movie star?

JOAN. I'm afraid so.

RACHAEL. Oh my! (*She rushes over to OLIVIA.*) I didn't recognize you. I was a huge fan of yours. When I was a teenager I saw every single one of your movies.

OLIVIA. Thank you, I think! It really wasn't that long ago.

RACHAEL. I know, I know. Oh-oh-oh. I'm an actress too.

OLIVIA. Really?

RACHAEL. Yes. In high school I was in the end of the year play and got a standing ovulation.

SANDY. Really?

RACHAEL. Yes, it was my first one ever.

OLIVIA. The mind boggles!

RACHAEL. I don't suppose – No. I couldn't ask.

JOAN. I'll bet you're going to!

RACHAEL. Well, I've got an audition for the community theatre tomorrow. Would you read a segment or two with me and give me some pointers.

OLIVIA. Well I don't usually –

RACHAEL. (*Grabs OLIVIA's hand and starts shaking her arm.*) Please, please.

OLIVIA. (*Breaking free of RACHAEL's grip.*) Okay, I suppose I could make an exception.

RACHAEL. Thank you, thank you, oh, I'm going to be working with the great Olivia St. Claire. This is so much better than when I was crowned Miss Dairy Queen of [insert the name of a local small town]. You know, that would have been a great evening if it wasn't for the cows that escaped and started a stampede. But it really wasn't my fault. I was just strolling the fair grounds when I tripped and fell into someone who fell into a gate that apparently wasn't latched tight. They blamed me and I was forced to give up my title, even though they did eventually round up all the cows. Anyways, this is so much more exciting. I'll be right back with the script. (*Runs out the French doors.*)

OLIVIA. My, she's an interesting character. I just hope I survive the reading. (*Moves to the bar to get a drink.*) Now, Doctor Gardener, I'd like to discuss setting up a time for a session with you.

SANDY. I'm not sure that would be a good idea.

OLIVIA. Nonsense, you're a therapist and I need therapy.

JOAN. You're right about that.

OLIVIA. What did you say?

JOAN. I said, I doubt that.

OLIVIA. Poor Joan. (*To SANDY.*) You don't appear overly busy at the moment, so perhaps now would be an excellent time for a session. (*Moves right toward the couch and sits.*) Please, excuse us Joan. Sit down Doctor Gardener. (*She lies down, head left.*)

JOAN. (*Gently pushes SANDY toward the chair.*) I'm sure Olivia's session will be much more interesting than mine. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll just be in the kitchen. I think I'll make a fresh batch of brownies. I have a feeling we're going to need them. (*Exits to the kitchen.*)

SANDY. (*Sits in the chair.*) Ms. St. Claire, don't you have your own therapist back home?

OLIVIA. Please, call me Olivia. Of course I do, I am a movie star after all.

SANDY. Wouldn't you feel more comfortable talking with him or her?

OLIVIA. They're not here, you are, and I need to talk.

(*Looks over at SANDY.*)

Aren't you going to take notes?

SANDY. Do you want me to?

OLIVIA. All my other therapists have.

SANDY. Right. Let me get a pad and pencil. (*Stands, moves behind the bar, and bends down out of sight.*)

OLIVIA. (*Not heard by SANDY.*) What I want to discuss is my sex life.

SANDY. (*Pokes his head up.*) Hold on a sec, can't find a pencil. (*Ducks down behind the bar again.*)

OLIVIA. Yes, I definitely need some help with my sex life these days. I need to spice up my autobiography.

SANDY. (*Moves downstage toward the chair with a pad of paper and a pencil.*) Okay, I'm ready to take notes. (*Sits in the chair.*) So, what's your problem?

OLIVIA. Well, I'm not as active as I used to be.

SANDY. Now that is something I can help you with.

OLIVIA. You can?

SANDY. Of course. Have you thought about joining a club?

OLIVIA. There are clubs?

SANDY. Certainly, I belong to one myself.

OLIVIA. You do?

SANDY. To start you'll want to hire a personal instructor to get back into the swing of things.

OLIVIA. A personal instructor?

SANDY. It was the best thing I ever did.

OLIVIA. Really?

SANDY. Oh, yes, they're very knowledgeable and they give you a lot of hands-on help.

OLIVIA. Hands-on help?

SANDY. Well, some of the equipment is a little tricky at first.

OLIVIA. Equipment?

SANDY. Once you get going, they even have group classes.

OLIVIA. Group classes?

SANDY. They've got beginners all the way up to advanced.

OLIVIA. Advanced?

SANDY. I don't like to brag, but I am part of the advanced group. I'm sure it wouldn't take you long before you were joining us.

OLIVIA. Join you? I don't think I could do that.

SANDY. Of course you could. It's much more fun in a group. As a matter of fact, I'd be happy to introduce you if you'd like to come and meet them all.

OLIVIA. Meet them? (*Sits up.*) I really don't think I would go for this group thing. I must say Dr. Gardener, you are a most unusual psychiatrist.

SANDY. You don't know the half of it.

OLIVIA. I don't think I want to know the half of it.

(*Enter RACHAEL through the French doors, carrying a script.*)

RACHAEL. Oh, am I interrupting something?

OLIVIA. Not at all. Thank you Doctor Gardener, you've given me some things to consider.

SANDY. (*Stands and moves to the bar to return the paper and pencil.*) Right, glad I could help. I can see you're going to be busy, so if you'll excuse me, I'll just pop into the kitchen to see how Joan... I mean Mrs. Scheller is doing. (*Exits to the kitchen.*)

RACHAEL. I can't thank you enough for helping me.

OLIVIA. It's the least I could do. After all you are a fan of mine. (*She crosses right and sits on the couch center.*) Now, what's this play all about?

RACHAEL. (*Sits on OLIVIA's left, almost touching her.*) It's about a drug cartel, and the role I want is that of an undercover agent who has infiltrated the cartel headquarters.

OLIVIA. (*Inches right.*) Infiltrated?

RACHAEL. (*Inches right.*) Yes, you know they don't know she's an agent.

OLIVIA. (*Inches right.*) Go on. What's my role?

RACHAEL. (*Inches right.*) Well, the scene I'm worried about is when this agent realizes she can't go it alone and needs help, so she approaches a woman whom she thinks might be willing to help her.

OLIVIA. (*Attempts to move but is up against the couch arm.*) And that's me?

RACHAEL. Yes

OLIVIA. Okay, let's get started. (**RACHAEL** opens the script and places it on the coffee table. Because they are both reading from the one script, **RACHAEL** has her back to the French doors, and **OLIVIA** is turned downstage with her head down, bent over the script.) I'll begin here. (*Reading.*) Why are you acting so strangely? What's going on?

RACHAEL. (*Reading, in a very awkward manner.*) I just don't want anyone to overhear us. Yesterday I noticed that when one of the bosses talked about killing two of the villagers, you looked horrified.

OLIVIA. (*Reading.*) Well I was. Why can't they stop all this bloodshed and murdering. I'm sick of it. I want out.

RACHAEL. (*Reading.*) That's what I thought. (*Enter VINNY from the garden. He is about to step into the room, but stops dead in his tracks on RACHAEL's next line.*) I have something very important to tell you, but I'll need you to keep my secret. Do you promise?

OLIVIA. Yes.

RACHAEL. I am not who everybody thinks I am. (*VINNY, visible to the audience, but not to RACHAEL or OLIVIA, stays just outside the French doors, listening.*)

OLIVIA. (*Reading.*) What do you mean?

RACHAEL. (*Reading.*) I'm an undercover agent working for The DEA, my job is to bust this thing wide open. (*VINNY reacts.*) And I need your help.

OLIVIA. (*Reading.*) My help! What can I do?

RACHAEL. (*Reading.*) I'm going to have to produce some hard evidence. Enough to put them behind bars, which means I need to go places I'm not supposed to. I may need you to cover for me.

OLIVIA. (*Reading.*) I suppose I could do that. (*VINNY reacts, then exits to the garden. OLIVIA sits back in her seat.*) You know my dear, that was a good start, but I have a couple of pointers for you.

RACHAEL. You do? That would be awesome. Thanks.

OLIVIA. Before announcing you're an agent, perhaps you could pause, look around to make quite sure no one is going to overhear you, then lean in confidentially.

RACHAEL. That's brilliant. I love it. Do you suppose you could just show me?

OLIVIA. Of course. What's your line? (*RACHAEL points to the line.*) Right, well this is what I would do. (*Demonstrates furtively looking around, pauses, then leans forward toward RACHAEL, indicating with a hand motion for her to lean in.*) "I'm an undercover agent working for the DEA." Now, you try it.

RACHAEL. (*Tries to copy OLIVIA, but ends up with over-exaggerated movements which should show how inexperienced*

she really is as an actress.) I'm an undercover agent working for the DOA.

OLIVIA. Dead on arrival?

RACHAEL. What? Oh, *(Looks at the script.)* I mean DEA. So, how did I do?

OLIVIA. A little practice wouldn't hurt.

RACHAEL. That's a great idea. Thank you so much Ms. St. Claire, I can't wait to tell everyone who coached me on my audition segment. *(Gives her an overdone hug.)*

OLIVIA. Maybe we should just keep that our little secret.

RACHAEL. Okay. *(Stands.)* Oh Ms. St. Claire, you've been a great perspiration to me. I can't thank you enough. *(Clearly excited.)* Oh, oh, oh... I can't wait to practice. *(Exits through the French doors, leaving her script on the table.)*

(Enter JOAN and SANDY from the kitchen.)

JOAN. Hi Olivia, how did the audition practice go?

OLIVIA. *(Laughs.)* Well she's certainly enthusiastic.

SANDY. Is that a nice way of saying she needs a new hobby?

OLIVIA. Well, we can't all be me. So Joan, I'm a little hungry, how are the brownies coming?

JOAN. I didn't think you ate chocolate. There are a few left from earlier, but the fresh batch is still in the oven. Are you sure I can't get you something else?

OLIVIA. No, I'll wait for the fresh baked brownies, they sound wonderful.

JOAN. Oh dear.

OLIVIA. Poor Joan, I know baking was never your forte, but I'm sure they'll be fine. I haven't had a brownie in years. Call me when they're ready, I'll be in my room. *(Exits down right.)*

SANDY. Can you see her after eating a brownie? Maybe it would mellow her out.

JOAN. *(Sits on the couch right side.)* Olivia, mellow! If she ate a whole panful that wouldn't happen. Looks like we have

a moment alone, come sit down and tell me all about your session with her. I'm dying to find out.

SANDY. *(Sits on the couch left side.)* We can't talk about that?

JOAN. Why not?

SANDY. Well, it would be unethical and unprofessional.

JOAN. You do realize you're not really a psychiatrist. Don't you?

SANDY. Of course I do.

JOAN. So, come on, spill the beans.

SANDY. I wouldn't feel right, she trusts me. I can tell you it wasn't anything exciting.

JOAN. Oh, Sandy, you really are a lovely man.

SANDY. *(Puts his arm around JOAN.)* Thank you. *(Kisses her.)*

(Enter VINNY from the front door.)

VINNY. Jeez, sorry Doc. Didn't mean to interrupt.

(JOAN and SANDY both quickly stand.)

JOAN. Vinny, I know I asked you to use the front door, but do you suppose you could include knocking or using the doorbell?

VINNY. Okay Ms. Scheller, for you I'll try, but it ain't somethin' I'm used to. I see you and the doc are, well... ya know...

JOAN. Yes, Vinny, we know. Is there something I can do for you?

VINNY. Jeez, Ms. Scheller, you and Doc here are good people. I just want ya to know it's nothin' personal if I have to rough up your boy a little if he shows up here.

JOAN. I don't suppose you could just go away and forget about this?

VINNY. You know I can't do that. This ain't chump change your boy owes. We gotta reputation to keep up.

JOAN. Well, do you suppose you could be here outside, without wandering in and out of our house?

VINNY. I can't do that. But just so's you know, even though I got a job to do, I'm watchin' out for you.

SANDY. What do you mean, "I'm watching out for you"?

JOAN. Yes Vinny, what do you mean?

VINNY. The feds are on to ya.

SANDY & JOAN. WHAT?

VINNY. I have it on good authority there's a federal agent around here who intends to bust you wide open, but ya don't have to worry 'cause we don't like the feds. I owe ya and I got your back.

JOAN. Oh dear. Sandy, what are we going to do?

VINNY. Leave it to me. What I want you guys to do is check the potting shed. Make sure it's locked and there are no chinks in the whitewash.

JOAN. Right, come on Sandy. (**JOAN** takes the potting shed key from the back of the bar and exits the front door.)

SANDY. I'm coming. (*Exits the front door.*)

(VINNY looks around and then moves behind the bar to pour himself a drink. RACHAEL enters from the French doors, but doesn't see VINNY, who quickly ducks behind the bar. RACHAEL crosses right for the script, picks it up, then looks toward the kitchen. She then looks around the room, back at the kitchen, and quickly moves upstage and exits into the kitchen, as VINNY tip-toes out from behind the bar and waits outside the kitchen door. RACHAEL re-enters with a brownie in her hand, but without the script.)

VINNY. (*Stands directly in front of her, blocking her.*) Who are you?

RACHAEL. I'm Rachael, Mrs. Scheller's next door neighbor. Who are you?

VINNY. I'm Vinny the...um...the security guard. I'm Mrs. Scheller's security guard, and I know all about you.

RACHAEL. You do? Why?

VINNY. It's my buisness to know. Just where do ya think you're goin' with that brownie?

RACHAEL. I'm, well... I couldn't help myself, besides it's only one little brownie.

VINNY. If I didn't know better, I would have fallen for that, but I do. So, you ain't leaving here until you eat the evidence.

RACHAEL. You want me to eat it?

VINNY. Yep.

RACHAEL. Now?

VINNY. If ya know what's good for you.

RACHAEL. (*Looks at the brownie.*) Oh, I definitely know what's good for me. (*Pops the whole thing in her mouth.*)

VINNY. Okay, you can go now, but if ya know what's good for you, you'll stop trying to get at those brownies.

RACHAEL. They're really good. I had one yesterday and it made me feel quite expired.

VINNY. Well if ya don't stop trying to get them out of here, that can be arranged.

RACHAEL. What can? Oh, I forgot my script. (*She quickly enters the kitchen, followed by VINNY, who gets right up to the door as RACHAEL comes back out and flattens him with the door. The door swings closed, and VINNY slowly crumples to the floor as RACHAEL, unaware of VINNY, exits through the French doors.*)

(*Enter OLIVIA from down right.*)

OLIVIA. (*Sees VINNY on the floor and goes to help him up.*)
Vincent, whatever are you doing sitting on the floor?

VINNY. I'm not sure.

OLIVIA. Are you feeling alright?

VINNY. I guess so.

OLIVIA. Then come along, stand up.

VINNY. (*Now standing.*) She plays it pretty cool, but she'll have to do better than that to keep me down.

OLIVIA. Whatever are you talking about? Did you hit your head?

VINNY. (*Crosses to behind the bar.*) Nah, I'm fine. I just need a drink. (*Takes the cap off of a bottle of beer.*)

OLIVIA. That sounds wonderful. (*Moves downstage and sits right on the couch.*) I'll have a martini with a twist, and an olive please.

VINNY. I ain't no bartender.

OLIVIA. I am not a bartender.

VINNY. You neither, then you're out a luck...how about a beer?

OLIVIA. No thank you Vincent. (*Pats the seat next to her.*) Please, come and sit down. I know you have to be tough and strong to be a security guard, but did anyone ever tell you how cute you are.

VINNY. (*Sits left on the couch.*) Well, Ms. St. Claire...

OLIVIA. Please, call me Olivia.

VINNY. Well Olivia, I ain't never been called cute before.

OLIVIA. I have never been called cute before.

VINNY. You ain't?

OLIVIA. You haven't.

VINNY. Well, I think you're a real good lookin' broad. (*Sets his drink on the table.*)

OLIVIA. (*Moves closer left toward VINNY.*) Vincent, how very sweet of you. (*Holds his hand.*)

VINNY. Whoa there, what ya doin'?

OLIVIA. What do you mean, what am I doing?

VINNY. You was hold'n' my hand.

OLIVIA. You were holding my hand.

VINNY. No, you was hold'n' mine.

OLIVIA. Yes Vincent, I was. (*She takes his right hand in hers. There is an awkward pause. Then VINNY inches toward her and gives her a peck on the cheek. She pauses, looks at him, and then straddles him, with her back to the audience, and covers him with kisses as JOAN and SANDY re-enter from the front door.*) Oh, Vincent.

(**JOAN** moves downstage toward the couch. **SANDY** puts the potting shed key back behind the bar, then follows her.)

JOAN. Olivia, what are you doing on the couch with my security guard?

OLIVIA. (*Quickly stands, and we see VINNY's face is covered with lipstick marks.*) I...ah...well, I was helping Vincent.

JOAN. Doing what?

VINNY. (*Stands.*) We weren't doin' nothin'.

OLIVIA. (*To VINCENT.*) We weren't doing anything.

VINNY. That's what I said, we weren't doin' nothin'.

OLIVIA. Actually Joan, I was following Doctor Gardener's advice.

VINNY. Ya were? Me too.

JOAN. (*To SANDY.*) Who do you think you are, Sigmund Freud?

SANDY. (*Smiles and pauses, and in a Freudian accent:*) What do you think?

OLIVIA. Vincent, there's a bathroom in the pool house, why don't you go clean up.

VINNY. Why'd I want to do that?

(**OLIVIA** whispers in his ear, **VINNY** looks horrified, whips out a handkerchief, and rushes out the French doors.)

JOAN. So Doctor Gardener, what's your secret?

SANDY. What do you mean?

JOAN. Getting everyone to follow your advice so quickly after just one session with you.

OLIVIA. He's quite inspiring to those of us willing to listen. Poor Joan.

CHRIS. (*Offstage.*) Mom?

(*Enter CHRIS from the front door. He is casually dressed in shorts, t-shirt, and loafers without socks.*)

CHRIS. Hey there. Aunt Olivia? What are you doing here?

JOAN. Chris? What are you doing here? *(She panics, runs to the French doors, and looks out.)*

OLIVIA. Hello Christopher. What a lovely surprise. I'm here for your mother's birthday. *(Looks over at JOAN, who is nervously looking out the French doors.)* Joan, are you feeling alright? *(There's no reply.)* Poor Joan, I can't imagine why she's acting so strangely. *(JOAN, clearly very agitated, moves right a step or two, then thinks better of it, returns to the French doors, and exits briefly.)*

SANDY. She has her reasons.

OLIVIA. I'm sorry, where are my manners? Christopher, have you met Doctor Gardener?

CHRIS. Nope.

SANDY. *(Shakes hands with CHRIS.)* Hello, nice to meet you. Your mother has told me a lot about you.

OLIVIA. He's your mom's psychiatrist, and from the way she's behaving I'm beginning to see why you're needed Doctor Gardener.

CHRIS. Psychiatrist?

JOAN. *(Rushes back in and gives CHRIS a hug.)* Oh Chris, it is good to see you, and in one piece. *(Looks back at the French doors.)* Did anyone see you come in? Why are you here?

CHRIS. Have you forgotten, it's your birthday.

JOAN. That's very nice of you to remember dear. *(Runs quickly toward the French doors to peek out.)*

OLIVIA. Yes Christopher, how very thoughtful. Joan, come away from those doors and talk to your son. *(JOAN looks at her, then out into the garden. Finally she crosses to CHRIS.)* Well Christopher, I can't wait to hear all about how you're doing, but I am sure you'd like some time alone with your mother first. Besides, I do need to freshen up a bit, I'm sure I'm looking simply wretched. I'll visit with you later. Ta ta. *(Exits down right.)*

CHRIS. I see Aunt Olivia hasn't changed much.

JOAN. No she hasn't. And apparently you haven't either.

CHRIS. What's that supposed to mean?

JOAN. Honey, I'm afraid you've got to go.

CHRIS. Why? I just got here.

JOAN. Sandy, you tell him.

SANDY. Well...uh... I'm not at liberty to say. Hippopotamus oath you know.

CHRIS. Mom? Does it have something to do with you needing a psychiatrist?

JOAN. Psychiatrist? I don't need a psychiatrist. Er...er... I mean... Chris, you might as well know, but please don't say a word as I haven't told your Aunt Olivia yet, Doctor Gardener and I are engaged. *(She grabs SANDY's hand and kisses him on the cheek.)*

SANDY. We are?

JOAN. Definitely.

CHRIS. Congratulations Mom. *(He gives her a kiss on the cheek.)* When did this happen?

SANDY. Very recently. *(JOAN gives him "a look.")* Look Chris why don't you come and sit down a moment. *(SANDY sits right on the couch and JOAN sits left on the couch. CHRIS sits in the chair.)* There is something else we need to tell you. The reason you can't stay here is that there's a mobster staking out the house. His name is Vinny and he calls himself "The Enforcer." He says you owe money and he's here to collect it from you.

JOAN. Chris, however did you get into this mess?

CHRIS. Sorry Mom, it just seemed to happen. I didn't mean for you to get involved.

SANDY. Well, we are, so I'm afraid you'll just have to leave. It's best for everyone.

JOAN. I'm sorry Chris. I want to help you, but it's just not safe for you to be here.

CHRIS. That's okay Mom, I'll leave.

SANDY. How did you get here?

CHRIS. I drove. My car is parked out front.

JOAN. Oh dear, he knows your car. He'll know you're here if he sees it. (*Crosses to the French doors to look out.*) The last time we saw Vinny he was going to the pool house. I just don't know how we're going to get you out of here without him seeing you.

SANDY. Maybe we can sneak him out the back kitchen door. Joan, quick, check that Vinny's not out there.

(JOAN exits to the kitchen. SANDY moves to the kitchen door and holds it partially open, waiting for JOAN's reply. CHRIS follows behind him. SANDY looks around and sees VINNY about to enter through the French doors. He quickly opens the door wide, with CHRIS behind it, and stands there looking nonchalant.)

VINNY. (*Enters through the French doors, talking on his cell phone.*) You think ya saw him comin' in the house? Yeah, that's his car. You stay with the car, and I'll search the house. If he's here, I'll find him. (*Hangs up and puts the cell phone in his pocket.*) Ya wouldn't be hidin' someone in that closet would ya Doc? (*Strides over and opens the closet door.*) Uh, I guess not. Maybe the kitchen? (*VINNY exits into the kitchen as SANDY quickly gets CHRIS into the closet and closes the door, then continues holding the kitchen door open as VINNY moves back into the living room.*) Well, well Doc, what's hidin' behind door number three? Let's have a look.

SANDY. Why not. (*He releases the kitchen door.*)

VINNY. Gotcha ya little slimeball. (*Deflated.*) He ain't here either. So, where's he hidin' Doc?

JOAN. (*Enters from the kitchen.*) There's a... Oh Vinny, you're back. (*Looks around for CHRIS.*)

VINNY. Look Mrs. Scheller, we know he's here and he ain't goin' anywhere. My partner's watchin' his car, so are you gonna produce him, or am I gonna search the rest of the house?

SANDY. If you really feel it's necessary, by all means Vinny, search the house.

VINNY. Jeez Doc, ya know I got a job to do. (*Exits down right.*)

JOAN. (*Whispers.*) Where is he?

SANDY. (*Opens the closet door, and CHRIS steps out.*) Joan, we can't keep this up. He knows Chris is in the house.

CHRIS. Doctor Gardener's right Mom.

JOAN. I'm not turning my son over to the mob. We simply have to find a way to hide him until Vinny gives up searching for him.

SANDY. Have you been eating more brownies? That's not going to happen.

OLIVIA. (*Offstage.*) Vincent, I expect you to wait for an invitation to my room.

VINNY. (*Offstage.*) Jeez, sorry, didn't know you was in there.

JOAN. Oh dear, Sandy do something, he'll be back any second now.

SANDY. I'm not a magician.

JOAN. (*Looks toward the couch.*) I know, time for a session with Doctor Gardener.

SANDY. Now?

JOAN. (*Quickly sits with her feet up on the couch, head right, feet left.*) Chris, get over here. Now, lie down with your head here. (*She points to her stomach, and CHRIS lies down on his back. His feet protrude over the arm of the couch.*) Sandy, quick, cover us up. (*SANDY now places the afghan over them. It reaches from JOAN's upper body to CHRIS's mid-calf, giving the impression of one body [see Authors' Note].*) Sandy, quick his shoes. (*SANDY quickly whips off CHRIS's shoes and returns to his chair, hiding the shoes behind him.*)

VINNY. (*Enters from down right, looks around, and moves toward the kitchen.*) I'll tell ya this, that boy of yours is a slippery one. (*He flings open the kitchen door and looks in.*) Ah-ha.

JOAN & SANDY. (*Look at each other, pause, smile, and simultaneously mimic VINNY.*) Ah-ha.

VINNY. (*Turns and quickly opens the closet door.*) Ah-ha.

JOAN & SANDY. (*Look at each other, pause, smile, and simultaneously mimic VINNY.*) Ah-ha.

VINNY. (*Closes the door.*) I don't understand it, my nose tells me he's real close by.

JOAN. What are you, a bloodhound?

VINNY. (*For the first time, he notices the strange figure of JOAN. There is a long pause as he looks at the couch from behind, then paces off the distance from her head to CHRIS's feet. Eventually he scratches his head.*) Jeez, Mrs. Scheller, just how tall are you?

SANDY. (*Stands.*) Really Vinny, this is too much. We appreciate your help with our other little problem, but you cannot expect us to tolerate your continual intrusion into the privacy of our home. If you insist on this ridiculous search for Mrs. Scheller's son, kindly restrict your activities to the exterior of the house.

VINNY. That's it. Outside. He's in the pool house. Ciao. (*Exits, running out the French doors.*)

JOAN. (*Removes the afghan, and CHRIS sits up and moves left on the couch as JOAN sits right.*) He's not going to give up looking, is he.

SANDY. (*Hands CHRIS his shoes.*) It doesn't look that way. Chris, just how much money do you owe them?

CHRIS. Twenty thousand, give or take. (*Starts to put his shoes on.*) Maybe I should just turn myself in to him. What's the worst that can happen?

JOAN. I watched *The Godfather*, I know what happens, so that is definitely not an option. Wait a minute. (*Pauses.*) I've got another idea. (*Jumps up and quickly exits downstage right.*)

SANDY. Oh dear.

CHRIS. Oh dear?

SANDY. When Joan gets that look in her eye it only means one thing.

CHRIS. What's that?

SANDY. Trouble.

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