

Catspaw
by
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Characters

RICHARD RICE – Mid-twenties. Handsome, charming, and reckless.

LINDY RICE – Early twenties. Quiet, serious, perhaps too deferential to those with more aggressive personalities and opinions.

PETER SHEPARD – Forties. Athletic, attractive and charismatic.

ALICE HACKETT - Fifties. Stylish, energetic, opinionated, and respectable.

BARBARA SHEPARD – Fifties. Generous, demanding, critical, and controlling.

Setting

Barbara Shepard's summer house on Cape Cod

Time

Act 1, Scene 1: Early evening, October

Act 1, Scene 2: Half an hour later

Act 2, Scene 1: Evening, one month later

Act 2, Scene 2: Half an hour later

ACT I Scene 1

RICHARD stands in the entrance, surveying the room. He appears edgy and full of nervous energy. He moves to the desk and begins opening drawers and pawing through the contents. He does not find what he wants and goes to the bar to fix a drink. After a healthy sip, RICHARD begins rifling the bookcases, drinking all the while.

RICHARD

Well... the bastard could have made this a little easier. Let's see... if I were a lying shit, where would I hide it? Oh, yes! Yes! Come to poppa. It's even loaded. What have you been getting ready for here, Dad?

(He pulls a gun from behind some books as headlights flare against the front window and a car pulls up in front of the house. RICHARD dashes to the window.)

Lindy? No! What are you doing here?

(RICHARD jams the gun back into the bookcase, leaving the door open. He tries to clean up the desktop, but is interrupted by LINDY calling out.)

LINDY (O.S.)

Hello! Is anyone here?

RICHARD

Shit!

(RICHARD makes a dash for the French doors, reconsiders, and then bolts through the kitchen door. It settles shut as LINDY enters. She carries a knapsack.)

LINDY

Peter? Alice? Who's here? Please answer me.

(Glass breaks in the kitchen.)

LINDY goes to the kitchen door, looks in, and exits.)

Hello?

(RICHARD enters at a fast clip from the hall. He makes for the bookcase but abruptly changes course when LINDY calls again from the hallway.)

Hello?

(RICHARD races across the room, grabbing a gym bag as he goes. He reaches the French doors, struggles with the lock, and is about to run out when LINDY enters from the hall and spots him.)

Richard!

RICHARD

Hi, sweetie. What's new?

LINDY

What's new? What are you doing here?

RICHARD

Just out for the day. To walk the beach. Me and my thoughts.

LINDY

You hate the beach.

RICHARD

Bored in Boston. I was up for a little change of pace.

LINDY

Why were you hiding? Why were you going through Mother's desk?

RICHARD

Just looking for some things I forgot the last time.

LINDY

Like what? And why would they be in her desk and not your room?

RICHARD

And why are you here? I thought you were happily settled in New Hampshire with the rest of the crunchy set, eating granola and communing with nature.

LINDY

Don't try to change the subject.

RICHARD

You tell me why you're here, I'll tell you why I am.

LINDY

Philosophical differences with the crunchy set. So I came home.

RICHARD

To the Cape and not Boston? Does Peter know you're here?

LINDY

I wanted to be by myself. And this is not his house. I don't have to ask his permission.

RICHARD

But, did you?

LINDY

I texted him. I said I was going to be here a few days.

RICHARD

And Peter said?

LINDY

I never heard back.

RICHARD

He's taken up residence out here for the winter. I guess I'm cramping his style a bit.

LINDY

He wouldn't do that. He's about as fond of this place as you are.

RICHARD

A rare example of good taste from our most favored step-daddy.

LINDY

Your turn. Why are you here? What about the desk? And, why didn't I see your car outside?

RICHARD

Actually, this is how I found it. Sloppy old Pete. Reverting to childhood with Ma and Pa in shantytown, Massachusetts. Before he found money and culture.

(RICHARD straightens a few items on the desk and closes the bookcase.)

LINDY

Why were you in such a hurry to get out of here just now?

RICHARD

I thought it was Peter. Didn't care to see him. We aren't fond friends.

LINDY

He doesn't know you're here. What are you really doing, Richard?

RICHARD

I told you: just a day out, enjoying the fresh sea air.

LINDY

You're high. Again. That's why you're so jittery. Where's the stuff? In here?

(LINDY begins searching through the desk as RICHARD watches.)

RICHARD

Not me. I'm clean, clean, ever-so-clean. There's nothing in there, Lindy. You're wasting your time.

LINDY

That bookcase was open.

RICHARD

So take a look. Check the whole damn house. Don't forget the kitchen, sweetie - I was in there too. That white powder in the canisters - that's called flour and sugar.

LINDY

I'm not doing this anymore, Richard. I'm not picking up after you. I warned you. If you've started using again then.... Fine. Don't tell me. I'm tired, I'm thirsty, and I want a shower.

RICHARD

Fix you a drink?

LINDY

Water is just fine. And, I'll get it myself, thanks.

(LINDY exits to the kitchen. RICHARD retrieves the gun from the bookcase and hides it in his bag. LINDY returns, glass in hand, and sits on the sofa.)

RICHARD

Feeling better?

LINDY

Dandy. Are staying tonight?

RICHARD

With Peter for company? I don't think so.

LINDY

So I'm going to be alone here with him.

RICHARD

You've got a car. Go anywhere you want. Maybe you won't be alone. Alice could stop by. She's been good at keeping Peter company since Mother's little trip. Three weeks now, isn't it?

LINDY

And that means... what?

RICHARD

Just making conversation. But, if you aren't interested, I can be on my way.

LINDY

I should go, too.

RICHARD

Thought you wanted solitude. Or do you want to keep tabs on me? I'm ready. Let's go.

LINDY

That's a fast exit. But you're so tidy now; I think you can clean up after yourself. The broken glass in the kitchen.

RICHARD

I'm not so sure I want you in Boston. Bet the commune isn't so tidy.
 (RICHARD exits to the kitchen. LINDY waits a moment or so, then goes straight to RICHARD's bag. She opens it and takes the gun out.)

LINDY

God!

(LINDY looks around wildly as RICHARD calls out.)

RICHARD (O.S.)

All set?

LINDY

Check that the back door is locked. And, don't leave the lights on in the kitchen

RICHARD

Your Yankee thrift is getting to be a bit much.
 (LINDY slips the gun into her knapsack as RICHARD enters.)

RICHARD

Lights out. Money saved. Can we leave now?

LINDY

Why don't you get started? I'll lock up and see you in town.

RICHARD

I'm parked down the road. You can give me a lift.

LINDY

You roam the dunes all day and now you can't take a couple steps to your car?

RICHARD

Suddenly I'm pretty tired. I'd rather leave with you.

LINDY

Well, I want to get some things before I go. You don't have to wait.

RICHARD

I don't mind. Go on. I'll be right here. Go on.

(LINDY exits into the hall. RICHARD immediately searches his bag.)

RICHARD

Shit!

(RICHARD ransacks the bookcase and the desk. Livid with frustration, he drinks straight from a bottle on the bar and glowers as LINDY enters the room, knapsack in hand.)

LINDY

What are you doing?

RICHARD

You ought to mind your own business.

(RICHARD starts toward LINDY. She retreats. RICHARD grabs her, wrestles the knapsack away, searches it and takes the gun. LINDY falls back against the desk. RICHARD raises the gun and rotates it around the room.)

RICHARD

Round and round it goes. And where it stops, nobody knows...

(He walks to the French doors, opens them, points the gun outside and fires several shots. RICHARD faces into the room again, points the gun at the floor, and cocks his head to one side.)

LINDY

God, what are you doing? Are you crazy!

RICHARD

Quiet. Quiet! Lindy, listen, Listen! Do you hear that?

LINDY

What? There's nothing.

RICHARD

No sirens. No police. No anxious neighbors at the door. "Miss Rice, whatever was that frightful shrieking that Mr. Cabot, Mr. Lodge, and I just heard? Could those have been gunshots?" You could set off a cannon down here at this time of year and no one would hear it.

LINDY

So what!

RICHARD

Where's mother, Lindy? Where is Mrs. Peter Shepard? "Where or where has our little Barb gone? Oh where oh where can she be? She's not on the Cape and she's not in Boston. Perhaps she's been buried at sea?"

(They stare at one another. LINDY pushes past RICHARD, walks to the sofa and sits.)

LINDY

Get out of here. Leave.

RICHARD

He took the boat out the day after. Left very early in the morning. Didn't come back until evening. Alone. I haven't noticed any six-foot patches of recently turned earth around here, so my thoughts inevitably turn to the sea. What do you suppose he chummed the water with, way out there, all by his lonesome?

LINDY

Stop it. How can you talk about Mother that way?

RICHARD

You weren't around here Labor Day weekend so how would you know what happened here? The place was deserted. That tropical depression cleared everyone out. Empty beach, empty houses, empty roads. Mother and I drove back to Boston Sunday morning. Peter was supposed to drive back that evening. We're in Boston half-an-hour when Peter calls to say that he won't be back until Monday.

LINDY

Peter called Mother?

RICHARD

So why the delay? It's not that hard: this year's Miss Autumn. How long after we left before she arrived? Anyway, I took a nap and when I woke up, Mother was gone. But I have a text message: "Hello sweetie! I'm so sorry that I had to leave this way, but there are a few things I need to straighten out. I'll see you very soon. Bye!" Oh, oh, I says to myself. She's gone back to the Cape. Maybe I'd better phone and see what's going on out there? But her phone just rings and rings.

LINDY

Mother could have been with Alice.

RICHARD

But she wasn't. Because Alice spent the weekend in Boston with her son.

LINDY

It doesn't mean she came back here.

RICHARD

I couldn't go after her. No car at that moment. Next morning, the cleaning lady asks me where Mrs. Shepard is. I tell her that Mother must still be out on the Cape. And, she says to me, how did Mrs. Shepard get to the Cape when her car is still in the garage?

LINDY

If Mother took the car, how did it get back into the garage?

RICHARD

She shoots. She scores.

LINDY

Mother could have left the car and taken a taxi to Logan.

RICHARD

But she did take the car. Because I checked after I read her text. So who brought it back?

LINDY

Mother could have brought it back. And then left again.

RICHARD

Between the hours of 3 a.m., when I went to bed, and 9 a.m. when the cleaning lady and I had our brief encounter? Does that sound like Mother? I don't think so.

LINDY

Why didn't you ever mention this until now?

RICHARD

When have I seen you? You've been holed up in granola land for weeks now.

LINDY

This colorful rustic has a cell phone. I want to see it. Mother's text.

RICHARD

I accidentally deleted it.

LINDY

That's convenient. Why should I believe any of this?

RICHARD

You have to now that you're here. Now that you know. Now that you can help.

LINDY

Help do what?

RICHARD

Force Peter to tell us what happened. Where Mother is. It's been three weeks, Lindy.

LINDY

Mother is fine. She's at some spa tanning or being massaged. She ran off somewhere because she got bored or felt neglected. The phone is going to ring soon and she'll be back with her "Hello sweetie! I've had the most wonderful time at 'Club Med' or 'Mazatlán'. Bye!" Last spring she went off to Mexico for two weeks, without a word to me, so I'm through worrying about her.

RICHARD

Who are you trying to convince? Okay, we'll do it your way. Let's assume that Mother is tanned and rested and enjoying her time at Club Med. Why is she there? Peter the cheater and Miss Autumn aren't news to you either. So Mother waits until I'm asleep, packs a suitcase, texts me, and heads for the airport. What's wrong with this picture?

LINDY

You're the only one who's seen that text.

RICHARD

Are you going to fight me every step? All right, first point. Did Mother pack a suitcase? Nothing seems to be missing, but the woman couldn't cross the street without a complete set of matching luggage

LINDY

You went through her things?

RICHARD

So, assuming Peter has a Miss Autumn, and assuming Mother found out and hopped a plane to nurse her grief and anger, where do we assume she would go with no clothes? The Lady Godiva Dude Ranch? Come on. Why did Mother go to Mexico last spring? Who was she angry at then?

LINDY

Me. Because I moved out.

RICHARD

Deferred the Ivy League a year. Shacked up with a bunch of slackers. Her golden child rebelling. Who'd a thunk it?

LINDY

Being the dependable one gets old after a while.

RICHARD

That's the diplomatic way of saying you were tired of holding Mother's hand all the time?

LINDY

Not just hers.

RICHARD

But she was mad at Peter, too. I can guess why. So neither of you heard from her that entire time?

LINDY

I didn't.

RICHARD

And no one else did either, right?

LINDY

Alice knew where Mother was.

RICHARD

Second point! Mother doesn't stay completely incommunicado when she chooses to disappear. She cuts you off if she thinks your behavior needs to be corrected. Right?

LINDY

Yes.

RICHARD

So it looks like this time around Mother's gone off because she's furious at Peter.

LINDY

You mean he hasn't heard from her?

RICHARD

So he says. No big surprise. Mother's so often out of sorts with him these days. Alice must have heard from Mother, though? An update on tanning conditions in Mazatlán?

LINDY

She hasn't said anything.

RICHARD

She has to me. Alice is perturbed because she hasn't heard word one from Mrs. Shepard, either. So, tell me Lindy, what's the latest from Mother?

LINDY

No. Just stop. I need to think about this.

RICHARD

Well?

LINDY

All right! Nothing! Are you satisfied?

RICHARD

Very nearly. Well, if you haven't heard from her, and Alice hasn't heard from her, and Peter hasn't heard from her, and I haven't heard from her, then who do you suppose has? How about the Pope?

LINDY

I just can't believe that Peter would...do anything.

RICHARD

After two years of wedded bliss following a six week romance?

LINDY

What do you know about it? You were never around. We never heard from you. You come tearing back here in August, and suddenly you know what makes everyone tick.

RICHARD

I know her. So do you. Mother picked the wrong guy. Again.

LINDY

Don't you even try it. Daddy at least took care of her. Put up with her. She divorced him. After that we almost never saw him. When he died she never even...

RICHARD

Change the subject. We aren't talking about dear old Dad now. We're talking about Peter. Peter who whiles away the hours observing the change of seasons: Miss Autumn, Miss Winter, Miss Spring. And Mother who kills time by popping tranquilizers and accumulating frequent flier miles. At least until Labor Day weekend. When she took a ride out to the Cape and never came back.

LINDY

You really believe all this. You've convinced yourself.

RICHARD

If you think none of this is possible, why are you still listening to me?

LINDY

Mother has to be all right.

(RICHARD walks to the desk and picks up the gun. He holds it and looks at it.)

RICHARD

I thought Mother kept this in Boston. That's where it's always been. I'm pondering how it found its way from Boston to Cape Cod.

LINDY

Peter must have brought it.

RICHARD

Protecting the old homestead from being broken and entered? Or maybe I've been keeping too close a watch. Maybe I've seen something, or heard something. Maybe I just haven't realized it yet, but Peter has.

LINDY

Stop it.

RICHARD

Feel safe staying out here now? All alone, with Peter to protect you, and that gun magically appearing and disappearing? He's just out to dinner with Alice. He'll be back soon. Would you like to sleep on it? With Peter standing guard at the foot of your bed?

LINDY

What are you going to do?

RICHARD

Have a quiet conversation. You, me, and Peter. The three people who care most about Mother. No one else around to hear cannons or anything else.

LINDY

What about that?

RICHARD

Since Peter moved it once, why don't we move it again? He might just go looking for it, after all.

LINDY

Why do you need it at all?

RICHARD

I don't know that we will. Just an extra bit of leverage in the unlikely event that Peter... is not as cooperative as he could be.

LINDY

Those are real bullets.

RICHARD

I brought blanks with me, sweetie. Peter won't know we're using blanks.

LINDY

You brought blanks? This is crazy. We have to think about this more.

RICHARD

But there isn't much time. So, I'm going to think about it while I tidy things around here. You go clean up. We can talk more when you come back downstairs. I should have everything ready by then.

(RICHARD goes to LINDY and puts his arms around her. She leans against him as he leads her to the hall.)

LINDY

Let's just leave. Let's go to Boston.

RICHARD

No. This is our chance. He's going to stumble in here tonight with a couple glasses of wine in him. Sleepy, off-guard, not expecting the avenging stepchildren. The "inquiring" stepchildren.

LINDY

And what do the "inquiring" stepchildren do then?

RICHARD

I bet he'll get nervous. Prodigal me with dutiful you. What on earth could we have been talking about? Mention Mother's sudden departure. The car mysteriously returning. The text she left me.

LINDY

And what? Peter caves? You can't really be counting on that. Not if all this is true. After he's so cleverly done...something with Mother that a month later no one even suspects?

RICHARD

I know what to do to make him cave.

LINDY

It's just going to be a conversation?

RICHARD

Of course. We have the advantage tonight. You have to trust me.

LINDY

We should be calling the police.

RICHARD

You want George Gillespie and his crack team out here? That'll solve our problem. Peter could slaughter his way up and down the coast and George would just rock back and forth on his heels. (*New England accent*) "Ayuh, Mr. Shepard, looks to be another fine day. Care for some help loadin' that large and bloody bundle in your car trunk." Go on. I'll just settle things down here.

LINDY

Richard?

RICHARD

There's no time. Please help me. Go.

(RICHARD watches until she is gone, then takes the gun and passes it from hand to hand, as though he were weighing it. He sets the gun on the desktop. He takes a container from his bag, opens it, and swallows several pills, then leans back against the desk, sips his drink, and is lost in thought.)

BLACKOUT

END OF SCENE

ACT I Scene 2

Half an hour later. LINDY, nervous and distraught, is seated. RICHARD enters from the kitchen. His edginess is apparent but under tight control.

LINDY

Shouldn't he be back by now?

RICHARD

We're not going anywhere. What's a few minutes?

LINDY

I can't calm down. I'm not sure what to do.

RICHARD

Your little rest doesn't seem to have had much of a calming effect.

(RICHARD brings LINDY a drink.)

LINDY

I don't want that.

RICHARD

You do if you don't want to be clinging to the ceiling the second the front door slams. Sip.

LINDY

Too strong.

RICHARD

It'll calm you.

LINDY

Where is it?

RICHARD

In the desk. Freshly filled...with blank cartridges. I'm wondering, should I aim at his head or his crotch? Which do you think he values more?

(LINDY shudders. RICHARD takes her glass, and walks to the bar.)

LINDY

No more. That's enough.

RICHARD

A few more sips to settle the nerves.

LINDY

Are you trying to settle me or sedate me?

(Lights from a car flare against the windows.)

RICHARD

Daddy's home.

LINDY

Oh, god. He's back!

RICHARD

He's seen your car. But he doesn't know I'm here. Let's surprise him.

(RICHARD returns to his chair. LINDY half crouches. A door opens and closes in the hall).

PETER (O.S.)

Hello? Melinda? Are you here?

RICHARD

Go on, sweetie. Say something. Get him in here.

LINDY

I don't want to do this, Richard.

RICHARD

Please!

LINDY

I... I'm in here, Peter.

(PETER enters. He goes straight to the bar.)

PETER

I need this. My god, the way that woman drives. She's talking, she's adjusting the radio, she's chattering on her cell phone. Anything but paying attention as she careens across the center line again. Alice is going to kill herself one of these days. Or someone else. At dinner Alice went on and on about Jordan and his triumphant entry into the Ivy League. Then she segued into some lunch tomorrow. Then she's criticizing the library trustees. Then she's making fun of Millie Cavendish for her latest attempt to censor the newly arrived books. Amazing how Alice can get started and before you know it...

RICHARD

How are things hanging, Pete?

(PETER stiffens, his voice falters. He glances from LINDY to RICHARD, turns back to the bar and very deliberately pours a different drink.)

PETER

...the evening is just shot to hell. I'm calm enough. I'll just have a little seltzer to end the day. Richard. Haven't seen you in some time.

RICHARD

Labor Day weekend?

PETER

Could be.

(PETER, eyes on RICHARD, moves to the fireplace. From there he can see RICHARD but RICHARD can't see him. RICHARD tries turning in his chair but, frustratingly, can't overcome the disadvantage.)

Just arrived, have you?

RICHARD

I've been here awhile.

PETER

The bus must run out here pretty late.

RICHARD

I have a car.

PETER

Gee whiz. You spent money? Of your own? Next thing you know we'll have drivers behaving civilly on the Mass Pike. I didn't see your car.

RICHARD

I'm down near the beach entrance.

PETER

You strolled the dunes and came through the woods. Didn't know you had it in you.

LINDY

Richard was saying that... he'd forgotten how long it takes to drive out here. From Boston.

(RICHARD stands and faces PETER
who is intently watching him.)

RICHARD

The wreck I have doesn't have the horsepower of Mother's Volvo. Here to Boston and back - about how long did it take in the Volvo?

PETER

You ought to know. Labor Day? You drove Barbara out here and you drove her back.

(PETER puts the sofa between
RICHARD and him.)

LINDY

Richard says that you're staying on the Cape, Peter.

RICHARD

Jogging the beach, Dinners with Alice and ...other friends. Early morning sailing.

PETER

We're pretty dull.

(The house phone begins to ring.
RICHARD and PETER watch one
another. LINDY watches them. No one
moves to answer.)

RICHARD

Shall I?

PETER

Voice mail.

(The phone stops.)

RICHARD

Thought it might be Mother calling.

PETER

She's speaking to you? How about you, Lindy? No? Which of her rules do you suppose we broke this time?

RICHARD

Sixth commandment. Seventh commandment. Never can keep those two straight.

(RICHARD walks toward PETER.

PETER continues around the sofa.)

PETER

You're an Old Testament scholar now?

RICHARD

Catechism class scraps.

PETER

The words don't fade even if the lessons never quite take.

RICHARD

What's occupying your time these days, Pete? Cooking classes? Tennis lessons? Big, big plans for that business you're going to start one of these years.

PETER

How goes that bi-coastal life of yours? Boston. Los Angeles. Miami.

RICHARD

I'm so hard to pin down. Here one day, gone the next.

PETER

Pretty fortunate to have a wealthy mother underwriting that carefree lifestyle.

RICHARD

Some are born to the life. Others have to marry into it.

(RICHARD follows the route that
PETER traveled. PETER walks across
the room to the windows.)

PETER

You never talk about this rootless life of yours. What you do. Who your friends are. I'll bet it's just... fascinating. Maybe Barbara learned a thing or two given all the attention she lavished on you since you came home. Seems like I barely saw my own wife the whole month of August.

RICHARD

Mother and I are compatible. She doesn't lavish anything on me.

PETER

I can only imagine the credit card bills. Barbara's, I mean.

RICHARD

My mother is an extremely generous person.

PETER

So generous. But so demanding. Always policing for unacceptable behavior. And so eager to control it once she finds it. But always acting in your own best interest. Always "just for your own good." Lindy, what do you think of the pretty picture I just painted?

LINDY

I don't like this. I'm not participating in this.

PETER

I expect some folks are better at hiding unacceptable behavior.

LINDY

Some more than others.

PETER

That sounds like an epiphany.

(PETER settles near the bookcase.
RICHARD takes LINDY's glass.)

LINDY

No more.

RICHARD

Still faithful to the cause? Are you sure? Think fast.

PETER

Does anyone else think this vacation of Barbara's is just a little weird? I watch my wife drive off with her son and, the next thing you know, she's nowhere to be found. Did she spend the whole time prying for details about what you've been doing and who you've been doing it to?

(RICHARD steps away from the bar.
PETER rises and reaches into the
bookcase. RICHARD begins moving
toward PETER.)

RICHARD

Lindy and I were just talking about weird occurrences. Vacations without luggage. A Volvo that leaves one evening but returns the next morning. A communication blackout. A man living in splendid isolation on the beach. A message a missing woman texts her son.

PETER

Stay the hell away from me!

(PETER cannot find the gun. He warily
looks at RICHARD who has retrieved
the gun from the desk drawer and is
pointing it at PETER.)

RICHARD

This thing keeps drifting. It's in Boston. It's in the bookcase. We tidied up.

PETER

We?

RICHARD

We were wondering what you might be up to.

PETER

What I might be up to?

RICHARD

We'd like you to help out.

LINDY

Why did you move the gun, Peter?

PETER

How long has Richard been speaking for you, Melinda? And thinking for you?

LINDY

He's not thinking for me or speaking for me.

(RICHARD slides closer to PETER,
placing the gun next to his head.)

RICHARD

Back to the point. We're accounting for... imponderables. What happened when Mother came back?

PETER

She left with you and that's the last I saw her.

RICHARD

"Sorry hon. I can't make it home tonight but I'll be there tomorrow. Something came up."
Like your dick? So Mother took off like a shot to see you and Miss Autumn. Was she waiting in the woods, champagne bottle clasped between her knees?

PETER

Liar.

(RICHARD taps the gun against
PETER's head.)

LINDY

What are you doing? He has to tell us. That's what you said.

PETER

He's said a lot of things, hasn't he?

RICHARD

I asked around after Mother disappeared. A drink or two can really loosen up a reticent New Englander. You went for a sail early morning Labor Day. On a choppy sea. By yourself. Me, I think you might have taken the little woman with you. But you forgot to bring her back.

PETER

Ask him what went on when they got back to Boston. Ask him if your mother wasn't finally fed up. The prep school and college expulsions. The waste of time and money. He's concerned about Barbara! Why hasn't he talked to the police? Unless he can't.

(RICHARD knocks PETER from the chair. LINDY grabs RICHARD's arm and places herself between the two men. The phone begins to ring. No one moves to answer it and it stops.)

LINDY

Stop!

RICHARD

We know she came back here. She texted me.

PETER

You saw this text, Lindy?

LINDY

No.

PETER

He told you? Like he told you about her car moving? And those reticent New Englanders? And a sailing trip that never happened? But not about the money he needs. Or that he was going to be put back on the street by his mother. Who we can't find. And you wonder why I moved the gun?

(RICHARD puts the gun to PETER's face.)

RICHARD

(deadly calm) Lying shit. Maybe we just can't hear him. To confess you have to speak clearly and open your mouth wide.

(A loud rapping sound begins.
RICHARD, PETER, and LINDY recoil.
ALICE is at the window.)

ALICE

Peter? Lindy?

RICHARD

What the hell? Lindy, get rid of her.

ALICE

Come get me. I fell over something.

(LINDY stumbles to the window as
RICHARD controls PETER.)

LINDY

Alice! Go to the front door. Or, I'll open the window. You can crawl through.

ALICE

I hardly think so.

RICHARD

Keep her out!

LINDY

Meet me at the door or I'll leave you out there.

(ALICE starts to moves off.)

ALICE

Wicked. I am mistreated and you are evil.

RICHARD

I said get rid of her.

PETER

Lindy, don't go.

RICHARD

Nothing is going to happen. Cross my heart.

(LINDY hesitates then races into the hall.
RICHARD hauls PETER to a chair. He
listens for signs that LINDY is giving
ALICE the brush-off, but their voices
are heard as they approach the room.
RICHARD sits beside PETER and
camouflages the gun in his clothing.)

LINDY (O.S.)

But Alice, I told you Peter was going to bed.

ALICE (O.S.)

Well, if that wasn't him in the room, then who was it?

LINDY

You saw me.

ALICE

As my father was fond of saying, "if my aunt had balls she'd be my uncle." I can tell the difference between you and Peter. Richard, dear. You didn't mention that you'd be here. Bad boy. Peter, there you are. I forgot to ask whether you would be driving to Boston with me tomorrow morning. I'm leaving early.

LINDY

How sweet of you, Alice. Running out here at this hour. You should have called.

ALICE

I tried. Ring, ring, ring. Have the three of you have been sitting on your hands? Peter, dear, you look like hell. What did you do to yourself?

RICHARD

He tripped. And fell.

ALICE

Right on his face, from the looks of it.

PETER

I should go upstairs. Alice, help me.

ALICE

Well, yes, of course, dear.

RICHARD

No! We shouldn't move him yet. Let him rest.

LINDY

Just for a minute, Alice.

PETER

I don't need to rest.

ALICE

Poor thing, you must be a bit in shock. We should have a blanket for you. Richard, sweetie, you're not doing anything. Get Peter a blanket.

(RICHARD stares at ALICE.)

LINDY

I'll do it.

ALICE

Peter needs hot tea. Richard? No, no, don't get up. I'll do it. Back in a minute.

(ALICE exits to the kitchen.)

RICHARD

Jesus Christ! Why did you let her in?

LINDY

She charged in. She wouldn't stop talking. She wouldn't listen.

LINDY

Fine. Tell Alice he's gone to bed. Put her coat on her and shove her out the door

(The kitchen door opens. ALICE leans in, speaks, and exits.)

ALICE

No caffeine tonight. You'll need sleep. Chamomile. That blanket isn't going to dance downstairs by itself.

RICHARD

Upsy-daisy, Pete. I'll read you a bedtime story.

LINDY

Then what? After Alice leaves? There's nothing more we can do.

RICHARD

I'm not through yet. Do you want to know where Mother is or not?

LINDY

What happened when you and Mother went back to Boston?

RICHARD

She came back here and he killed her. I'm going to show you. C'mon daddy.

(ALICE enters.)

ALICE

Almost ready.

RICHARD

We're going upstairs now.

ALICE

Oh, stop hovering over him. You'd think you two were dating. I had no idea you were coming. What have you been up to all evening?

RICHARD

We didn't notice how late it was. We were getting ready to get some sleep.

ALICE

But that wasn't my question. The last I saw you was Labor Day weekend. You and your mother. When I see Barbara again, I'm going to let her have it. She might have asked me along on this vacation. After the year I've had. The divorce. Howard being such a jackass. Jordan starting college. Father dying and leaving me that damned house to clear out and sell. She leaves me scrambling to pack boxes and bargain with movers. Would that I was fending off hordes of buyers. In the last month Norman and Charley have brought a grand total of three people by the house. Where was I going with this particular train of thought? Oh, yes. Why I'm so irritated with your mother. Three weeks now and not a word. Ah, well. Lord, it is late. I'm due in Boston early first thing in the morning. The tea is steeping in the kitchen. Richard, why don't you get it?

RICHARD

Long drive. Lots of traffic.

ALICE

I adore Boston driving. No rules. Absolute chaos.

LINDY

Like the time you cut that woman off and she chased you. You were doing seventy on Storrow Drive. She was hanging out her window screaming.

ALICE

One needn't worry unless gunfire is exchanged.

RICHARD

Will you look at the time.

ALICE

Horribly late. I'll call you tomorrow, Peter.

PETER

Alice, stay.

LINDY

Do you have to leave already, Alice?

(RICHARD glares at LINDY.)

ALICE

Good night, Lindy. Richard, be a dear: take me out and point me toward my car.

RICHARD

I'm going to help Peter upstairs.

ALICE

You have misplaced chivalry. I insist.

RICHARD

No.

(ALICE stares. PETER tries to speak.
RICHARD clamps an arm around him.
After a moment, ALICE exits into the
hall. LINDY pauses at the hall entrance.
They hear the front door slam.
RICHARD turns on LINDY.)

RICHARD

"Do you have to go already, Alice?" Why not, "Oh, Alice, please stay and protect us from Richard, the big bad wolf?" You haven't started believing his lies?

LINDY

Please be quiet. I have to think what to do.

RICHARD

I know what to do.

LINDY

Give the gun to me.

RICHARD

No. Pete and I need to talk some more. "How we spent our Labor Day Weekend." C'mon Peter the Cheater. Stand and recite.

(RICHARD prods PETER with the gun forcing him to stand. He puts a hand around PETER's waist and places the barrel of the gun under PETER's chin. RICHARD dances PETER to the center of the room.)

I come from a shit-hole mill town.

PETER

I come from a shit-hole mill town.

RICHARD

I am a social climbing, bed-hopping predator.

PETER

I am a social climbing, bed-hopping predator.

RICHARD

I killed... c'mon Pete, let's repeat.

PETER

I killed.

RICHARD

The pill-popping, frequently flying light of my life.

PETER

The pill-popping, frequently flying light of my life.

LINDY

Richard, what are you going to do?

RICHARD

What happens after a confession? You don't need a trial.

LINDY

The police. You call the...

RICHARD

Too late. Watch the show. Now, Dad. One more time. Speak clearly. Open wide. I, Peter Shepard.

(RICHARD moves behind PETER, one hand on PETER's shoulder, the other pointing the gun between PETER's shoulder blades.)

PETER

I, Peter Shepard.

RICHARD

Killed my wife.

PETER

Killed my wife.

RICHARD

And now, what shall we do?

PETER

Lindy, please.

RICHARD

What shall we do?

LINDY

No!

(ALICE bursts in through the French doors.)

ALICE

Where the hell are my car keys?

(RICHARD freezes. PETER wrenches free and grabs for the gun. PETER and RICHARD are face to face.)

They stagger across the room, the gun sandwiched between them, as LINDY and ALICE protest. Shots are fired. The men jolt together. PETER pulls away, the gun in his hand, his shirt bloody. RICHARD turns, his shirt sopping and crimson, his face a mask of anguished astonishment. He staggers toward LINDY, one arm outstretched. She screams and falls back into the chair. RICHARD collapses dead on the floor. PETER silently stares at RICHARD as ALICE kneels beside RICHARD.)

ALICE

My god, my god. The police. An ambulance. Someone call!

(PETER shambles to the phone. He lifts the receiver, drops it, retrieves it, and holds it against his bloody shirt. ALICE stands. LINDY crawls to RICHARD and kneels beside him.)

PETER

Alice... I can't.

(ALICE repulsed by the gore, steps back.)

ALICE

My phone. Where's my phone? My phone is in my purse. Where's my purse? On the patio. I left it on the patio.

(ALICE hurries out through the French doors.)

PETER

It was an accident. He wouldn't let go.

LINDY

I could have stopped him.

PETER

What exactly were you doing to stop him?

LINDY

He would have listened.

PETER

You call me. You tell me he's downstairs. You don't say one word about him moving the gun.

LINDY

Why did you bring it?

PETER

It's isolated here. The neighbors are all gone.

LINDY

I forgot to tell you. There was too much happening.

PETER

Wasn't there just. Thank god for Alice and her Puritan sense of duty. That gave me a fighting chance.

LINDY

You didn't have to do this.

PETER

It was an accident.

LINDY

Another one?

PETER

We have to agree on what we're going to tell George.

LINDY

Not this time.

PETER

We killed Barbara. And we dumped her body. Nearly one month ago.

LINDY

You hit her and she didn't get up.

PETER

You helped move her to the boat. And you drove her car back to Boston. Did you tell anyone? That prestigious law school and that stellar legal career you and your father planned won out. Barbara lost out last time, and I expect Richard will now. Unless you're eager to get to know the girls at the women's reformatory.

(ALICE enters.)

ALICE

I thought George would never stop asking me to repeat myself.

LINDY

Please, can we cover him.

ALICE

Yes. Where? Oh. You never did get that blanket, did you?

(ALICE exits into the hall.)

LINDY

He hated you.

PETER

Little momma's boy. Funny how addictions run in families.

LINDY

Your Boston Brahmin mask is slipping.

PETER

George and the rest of the Keystone Kops will be here soon. So you listen to me. Richard came back to Boston in August. He was using again. He needed money. Barbara wouldn't help. Richard gets desperate. Barbara won't cooperate. They drive to Boston and Barbara vanishes.

LINDY

No.

PETER

Everything can be skewed the right way.

LINDY

Why did you bring the gun? You didn't expect Richard. Just... me.

PETER

How could I hurt you, Lindy?

LINDY

You think I can't keep a secret?

PETER

If I'm worried about you it's not because you can't keep a secret.

LINDY

Tonight who wanted whom dead?

PETER

Since Richard moved the gun and you didn't tell me, who indeed?

(ALICE enters. She spreads a blanket
over RICHARD.)

ALICE

Oh god, I'd better turn on the front lights. George is liable to run the car into the house otherwise.

(ALICE exits.)

LINDY

You never told me you called Mother. You wanted her to come back. To find me with you. So that you could kill her and make me help.

PETER

If that's what you think, you could have told Richard. You had plenty of time. But you didn't say a thing. And so far you haven't exactly opened your heart to Alice. Must be quite a relief. Knowing that you're all done playing nursemaid to the two of them.

(ALICE enters.)

ALICE

Even George couldn't overshoot the driveway now. What happened here tonight? Lindy, why did Richard have a gun?

LINDY

I can't. Ask Peter. I want to go upstairs. I'll come down when they need me.

ALICE

Peter, what happened?

(LINDY pauses to listen. PETER
watches her over ALICE's shoulder.)

PETER

Remember how Richard appeared out of nowhere last August. He wouldn't say where he'd been or what he'd done. Barbara was so nervous with him. She told me he'd asked for money. And he was using again. Alice, Richard may have killed my wife.

(A siren sounds and lights flash against
the front windows. LINDY turns and
exits. PETER continues telling tales to
ALICE.)

BLACKOUT

END OF SCENE

ACT II Scene 1

One month later. It is late afternoon on a cloudy and windy day. LINDY is pacing the room. She seems tired and a little haggard. Her cell phone starts to ring. She glances at the number, but does not answer. The ringing stops.

LINDY

And. Three. Two. One.

(The house telephone begins to ring.
LINDY answers this time.)

Hello? Hello? Who is this?

(LINDY hangs up. She stares ahead,
thinking. She picks up the receiver, dials
and listens, and hangs up.)

Stupid voice mail. Where are you, Peter? What are you up to?

(LINDY walks to the French doors. She
stretches. She opens the doors. The
wind whips the curtains. LINDY exits.
After a long moment, ALICE appears in
the hall and looks into the room.)

ALICE

I'm back! Where are you, dear? Heavens, it's far too cold to leave these open.

(ALICE closes the doors and exits to the
kitchen. LINDY returns from the patio.
She looks at the closed door. She tries
the handle. She enters, cautiously,
leaving the doors open.)

LINDY

Hello?

(LINDY listens for a response that
doesn't come. She goes to the kitchen
door, pushes it open, and peeks inside.
She slips through the door. A few
seconds later, ALICE is back at the hall
entrance. She looks into the empty
room.)

ALICE

I just closed those!

(ALICE crosses the room and exits through the French doors, closing them behind her. LINDY enters from the hall.)

LINDY

Who's here?

(LINDY slips over to the French doors. She opens one and looks out. She leaves the door ajar, goes to the kitchen door, and looks in. She walks back to the hall and exits. ALICE returns, package in hand. She closes the door again, clucking in displeasure. ALICE exits to the kitchen. LINDY enters from the hall, and sees the door shut again.)

LINDY

What are you up to?

(Glass breaks in the kitchen.)

Peter, you bastard.

(LINDY looks for a means of defense. She settles on the fireplace poker. She creeps toward the kitchen door. She reaches out and begins to push the door open. ALICE bustles in from the hall.)

ALICE

There you are!

(LINDY yelps and smacks her head into the door. She drops the poker as she spins around. ALICE, oblivious, marches into the room.)

Lord almighty, are you heating the outdoors, too?

LINDY

Alice!

ALICE

You ran right into the door. Oh, I think that's going to bruise. You ought to be more careful. What is this doing here?

(ALICE returns the poker to the fireplace.)

LINDY

You scared me.

ALICE

Oh pish. Fierce little me?

LINDY

You were here this morning... and yesterday

ALICE

Please tell me that I'm not a pest. But, I'm very concerned about you, sweetie. You're so solitary. You seem very tired and sad. And why wouldn't you be, after all that's happened.

LINDY

I'm fine. Really. I'm dealing with what happened to Richard... and to Mother.

ALICE

Hmmm. Is that so? Because I was at the pharmacy yesterday. I had a long talk with Lloyd Wurman. How long have you been taking sleeping pills?

LINDY

So much for privacy! How could he tell you that?

ALICE

This is a small community. Everyone knows everyone's business. Norman talks to Charley, Charley talks to Millie, Millie talks to George, George talks to Lloyd, Lloyd talks to me.

LINDY

Everyone in town knows?

ALICE

You have to be quite clever to keep secrets out here. Especially from Millie and her circle. She may be oblivious to quality in art and literature, but she's an absolute bloodhound when it comes to digging up dirt on her neighbors.

She had the nerve to come baying after me when Howard left. She won't be doing that again. Oh, I brought you a present. Marcella's been baking. Coffee cake today. I expect it's therapy for her. She liked Howard more. When she punches down the dough, she's probably picturing my face. Just my lot. I have a housekeeper who's hostile and passive aggressive. Would you like some coffee cake? I told Marcella I was bringing to you, so I doubt she poisoned it.

LINDY

I have what you brought the other day.

ALICE

She never stops. For all I know she's drying the loaves into bricks so she can wall me up in the cellar. We'll have tea, though. I'm already heating the water.

(ALICE exits to the kitchen.)

LINDY

No, I don't want any. Thank you.

(LINDY moves to the house phone and dials. She gets voice mail and hangs up.

LINDY checks her cell phone.)

It's always a different number.

(ALICE enters with the tea. She settles on the sofa and begins drinking the tea.)

ALICE

Here we are. So nice. It is chilly outside. You shouldn't leave the doors open. Oh, I must tell you. Last night I was at the library trustees meeting. Millie Cavendish. She found another dirty book. I think she's living vicariously. I swear, if she were any less intelligent, she'd be on life support. George Gillespie cornered me there. At first he said that he was interested in Father's house. But then he hemmed and hawed. Finally I said, "George stop wasting my time. Get to the point." So George bumbled a bit more and turned red and then... he asked me for a date. Of all things. And I said yes. It surprised George. It surprised me. Men haven't exactly been clamoring for my attention since the divorce.

LINDY

You're going on a date with the Chief of Police?

ALICE

We've known each other all our lives. Sweet, kind, but just a little dim, that's George. Who would have imagined that the two of us. Oh my, what have I gotten myself into? Still, it does give me an opportunity to pump him for information.

LINDY

What?

ALICE

About your mother and Richard. Nearly two months and George has the gall to tell me that the investigation is still progressing. In what direction I asked him - "reverse"? Sometimes I believe that I could do a better job detecting but with all the committees and councils and Jordan, I just don't have the time.

LINDY

George is probably doing the best he can. Richard didn't leave much that could be traced, did he?

ALICE

So untypical of him. He was a sweet boy but he invariably told one lie too many. And he was sloppy with details.

LINDY

He got better at lying. Better with details.

ALICE

Well, perhaps. But it seems to me that there's an inconsistency here.

LINDY

What inconsistency?

ALICE

How is it that Richard did such a poor job concealing his addiction and his money problems, but yet he managed to hide so completely anything to do with Barbara's disappearance? He couldn't have thought the police would be completely uninterested in his background. Not if, god forbid, someone else had died that night.

LINDY

I don't know. I didn't find out anything until afterwards.

ALICE

But your mother must have known something was going on. And Peter seems to have been suspicious as well. If they found him out, why would Richard think the police wouldn't?

LINDY

Richard wasn't thinking that night. He was out of control.

ALICE

But doesn't that prove my point, dear? We find out so much about some of his activities and virtually nothing about others. How could Richard be so sloppy and out of control in one situation and so...calculating and methodical in the other?

LINDY

Maybe he was just lucky that no one saw or heard anything. He did fool everyone for almost a month.

ALICE

No, there's something strange here. George needs to hear about it.

LINDY

Maybe he likes to work at his own pace.

ALICE

One step forward, twelve steps back? I should mention this to Peter, too.

LINDY

He hasn't been here in weeks.

ALICE

We speak on the phone. I'll see him on Sunday. You didn't know? I'm sure he said he'd told you. In any event. George and I rendezvous tonight. Sunday I see Peter. Aren't I popular, all of a sudden? Lord, what time is it? I must run. The demands of being a pillar of the community. Well, tonight I will work my feminine wiles, rusty as they are, on George, and try to get some answers.

LINDY

Very romantic.

ALICE

Somehow I don't see George and me growing old together. Although he does seem to be a little jealous of my time. He wasn't happy to hear that I'm seeing Peter. Goodbye, Lindy. Take care of yourself. I will stop by Sunday when I get back from Boston? I'll fill you in on all the men in my life. Bye!

(ALICE exits through the French doors.
LINDY closes the doors and leans her
head against them.)

LINDY

Oh, god, does she have to be a problem, too?

(LINDY goes to the telephone and dials.
PETER appears in the hall and watches
her. She waits and listens, then hangs
up.)

Where is he?

PETER

Missing me?

LINDY

What are you doing here?

PETER

I wanted to see how you are.

LINDY

I am just fine.

PETER

That's not what I hear from Alice.

LINDY

Where's your car?

PETER

Where Alice won't see it on her way out.

LINDY

She's over every day, checking on me. She may come right back.

PETER

I doubt it. Her big date is tonight. She won't be back until Sunday.

LINDY

How long were you standing out there?

PETER

Long enough.

LINDY

Alice asked about you. How you've been. What you've been doing.

PETER

Weird. She calls me all the time. We talk about you.

LINDY

I've tried calling you.

PETER

Busy, busy, busy.

LINDY

Have you heard anything from George Gillespie?

PETER

He's left a couple rambling messages. I can't tell whether he wants me to call him back or not. So, how have you been, sweetie? Solitude agreeing with you?

LINDY

Why haven't you returned my calls?

PETER

If living in seclusion is what you want, the last thing you need is annoying telephone calls.

LINDY

I have been getting calls. On my cell phone. On this phone.

PETER

From whom?

LINDY

The number is always different, but it's always the same voice. Echoing and garbled. Hard to understand. I think that it's Mother's voice. And the words I pick out are like the ones Mother used in the text message to Richard.

PETER

The text he deleted?

LINDY

Where is she? What really happened that night?

PETER

You were there.

LINDY

We moved her to the boat. We left the Volvo in Boston and drove back here. I left for New Hampshire. I never saw...what you did.

PETER

So I botched the job and Barbara is back from a watery grave? Or, did she fake her death so that she could spend eternity tormenting you with prank calls?

LINDY

Or, are you up to something?

PETER

So many possibilities. I've spent some sleepless nights wondering why you never told me Richard had the gun. What I come up with is that you thought you'd be better off with me dead.

LINDY

Why would I want something like that?

PETER

I'm dead. Barbara's dead. Richard's tucked away in prison or a hospital. You are rich. Your reputation is spotless. The sky is the limit. So, if you were all gung ho on a plan like that last month, I wonder what else you might be trying now. Something that requires you to act in self-defense?

LINDY

You're twisting things around.

PETER

Sadly, I've come to question your fidelity. I feel so intensely cautious anymore. And you. You're so tense these days. You even need sleeping pills.

LINDY

You called Mother and she drove all the way back here. To find you and me.

PETER

Same tune. Different verse.

LINDY

You're free. You've got money. I think Milltown boy wants to be sure he keeps what my Mother gave him.

PETER

Careful with the tone. Milltown boy bites. Ask Richard. And Barbara didn't give me one damn thing. She made me earn it all. Which I have. And I am keeping it.

LINDY

Leave me alone. Stay in Boston. Away from me. Away from Alice.

PETER

You're jealous? Of Alice?

LINDY

She's nosey. She's snooping. She's going on a date with George.

PETER

Nancy Drew has got zippo and George is the dimmest bulb in the pack. I'm not worried about pillow talk between the two of them. A little revolted, maybe, but not worried.

(The phone begins to ring.)

LINDY

That's probably Alice now.

(LINDY picks up the receiver.)

Hello? I thought it might be you, Alice. I wanted to... what? Why, yes, he is here. She wants to talk to you.

PETER

To me?

LINDY

Alice talked to Millie. She saw your Jeep in town.

PETER

Did she? “Hi, dear. Yes, I’m out to get a few things. I thought that since you and I... Really? What about Richard? Hmm. How about this? You come over here. Yes. As soon as possible. That’s right. Oh, Alice? Have you passed any of this on to George? Oh, later tonight. Yes, you can certainly tell him then. See you soon.”

LINDY

She’s coming back?

PETER

Nancy Drew found a clue. Something struck her strange. She wants to talk to us. Why are you looking at me that way?

LINDY

You could talk to her on Sunday. But then she has time to talk with George.

PETER

It just seems prudent to hear what she has to say.

LINDY

I don’t believe you.

(LINDY dials, listens, and hangs up.)

She’s not answering. I’ll try her cell phone.

(LINDY dials again, listens, and hangs up.)

Why isn’t she answering?

PETER

We’ll see her soon enough.

LINDY

I want you to leave. Before she gets here.

PETER

Can’t do that. Alice is on her way, magnifying glass in hand. What will we say to her? Will we have a united front? Why don’t you think it over?

(PETER exits down the hall. LINDY dials again.)

LINDY

Come on, Alice, answer.

(She hangs up. The phone rings. LINDY snatches it up.)

LINDY

Alice? Hello? Who is this? Who is this? Hello? Peter!

(PETER enters from the kitchen.)

Your cell phone. Where is it?

PETER

Search me. Maybe in my car. Want to go out in the dark and look for it, or would you really like to search me?

LINDY

I'm not going to let you do this to me. I'm not.

PETER

What was that?

LINDY

Nothing. I didn't say anything.

PETER

How about a pick-me-up? Something to stimulate the brain.

LINDY

I don't need anything.

PETER

You're all tense again. Want me to rub your shoulders?

LINDY

Stay away from me.

PETER

I wonder, during your talks with Alice, what interesting twists you've been giving to our story.

LINDY

I could phone George now. Tell him what you've done.

PETER

What we've done, sweetie. You haven't been granted absolution.

LINDY

You killed them.

PETER

And you either helped or you stood by.

LINDY

You were controlling everything.

PETER

Wouldn't I love to be a fly on the wall in that interrogation room. Do you really see George grasping the subtle nuances in our Svengali/Trilby relationship?

LINDY

As soon as Alice gets here I'll make her leave.

PETER

That's awfully unfriendly. And unlikely to happen knowing Alice as I do. I think you could use a little quiet time. I can bring you some tea.

LINDY

I'm locking my door. Until Alice arrives.

PETER

Tell you what: I'll lock mine as well. We'll both feel extra safe then, won't we?

(They exchange looks. LINDY exits.

PETER watches after her a moment,
then exits to the kitchen.)

BLACKOUT

END OF SCENE

ACT II Scene 2

AT RISE: Half an hour later. It is completely dark outside and the wind continues to gust. PETER is seated on the sofa. Headlights from a car flash against the window. PETER stands and moves to the hall.

PETER

Alice is here. Lindy? Are you coming down? I thought you were leaving. Melinda? Answer me.

(No answer. PETER looks down the hall, then exits. After a moment LINDY noiselessly enters and pauses in the living room, listening. Hearing ALICE and PETER approach, she exits to the kitchen. ALICE and PETER enter.)

ALICE

Heavens, what a wind. I must be a fright. And you must have been standing right at the door.

PETER

Oh, yes. I've been watching for you.

ALICE

Millie took me completely by surprise when she asked if you were in town. I said that you hadn't been in weeks. But here you are. She'll be glad to know she got at least one thing right.

PETER

How about George? Have you talked to him?

ALICE

No time. After I bumped into Millie I had to race home. And after I spoke to you I had to race right back here. I'll see George at the restaurant tonight. Where is Lindy?

PETER

Upstairs. I was intrigued by our telephone conversation. The concerns you suddenly have? You were cryptic.

ALICE

It's all rather a jumble in my head. I thought that talking with you and Lindy would help me sort things out.

PETER

Let's see if I can give you a hand sorting that jumble.

ALICE

It would be nice to have Lindy here, too.

PETER

She may be asleep. She's been very tired. Would you go up and check?

ALICE

Won't be a moment.

(ALICE exits. PETER charts her progress, then crosses the living room and exits to the kitchen. A long pause. PETER steps back into the living room as ALICE enters.)

ALICE

There was no answer when I knocked.

PETER

Still asleep.

ALICE

The door was locked.

PETER

Guess that's understandable, living alone out here.

ALICE

I suppose.

PETER

You and I can talk over what's on your mind. Lindy can join in later.

ALICE

I'm probably just making something out of nothing.

PETER

You never know. Have a seat. Tell all.

ALICE

I've been worried. About Lindy. Alone out here. After all that's happened.

PETER

She's isolated herself. And she's taking sleeping pills. Not a very positive combination.

ALICE

You know about that?

PETER

She let it slip. But that's all?

ALICE

No. Something very odd happened when I stopped by this afternoon. I frightened Lindy. Quite badly. I think she had the fireplace poker for protection.

PETER

That's... bizarre.

ALICE

So bizarre that I couldn't think of much else after I left. Who did she think was in the house? What would make her so afraid?

PETER

Very strange. Oh, I'm sorry, Alice. I'm making tea for you. Give me a minute.

(PETER exits to the kitchen. LINDY
appears in the hall.)

LINDY

Alice.

ALICE

Why Lindy, I thought you were upstairs.

LINDY

I'm leaving. Could you give me a ride?

ALICE

But I just got here. I want to talk to the two of you.

LINDY

Let's go to your car. Talk to me there.

ALICE

I want Peter's opinion, too.

LINDY

Talk to him tomorrow.

(PETER looks in from the kitchen.)

PETER

Well, look who made it downstairs. Milk or sugar, Alice?

ALICE

Plain old tea will do.

PETER

I'll be right out.

(PETER exits.)

ALICE

Is something wrong, Lindy?

LINDY

No. I just really have to go and I thought you could drive me to town.

ALICE

But you have a car. What is going on here?

LINDY

I'll meet you outside. Tell him you have to leave.

ALICE

What?

LINDY

He won't care. Make an excuse. Let's go.

(PETER enters, tea cup ready.)

ALICE turns to him. LINDY bolts from the room.)

PETER

Where are you going?

ALICE

Lindy?

PETER

Here it is. Make yourself comfortable. Lindy will be back when she's good and ready. You and I can talk about Richard and the "inconsistency."

ALICE

Lindy told you?

PETER

Something to do with Barbara?

ALICE

Lindy must have told you quite a bit about our conversation.

PETER

Bits and pieces. You're more informative. So, what is it? Are you going to tell me or not?
(ALICE is thinking things over.)

ALICE

Yes. Of course I am. But. First. I really must use the bathroom upstairs. The drive over, you know.

(ALICE rises. She goes into the hall.)

PETER

There's one right around the corner.

ALICE

Oh, yes. Yes. Thank you.

(ALICE exits. PETER stares after her, then at the kitchen door. He starts to follow ALICE. As he exits, LINDY slips in from the kitchen. She starts across the room. She pauses.)

She hears PETER, and exits to the kitchen. PETER enters. A moment later, ALICE joins him.)

ALICE

Is she coming down?

PETER

That's a good question.

ALICE

Why don't I go up? She seems flustered. Perhaps I can help.

PETER

I think she can manage. Lindy! Alice would like you to join the conversation.

ALICE

I'll go up and check on her.

PETER

Not necessary. Better finish that tea. Before it gets cold.

(ALICE sits. PETER goes to the bar.)

PETER

So Lindy never gave you an answer. Alice?

ALICE

What?

PETER

You thought she was afraid, earlier today. Of someone being in the house.

ALICE

I don't know.

PETER

You said you couldn't think of much else after you left.

ALICE

I'm not sure.

PETER

And that inconsistency?

ALICE

Really, now that I think about it, there's probably not much to it.

PETER

What if there is something to it? However insignificant.

ALICE

Inconsistency may be too strong a word. Now that I think about it.

(ALICE considers the tea, PETER, and
her situation.)

Goodness, what time is it? I ran out of the house so fast, I forgot to call George. I
promised I would.

PETER

But you're seeing him so soon.

ALICE

But I said that I would call him. To let him know if I was running late. Which I always
am. That way we could meet at the restaurant and he wouldn't have to pick me up at my
house.

PETER

He's picking you up at your house? How romantic.

ALICE

Unless I call him soon and tell him not to. Otherwise he'll be knocking on my front door
and wondering what on earth might have happened to me.

PETER

And what time will he be knocking on your door?

ALICE

Eight. It's nearly that, isn't it?

PETER

Barely seven. Plenty of time You and I can talk more and then you can call George. He
could even pick you up here. Although it is a bit out of the way. And then there's your
car to deal with. Hmmm. Liking the tea?

(ALICE sniffs the cup.)

ALICE

Very good. Thank you. But I really should call George. He may leave early.

PETER

First date jitters? Let me give you a hand. He's still at the office? Barbara programmed important numbers into this phone. Yup. Police, right at the top.

(PETER dials.)

ALICE

Really I can do that. You don't need to.

PETER

I'm promoting romance. "Hello? George? May I speak with him? Well, could you take a message? Yes. I'm calling for Alice Hackett. She and George have an appointment this evening. She's running late so there's no need for George to meet her at her house. She will see him at the restaurant. Eight o'clock. That's right. Thanks." There. All taken care of.

(During the call ALICE rises and walks to the fireplace. She stands, thinking troubled thoughts, as PETER speaks.)

ALICE

There really was no need for you to do that. I should be leaving soon anyway.

PETER

Now we have more than enough time. We'll finish off and you can be on your way.

ALICE

Who did you speak with just now?

PETER

Didn't catch his name.

ALICE

Older? Younger?

PETER

Couldn't say.

ALICE

Tom Wilcox? You must know him? An older man. With a cough. He chain smokes. Or Arnie Sullivan. The young man with the very deep voice?

PETER

Wasn't paying attention.

ALICE

It was probably Tom. He's usually there later.

PETER

If you say so.

ALICE

Of course. It would have to be Tom.

PETER

So you and George are all set for dinner. More tea? We can toast you and George.

ALICE

No, thank you. You should slow down. You don't want a headache tomorrow.

PETER

Just seltzer. Got to keep my wits about me.

ALICE

You know, George may have gone home already. He may not get the message you left. Especially if it was Arnie you spoke with. He's not very reliable.

PETER

I'm sure George will get the message.

(ALICE takes out her cell phone.)

ALICE

You never know. I'll try him at home. Then we can be sure George knows I'm here.

PETER

Well, I'm right here by the phone. Let me call. What's the number?

(ALICE looks at PETER. She puts her cell phone in her lap.)

ALICE

You're certain he said George would get that message? And that it was Tom you spoke with?

PETER

Fairly certain. On both counts.

ALICE

And it was Tom and not Arnie.

PETER

Come to think of it, I heard him coughing.

ALICE

Did you?

PETER

You said he was a chain smoker.

ALICE

He was.

PETER

Was?

ALICE

Tom died of lung cancer. Last summer.

PETER

Alice. You've just been a series of surprises all evening.

(As PETER moves toward her, ALICE retreats.)

ALICE

You didn't call George.

PETER

My cell phone must have rung up a storm out there in my car.

ALICE

You've been lying to me.

PETER

And you've been lying to me. Forgetting to call George. Nice story. And Lindy. Moves like the wind, doesn't she? Dropping hints as she flies past. Come out, come out wherever you are!

ALICE

She wanted me to leave. She didn't want me to talk to you.

PETER

You didn't need to. I heard it all this afternoon.

ALICE

Why didn't you tell us you were here?

PETER

Alice, really. You've been harping on that damned inconsistency all day.
(ALICE continues to retreat as PETER approaches.)

ALICE

You meant to kill Richard.

PETER

She shoots.

ALICE

Because he knew you killed Barbara.

PETER

She scores. He wanted to kill me too. It didn't quite work out to his advantage. I did have some help. But she's gotten unreliable. What with the barbiturates. Speaking of which.

ALICE

Lindy! My god.

PETER

I think you may want to sit down. Very soon, in fact. I spiked your tea. I thought you might need soothing before the night was over.

(ALICE has retreated all the across the room. She grabs for the telephone, but PETER takes firm hold of her and plants her in a seat.)

Her drowsiness begins to be evident.)
George is going to be stood up, I'm afraid. We won't be calling him. Not yet.

ALICE

Millie saw your Jeep! George will know you're here.

PETER

Nobody knows. Nobody but you and Lindy. It's just the two of you out here tonight.

ALICE

What does that mean?

PETER

Simple strokes for simple folks. To help George out all we can. You've been worrying Lindy with your questions. She can't let anyone know that she and Richard killed Barbara. So she gives you an overdose. And then panics and goes on the lam.

ALICE

George won't believe you!

(ALICE tries mightily to rise but collapses back.)

PETER

This is unexpected confidence in George. Relax. You'll just fall sleep. I have to find Lindy now. Let me know if there's anything you need. Except CPR. Melinda! Alice is... leaving.

(PETER exits to the hall. Almost immediately LINDY enters through the French doors. She is disheveled and out of breath.)

ALICE

Lindy. Help me.

LINDY

Shh! Be quiet. He'll hear you.

ALICE

George! Call him.

LINDY

It's too late. I can't. He's coming!

(LINDY slips out the kitchen door as
PETER runs in from the hall.)

PETER

The little bitch went out the window. Which, given a window at the correct height, is not such a bad thing. Sweet dreams.

(PETER disappears down the hallway.
LINDY returns from the kitchen. She slowly makes her way toward the hall. As she passes the fireplace she takes the poker and hefts it. As LINDY approaches the hall PETER steps out. He is armed with a knife. LINDY retreats to the sofa. PETER stalks her across the room.)

LINDY

What did you do to Alice?

PETER

The sleeping beauty? She's hibernating.

LINDY

How are you going to explain this accident?

PETER

All finished with accidents. I've got a reasonable explanation. You seem to know that already.

LINDY

I called George. I told him what you've done.

PETER

You have no more intention of going to prison than I do. And that's all that calling George would accomplish. And, since that's the case, it looks like one or the other of us will have to suffer a little...disappointment?

(PETER lunges at LINDY, slashing with the knife. She twists away and swings the poker against him.)

PETER cries out and falls to his knees.
 The knife skitters across the room.
 LINDY stands over PETER, poker
 raised. She takes a swing at him but he
 ducks the blow, grabs hold of LINDY's
 ankle and wrenches with all his might.
 LINDY falls backwards to the floor. The
 poker rolls away with PETER in
 pursuit. He retrieves the poker but
 LINDY has already risen, taken
 possession of the knife, and placed the
 sofa between them. They nurse their
 wounds as they glare at one another.)

LINDY

Bastard.

PETER

Bitch.

(LINDY escapes into the kitchen.
 PETER makes as if to follow but circles
 back to the hall and exits. LINDY
 reenters from the kitchen, knife at the
 ready. She works her way toward
 ALICE and searches her purse for car
 keys. There is a loud crash from the
 kitchen. LINDY drops the purse. The
 lights go out. The French doors crash
 open and PETER enters. He cuts
 LINDY off from the kitchen and the hall.
 LINDY runs out the French doors which
 are swinging wildly as the curtains
 billow in the wind. PETER exits into the
 kitchen. After a few seconds of silence,
 LINDY peeks into the room from the
 patio. She scuttles to the sofa, and
 crouches while she searches ALICE's
 purse.)

LINDY

Where are the god-damned car keys!

(PETER leaps up from behind the sofa, poker raised above his head. He swings wildly. A lamp and bric-a-brac smash and tumble. LINDY half falls, half turns and scrambles away. PETER lunges around the sofa and hunts LINDY across the room. The telephone begins to ring. PETER corners LINDY.)

PETER

Nowhere to go, Lindy. Tell the family I said hi.

(PETER hoists the poker. As he prepares to strike, Barbara's voice interrupts.)

BARBARA

"Hello sweetie! I'm so sorry that I had to leave this way, but there are a few things I need to straighten out. I'll see you very soon. Bye!"

(PETER and LINDY freeze. ALICE rises and points a gun at PETER.)

ALICE

Murderer!

(ALICE fires. PETER recoils, sways, and falls to the floor. LINDY sits stunned. She eyes ALICE. ALICE lowers the gun, her hands shaking. She tucks the gun away and checks PETER for signs of life. Satisfied that there are none, she walks to the French doors and shuts out the howling wind.)

Let's leave the lights off for now. It's more pleasant with just fire and moonlight. My hands are shaking. I could use a drop of something alcoholic. I think you could to.

(ALICE goes to the bar and busies herself. She brings LINDY a drink.)

LINDY

Alice?

ALICE

It's me, dear. The sleeping beauty awakened.

LINDY

That was the message Mother texted Richard.

ALICE

I don't text, so she left me a voice mail the day she died. I thought it might come in handy at some point. And it did.

LINDY

Peter killed Mother. And Richard.

ALICE

I tried so hard that night to stop Richard. If only he had walked me to my car. Or if I'd come in earlier the second time, I might have been able to.... but I was too late.

LINDY

He killed them both.

ALICE

That night I was in Boston with Jordan. By the time I got out here, there was nothing I could do. And do you know what the truly ironic thing is? I think Barbara thought she would find me with Peter. And instead she found you.

LINDY

You and Peter?

ALICE

One of my very worst mistakes. Of course Howard found out. Gentleman that he is, he said nothing to Barbara. He just made life hell for me. A spiteful Puritan heart that's what my ex-husband has. It's no wonder Marcella adores him so.

LINDY

You and Peter?

ALICE

After twenty-five years, when you and your husband haven't much in common anymore, and your child has grown up and left you, then... oh, many things can happen. Many, many stupid things. Ah, what time is it? I'll have to hurry.

(ALICE takes out her cell phone and dials.)

LINDY

What are you doing?

ALICE

This certainly came in handy. The ringing phone was a nice touch. "Hello? George? May I speak with him, please?" I think you could use another.

(ALICE takes LINDY's glass to the bar.)

LINDY

Wait, Alice!

ALICE

"George, dear? Oh, Arnie, is George there? Have him call me, please. Yes, I'm at home. But, my telephone is acting up. Tell George to call my cell number. Thank you dear. Goodbye."

(ALICE hangs up, pours another drink, and hands the glass back to LINDY.)

LINDY

Why did you tell him that?

ALICE

You and I need to talk a bit more. Before we get George or anyone else involved.

LINDY

Why didn't you go to George right away?

ALICE

With what evidence? You and Peter did such a fine job cleaning up.

LINDY

But you've waited months.

ALICE

You were in New Hampshire. Peter wasn't going to say anything.

LINDY

So after Richard died you started calling me and playing Mother's voice.

ALICE

I knew the strain you were under, alone out here, worried what Peter might be up to. I never expected Peter to crack, knowing him as I do... did. You were the weaker link. That's where I applied the pressure. At first I hoped you would go to George. Tell him the truth. But, you have no intention of going to prison.

LINDY

So you tried to make us suspect one another.

ALICE

Which wasn't difficult.

LINDY

I tried to stop Richard. I didn't want him to kill anyone. I wanted to help him.

ALICE

You wanted to help yourself more. You could have told him what happened but you didn't.

LINDY

I loved Richard.

ALICE

We all love within certain limits, don't we? You're one poor devil of a brother to the bad, but how much are you to the good?

(ALICE's cell phone rings.)

I expect that will be George. "Hello? George, dear. I've a terrible headache. A migraine. Would you mind a rain check? Tomorrow works for me. And Sunday has opened up as well. Call me in the morning. Now I'm taking a pill and going straight to bed. Goodbye."

LINDY

How did you know about the tea?

ALICE

I never left, sweetie. I watched Peter get things ready for me. So the tea went on the carpet and in the houseplants.

LINDY

You lied about Millie spotting Peter's Jeep.

ALICE

Well, of course I did.

LINDY

And the gun?

ALICE

I found it when I cleaned out my father's house. It's unlicensed. Nobody knew he had it. I would never have expected it of Father. You think you know someone. But it certainly came in handy.

LINDY

What do we need to talk about? Before George gets involved.

ALICE

I've agonized over this, Lindy, but I've decided that, between you and Peter, you are the less guilty party.

(ALICE's cell phone begins to ring again.
She does not answer.)

I've taken a pill George. I won't be picking up. And I hate to think of you spending years in prison. But, that's what will happen. If we tell George.

LINDY

So, we're not going to tell him?

ALICE

The difficulty with involving George is that my role in this mess becomes public knowledge. It would be rather unpleasant to face questions.

LINDY

Like, why didn't you do anything for two months? When you knew what was going on.
(The house telephone begins to ring.)

ALICE

My, we are popular tonight. Let's not answer.

LINDY

And, what exactly was your relationship with Peter Shepard?

ALICE

People would have a field day. People like Millie Cavendish. No. My father spent his life here. He was respected. His reputation was unimpeachable. He was a pillar of the community.

LINDY

And so are you.

ALICE

And so am I. Jordan will never find out any of this. Richard called us “reticent New Englanders.” But reticence isn’t necessarily bad. There are many things in one’s life that other people just don’t need to know.

LINDY

Peter is dead. People are going to figure that out.

ALICE

Suppose he left on a sailing trip. All by himself. And didn’t come back.

LINDY

Why would he do that?

ALICE

Why does anyone do anything? People can be so inexplicable.

LINDY

You’ll let me walk away? No one will ever know?

ALICE

A killer has been executed. That’s justice of a sort. I’m holding out an olive branch, Lindy. You should grab hold. Shall we have more for the road? The briny deep, actually. I am popular, aren’t I?

(As ALICE holds out her glass to LINDY, ALICE’s cell phone starts ringing again. She does not answer. LINDY rises to take the glass, but staggers, overcome by weakness. ALICE studies her.)

LINDY

Alice. I feel... strange. Why do I feel this way?

ALICE

It's acting more quickly than I anticipated.

LINDY

What? Why?

ALICE

This was a test. Of ethics and morals. I'm afraid you failed. But so did I.

LINDY

Alice!

ALICE

All I wanted was for you to go to George. So that this wouldn't be necessary.

LINDY

Help me.

ALICE

Did you help me? When you thought Peter had poisoned me?

LINDY

Please.

ALICE

No. You killed your mother and your brother.

LINDY

It was Peter.

ALICE

Not by himself. And clever as the two of you were, George was no match. He'll find the two of you tomorrow and, with my help, he'll piece together the right story. How Peter and Lindy murdered two people. And let mistrust and greed and suspicion get the best of them. So Peter poisoned Lindy. And Lindy shot Peter. A poor solution, but it's the best I can do for Barbara and Richard. I can't let you get away with what you've done. But I can't tell anyone.

LINDY

Peter can't tell anyone about the two of you. Or threaten to tell. That's what really worried you, isn't it? Who's the murderer?

ALICE

It's not the same. Not at all. And it's something I can live with.

LINDY

Millie will figure it out and tell George.

ALICE

Millie and George? I may start to giggle.

LINDY

Help me. Don't do this. No.

(LINDY slumps to the floor as ALICE watches.)

ALICE

This is not my fault. You brought it on yourself. It's not how I wanted it

(ALICE's cell phone is ringing again. She does not answer it.)

Stop calling, George. I'm fast asleep. Now, I need my coat. Gloves. Purse. This glass and cup go with me. A few of my fingerprints around won't be unusual. The gun goes to Lindy. And we're done. Let's leave the doors open. The cold will make it harder to exactly fix time of death. Fine. Fine. Well, off I go.

(ALICE walks across the room and opens the French doors. The wind flings the doors back to crash against the walls. The curtains whip back and forth. A powerful beam of light strikes ALICE's face. She is frozen, blinded, trying to see into the darkness. The beam of light travels down her body and returns to her face as ALICE's eyes adjust. ALICE's face twists into a mask of astonishment and she takes an involuntary step back into the room.)

My god! Who? Oh! Oh my. Oh, my goodness. What are you...? I thought that tomorrow... I mean... I... I... Why, George dear, have you been trying to call me?

(ALICE, her mouth twisted into a rictus of a smile, continues her retreat, the beam of light strengthening and closing in on her.)

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY