

# Nothing to die for

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# Nothing to die for

**Set:** In an immaculate modest house there is a dining area adjacent to the front room. The dining is RS and the front room is LS. The front room extends past the upstage wall of the dining area. Implied beyond the dining area's upstage wall is the front porch. The front door opens from this unseen porch into the front room. In the left stage wall is the hallway opening. In the same wall, upstage of the hallway entry, is a narrow window. In the dining area is a small table and four chairs. A kitchen hatch sits against the upstage wall of this area.

In the right stage wall is a door. In the front room there is a small couch or love seat, with two comfortable chairs on either end of a small coffee table; other furnishings, a small end table, with a drawer, and lamp.

## ACT ONE (pages 1-28)

### Scene 1 (pages 1-11)

**At rise:** **Tom**, mid 40s, neat in his appearance, still in his bathrobe and slippers, is sitting at the dining room table looking at his laptop. **Carla**, late 30's, casually dressed, sits in the front room trying to read.

**Tom** *types a few things his computer then stares at it. Frustrated he taps the delete button repeatedly.* - Nothing. Five weeks now, and all I think about when I look at this thing is nothing. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. NOTHING!

**Carla** *looks up over her book at Tom, briefly, then returns to reading.* Damn!

**Tom** *get ups and exits LS.*

**Carla** *puts her feet up on the coffee table.*

**Tom** *returns. He has a bottle of glass cleaner and a paper towel. He looks at Carla, she takes her feet off the coffee table. He looks at the glass in the kitchen hutch. He takes a paper towel off the roll.*

**Carla** – The glass is clean.

**Tom** – There's a spot. *He sprays the cleaner.*

**Carla** – You're obsessing, because you can't think of something to write.

**Tom** *wipes, then refolds the paper towel and wipes again, and so forth – I'm not obsessing. I don't obsess. I clean, because–*

**Carla** – It relaxes you. You're cleaning the clean glass; that's obsessing. They have medication for that.

**Tom** – I don't need medication. Cleanliness is not a disease.

**Carla** – OCD is at least–

**Tom** – There, now the spot's gone.

**Carla** – There wasn't a spot there in the first place.

**Tom** – How can you tell from there?

**Carla** – I've watched you clean the glass four times, in two days; so, unless people are breaking into our house, in the middle of the night, to smudge the glass, unless there's a conspiring against you, and again, they have medication for that, the glass is clean.

**Tom** – Well yes, it's clean now. *He exits to the kitchen with the paper towels and cleaner.*

*Carla puts her feet back up on the coffee table.*

*Tom returns, and sits at his laptop.*

*Carla takes her feet off the coffee table.*

**Tom** *stares at his screen, his fingers are on the keyboard, but not moving.* Nothing! Why can't I think of something?

**Carla** – It's probably because you've no real creative talent. Maybe you should clean the glass again.

**Tom** – Are you bored?

**Carla** – A little.

**Tom** – Picking on your husband for sport?

**Carla** – Are you feeling sorry for yourself?

**Tom** – Well, damn it! You know how much crap there is out there?

**Carla** – A lot.

**Tom** – Why can't a few of them be mine?! Why can't I go around bragging about my beautiful turd like–

**Carla** – Are you regressing?

**Tom** – Is my writing too turdy or not turdy enough. What's the proper amount of turdness?

**Carla** – Maybe if you slept with someone important.

**Tom** – I could be gay.

**Carla** – Ignoring the sexism in that comment, the lady doth protest too much, methinks.

**Tom** – Methinks, the lady doth have a penis.

**Carla** – That’s not a problem these days. It’s all about self-identity.

**Tom** – Be serious. It's hard enough to get someone to just look at your work before they turn it down, and now I can't even think of something for them to look at.

**Carla** – I'm sure you'll think of lots of things for them to turn down.

*Tom shows her the middle finger. Carla picks up a magazine. So, is being turned down anything like being turned off? Carla lets the magazine droop.*

**Tom** – Why are you being such a... *He gets up and heads for the front door.*

**Carla** – Where are you going?

**Tom** – To paint the trim.

**Carla** – Again?

**Tom** – It's almost done.

**Carla** – Tom you're still in your bathrobe.

**Tom** – I've got coveralls in the garage.

**Carla** – Tom I just think... **Tom exits.**

*Carla returns to her reading. She looks at the door. She looks at her cell phone. She sends a quick text. She gets a response. She peeks out the curtains through the windows. Oh, that's great up the ladder in your bathrobe, Miss Chapman will be over for sure. She picks up her phone and calls. Hi. I'm at home. Tom's outside. I ran him out. It's your fault. If I wasn't trying not to think about you, I might have played the happy homemaker and petted my husband's wounded ego. But I didn't call to talk about Tom, what are you doing? That sounds fun, you want some company? Oh, you've got company. Should I be jealous? I wish I could, but I'll see you soon enough. I promise. I don't know...soon. Maybe we could-*

*Tom opens the front door; he steps in kicking his slippers off outside. He examines himself, to be sure he's not about to bring any crud into the house and then rushes over to his laptop and starts typing.*

*Carla sets her phone down and returns to her book. Did you get an idea?*

**Tom** – Yes, no, maybe ssh.

**Carla** – Yes, no, maybe ssh. Now that's an idea.

*Tom gives her a sharp look. Carla picks up her book. Tom types furiously for a few moments then quits abruptly.*

**Tom** – It's no use. It's been done a thousand, thousand times. *He gets up and walks to the door.*

**Carla** – What’s been done a million times?

**Tom** – Infidelity. *He exits.*

*Carla sets her book down and looks out the window again. She picks up her phone and calls.*

**Carla** – Hi. Sorry, Tom just burst in, wrote for a moment, then left. No, he's still stuck. He had some idea, but gave up. So where were we. No, we weren't. I think I was telling you I'd see you soon, but not that soon. You'll survive. I'm not sure I will. I'm forcing myself to stay at home today. It's my damn home to I should be able to relax in it; it used to be... Oh never mind. Guess what Tom's idea was. No. Are you ever going to give up on that. He said it was something to do with infidelity. Yes, infidelity. It's just a coincidence, but I thought it was amusing. No, he didn't say anything more. He wrote and left. I don't know. Okay, I'll look.. *She goes over to Tom's laptop.* Oh my. It's just that...it says, "He's sleeping with my wife. I should kill them both." No, I'm not kidding. What? Tom's calling you? Are you kidding? Tom's outside.

*Tom enters, again leaving his slippers outside. He's on his cell phone, goes through his routine of making sure he's clean before stepping on the carpet.*

**Tom** – Brad, it's Tom. Hey, I just got this great idea. I mean great! It just hit me all at once. No, I didn't call you to tell you about it. Not now, I thought maybe tonight; do you think you could come for dinner? *(To Carla)* Do mind if Brad comes over for dinner?

**Carla** – I haven't spoken with Brad in so long, that would be fun.

**Tom** – This is the one, I'm sure. There might even be that part for you. Something worthy of your particular talents. So, see you tonight? Good. No hints. I get some it on paper first. See you around six. Thanks. Bye. *He puts his phone back in his robe pocket and looks at his screen and starts typing.*

**Carla** – So what is your great idea? Did you finally think of the one thing that hasn't been done before?

**Tom** – Yes, I mean no. It's not new; just a different twist.

**Carla** – What is it?

**Tom** – I'm going to reheat the coffee first; do you want some?

**Carla** – No.

*Tom gets up and exits to the kitchen.*

**Carla dials her phone** – Hi. I've just got a moment. I'll see you tonight. Bring more bubbly. You know he loves the bubbly. Bye. *She erases things on her phone and then nervously walks around, flustered and excited.*

**Tom returns, holding a cup of coffee** – I should thank you. It really is the best idea I've had in a long time.

**Carla** – Thank me, what for?

**Tom** – Inspiration.

**Carla** – Oh? How?

**Tom** – If you hadn't been so annoying. *He begins typing furiously.*

**Carla** – I do what I can. Should I annoy you some more?

*Tom continues typing.* It's really not a problem.

**Tom** (*while typing*) – What?

**Carla** – I can think of lots of ways to annoy you.

**Tom** (*while typing*) – Okay.

**Carla** – Or I could just sit here and talk to myself. Should I annoy you or talk to myself?

**Tom** (*while typing*) – Yes.

**Carla** – That's what I thought too.

**Tom** (*while typing*) – Huh, what?

**Carla** – I was just–

**Tom** – That's fine.

**Carla** – Tom, what's wrong with our marriage? I think it's flatulence. Don't you?

**Tom** – Yah, you're right.

**Carla** – You think I should fart more? Tom? Tom do you think I should fart more?

**Tom** (*while typing*) – Of course.

**Carla** – I just don't know if I have it in me. Another marriage ruined because a woman doesn't fart enough. So, cliché. So sad. Isn't it? Tom?

**Tom** (*while typing*) – What dear?

**Carla** – I said it's sad. Don't you think so?

**Tom** (*while typing*) – Uh hum.

**Carla** – I suppose I'll have to find someone else. Should it be someone older or younger; which do you prefer? Tom, older or younger men? Older or younger? Say younger.

**Tom** – Younger... Wait, what are we talking about?

**Carla** – Nothing important, just trying to inspire you.

**Tom** – I really need to focus. Oh damn. I opened the paint. Could you put the paint away for me? I've got a great stream of thought going here.

**Carla** – Since I discovered something new, we have in common, I will be glad to.

**Tom** (*typing*) – Thanks.

*Carla goes out the front door, but leaves it open.*

**Tom** – Wait what did we have in common? *Looks back at his computer screen and begins reading from it.* I'll kill her, I can't take her farting anymore? What? *He sips his coffee and returns to typing.*

**Nancy Chapman**, early 30's, pudgy, with a nervous high energy, *knocks on the front door, as she pokes her head in.*

**Nancy** – Hello? Hello? *She comes all the way in and sees Tom typing away at his computer.* Hi, Tom. Oh my God, are you working on something? You are writing right? Writing right? Ha.

**Tom** – Nancy. Did you just let yourself in?

**Nancy** – The door was open, and you didn't hear me. Any ways, I really don't mean to intrude, it's I wanted to return this book. I like it, but I was surprised how much sex there was in it. I don't know why books have so much sex in them. Do you?

**Tom** – Uh no, I mean, what book?

**Nancy** – A Winter's Garden, remember you loaned it to me. Kind of a juicy book to loan a new neighbor; it could give a girl ideas.

**Tom** – Juicy? A Winter's Garden? Are you sure you're thinking of this book?

**Nancy** – Maybe I'm just more sensitive. You're probably use to endless sex. **Tom** *stares blankly at her for a moment.* As a writer, I mean. It could be a matter of opinion, but there was so much desire in it. It seemed like it was on every page?

**Tom** – I don't think—

**Nancy** – For example, Mrs. Comer,

**Tom** – Mrs. Comer?

**Nancy** – Comer, Commer, no, no, Conner; she's most taken with her neighbor. She's quite enchanted with him, well that's not the right word. I'm not good, like with words. But I make up in other ways. Anyways, Mrs. Conner keeps putting herself in all kind of situations practically begging her neighbor to pounce on her. Do you think that's realistic writing?

**Tom** – The Winter's Garden is pristine in its realism, that is in the seesaw of how literature both accurately reports on, while simultaneously shapes our views of reality.

**Nancy** – Huh?

**Tom** – I mean-

**Nancy** – Are you saying all the lust in this book is real or not?

**Tom** – I'm uncertain about your interpretation, art is after all–

**Nancy** – Where's Carla?

**Tom** – Probably in the garage.

**Nancy** – Hey I didn't close the door. *She closes the front door, and locks it. Tom gets up, and pulls his bathrobe around him tightly.*

**Tom** – Thanks for returning the book, I'll have to reread it, make sure–

**Nancy** *moving toward Tom as Tom circles around the table to keep away from her*– I just mentioning my take on it. I mean you're such a serious thinker, and I love being able to discuss things with you. Oh, what are you working on now? I guess that means the writer's block is gone.

**Tom** – One form of it.

**Nancy** – What is it about? Any sex in it, ha, just kidding. I know you're not obsessed with sex, like other writers, are you?

**Tom** – No.

**Nancy** – Didn't someone famous say all creative energy is sexual in nature?

**Tom** – Did you color as a child?

**Nancy** – Only outside the lines. Here let me see what you've written. Oh, someone's cheating; see just like other writers: sex, sex, sex.

**Tom** – Nancy, Nancy would you do me a huge favor?

**Nancy** – Of course, what is it?

**Tom** – Would you get my wife for me?

**Nancy** – Do you need her for something? I could help?

**Tom** – I'm afraid I really do need her. Would you?.

**Nancy** – You'll owe me a favor.

**Tom** – Sure. *Nancy starts toward the bedrooms. She's in the garage.*

**Nancy** – Oh, right. I forgot. *She tries to open the front door, but it's lock. Silly me, I locked it. So safety conscious.*

*Tom sits back down and continues to type, think, and drink coffee in an excited animated fashion.*

*Carla enters, Nancy stays just outside the doorway, with some paint splattered on her.*

**Carla** – You don't want to use our bathroom?

**Nancy** – No, I'll wash it off at home.

**Carla** – What did you want?

**Tom** *looking up from his computer* – Where's Nancy?

**Nancy** *stepping forward* – I'm right here.

**Tom** – Stop, wait–

**Carla** – She's not coming in.

**Tom** – What happened?

**Carla** – I accidentally splattered some paint on her. Well, what did you want?

**Tom** – Want? What did I want? Let me see, I was here trying to write, and Nancy was talking to me, and I was trying to... funny that I forgot.

**Carla** – If you can't remember–

**Nancy** – I came over to return the book Tom loaned me. I was telling him about it. I don't know why writers have to put so much sex in their work?

**Carla** – I suppose they have to put it somewhere. Is this the book?

**Nancy** – Yes. *She moves further in.*

**Tom** – No please, not on the carpet. Here, I'll find something to put down.

**Nancy** – It's okay, I'll just stand here.

**Tom** – Could you stand just a little further back?

**Nancy** – Here?

**Tom** – A little more, thanks. Sorry, it's just–

**Carla** – Tom had this tragic incident in his childhood; a stain tried to kill him.

**Tom** – Yes, yes, I'm a neat freak. I don't know why, but I've always like things nice and tidy and in their proper place.

**Nancy** – Oh I love to put things in their proper place too. There are times, though, I don't care where things go, just as long as they're going somewhere.

**Carla** – Miss Chapman it's such a joy to have you as our neighbor.

**Nancy** – Thank you. I like living next to you guys as well.

**Carla** – A Winter's Garden, it's one of your favorites, isn't it Tom? You should share some of your knowledge with Miss Chapman; she seems so interested.

**Tom** – I remember what I wanted to ask. Do you need anything for dinner tonight? Should I help you clean the house?

**Carla** – Clean the house, because it's just too untidy for... Miss Chapman, what are you doing tonight?

**Nancy** – Tonight, nothing.

**Carla** – We're having a friend over so Tom can tell him all about his new idea. Sometimes, when Tom has a new idea, we even act a few scenes for him. It's always great fun. You should come over.

**Nancy** – Oh I'd love that. It's so nice to live next to creative types. My last neighbors were no fun at all, especially after they put their fences up. Why do people always want fences?

**Carla** – People have been known to like their privacy.

**Nancy** – You can have privacy without fences.

**Carla** – Yes, of course your neighbors then have to respect your privacy.

**Nancy** – I know exactly what you mean, which is why I'd never tell anyone what I see going on over here.

**Carla** – There's that. So, tonight around six.

**Nancy** – Is there anything I can bring?

**Carla** – Just alcohol, and a willingness to indulge in make-believe.

**Nancy** – Oh I'm willing.

**Tom** – Nothing that stains.

**Carla** – Don't listen to him. Worrying about the carpet is his favorite hobby.

**Nancy** – I better go now. This paint is beginning to dry. I'll bring something, but nothing that stains. That takes so much fun out of my choices. Bye Tom, see you tonight.

**Tom** – Good day. *Nancy exits.* Did you have to invite her?

**Carla** – You didn't want me to? What's wrong with Miss Chapman; she so adores you creative types?

**Tom** – You use to get jealous when a woman showed me that kind of attention.

**Carla** – What kind of attention is that Tom?

**Tom** – You know.

**Carla** – Yes, I do. I was just wondering-

**Tom** – Well since you invited her, you can run interference.

**Carla** – Perhaps a fresh perspective would be good for your...writer's block.

**Tom** – Last time I checked, I was married, but I can check again.

**Carla** – I was only teasing Tom.

**Tom** – I'm sorry hon. I just...I certainly don't have to worry about my writer's block. *He starts typing.* Hey, maybe Nancy will take a shine to Brad. He's not a bad looking guy.

**Carla** – No, he's not bad looking.

*Tom continues to type.*

*Carla sits back down and picks up her book.* But I don't think Miss Chapman is his type.

**Tom** (*while typing*) – How would you know?

**Carla** – What type of woman do you think Brad likes? *Tom doesn't answer.* Blondes, brunettes, thin or chubby, bright, mysterious, sassy, shy, sweet, fiery?

**Tom** (*while typing*) – Yes.

**Carla** – Yes? He just likes them all?

**Tom** (*while typing*) – Uh huh.

**Carla** – Is he sex starved? Tom?

**Tom** (*while typing*) – I think so.

**Carla** – Should we do something about it?

**Tom** (*while typing*) – I would.

**Carla** – Now that's a good friend.

**Tom** – Sure. Sure. Wait... *He sighs frustrated and does some quick editing.* I think I'll go downstairs. *He folds his laptop up and exits with it and his cup of coffee, RS.*

*Carla puts her feet back on the coffee table and reads her book.*  
"Knocking,"

*Carla, thinking it's Miss Chapman, ignores it. More "knocking."*

**Carla** – Come in. "Knocking." Come in!

**Jan Anderson**, in her sixties, *opens the door and comes in.*

**Jan** – I got mail for you.

**Carla** – Oh, god. I thought it was someone else. Sorry Jan.

**Jan** – I should have brought it over last night. *She hands Carla a piece of mail.*

**Carla** – You shouldn't have to. I've got proper labels now.

**Jan** – Can you get help. They seem to have a pill for everything now. *Looking at the book Carla's reading.*

**Carla** – It varies. You know I once tried to go to a seminar for it, but all I found was a lecture on Alexi Dys.

**Jan** – Never heard of her.

**Carla** – Me neither. I tried again, and it was a lecture on daily sex, which is a nice thought, but...

**Jan** – I did notice it's from an agent. Do you think he got accepted?

**Carla** – Let's hope. He's downstairs, right now, typing away.

**Jan** – That's good. Isn't it?

**Carla** – Yes, it's what he wants. It's all he wants.

**Jan** – All?

**Carla** – Yes. I mean I understand; he's wanted this his whole life, but–

**Jan** – Bit of a midlife crisis.

**Carla** – If Tom wants to wallow in self-pity, like he's the first person whose dreams have eluded them, does he need to drag me along? I'm sorry, I don't mean to unload on you.

**Jan** – I've always had a sympathetic ear.

**Carla** – His OCD is getting worse.

**Jan** – At least you have that dear. My John has had more than his share of disappointments in life, but I don't think he knows how the dishwasher works.

**Carla** – I suppose; now who's complaining. Thank you for bringing this over.

**Jan** – You're welcome. Good luck dear.

**Carla** *closes the door. She starts to take the letter to Tom, but stops. She opens and read it. Then bundles it in a drawer with a stack of other rejections.*

## Scene 2 (pages 12 - 20)

**Set:** The table's partially set for dinner.

**Brad** knocks on the front door. **Carla** crosses to the front door looks through the peep hole, smiles, arranges herself quickly and opens the door. **Brad**, mid-forties, dressed casual, sports jacket, loose tie, he's carrying a bag with bottles of Champagne.

**Carla** – Hello Brad.

**Brad** – Hi Carla. Lovely to see you. *He brushes against Carla, as he enters.*

**Brad** – I brought bubbly.

**Carla** – That's so thoughtful.

**Brad** – A little voice whispers these ideas in my ear.

**Carla** – A little devil or a little angel, that whispers to you?

**Brad** – A bit a both, I think.

**Carla** – Which do you prefer?

**Brad** – Where's Tom?

**Carla** – He's sequestered himself in the basement. He couldn't take all my distractions.

**Brad** – You can be distracting.

**Carla** – Those aren't the kind of distractions he was talking about.

**Brad** – So are all alone?

**Carla** – Might be, since I haven't heard Tom knock the ironing board over, which I absentmindedly left in front of the stairway door.

**Brad** – My you're forgetful.

**Carla** – I know, but what can I do about it?

**Brad** – Kiss me.

*Carla kisses him.*

**Carla** – It's not improving my memory.

**Brad** – Don't give up so quickly. **Carla and Brad** kiss more passionately. God I've missed you. Every delicious morsel of you. Your sparkling eyes. The sweet crook of your neck. The infectious smell of your

hair.

**Carla** – Have you missed this pinky?

**Brad** (kissing her pinky) – Oh especially this pinky. Such an exquisite little pinky; ambrosia to the gods.

**Carla** – Are you a god?

**Brad** – I feel like a god when I'm with you.

**Carla** – God you're ridiculous, so, so ridiculous. *They kiss again.*

**Brad** – Can we go somewhere? Did you need something from the store?

**Carla** – I'm not sure–

**Brad** – We'd only be gone for a moment.

**Carla** – A moment? *She pushes Brad away.* Dinner's cooking.

**Brad** – Could let it simmer; it enhances the flavor.

**Carla** – Some things are much better, after they've stewed for a spell.

**Brad** – Just not what you're cooking?

**Carla** – Afraid not.

**Brad** – I suppose I'll just have to settle for appetizers, delightful, delicious, delovely-

**Carla** – Appetizers, is that all my affection denotes to you? You know Tom did say you were sex starved.

**Brad** – What?

**Carla** – It's a new game I play, when Tom's pretending to listen to me. I can say anything, and all he says is yes, uh huh, sure, that's nice, and so on. So today, he agreed that you were sex starved. He's willing to help.

**Brad** – I wish I could be a fly on the wall for those conversions.

**Carla** – You wouldn't survive long. He might not be listening to me, but he'd notice the tiniest spot on the wall. The human mind is such weird thing. He'd notice some speck of dirt, but I could tell him every detail about us, and all he'd say is –

**Brad** – You wouldn't?

**Carla** – It wouldn't matter. He doesn't hear anything I say, when he's like that. Not really.

**Brad** – Still, you wouldn't.

**Carla** – When we're caught it's not going to because-

**Brad** – When? What do you mean when?

**Carla** – Brad, everyone always thinks they're so clever; then they get caught.

**Brad** – We are not everyone, and we are clever. *He kisses her.* Very, very clever.

**Carla** – Wouldn't you feel better if we had some rudimentary idea of how we'll handle it, in case, we're not so clever, Mr. 'We'll only be gone a moment?'

**Brad** – There's no handling a thing like that. You can't predict how someone will react.

**Carla** (laughing) – Even Tom?

**Brad** – Especially Tom. Who knows what would happen if all his tidy little threads were suddenly made to appear disheveled? (*beat*) Are you feeling guilty? Is that what this is about?

**Carla** – No. No, I don't think so. Oh, it's just been one of those weeks. Forget it. I guess I'm like Miss Chapman, a little confused.

**Brad** – Miss Chapman?

**Carla** – My new neighbor.

**Brad** – I thought you said she was...

**Carla** – Okay, so I'm not that confused. Tom's afraid of being alone with her.

**Brad** – Why?

**Carla** – What's the polite way to put it? She wants something badly. She either doesn't care or is oblivious to how obvious she's making it. I don't know if I'm amuse or disgusted, by it.

**Brad** – Jealous?

**Carla** – I kind of wish... Let's not talk about it. There are conveniences to our lusty neighbor.

**Brad** – Such as?

**Carla** – Well I can practically imprison Tom at home, merely by mentioning to her I'm leaving.

**Brad** – She can't be that bad.

**Carla** – I lock the doors. And I'm pretty sure Tom hides in the basement.

**Brad** – She's not some crazed stalker?

**Carla** – She’s definitely a crazed stalker, but harmless. She’ll be here tonight. I invited her.

**Brad** – Why?

**Carla** – Convenience.

**Brad** – Oh, clever, clever, girl.

**Carla** – Woman.

**Brad** – Most definitely. So, while Miss Chapman is cornering Tom.

**Carla** – We might have a moment. That’s all you need right? *She picks up the bottles of Champaign and walks toward the kitchen. Brad starts to follow.* You’d better stay here. Tom might hear your clodden footsteps in the kitchen. *She exits.*

**Brad** – Clodden? That's not a word. I'll have you know I have the lightest of steps. I trained ninjas in Master of the Panther Arts. *He makes a show of moving melodramatically around like a ninja, but backs up and knocks over lamp. He hurries to sit down and picks up a magazine.*

*Carla enters.* **Carla** – Hmmm. *She bends over to pick up the lamp with deliberate flirtation.*

**Brad rises.** Now, now. This maiden will only yield to the charms of a ninja.

**Brad moves across the room, again melodramatically.** Oh my, a ninja, whatever shall I do?

**Brad seizing Carla, caressing her. The door knob jiggles. Nancy knocks on the front door. Carla and Brad leap back. Brad sits on the chair. Carla flustered looks around.**

**Carla composes herself, and opens the door.**

**Nancy stands in a tight dress.** Why Miss Chapman what a pleasant surprise. **Nancy enters.**

**Nancy** – Surprise? Is it too early, I could... Hello? You must be Tom’s friend. I’m Nancy, Miss Chapman to Carla, I don’t know why she does that, calls me Miss Chapman, no one’s been that formal in decades, except her, it’s Miss or Misses whenever she talks about someone, or of course Mister, how come men don’t have to be called something different if they’re single? I mean, that’s a handy thing to know, don’t you think? See everyone knows I’m single because I’m a Miss something. Okay, I’m rambling. It’s just I’m nervous and excited. Hi, I’m Nancy.

**Brad** – Brad. How do like your new house?

**Nancy** – It’s great. It’s a little big. I suppose I should have thought about that. I’m just not use to being single again.

**Brad** – When did you move in?

**Nancy** – I'm still moving in; half my belongings are still in boxes, but I guess I've been in the house for about four months.

**Carla** – Only four months. It seems so much longer.

**Nancy** – Doesn’t it? Seems like I’ve been spying on you guys forever. Just kidding. Where’s Tom?

**Carla** – He’s in the basement, writing.

**Nancy** – Does he have a man-cave down there? *Brad and Nancy repress a laugh.*

**Brad** – Yes, quite the man-cave.

**Nancy** – I'd love to see his creative den.

**Carla** – I should let him know everyone's here. Drinks?

**Nancy** – Oh, forgot the booze. I'll just get it.

**Carla** – You don't have too; we've plenty.

**Nancy** – I'll be right back. *She rushes out. Closing the door behind her.*

**Brad** – So is she single?

**Carla laughs** – You want me to set you up on a date?

**Brad** – Yes, with the most dazzling woman on earth? *He kisses her.*

**Carla** – Does she have a name?

**Brad** – Fred. *Carla laughs. The ironing board is heard falling over offstage.*

*Brad and Carla move to sit while starting a fake conversation.*

**Carla** – I can't believe that.

**Brad** – No, it's absolutely true.

**Carla** – You're kidding me.

**Brad** – Why would I joke about something like that?

**Carla** – You and Tom are constantly making up stories, so-

**Brad** – Yes, but I'd never make up...

*Tom enters.*

**Carla** – Hi dear. Brad was just telling the most amazing story.

**Tom** – You left the ironing board in front of the basement door again.

**Carla** – I'm sorry, I just got so preoccupied in the kitchen.

**Tom** – Brad you're early.

**Brad** – Yah, I guess I am.

**Tom** – It doesn't matter, but do you mind if I continue writing, for a bit.

**Brad** – Of course not. I'll just sit here and continue lying to Carla.

**Carla** – Brad you weren't. You made that whole thing up?

**Tom** – You're so gullible.

*Tom exits.*

**Carla** – There are advantages to being gullible. Someone told me I'm the most dazzling woman in the world, and I believed him.

**Brad** – No, no, I said Fred.

*Carla throws a cushion at him. So where were we.*

**Carla** – Well, Fred was needing to go to the kitchen. *She exits to the kitchen.*

*Brad looks around and opens the drawer where the rejection letters are kept. He takes out the stack and looks at the post mark date.*

*Nancy bursts in the door, winded, which mildly startles Brad.*

**Nancy** – Did I miss anything? Where is... There you are Brad. What are those? **Brad puts the letters back.** Did I catch you snooping?

**Brad** – No no, I was just looking for a pen.

**Nancy** – Like the one in your pocket?

**Brad** – Oh... They're rejection letters. I always check, just to see how my friends doing.

**Nancy** – I'm the one who's snooping. That's so unlike me, sorry. Where's everyone?

**Brad** – Tom was just here, but went back down to his man-cave, and Fred is in the kitchen.

**Nancy** – Fred?

**Brad** – Carla, inside joke.

**Nancy** – Well, what do you do Brad?

**Brad** – By day or by night?

**Nancy** – Which is more interesting.

**Brad** – By day, I'm America's greatest undiscovered actor. By night, I do a number of freelance things, online, and somehow, in the hodgepodge, I pay the bills, just not always my taxes. You don't work for the IRS?

**Nancy** – Ha! Me work for the IRS. I think decimal points are evil. Those little dots, that if put them one place in my check book, I'm rich, but if I put it another, I'm broke. I always want to put things where they feel good, don't you?

**Brad** – That's easier said than done.

**Nancy** – Yes, but I can keep trying. Are you married?

**Brad** – No.

**Nancy** – Really, a handsome interesting guy like you isn't married?

**Brad** – I guess I just haven't met the right...guy yet.

**Nancy** – Oh. Well I'm sure you will. I'll just go to give this to Carla. *She exits toward the kitchen (stage right).*

*Carla enters.*

**Carla** – Maybe I should tell Miss Chapman you're gay, just so she doesn't get–

**Brad** – I already didn't. It was a fight or flight reaction.

**Carla** – When?

**Brad** – Just now.

**Carla** – She's back?

**Brad** – No she just went into the kitchen, to give you the booze she brought.

**Carla** – Excuse me, I think I have to go rescue my husband.

**Brad** – Why? I thought that was your clever plan?

**Carla** – We haven't eaten dinner yet. I didn't spend hours cooking just to let it go to waste. *She exits stage right.*

*Brad walks around the room. Tom enters from the left stage door, off the front room's wall. He walks up behind Brad, without Brad noticing.*

**Tom** – Brad?

**Brad** – Jesus Tom! You trying to give me a heart attack. I thought you were still in your man-cave.

**Tom** – My what?

**Brad** – The basement.

**Tom** – Too much coffee, I needed to tinkle.

**Brad** – Carla and Nancy–

**Tom** – So you've met our enthusiastic neighbor.

**Brad** – Is that what you call it?

**Tom** – I see you have. You're still single?

**Brad** – Not that single Tom. I've never been that single.

**Tom** – Just a thought. She seems to be having some kind of breakdown. Carla must feel for her, I don't know why else she'd invite her over.

**Brad** – They're both looking for you.

**Tom** – You should be so lucky. I guess I'll go find them. *He exits, stage right, to the kitchen.*

*Brad turns toward the left stage door.*

*Tom returns from the kitchen.* Hey, Brad –

**Brad** – Would you stop doing that!?

**Tom** – Sorry, I just thought I should offer you a drink first.

**Brad** – I brought some Champagne. It's already chilled.

**Tom** – So thoughtful. You know I love the bubbly. I'll just go get it, and maybe they can find us. *He exits stage right to the kitchen.*

*Brad picks up a magazine and flips through it, keeping an eye on the kitchen exit.*

**Brad (to himself)** – Brad, you seem a little nervous tonight. Me nervous, what do I have to be nervous about? Nothing. Nothing, at all, but you know you're talking to yourself. Well, I do that sometimes, when I'm nervous. Brad, you crack me-

*Carla enters swiftly from the stage left door.* **Carla** – Well, I can't find her or Tom.

*Brad jumps.*

**Carla** – You all right?

**Brad** – I would be if people would stop running up behind me!

**Carla** – What?

**Brad** – Never mind. Tom just went into the kitchen.

**Carla** – And Miss Chapman? *Brad gives a I don't know gesture.* How could she vanish? **Carla heads towards the kitchen.** You sure you're okay?

**Brad** – I'm fine. I'm fine.

*Carla exits.*

*Brad moves towards the front door, keeping an eye on the RS ad LS entrances. He stands there guarded for a moment. The front door's knob starts to move. Brad turns and sees it. He grabs the door and jerks it open. Ah ha! Nancy screams and tumbles inside, with one shoe in her hand, the heel broken.*

**Nancy** – My God, what's wrong with you?! Why would you do that?!

**Brad** – I’m so, so, sorry. I didn’t know, I mean, I... I... I thought you went to the kitchen.

***Brad** helps her up.*

**Nancy** – I couldn’t find anyone, and thought they might be out on the back porch, but the door locked behind me. So, I had to walk around, but I stumbled in the dark, and broke my heel. I loved these shoes. And then for some reason, someone yanked the door open and screamed at me.

**Brad** – I’m sorry about that. Really.

***Carla** enters from the kitchen. She is carrying Champagne glasses.*

***Tom** follows her, holding a Champagne bottle, which is blocked from Brad’s view.*

**Carla** – I see you’ve reappeared Miss Chapman.

**Nancy** – Yes, I stepped out the back door

***Nancy**, feeling entitled to, uses Brad to balance herself while she takes her other shoe off. And got locked out.*

**Carla** – But what happened to your shoe? ***Tom** pops the Champagne.*

***Brad** screams, and jumps, causing **Nancy** to fall over again.*

### Scene 3 (20 -24)

**Tom** is sitting and sipping Champagne while scribbling some notes.

**Brad** is setting on the table.

**Nancy** enters through the front door, with a different pair of shoes on.

**Nancy** – Who knew dinner could be so dangerous?

**Brad** – Again, I'm so sorry.

**Nancy** – You should be. So, Tom are you ready to tell us all about your play?

**Tom** – I need to eat first.

**Nancy** – Can't you just tell us a little?

**Tom** – I don't think I'd be able to stop if started. It's really is good stuff Brad. If I don't say so myself.

**Carla** enters, carrying a dish.

**Carla** – It will be just a few minutes longer. Sneakers, Nancy? How appropriate

**Nancy** – What a delicious smell.

**Brad** – Carla's an amazing cook. I don't know why Tom doesn't weight 400 pounds.

**Tom** – Discipline. But I see you're putting on a little weight Brad.

**Brad** – What? I don't think so. *Pinching himself.*

**Tom** – What do you think Carla, has Brad put on some weight?

**Carla** – I was thinking just the opposite. *(to Brad)* Have you been eating well enough?

**Brad** – I will tonight.

**Carla** – Be sure to save room for desert.

**Nancy** – How long have you known each other?

**Brad** – More than twenty years. Tom and I went to college together.

**Tom** – And here we are still pursuing the same dreams.

**Brad** – I think you've caught a dream.

**Carla** – When you reel your dreams in Brad, do you club them over the head first, or go straight to gutting?

**Brad** – Catch and release, that's my motto.

**Carla** – Well I guess someone else gets to keep your fish then.

**Nancy** – Tom, is your play a drama, a comedy, or a tragedy?

**Tom** – That's a good question. I'm not sure yet.

**Nancy** – Tom, you're not giving my imagination anything to work with.

**Carla** – Can't you give Miss Chapman one hard thing? Didn't you say something about infidelity, this morning?

**Nancy** – Cheating, yes, I remember. Is that what it's about? Is someone sleeping with someone they are not supposed to?

**Tom** – Something like that, but I really do need to eat first. I'll slay you all with my brilliance after dinner.

**Nancy** – Well then, I just can't wait to die, but you don't seem like a killer to me.

**Carla** – He's killed the mood more than once.

**Nancy** – Tell me where do you get your ideas, then? I've always been interested in the creative process.

**Tom** – The mysteries of the creative mind. Where do ideas come from? Are we their creators or but midwives? In the twilight of the mind do we breathe life into them or they into us?

**Carla** – Yes, where does all that crap come from?

**Nancy** – I think everything comes from the unconscious. We know so much we don't know. You know?

**Tom** – Do you mind if I borrow that? *He starts writes a note on his pages.*

**Nancy** – What, what did I say?

**Tom** – We know so much we don't know. You know?

**Nancy** – Was that clever?

**Brad** – Don't let him get it cheap Nancy. Make him pay you properly.

**Nancy** – Oh, Tom can have it, after all I didn't even know I said it. He'll just owe me a favor.

**Carla** – Don't go into in debt to Miss Chapman, Dear. I can't think of how you'd be able to repay her.

**Nancy** – I'm sure I could think of something.

**Carla** – Does your house need cleaning?

**Nancy** – No.

**Carla** – Do you need help with some writing?

**Nancy** – No.

**Carla** – Research, that’s it. Tom’s really good at research.

**Nancy** – No.

**Carla** – Well, I’m at a loss then. I bet the rolls are done.

**Brad** – Do you want some help?

**Carla** – Sure. *Carla and Brad leave for the kitchen.*

**Nancy** – I know Carla was just kidding. I bet you have lots of wonderful talents.

**Tom** – I suppose, but you know Brad is a very talented guy. He's a great actor. He's–

**Nancy** – Oh I’m sure Brad's marvelous, but...well if you don't want talk about your play, and you don't want to talk about your many talents, what are we going to talk about? May I ask you a question? Does being married get easier? I mean if it last more than a few years?

**Tom** – I don’t know if it gets easier. I think you get more comfortable with each other.

**Nancy** – Comfortable? That doesn’t sound very exciting?

**Tom** – I don’t appreciate excitement as much as some others do.

**Nancy** – Everyone likes excitement, that’s why they call it excitement.

**Tom** – I seem to be missing that ap.

**Nancy** – It’s all about pushing the right button.

**Tom** – I don’t have any buttons.

**Nancy** – Really, that’s not a button? *She touches a button his collar, then draws her hand down his shirt* ,And this isn’t a button, and what’s that?

**Tom** – Nancy, I’m just going to pop into the kitchen and see if Carla needs more help.

**Nancy** – Don’t leave me alone.

**Tom** – I’ll be right back.

**Nancy** – Stay and we can do some research?

**Tom** – Research?

**Nancy** – Your play, it's about infidelity isn't it? Don't authors do research?

**Tom** – I don't think this play needs research.

**Nancy** – None? Not even a little? Why?

**Tom** – Well, it's... I'll be right back. **Tom exits. Nancy peeks at Tom's play.**

**ACT 2 (pgs 25 - 56)**

**Scene 1 (pgs 25 - 44)**

After Dinner: Tom and Nancy on end chairs in the living room. They both have bubbly drinks. **Tom** is scribbling notes on his pages. **Nancy** is starrng at the bubbles in her glass.

**Nancy** – Bubbles, bubbles, bubbles. Did you ever feel like a bubble?

**Tom** – No.

**Nancy** – Do you know what a bubble feels like? You don't want to know what soft round bubbles feel like?

**Tom** flips through his pages and scribbles a few words down. What are you writing there?

**Tom** – Soft round bubbles.

**Nancy** – I just said that.

**Tom** – Did you?

**Nancy** – Oh, you're teasing me. I liked to be teased.

**Tom** – I know.

**Nancy** – How do you know?

**Tom** – I could be psychic, or it could be that you're just–

**Nancy** – I love men who are psychic. Do you know what I do with men who are psychic?

**Tom** – Of course I do.

**Nancy** – Oh right, because you're psychic. Well, Mr. Psychic do you want to–

**Tom** – No.

**Nancy** – No? You're no fun, no fun. Okay, I want to hear about the play.

**Tom** – Brad and Carla are almost done in the kitchen.

**Nancy** – They're taking a long time. I think they're up to something, that guy–

**Tom** – Brad?

**Nancy** – Yah he's shifty, I wouldn't trust my wife with him.

**Brad** – You wouldn't trust him with your wife?

**Nancy** – Nope, nope, nope. He's shifty.

**Tom** – You think Brad is shifty?

**Nancy** – Yah.

**Tom** – Why is that?

**Nancy** – He's happy.

**Tom** – And that makes him shifty.

**Nancy** – My husband wasn't happy and then he was happy happy, happy, happy. I'm taking all kinds of meds and I'm not happy. Happy people are up to something, something naughty, and that's why they're happy.

**Tom** – Should send you in there to catch them?

**Nancy** – I could. I could sneak in a catch 'em.

**Tom** – Putting the food in the refrigerator.

**Nancy** – No no. Putting the salami in the Ziplock.

**Tom** – Ziplock?

**Nancy** – I mean–

**Tom** – I know what you mean. So, what are you going to do when you catch them?

**Nancy** – Uhhmm... kill 'em?

**Tom** – How?

**Nancy** – Uhhhhh...oh oh I know, a frying pan.

**Tom** – It's pretty hard to kill two people with a ceramic coated aluminum frying pan, even for a sober person.

**Nancy** – Well Mr. Smarty, how would you kill them?

**Tom** – I'd have a better plan than a frying pan, no offense.

**Nancy** – None taken. Bubbles bubbles bubbles, soft round bubbles, say it again.

**Tom** – It.

**Nancy** – No, no, no. Soft round bubbles.

**Tom** – You're drunk.

**Nancy** – Yes, Mr. Psychic, but say it.

*Carla and Brad enter. Carla is carrying a bottle of Champagne and Brad has a glass.*

**Carla** – Say what?

**Tom** – It.

**Nancy** – No, no, no, no, no.... soft rou... bubbles, bubbles, bubbles.

**Tom** – She seems to like the bubbles.

**Carla** – You have something in common. More dear?

**Tom** – Please.

**Nancy** – Me too.

**Carla** – Miss Chapman, I don't want to carry you back to your house, even if it is only next door.

**Nancy** – No more bubbles?

**Carla** – No.

**Nancy** – Fine then, but since we're finally all here, Tom can tell us all about his play.

**Brad** – Yes Tom, what is this brilliant idea?

**Tom** – Did I say brilliant, I meant genius.

**Carla** – My modest husband.

**Nancy** – I believe you're a genius Tomsy womsy. Go ahead, show them how brilliant you are. I already know. I peeked. My favorite part kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, though I don't remember who we're killing. Who are we killing?

**Carla** – Yes, Tomsy womsy who are we killing?

**Nancy** – Are you making fun of me?

**Brad** – Come on Tom, you've kept us in suspense long enough, especially poor Nancy. Who, I suspect, won't remember a thing in the morning.

**Nancy** – Don't bet on it. I have a great memory Mr. Mr. *(to Tom)* psst what's his name?

**Tom** – Brad.

**Nancy** – Mr. Shifty. Mr. Brad Shifty. We know what you're up to, and Tomsy's got a plan, and it's not a frying pan. Hey, that rhymes.

**Tom** – The concept is pretty simple, but for some reason it's really grabbed me. I find so many possibilities with it, some dark.

**Brad** – Dark isn't your thing.

**Tom** – Not usually.

**Carla** – Well what is it?

**Tom** – Sit, and I'll tell you. No, no, right here together. *Brad and Carla take a seat on the love seat. Sit a little closer. He studies them for a moment.* So, here's my idea. It's simple, as I said. It's about infidelity. A man discovers his wife is cheating on him and so invites her lover over for dinner. It's the three of them, the husband, wife, and lover, and perhaps another. Well, what do you think? Brad, what do you think?

**Brad** – I, I, I don't know.

**Carla** – It's an idea, but where are you going with it?

**Nancy** – Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill...

**Carla** – Yes, we've heard that part.

**Brad** – What part is that Tom?

**Tom** – That's skipping ahead. I'm not sure which exact way to go with it, I mean, what tone to approach the subject; what mood I want to convey in the story arc.

**Nancy** – Is it a drama, a comedy? Come on Tomsy, tell me.

**Brad** – It seems like a good set up for a comedy. Don't you think so Carla?

**Carla** – Hilarious.

**Tom** – Do you? Do you think it's funny?

**Brad** – I mean you're writing it. I'm just thinking of the idea of a man inviting his wife's lover over for dinner. I mean this man or is it a woman? We should portray equal opportunity affairs, right? So, a woman, perhaps–

**Tom** – It's a man, a close friend, I think. It's got to be comedy then, unless this guy is total sap?

**Brad** – I'm not sure I follow.

