

SOMETHING IN THE BASEMENT

(*Something in the Basement* premiered at the Independence City Theater in Independence, Missouri, and was part of a larger production titled *The Other Side*.)

CHARACTERS

RITA: A plain girl of seventeen, withdrawn and not popular. She prefers animals over people.

CARLA: She's the opposite of Rita, beautiful, outgoing, and well liked.

JERRY: Carla's boyfriend, attractive and athletic.

Setting: Rita's living room, decorated with pictures of animals all around.

Time: The Present

Synopsis: Sometimes your best friends live in the basement.

Lights come up on the living room of RITA'S home. A basement door is near a table and chairs. The walls have pictures of animals on them.

RITA is picking up items that appear to have been set out for a party that never occurred.

There is a frantic knock on the front door, which is offstage.

CARLA (OFF STAGE)
Rita, it's me, Carla. Open the door! It's freezing out here.

RITA rushes offstage to answer the door.

RITA (OFF STAGE)
What's the rush? Oh my gosh.

CARLA enters quickly.

CARLA
It's really freezing out there.

CARLA is dressed in a flimsy red
teddie.

RITA enters behind her.

RITA
What are you doing out in that, Carla?

CARLA
This is a pajama party, isn't it, Rita?

(looking around)
Where is everyone?

RITA
You're lookin' at 'em.

CARLA
You're kidding?

RITA
It's okay. I'll understand if you don't want to be here
either.

CARLA
You know me better than that. I can't believe this. After
all I went through to set this up. Oh well, what's to eat.
I'm starved.

RITA
It's over here.

They cross to the table and sit. CARLA
immediately starts eating.

CARLA
Got any beer?

RITA
Uh...

Really? CARLA

I tried. RITA

CARLA
This just keeps getting and better and better. Oh well,
there's still time.

What do you mean? RITA

Nothing. Oh, did you hear the news? CARLA

What news? RITA

They found another body. CARLA

What? RITA

Yeah, do you believe it? That makes uh... CARLA

Six. RITA

No, four. CARLA

Oh, you're right. Let's change subjects. RITA

Why? Does it bother you? CARLA

Doesn't it bother you? RITA

No. I think it's great. It's the most exciting thing that's
happened around here since the Morrison twins disappeared two
years ago. CARLA

RITA just stares at her.

CARLA

Okay, look. Maybe that came out wrong. I don't mean it's great that people are dead. I'm not that messed up. Well maybe a little. But doesn't it give you goose bumps to think that some maniac is running around hacking people up? Have you ever seen so many TV cameras in this town in your life? The press is everywhere. We're on the map now.

RITA

I think what's happening is sick and I think the press is making it worse. They feed off it like wild animals. The more gore there is, the more pictures they take. Somebody loaded video of the last body on the internet and its gotten over 32,000 hits since yesterday.

CARLA

Oh, grow up, Rita. This is the real world, a world full of psychos and serial killers.

RITA

And voyeurs ready to film it all.

CARLA

So what? People get off on that now. Did you see "Bloodfest" over at the Midland?

RITA

No, I think those kinds of movies are sick.

CARLA

Someone must like them. That director's making a fortune and laughing all the way to the bloody bank.

RITA

Do you really like those movies?

CARLA

Sure, they're fun on a date.

RITA

What do you mean?

CARLA

Don't you know anything?

RITA

Yes, I do. I know a lot of things.

CARLA

Calm down. Don't get your panties in a twist. I didn't mean it that way.

RITA

I know.

CARLA

All I meant was that is that you need to get out more. You don't date enough.

RITA

I don't date at all.

CARLA

That's my point. How long have your parents been in Europe?

RITA

Over two months.

CARLA

You've had this place all to yourself for over two months and still haven't had any guys over? That's a waste of good make out space, Rita.

RITA

I don't know what to say to guys.

CARLA

Sometimes you don't need to talk.

RITA

I can't do that.

CARLA

Look, it's easy. You just haven't been around enough. First off, you need to go out on a date. Go to a good slasher movie.

RITA

I didn't think there were any good slasher movies.

CARLA

Don't be a critic.

RITA

Why would I want to go to one of those?

CARLA

Because going to "one of those" movies gives you the perfect excuse.

RITA

Perfect excuse to what?

CARLA

To grab your date. What else? Every time it starts to get scary, you grab John's, or Bill's, or whomever's arm and whatever part and hold on for dear life. It's great. I love it!

RITA

But all guys ever want to do is...

CARLA

Not all guys want to go that far. Most of 'em I date do, but not all of them. Besides, what's wrong with that? I like guys. I like being with them.

RITA

Aren't you ever lonely being with guys who only want one thing?

CARLA

It must be great having this place all on your own.

RITA

It's okay. You know, sometimes I think the only reason you come over here is to get away from your parents.

CARLA

Don't be silly. This would be a great place to bring a guy.

RITA

What?

CARLA

Nothing. Say, who do you think our local slasher is anyway?

RITA

I couldn't say.

CARLA

I wonder why he just picks guys?

RITA

How do you know the slasher's a man?

CARLA

The murders are too nasty to be a woman's touch. A woman would use a gun, poison, or something like that. She wouldn't pull their arms off like this freak. Although, I think that doctor's theory is right.

RITA

What theory? What doctor?

CARLA

Some doctor from out of state thinks it might be an animal that's killing everyone.

RITA looks perplexed.

CARLA

You need to get out more, Rita. One of the papers interviewed some doctor or was he a veterinarian? Anyway, he thought it could be an animal because of the saliva he found on one of the body parts. Man, if it's an animal, I feel sorry for it.

RITA

Why?

CARLA

Because everyone's going to be hunting it.

RITA

You think so?

CARLA

Sure. It'll be just like in "Jaws" or "Silver Bullet." People will be all over the place with guns, just waiting to blow it away. We'll be on national news. And all those camera guys will be there when they blow it into little bitty pieces.

RITA

How can they do that?

CARLA

Do what?

RITA

Just kill something that easily.

CARLA

What are you talking about? Oh yeah, that's right, you like animals, all kinds of animals. Say, where are your cats?

RITA

Oh, they're roaming outside somewhere.

CARLA

I didn't know you let them out.

RITA

I finally worked up the courage.

CARLA

Sometimes I think you like animals more than people.

RITA

At least animals can be trusted. They have no ulterior motives for their actions. If you love them, they'll love you, and they won't expect anything in return.

CARLA

Unlike a guy.

RITA

Yes, unlike a guy.

CARLA

Sorry, but life isn't like that, Rita. Do you think Mitch's parents would like to have some rabid animal around that ate half of their son? I don't think so. No, people aren't like that. They aren't forgiving. They want their revenge, their pound of flesh.

RITA

I know.

CARLA

Well, whatever this thing is when they get done with it, you'll never see it again. I just hope I'm nearby when they get it.

RITA

Why?

CARLA

To be a part of history. The "Mad Ripper" gets blown apart and I'm there to see it. I might even get interviewed.

RITA

You're sick, Carla.

CARLA

You don't know the half of it.

They laugh. After the laughter subsides, there is a SOUND of something SCRATCHING on the basement stairs.