

CHARACTERS

Chris Gorman
Ken Gorman
Claire Ganz
Lenny Ganz
Ernie Cusack
Cookie Cusack
Glenn Cooper
Cassie Cooper
Officer Welch
Officer Pudney

PLACE: Sneden's Landing, New York

TIME: The present

ACT I

SCENE: A large, tastefully renovated, Victorian house in Sneden's Landing, New York, about forty minutes from the city. Despite its age and gingerbread exterior, the interior is modern, monochromatic and sparkling clean. A nice combination.

An entrance doorway at Upstage Right leads onto an open vestibule. To the right of the door is a powder room. One step down, is the large and comfortable living room. The color is predominately white.

There are two furniture groupings in the living room. Stage Right are a love seat and two chairs. Upstage of the love seat and near the powder room door is a table and a telephone with a long cord. Center Stage is a large sofa and coffee table. Two chairs Stage Left are part of a grouping with the sofa. On the Stage Left wall is a mirror in an ornate frame. Against the Upstage wall are a well-stocked bar and a stereo system enclosed in a gorgeous cabinet. Between these two pieces is a closed door leading to the cellar.

From the living room, a curved staircase leads to a landing and two doors; each to a bedroom. On the landing is a railed bannister. At the Stage Left end of the second-floor landing is an archway leading to a hallway and more bedrooms. Downstage of this archway is an extension of the balcony which can be used as a playing area.

Through the living room, at Left, double doors lead into a dining room and then, the kitchen. A huge window

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RUMORS

start
above the front door looks out onto a wooded backyard. A large window in the Stage Right wall overlooks a yard and the driveway beyond. Headlights of approaching cars may be seen through this window.

AT RISE: It is about eight-thirty at night on a pleasant evening in May.

CHRIS GORMAN, an attractive woman, mid-thirties, paces anxiously back and forth, looking at her watch, biting her nails. SHE is elegantly dressed in a designer gown. SHE looks at the phone, then at her watch again. SHE seems to make a decision and crosses to the cigarette box on the coffee table. SHE takes out a cigarette, then puts it back.

CHRIS. Oh, my God!

(Suddenly, Charley's bedroom door opens on the second landing and KEN GORMAN, about forty, dressed smartly in a tuxedo but looking flushed and excited, comes out to the rail. THEY BOTH speak rapidly.)

KEN. Did he call yet?

CHRIS. Wouldn't I have yelled up?

KEN. Call him again.

CHRIS. I called him twice. They're looking for him . . . How is he?

KEN. I'm not sure. He's bleeding like crazy.

CHRIS. Oh, my God!

KEN. It's all over the room. I don't know why people decorate in white . . . If he doesn't call in two minutes, call the hospital.

CHRIS. I'm going to have to have a cigarette, Ken.

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KEN. After eighteen months, the hell you are. Hold onto yourself, will you?

(HE rushes back in, closes the door behind him. SHE returns to pacing.)

CHRIS. I can't believe this is happening. (SHE crosses to the cigarette box. The PHONE rings.) Oh, God! (SHE calls out.) Ken, the phone is ringing. (But HE's gone. SHE crosses to phone and picks it up.) Hello? Dr. Dudley? . . . Oh, Dr. Dudley, I'm so glad it's you. Your service said you were at the theatre.

(Charley's bedroom door opens, KEN looks out.)

KEN. Is that the doctor?

CHRIS. (Into phone.) I never would have bothered you, but this is an emergency.

KEN. Is that the doctor?

CHRIS. (Into the phone.) I'm Chris Gorman. My husband Ken and I are good friends of Charley Brock's.

KEN. Is that the doctor?

CHRIS. (Turns, holds phone, yells at Ken.) It's the doctor! It's the doctor!

KEN. (Angrily.) Why didn't you say so? (HE goes back in, closes the door.)

CHRIS. (Into the phone.) Dr. Dudley, I'm afraid there's been an accident . . . I would have called my own doctor, but my husband is a lawyer and under the circumstances, he thought it better to have Charley's own physician . . . Well, we just arrived here at Charley's house about ten minutes ago, and as we were getting out of our car, we suddenly heard this enormous —

(KEN suddenly comes out of the bedroom)

KEN. Don't say anything!

CHRIS. (To Ken.) What?

KEN. Don't tell him what happened!

CHRIS. Don't tell him?

KEN. Just do what I say.

CHRIS. What about Charley?

KEN. He's all right. It's just a powder burn. Don't tell him about the gunshot.

CHRIS. But they got the doctor out of the theatre.

KEN. Tell him he tripped down the stairs and banged his head. He's all right.

CHRIS. But what about the blood?

KEN. The bullet went through his ear lobe. It's nothing. I don't want him to know.

CHRIS. But I already said we were getting out of the car and we suddenly heard an enormous – what? What did we hear?

KEN. (Coming downstairs.) We heard ...

CHRIS. (Into phone.) Just a minute, doctor.

KEN. (Thinks, coming downstairs.) We heard ... we heard ... we heard ... an enormous – thud!

CHRIS. Thud?

KEN. When he tripped down the stairs.

CHRIS. Good. Good. That's good. (Into phone.) Dr. Dudley? I'm sorry. I was talking to my husband. Well, we heard this enormous thud! It seemed Charley tripped going up the stairs.

KEN. Down! Down the stairs.

CHRIS. Down the stairs. But he's all right.

KEN. He's sitting up in bed. He'll call him in the morning.

CHRIS. He's sitting up in bed. He'll call him in the morning.

KEN. You!

CHRIS. You! He'll call you in the morning.

KEN. You're very sorry you disturbed him.

CHRIS. I'm very sorry I disturbed you.

KEN. But he's really fine.

CHRIS. But he's really fine.

KEN. Thank you. Goodbye.

CHRIS. (To Ken.) Where are you going?

KEN. Him! Him! Thank him and say goodbye.

CHRIS. Oh. (Into phone.) Thank you and goodbye, Doctor ... What? ... Just a minute. (To Ken as HE goes upstairs.) Any dizziness?

KEN. No. No dizziness.

CHRIS. (Into phone.) No. No dizziness ... What? (To Ken.) Can he move his limbs?

KEN. (Irritated.) Yes! He can move everything. Get off the phone.

CHRIS. (Yells at Ken.) They got him out of Phantom of the Opera. (Into phone.) Yes, he can move everything ... What? (To Ken.) Any slurring of the speech?

KEN. NO! NO SLURRING OF THE SPEECH.

CHRIS. (To Ken.) Don't yell at me. He'll hear it. (Into phone.) No. No slurring of the speech.

KEN. I've got to get back to Charley. (KEN starts to back into Charley's room.)

CHRIS. (Into phone.) Any what? (To Ken.) Any ringing of the ears?

KEN. I can't believe this ... No. Tell him no.

CHRIS. (Into phone.) Yes. A little ringing in the ears.

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KEN. I told you to say no.

CHRIS. It sounds more believable to have ringing.

KEN. Jesus!

CHRIS. *(Into phone.)* Who? His wife? Myra? ... Yes. Myra's here.

KEN. *(Rushing downstairs.)* She's not here. Don't tell him she's here. He'll want to speak to her.

CHRIS. *(Into phone.)* Dr. Dudley? My mistake. She's not here. I thought she was but she wasn't.

KEN. She just stepped out. She'll be back in a minute.

CHRIS. *(Into phone.)* She just stepped back. She'll be out in a minute. Yes. I'll tell her to call.

(KEN goes back upstairs.)

CHRIS. ... Okay, thank you, Dr. Diddley ... Dudley. Enjoy the show. Ken and I saw it, we loved it ... Especially the second act. Who's playing the Phantom tonight?

KEN. Are you going to review the whole goddam show? *(KEN goes back into Charley's room.)*

CHRIS. Oh, Charley's calling me. *(Calls out.)* Just a minute, Charley. *(Into phone.)* He sounds a lot better. I have to go. Yes, Doctor, I will. *(SHE hangs up, furious at Ken.)* Don't you ever do that to me again. He must suspect something. I didn't get his name right once.

KEN. *(Coming out of the bedroom.)* If anyone calls again, don't answer it. *(HE starts to go into the bedroom.)*

CHRIS. Then why did you tell me to answer that one?

KEN. Because I thought the bullet went through his head, not his ear lobe. Fix me a double vodka, I left Charley standing in the shower.

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CHRIS. If he drowns, you're making that call.

(KEN goes into the bedroom.)

CHRIS. I don't know why we're always the first ones here. *(SHE fixes the vodka.)* Never came late once in our lives. Someone else could have dealt with all this. *(SHE goes to the cigarette box once more. the DOORBELL rings. SHE jumps.)* Oh, SHIT! Shit shit shit shit!

(The upstairs door opens, KEN comes out.)

KEN. Who's that? Who is that?

CHRIS. Am I near the door? Do you see people in here? You think I'm on roller skates?

KEN. Let me think a minute.

CHRIS. Take your time because I don't answer doors. I only speak to Dr. Dudley.

KEN. All right. It's got to be Lenny or Ernie, one of the others. We've got to open the door.

CHRIS. You've got arms, reach down.

KEN. I've got to dry Charley off and bandage his ear. Don't tell them what happened. I need a few minutes to figure this out. Can't you stall them?

CHRIS. His best friends are coming to his tenth anniversary, his wife isn't here, he shoots himself in the ear lobe and I'm supposed to make small talk when they come in?

KEN. Attempted suicide is a criminal offense, not to mention a pretty ugly scandal. Charley's Deputy Mayor of New York. He's my client and my best friend, I've got to protect him, don't I? Just play the hostess for a few minutes until I figure out how to handle this.