

**'Favorite Photos'**

**Play by Yale Udoff**

**ACT ONE, SCENE ONE:**

**STAGE IS DARK.**

STEPHEN

You were so beautiful, Tanya. Now, you're a deranged old lady. You walk in circles, stare at the wall. It's so sad. You don't even know who I am anymore. And, yes, it must be said: you crap in your bed.

**LIGHTS UP QUICKLY.**

STEPHEN, in an undershirt and shorts, wiping sweat from his brow, sits across from a crude wooden construction of a black-'n-white Siberian Husky, sitting on its haunches. There's an old fan sitting on the window sill, blowing air into the room.

None of this means I still don't love you, because I do. We had good times, didn't we?

He seems to be waiting for an answer. The bedroom door opens and CAROLE, in a long negligee, moves into the room, still mostly asleep.

CAROLE

Talking to Tanya again.

STEPHEN

Yes.

CAROLE

I loved her also. But she's no longer with us.

STEPHEN

Not to me.

CAROLE

Stephen, that isn't even a good likeness. Come to bed.

STEPHEN

Later.

CAROLE

It's close to four in the morning.

STEPHEN

I have no morning appointments. For that matter, I have no afternoon appointments. In fact, I have no appointments in the foreseeable century.

CAROLE

It's nice and cozy in the bedroom.

STEPHEN

Cozy is for the middle of winter. This isn't winter. That great old girl with her snow and windy mornings - she's lost somewhere east of Arizona.

CAROLE

We could put on the air-conditioning.

STEPHEN

No! All it does is mess up your sinuses.

CAROLE (playfully)

Come to bed. I'll be nice to you.

STEPHEN

You always are. I don't deserve it.

CAROLE

Why do you say things like that!

STEPHEN (checks his watch, stands)

Actually, it's close to three. You forgot to turn the clock back, which is what I'd like to do with my life. It gets dark early now. I like that - day's over almost before it begins.

CAROLE

You have to stop torturing yourself. It's wrong.

STEPHEN

You think so? I don't. No job, no future, fifty a few stumbling steps away. It wouldn't be so bad if we had an heir, a bright young thing who could be manipulating the market so his dad and mom could live comfortably in their waning years, which start now at about thirty-five, slump into degeneration at forty before the final wild roller coaster ride into the garbage dump at fifty. Get off, disappear - oh that smell - fifty! (Realizing, and pleased with the thought.) I mean, we would be *his* heirs. And if he were kind, he could pass a law - I wouldn't put it past his generation - to end it at exactly forty-five with a bullet behind the ear. Think of all the apartments a bullet would free up in the crowded southern California real estate market.

CAROLE

We don't have an heir.

STEPHEN

I know.

CAROLE

I'm working. We manage.

STEPHEN

Yes.

CAROLE

You can be very hurtful.

STEPHEN

I know.

CAROLE

If we had an heir, the only deal *she* would make -

STEPHEN (interrupts)

She?

CAROLE

Why not? Girls run in my family. Anyway, the only thing she would be presently negotiating is a bigger size crib, which you could share. (Immediately, she regrets this.)

STEPHEN

I deserved that.

CAROLE

Maybe. In any case, I'm sorry. You were being flip.

STEPHEN

Was I? (Slight pause.) What we talked about, before...

CAROLE (tiredly)

I am **not** moving out.

STEPHEN

But it's my house! Condo.

CAROLE

It's our home.

STEPHEN

I lived here first. I bought it during my one point seven good years.

CAROLE

Why do you do this? You know you love me. (Slight pause.) You do, know that?

STEPHEN

That word - it gives so much hope but more pain, because....because it means everything when all it is, is a word liars hide behind.

CAROLE

Did you, lie?

STEPHEN

I didn't say I was talking about me. I was commenting, in general.

CAROLE

Did...you...lie.

STEPHEN

No. Never, about that.

Slight pause.

CAROLE

We have so much. You ought to be thankful for that. (She waits for him to reply. He doesn't.) The other day, walking to lunch, I saw this man - I've seen him before. He's not like a lot of the ones you see. He can't be much more than sixty or so, wears a tie, a frayed but clean old sports jacket. It breaks my heart. I give him something every time I pass. He's always polite. Yet, I feel maybe he resents me for giving. Stupid, I know...

STEPHEN

You deserve more than I give you.

CAROLE

Stephen, I know how difficult it's been for you. But lots of other people are suffering too. Like that man.

STEPHEN

And I grieve for him, too.

CAROLE

You could always teach.

STEPHEN

Teach? What?

CAROLE

The law! You graduated a very good law school.

STEPHEN

First of all, I never took the bar. More importantly: What law? There's hardly any left, except, of course - protecting corporations and what they want, which is mostly what they get.

CAROLE

That use to be funny, Stephen. The way you turn something around - a statement, a fact - and make it fresh, even if it has little relation to the truth.

STEPHEN

Are you the girl I married? Because she knew better. Much better. However, you must admit that the modifier "*mostly*" shows I'm open to debate, even though there is none.

CAROLE

Then teach screenwriting.

STEPHEN

To whom...or is it who? No, to whom. (With theatrical disgust.) Teach those semi-illiterates with degrees how to get their Porsche. Sorry, no.

CAROLE

I'm going to sleep.

STEPHEN

Like this great land of ours. Sleeping, while "We the People" are being screwed. Okay, you'll stay, Tanya and I will leave.

CAROLE

You are ridiculous.

STEPHEN

Most likely.

CAROLE (with determination)

This is our home. Our home. You are not going anyplace. **I don't know when you got this crazy idea - you and I live here. Even if recently you fall asleep every night on the couch.** My parents failed. We will not. (She starts to break.) Stephen, I love you. You're a good man. You're just going through a bad period. (She turns, heads toward the bedroom, stops.) Come to bed. Tomorrow, we can talk this out.

STEPHEN

'This!?' This is my life. It won't move because we talk.

CAROLE

I don't know how to talk to you anymore.

She exits into the bedroom, closing the door behind her.

As he moves to the CD player, we realize **he has a slight limp**. He slips a disc into it: the opening jazzy strains of *Petite Fleur* with Sidney Bechet. It plays low and under as he moves to Tanya.

STEPHEN

Remember when I first bought that, Tanya. Remember those days? New York. Crisp, alive - it was October, like now, only *not a baking fucking ninety-seven degree furnace!* It's the end of October, Tanya. (Spells.) O-c-t-o-b-e-r!!! Fall. Autumn.

What great words: The summer is over and you're reinvigorated, there's renewed hope. Leaves falling. You're ready for it. IT'S NOT NINETY-SEVEN! (Bends to her.) It was the heat, wasn't it Tanya. It did you in, you Russkie beauty. In Siberia, you would still be alive. (He runs to the open window next to the fan, *screams* into the street:) It's fucking fall. Go away summer! Give life a chance! You murdered my dog! (He stands there for a few moments, then moves back to Tanya.) How did it go wrong?

**FADE TO DARKNESS.**