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*Blinders*

Second Printing, 2010

Printed in U.S.A.

ISBN 978-1-934962-22-0

**More Great Plays Available**  
**From OWP**

**American Way**  
**by Jeremy Gable**

3 Males, 1 Female

No Intermission

**Synopsis:** It's not easy being a superhero. When not busy looking danger straight in the eye, there's comic book sales, public complaints and failed marketing strategies to deal with. Sometimes it seems the only solace for a hard day of crime-fighting is a trip to the secret café. Our heroes - the explosive Firebang, the voluptuous Mandible Maiden and the recently retired Crescent Wonder - gather to have a drink and welcome the newest apprentice, an eager kid with an unusual name. But the day is young, and there is danger lurking. "American Way" shows what happens when those with superpowers suddenly realize that they are powerless. With a mixture of humor and tragedy, it shows us what truly makes a superhero.

**The Armageddon Dance Party**  
**by David L. Williams**

4 Males, 5 Females

**Synopsis:** John and Michelle, a lovely young New York couple, are faced with a problem: the TV news just told them Armageddon is here. Talk about ruining a Friday night! But John and Michelle turn lemons into lemonade by throwing an end of the world party. With dancing!! When the friends and friends of friends packed into the apartment learn the end is nigh, the party changes a bit. Guests list everything they won't miss about the world, fights break out, people ask to be killed, others grant their requests, lovers couple and uncouple for Armageddon sex, and talk of Revelation and great music fill the air. Like any good party.

**BLINDERS**  
by Patrick Gabridge

For Tracy.

Time: The Present

Place: Various places in America

Character Descriptions: (required: 1 woman, 3 men, 4 chorus members of mixed gender)

Karen Sayer, a reporter, committed to the truth

Stack Thompson, the world's greatest salesman

Chris

Alex

Roles that can be played by a 4 person chorus of mixed gender:

Papergirl

Dr. Cooper Gennette

Reporter1

Reporter2

Tipsy Starlet

Dude

Jolene

Shopper1

Shopper2

Jack--Karen's boss (or Jackie, if you cast role as a woman)

Optometrist

Passerby

Cop

Mailman

Floyd Sayer--Karen's Father

Wanda Sayer--Karen's Mother

Psychologist

Inmates 1-3:

    Carnac

    Miller

    Hideout

Fat Dominic

Wilbur Jenkins (or Wilma if you cast role as a woman)

Senator Caldwell

Voice in Crowd

HOG-1

HOG-2

Moderator

Judy

James

An early version of this play (under the title, *Two Snowflakes*) opened at the Plays-in-Progress World Premiere Theatre, in Eureka, California, in November, 1998, directed by Michael Thomas. *Blinders* also premiered, that same week at Studio 44, in Denver, directed by Greg Ward.

The first New York production of *Blinders* was produced by the Sage Theatre Company at Raw Space, May 1999.

Director: Frank Calo  
Lighting Design: Krista Stella

Cast:  
Karen: Nicole Verbois  
Stack: Michael D. Kelber  
Chris: Phillip Stafford  
Alex: Paul Witte  
Ensemble/Chorus: Vance Clemente, Tracy Friedman, Michele McKiernan, Jami O'Brien, Jeremy Shepard, and Celeste Wescott.

Special Thanks: Chameleon Stage, Rhombus, the casts, crews, and staffs of the productions and readings by Chameleon Stage, Out of the Blue, Plays-in-Progress, Sage/Spotlight On, Stage Left, Studio 44, and Yellow Taxi Productions. The Karens who worked with me in production: Margaret Casart, Nicole Verbois, Julie Partyka, and Karen Woodward-Massey. The directors who provided so much helpful input: Greg Ward, Frank Calo, Alice Kroman, and Melissa Wentworth. Thanks also to Jessica Maria Tuccelli, Arthur Bracco, and to the Boston Playwrights Theatre. And, as always, thanks to my ever-patient family.

## BLINDERS

### Scene 1, TWO SNOWFLAKES

*(The stage is dark and bare. Props and set pieces are brought on as necessary, with only the barest minimum used to suggest each scene.)*

*(Spotlight center stage on a young girl hawking newspapers at the top of her lungs.)*

PAPERGIRL: EXTRA, EXTRA, READ ALL ABOUT IT! AMAZING DISCOVERY!!! SCIENTISTS DISCOVER TWO IDENTICAL SNOWFLAKES. EXTRA, EXTRA!

*(Her spotlight goes black. Another spot comes up on KAREN. KAREN wears a suit, is about thirty-five years old, and carries a steno pad. Her manner is steady and calm.)*

KAREN: Two identical flakes of frozen water. That's how it begins. What could be more harmless?

*(Karen walks over to a group of REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS gathered in front of a podium, eagerly taking notes and snapping photographs. DR. COOPER GENNETTE enters.)*

GENNETTE: As you are aware, after the first discovery of identical snowflakes ten years ago, my Department of Theoretical Duplication has searched for a set of human duplicates. After years of painstaking research, we are pleased to announce that we have found two people exactly alike. Let me present to you, Chris and Alex.

*(Two men walk out, dressed in identical suits. Maybe ALEX is about twenty-five, blond, tall, athletic. Maybe CHRIS is about thirty, dark haired, not tall, and carries a little more weight than he should. (The important thing is that they should not look at all alike.) They smile and stand next to Gennette for photographs. After sufficient flashes have gone off, they sit in the chairs by the podium.)*

GENNETTE: I must admit that we were shocked when we actually found these two marvels of nature. I'd be happy to answer your questions.

REPORTER1: Dr. Gennette, are you sure that Chris and Alex aren't merely identical twins? Perhaps they were separated at birth.

GENNETTE: Any time two people appear identical, our first expectation is twinship. However, in our research with twins we have discovered that the original splitting of the embryo leaves behind a

GENNETTE (Cont'd): trace marking, a genetic scar, if you will. To answer your question: we are certain that Chris and Alex were not, are not, and never will be... twins.

*(A MURMUR runs through the crowd.)*

REPORTER2: Are you continuing testing?

GENNETTE: We have already conducted every important test with the most modern scientific instruments. I consider the results one hundred percent verified.

REPORTER1: Rumor has it that you will be nominated for the Nobel Prize. Any comment?

GENNETTE: Everything I've done has been in the name of science. Any recognition is purely secondary.

*(Lights cut to black, except for on Karen.)*

### **LOVING PUBLIC**

KAREN: Chris and Alex are a smash socially.

*(A dazzling young woman with a drink in her hand.)*

TIPSY STARLET: Oh, of course I've seen them. They are so cute. I'd love to take one home with me. You can't help wanting to squeeze them, they're so adorable.

*(A young guy, DUDE, who shakes as he talks (he's a little strung out).)*

DUDE: It's like talking to a fucking mirror, man. Definitely, definitely, I repeat definitely, do not get stoned before going to a party that they're at. It'll pop your circuits. I saw it happen to a guy... Really. He was talking to them, and his head was turning back and forth, back and forth... and the next thing you know he's flopping on the floor like a fish, his eyes rolling up in his head. Scared the shit out of me. I didn't sober up for a week.

*(A middle-aged woman in a prim hat enters, perhaps holding a Bible.)*

JOLENE: Praise Jesus! The Lord works in mysterious ways. A miracle in our lifetime. Let those secularists talk all they want about science, we know that true wonderment comes from the Lord. The Lord is surely speaking to us at this time, showing all his Glory. Amen, my brothers and sisters. Amen!

*(Two SHOPPERS talking together, carrying baskets or bags from trendy shops.)*

SHOPPER1: Have you seen their TV commercial?

SHOPPER2: The one for Reebok or the breakfast cereal?

SHOPPER1: The breakfast cereal. I heard they got five million dollars.

SHOPPER2: More for Reebok.

SHOPPER1: Imagine two people exactly the same playing basketball against each other. It'd be impossible.

SHOPPER2: Everyone has good days and bad days.

SHOPPER1: But they have them at the same time. At least that's what I hear.

SHOPPER2: Can you imagine being with them in bed? I mean... you know.

SHOPPER1: You're terrible... What do you think it would be like?

*(They exit.)*

## **INTERVIEW**

*(Karen, alone on the stage. )*

KAREN: I am confused, intrigued, irritated. I think that if I can just get an interview, up close and personal, perhaps I'll see what I'm missing.

*(Lights up on chairs occupied by ALEX and CHRIS. KAREN joins them.)*

KAREN: Thanks for taking the time to talk with me. I'm sure you must be worn out from all the national touring.

CHRIS: Yeah.

ALEX: Pretty much.

CHRIS: But we don't mind sacrificing--

ALEX: --ourselves. It's all for the advancement--

CHRIS: --of science.

KAREN: Do you think the same answers to all my questions?



CHRIS & ALEX: Sure.

KAREN: Do you share emotions, like some twins do? Sort of a telepathy?

ALEX: It's not necessary, since we're exactly the same.

CHRIS: There's no need to share the thoughts, if they're the same in both places at once at the same time.

ALEX: See what we mean?

KAREN: Were you aware of each other before Dr. Gennette found you?

CHRIS: No. We owe all this to Gennette.

KAREN: How did your families take the news? Are either of you married?

ALEX: No.

CHRIS: But you must be.

ALEX: A good looking woman like you.

CHRIS: I didn't know you could win a Pulitzer Prize--

ALEX: --and still be so--

CHRIS: --delicious.

*(Dr. COOPER GENNETTE enters and takes a seat.)*

GENNETTE: I'm sorry that I'm late.

ALEX: You didn't miss a thing.

CHRIS: We were just getting to know--

ALEX: --the illustrious--

CHRIS: --the luminous--

ALEX: --Ms. Sayer.

KAREN: Yes. Um. Well. Dr. Gennette, the nation seems fascinated with the results of your research. Is this what you expected?

GENNETTE: It's even better. How wonderful to inspire a passion for science. The press has been most cooperative.

KAREN: So I've noticed.

GENNETTE: We present the facts as simply as possible, so they can flow freely to the masses. I'm sure it's difficult for journalists to refrain from commenting. I'm glad they've been willing to trust the Experts.

ALEX: In matters of Science.

CHRIS: And Miracles of Nature.

KAREN: I was wondering... Are you sure all these measurements are correct?

GENNETTE: Every one has been scientifically verified. We have the most advanced instruments in the world. The technology is incredible.

KAREN: I thought this height reading for Alex might be a little optimistic.

ALEX: Excuse me?

KAREN: With all the money poured into the search, I imagine there would be intense pressure to produce a pair of--

GENNETTE: I don't like your tone, Ms. Sayer.

KAREN: You misunderstand.

GENNETTE: Do I?

*(The light on GENNETTE fades.)*

### **PRICE TO PAY**

*(JACK steps towards Karen, flushed with anger.)*

JACK: Karen! Are you a scientist?

KAREN: No.

JACK: You don't look like a scientist.

KAREN: I'm not a scientist.

JACK: When I hired you, you didn't tell me you were a scientist.

KAREN: What's your point, Jack?

JACK: A very famous scientist just called to complain about you.

KAREN: I asked a few questions.

JACK: Cooper Gennette is impossible to get for an interview.

KAREN: It's my job to ask hard questions.

JACK: Your job was to get face-to-face with the first two identical humans and their discoverer. Your job was to give us an excuse to plaster their incredibly popular faces on our front page, so we can sell newspapers. You used to be my best reporter, Karen. One of the best I've ever known. But this... Why would you do this to me? To yourself? Why are you flushing years of hard work down the toilet?

KAREN: They don't even look alike.

JACK: What?

KAREN: Do they look alike to you?

JACK: Do the scientists say they're identical?

KAREN: Yes, but--

JACK: Did our newspaper say they're identical?

KAREN: We were wrong.

JACK: Do our readers think they're identical?

KAREN: They're idiots.

JACK: Fine. We're all idiots, Karen. We're all wrong. The scientists, the media, the idiots in the streets.

KAREN: That's right.

JACK: Because they don't look alike to you.

KAREN: No, they don't.

JACK: I only need reporters who can see straight. Maybe you'd better get your eyes checked.

*(Jack exits.)*

## **VISION**

*(Karen sits on a chair facing the audience. The OPTOMETRIST is a voice over loudspeakers. Perhaps there is a projection of a giant eye.)*

OPTOMETRIST: What seems to be the problem?

KAREN: I see things other people don't. Or they see things I don't.

OPTOMETRIST: Headaches? Dizziness?

KAREN: No.

OPTOMETRIST: Double vision?

KAREN: That's the whole problem.

OPTOMETRIST: Hold the paddle over your left eye.

*(Blinding light into Karen's face as she holds a plastic paddle over her eye.)*

OPTOMETRIST: Look up. Down. Right. Left. Roll it around. Other eye. *(Karen switches eyes.)* Up. Down. Zig zag.

KAREN: Normal?

OPTOMETRIST: So far. I want you to read this.

*(An eye chart is projected. It reads something like this:)*

A  
LEX  
ANDCH  
RISAREW  
ONDERFUL

KAREN: A-L-E-X-A-N-D-C-H-R-I-S... I don't think so.

OPTOMETRIST: No wonder you're having trouble. Which is better, number one or number two?

*(SOUND of lenses switching. The chart switches to read:)*

I  
LOV  
ECHRI  
SANDALEX

OPTOMETRIST: How's that? Karen? Karen?

*(beat. KAREN exits. Lights shift to JOLENE. )*

JOLENE: My brothers and sisters in Christ, I know that some of you saw the newspaper articles about our beloved Chris and Alex, degrading them, challenging their unique God-given miraculous duplicity. And I ask you to reach down in your hearts, and pray to

JOLENE (Cont'd): God almighty, to smite the purveyors of such lies and filth. Boycott that newspaper. Call your Senator. We must not stand for such immoral attitudes.

*(JOLENE exits.)*

## **HOME**

*(Karen's apartment. KAREN sits on the floor, in the dark.)*

*(STACK THOMPSON enters, talking on his cell phone. He possesses a confident charisma. He wears a business suit.)*

STACK: *(into the phone)* No. You're not listening to me. Their product makes customers think their lives will improve. Our product makes them believe. There's a big difference. Exactly. That's what I'm saying. You understand. Perfect. We'll have a contract to you by morning. *(He clicks off his phone, turns on the light, and notices Karen.)* Karen? Why are you sitting in the dark?

KAREN: I have a headache.

*(Stack's cell phone RINGS, but he ignores it.)*

STACK: Sorry.

*(He sits behind her and massages her shoulders.)*

STACK: I thought you were working tonight, big celebrity gala with the wonder twins or something like that.

KAREN: Jack made me take a leave of absence.

STACK: What? Why?

KAREN: The story on the freaks. Gennette and his pals complained, readers complained. Jack thinks I'm losing my mind.

STACK: Jack's a weakling. He forgets that your journalistic integrity is part of the reason why his paper is number one.

KAREN: I don't feel good, Stack. This whole thing, the media reaction, the public reaction, it's making me sick.

STACK: You can't let them get to you. Maybe time off is good.

KAREN: They all treat me like I'm wrong.

STACK: Truth is in the eye of the beholder. Or mouth of the seller.

KAREN: Do they look alike to you?

STACK: You know what you see. It doesn't matter what I think.

KAREN: It matters to me.

*(Cell phone RINGS again. Stack ignores it.)*

STACK: What I think is that if these jokers had a real marketing guy working for them, the sky would be the limit. Christ, I'd kill to represent these guys. Historical freaks of nature. America loves freaks.

KAREN: Do they look alike?

STACK: I hear that they look alike. My customers can't tell the difference. If the people I sell to think they look the same...

KAREN: You're not selling to me.

STACK: We all sell, all the time. Even to the people we love.

KAREN: So you're never honest with me?

STACK: I'm always honest. Selling is about being honest, about believing what you say. Nobody can sell with a lie. We all need to believe that what we just bought is the God's honest truth.

KAREN: But I believe in concrete truth, factual truth.

STACK: You're a reporter, you should know better.

KAREN: But sometimes, a lot of the time, people listen. They're capable of listening.

STACK: Maybe it'll blow over. You'll be all right.

*(He wraps her in his arms.)*

KAREN: Do you have to go out tonight?

STACK: I'm supposed to close the deal with SoftMart over dinner. They're downstairs waiting. Do you need me to stay here?

KAREN: No. No. You've been working on this for months. Go.

STACK: Take some aspirin, a long bath, a little Mozart. Try to relax.

KAREN: I'll try.

STACK: You'll be fine. You're tough. Resilient.

KAREN: I am.

STACK: You'll be fine.

KAREN: I will.

*(He kisses her and exits.)*

KAREN: Good luck! *(to herself)* I'll be fine.

*(LIGHTS SHIFT TO:)*

### **ACCUSATION**

*(COOPER GENNETTE at a podium. CHRIS and ALEX behind him. REPORTERS are watching, joined by KAREN.)*

GENNETTE: Due to the tremendous public interest in duplication research, we will expand our testing. In order to find as many duplicate humans as humanly possible, we need a huge number of DNA samples. Our Duplication Vans are roaming the country at this very moment. Due to limited government funding, we ask that our sample volunteers donate a small ten dollar fee.

CHRIS: Please help us with this important scientific research.

ALEX: And get a free Chris and Alex autographed T-shirt.

*(KAREN steps in front of her fellow reporters.)*

KAREN: What kind of reporters are you people? Open your eyes. These two men don't look a thing alike. Close your ears for a minute and open your eyes.

REPORTER1: Hey, it's Karen Sayer.

REPORTER2: Somebody call security.

REPORTER1: Just can't stay out of the spotlight, huh, Sayer?

KAREN: It's not about me. This is about--

GENNETTE: It's about you constantly attacking my reputation, insulting the other scientists and pundits who agree that our discovery is astounding.

CHRIS: Some people are just afraid--

ALEX: --of change.

CHRIS: And some people--

ALEX: --have an axe to grind.

KAREN: I am not afraid of change. And why would I--

CHRIS: We hoped not to bring this up.

ALEX: But in light of her ridiculous accusations--

CHRIS: --we should help the public understand--

ALEX: --why this might be happening.

GENNETTE: This is not the time.

REPORTER1: We're listening.

KAREN: What are you--

CHRIS: Without turning this into a tabloid explosion--

ALEX: --as you may know--

CHRIS: --we are sometimes--

ALEX: --the objects of curiosity--

CHRIS: --that isn't always--

ALEX: --shall we say--

CHRIS: --pure.

KAREN: Don't even--

CHRIS: Ms. Sayer made a suggestion--

ALEX: --a rather suggestive--

CHRIS: --suggestion--

ALEX: --to put it delicately.

CHRIS: And she was--

ALEX: --rejected--

CHRIS: --dismissed--

ALEX: --in what we thought was a good-natured fashion.

KAREN: I never made a pass at either one of them. You can't make accusations like this. You can't just--

GENNETTE: This press conference is over. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen of the almighty press.



KAREN: But they're lying. They're lying! Listen to me! Listen...

*(ALL exit.)*

*(DUDE with a bandage on his forehead.)*

DUDE: I didn't really mind getting jabbed too much. It wasn't the first time I'd suffered a blow to the cranial area, if you know what I mean. I looked at the line of hundreds of people all waiting, and I wondered--which one of these things is just like the other?

### **SPREADING THE TRUTH/TO THE FLAMES**

*(KAREN enters, holding a stack of papers over her head, shouting. Various PASSERSBY walk in a circle around her, ignoring her. DUDE joins them.)*

KAREN: Conclusive proof! Get your proof right here! Page after page of side-by-side photo comparisons. Medical records, weight, coloration, birthmarks. Raw and processed data. Easily digestible. Color pictures.

PASSERBY: Color pictures of Chris and Alex?

KAREN: Color pictures, cute little comic strips. Even a whole section of Chris and Alex jokes.

PASSERBY: Ones they told?

KAREN: About them.

PASSERBY: That's sick.

*(The PASSERBY returns to the circle.)*

KAREN: These are the actual numbers. See for yourselves. Draw your own conclusions. I'm here to help. Get your data here. Red hot data. Get your data here.

*(A COP enters.)*

COP: Move on.

KAREN: Officer, would you be interested in a factual expose of our latest celebrity frauds?

COP: You got a permit?

KAREN: These are public sidewalks. I am exerting my First Amendment rights.

COP: Gotta have a permit.

KAREN: I have a right to speak my mind.

COP: You want to put a penny in your pocket, government takes its bite.

KAREN: I'm giving them away, see? Free! Come and get your free debunking guide!

COP: Now you're loitering.

KAREN: I'm--

COP: You're pissing me off.

KAREN: Your happiness is not--

COP: My happiness decides if I bust your skull.

KAREN: But I--

COP: That's it. End of fuse.

*(He grabs her and drags her off stage. Her brochures are scattered.)*

*(CHRIS and ALEX enter as KAREN is dragged off. The PASSERSBY rush to them, pens and papers thrust eagerly. CHRIS and ALEX sign.)*

PASSERSBY: Autograph! Autograph! Sign right here. To Edna, Jane, Dallas, Ricky, Adolf, Petruccio, Jimmy, Alice.

ALEX: Do your part for Science.

CHRIS: Volunteer a small amount of DNA.

*(The COP re-enters.)*

ALEX: A tiny speck of grey matter is all we need.

CHRIS: Keep the rest of the unused mass for yourselves.

ALEX: Only \$19.95. A small price to make your mark upon history.

CHRIS: We accept the short, tall, fat, thin, infirm, sane, politicians, serial killers, farmers, watchmakers, telemarketers. Our sample van is right around the corner. *(CHRIS looks down and sees one of Karen's pamphlets. He picks it up.)* What the hell is this?

COP: Whacko woman was selling them. I made her move on.

ALEX: You'd better find her.

CHRIS: Now!

*(COP exits. The PASSERSBY seem tense, uncertain.)*

CHRIS: We need lighter fluid.

ALEX: Now!

*(The PASSERSBY scatter and exit, searching.)*

CHRIS: I will not tolerate people spreading lies.

ALEX: Libel.

CHRIS: Slander.

ALEX: Sedition.

CHRIS: She has no right to attack--

ALEX: --our very nature.

CHRIS: Our celebrity.

ALEX: Our power.

CHRIS: As ordained by science.

ALEX: Sacrilege.

CHRIS: There is only one remedy for such filth.

ALEX: To the flames!

*(They exit.)*

#### **FASHION STATEMENT**

*(The two SHOPPERS with their baskets. They have x-shaped bandages in the centers of their foreheads.)*

SHOPPER1: I touched one.

SHOPPER2: Liar.

SHOPPER1: He handed me his picture and I stroked his hand.

SHOPPER2: You didn't.

SHOPPER1: I did.

SHOPPER2: And?

SHOPPER1: Wonderful. As soon as I touched him, I went right out and got sampled.

SHOPPER2: Didn't hurt a bit, did it?

SHOPPER1: They say the little scar will be--

SHOPPER2: --a fashion statement. Better than a tattoo. Have you heard anything?

SHOPPER1: Not yet. With my luck it'll be some Chinese woman.

*(SHOPPERS exit.)*

### **THE RISING TIDE**

*(KAREN, in her apartment. She stands face to face with the MAILMAN. He attempts to give her a handful of mail.)*

MAILMAN: Here's your mail, Ms. Sayer.

KAREN: Have you looked through it?

MAILMAN: No, Ma'am. That would be an invasion of your privacy. Here you go.

*(She won't take it.)*

KAREN: Is there a single piece without their pictures or names?

MAILMAN: Excuse me?

KAREN: Chris and Alex.

MAILMAN: They do seem to endorse... I really need to get on with my route.

KAREN: Look through it. I'll take everything that's clean.

MAILMAN: I really--

KAREN: Sort it out, Mailman!

*(He fumbles through the mail and finally produces a single envelope.)*

MAILMAN: Phone bill.

*(She takes it.)*

KAREN: Thank you. *(The MAILMAN exits. KAREN sits in her apartment and reads the phone bill.)* This is simplicity. I talk on the phone for a certain number of minutes; I pay a certain amount of

KAREN (Cont'd): money. The money is green. And green is just an agreement to label things consistently. All I want is for the world to be consistent and say that things that are alike are alike and things that are different are different. *(beat)* I really love this phone bill.

*(STACK enters, carrying a box and a bag. KAREN does not notice him.)*

STACK: Must be quite a phone bill.

KAREN: It was the only thing that wasn't tainted.

STACK: Rough day?

KAREN: I almost got thrown in jail. A screaming mob burned my flyers.

STACK: That's totally the wrong attitude.

KAREN: There's an ugliness behind these creeps, behind the whole bizarre phenomenon.

STACK: It was an isolated incident.

KAREN: The same thing will happen if I try again tomorrow.

STACK: Something must have stirred them up, Karen. People disagree with just about everything in the world, but they don't take action.

KAREN: These did.

STACK: Forget the whole stupid situation. If people want to believe, why not let them?

KAREN: Because it's not true. It's deceit.

STACK: Not true in your eyes. You're stronger, you see better, you're superior to the great mentally unwashed. Forget about the rest of them.

KAREN: I can't.

STACK: It's time to try. I am ready to begin our first evening of complete blockage. We will not turn on the radio, read our mail, or watch the television. We will spend the entire evening with just the two of us.

KAREN: And what about tomorrow?

STACK: Screw tomorrow. Focus on tonight. You and me, together for an evening, without the duplicate specters haunting us. I raided the video store--tonight will be Frank Capra night--"Mr. Deeds Goes to Town," "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," "It Happened One Night." I will be Clark Gable.

*(He hands her the box.)*

KAREN: And this is?

STACK: A celebration gift.

KAREN: Celebrating what?

STACK: Our new life of sanctuary together. And one other small thing.

KAREN: Which is?

STACK: Open it first.

*(She opens it. It's an evening gown.)*

KAREN: Quite the occasion.

STACK: Allow me.

*(He dresses her in the dress during the following:)*

KAREN: The other news?

STACK: The stage must be set. The moment of the sale, of the final revelation does not come randomly. A seed does not germinate on hard, dry earth. The ground must be plowed, watered, fertilized.

KAREN: You're a master fertilizer, Stack.

STACK: You know what I have, Karen? Faith. I have faith in the ability of the American people to be overcome with desire. Not just wistful longing. I'm talking about lust--lust to be important. A craving to feel that they are more than ants on the sand hill of time. They will pay money to have the magnifying glass pass over them, to make a direct, searing connection between them and the sun. And the whole combination is already in place, the ants, the sun, the glass, but it takes the right person to provide focus, to line things up in just such a way. I'm the right man to do it.

*(He finishes dressing her. She's beautiful.)*

STACK: *(admiring her)* I am indeed a man of vision. Dinner should be here in twenty minutes. Champagne?

*(He produces a bottle and glasses.)*

KAREN: It makes me nervous to see you so gleeful.

*(STACK pops the cork and pours champagne for both of them.)*

STACK: You're nervous because I'm nervous. Nervous, excited, thrilled, worried. I got a new job.

KAREN: Wonderful. What is it?

STACK: Who is the best, most creative, most insightful salesman you know?

KAREN: Stack Thompson.

STACK: You are a veritable Oracle of Delphi.

KAREN: That's my job.

STACK: My job is to satisfy people's hunger. To complete their lives by helping them spend their money to be part of something larger than themselves. I have the opportunity to help people be part of the most influential and popular scientific discovery of our generation.

KAREN: No.

STACK: I understand you might have a few qualms about this job. But I will not bring my work home.

KAREN: You can't do this.

STACK: It's the opportunity of a lifetime.

KAREN: I don't blame you for considering it.

STACK: I love you, Karen. This doesn't change that.

KAREN: It's not just about me, Stack. The entire world is at risk. Help me. Sell the truth.

STACK: I can't sell something people don't want.

KAREN: I've never asked much of you. But I'm asking now.

STACK: We can block it all out.

KAREN: You're too good at what you do. There will be no escape.

STACK: I have to do this, Karen. It's in my nature.

KAREN: Don't say that. I believe a lot of things about you, but I can't believe you would do this.

STACK: Can't you trust my judgment? Just a little.

KAREN: I know what I've seen, Stack. You can't change that.

STACK: I'm taking the job.

KAREN: Get out.

STACK: It doesn't have to be this way. I promise we can avoid--

KAREN: Get out now!

STACK: I won't give up on you, Karen. Never.

*(STACK exits.)*

#### **FLOYD AND WANDA**

*(FLOYD and WANDA SAYER in an American Gothic pose, though they wear Chris and Alex T-shirts and he holds a fishing pole, rather than a pitchfork.)*

*(KAREN enters. FLOYD and WANDA look a little nervous.)*

KAREN: Hi, Mom.

WANDA: Karen? Why, don't you look... Floyd! Floyd! Floyd, it's Karen.

FLOYD: Did anyone see her?

WANDA: Why don't you hurry inside, before someone sees you?

KAREN: Stop. Don't touch me. Don't take one more step.

WANDA: What's the matter?

KAREN: Those T-shirts.

WANDA: Aren't they wonderful?

KAREN: Take them off.

FLOYD: We're going to the big rally at the convention center next week.

WANDA: Your dad got us the tickets.

FLOYD: I have connections.



KAREN: Please. Please, please, please take off those T-shirts.

WANDA: Guess which one I'm wearing?

FLOYD: I always put on the wrong one. But your mom's is smaller.

WANDA: Mine is Alex. I just couldn't resist. Everyone will be wearing them. That's half the fun.

FLOYD: Those tickets are impossible to get, unless you have connections.

KAREN: Goodbye.

WANDA: What?

KAREN: I just want a small bit of sanctuary, just for a minute. But you won't take off those DAMN T-shirts!!!

FLOYD: Fine. Don't throw a snit.

*(Cardigan sweaters are thrown to Floyd and Wanda from offstage. They put them over their T-shirts. KAREN sits on a stool.)*

WANDA: Floyd, she won't eat.

FLOYD: She won't sleep.

WANDA: It is everything I can do to get her in the shower. Clearly there is something wrong...

*(FLOYD casts his fishing rod into the air. WANDA exits and enters with a plate of poundcake.)*

WANDA: Poundcake?

KAREN: No thanks.

*(WANDA exits.)*

FLOYD: Oh, yeah. Got a bite. Ease into it. Don't horse it. Fifteen pounds if he's an ounce.

KAREN: You could have gone on your fishing trip, Dad.

FLOYD: Wouldn't think of abandoning my baby.

*(WANDA enters with a plate of roast beef.)*

WANDA: Roast beef?

KAREN: No thanks.

WANDA: If you don't eat soon, we're going to have to take you to the hospital. And then what will people think? They'll think we starved you, that we were such bad parents that we couldn't even get you to do something simple like eat a slice of roast beef, and they'll think it's no wonder she turned out the way she did, just look at her parents, they can't even get her to eat a slice of blankety-blank bread, let alone control herself around celebrities.

KAREN: I'm sorry if I reflect badly on you in public.

WANDA: I would have thought you finished that "acting out" phase when you dated that boy with the long hair and the motorcycle.

FLOYD: Never liked him.

WANDA: She didn't want you to like him, dear.

FLOYD: I like Stack.

WANDA: What exactly did Stack do? He took an opportunity. Maybe you disagree a little on philosophy. He's a very nice boy.

FLOYD: Very promising fisherman.

KAREN: I love Stack, but we're not meant to be together. Is there any other salt you'd like to rub into my wounds? Maybe I should go get a razor and open a vein.

WANDA: It's fine if you want to be melodramatic at home. We're used to it. That's fine.

FLOYD: But don't do it in front of the papers.

KAREN: Chris and Alex don't look alike. They're completely different people.

FLOYD: Talk like that will get us all in a lot of trouble.

KAREN: Then bring it on. Because I'm ready for it. I don't care what your idiot friends say, what my boss says--

FLOYD: You got fired, didn't you?

KAREN: --what Stack says, what you say. It doesn't matter. I will not change my mind.

WANDA: Karen Sayer, act your age. We are alive in the midst of a time of wonder. Stop trying to ruin it.

*(KAREN begins a frantic dance around Wanda and Floyd.)*

*(Karen is joined in her dance by two MEN in white coats, carrying a long strip of cloth. The MEN can be played by Chris and Alex.)*

*(FLOYD takes a pile of smashed plastic from his pocket.)*

FLOYD: Karen!

KAREN: Yes, Daddy. Yes, Daddy. Yes, Daddy. Yes, Daddy.

FLOYD: How am I supposed to watch TV without the remote?

WANDA: We'll buy a new one, dear.

FLOYD: She smashed the remote.

KAREN: Yes, Daddy. Yes, Daddy. Yes, Daddy.

WANDA: We'll buy a new one.

FLOYD: SHE SMASHED THE REMOTE!

*(KAREN and the MEN in white coats join hands.)*

KAREN: Ring around the rosy, pocket full of posies, ashes, ashes,  
we all fall down.

*(WANDA produces a handful of ashes from her pocket and hands them to FLOYD.)*

*(The MEN in white coats wrap the cloth around KAREN, like a straight-jacket.)*

WANDA: Floyd.

FLOYD: No.

WANDA: I thought I hid all the matches from her.

FLOYD: Oh, no.

WANDA: Floyd, honey.

FLOYD: Those tickets were impossible to get. I used my connections.

KAREN (*overlapping*): They are not alike. They don't look alike. They don't sound alike. You all buy whatever they sell you, because you have lost the capacity to use your brains.

WANDA: We have to make the call, Floyd.

FLOYD: Those were hundred dollar tickets. You can't get 'em anywhere. But I have connections.

*(The MEN have completely wrapped Karen's arms and upper body with the cloth (so it looks like she's in a straight jacket). The MEN exit with FLOYD and WANDA.)*

KAREN: Let me go! There is nothing wrong with me! I am not crazy. I am not crazy. You can't do this to me. I have a right to my opinion. I have a right to disagree. I do not belong here. I do not belong here. You can't make me change my mind. I've seen them, in the flesh. I know the truth. I know the truth. Can't we just agree to disagree? You are all willing dupes, willing to open your pocket-books and spread your legs. I'm not. We're just different, that's all. I know the truth.

### **THE PSYCHOLOGIST**

*(A PSYCHOLOGIST enters on roller skates or riding a scooter. She circles around Karen.)*

PSYCHOLOGIST: Are you enjoying your stay at The Institute for Impaired Perception, Katie?

KAREN: Karen.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Excuse me?

KAREN: That's my name.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Are you sure?

KAREN: You can let me go. I'm not a danger to anyone.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Do you know why you're here?

KAREN: My parents had me committed.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Because...

KAREN: I smashed my father's remote control, burned his tickets to see the freaks, and shredded all the newspapers in Tampa County.

PSYCHOLOGIST: And how do you feel about your actions?

KAREN: Happy.

PSYCHOLOGIST: How do you feel about being here?

KAREN: Angry.

PSYCHOLOGIST: And those things are in the wrong order, aren't they? You should feel angry about your actions and happy that someone decided to fix your problem.

KAREN: I don't have a problem.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Let's take a little test, shall we? Tell me the first word that comes to mind when you see these pictures.

*(The PSYCHOLOGIST activates slides projected onto the rear wall. The first slide is of a horrific demon.)*

KAREN: Satan.

PSYCHOLOGIST: And this?

*(Picture of Hitler.)*

KAREN: Hitler.

*(Picture of Saddam Hussein.)*

KAREN: Hussein.

*(Picture of Chris.)*

KAREN: Fake. Impostor. Evil incarnate. Chris.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Hmm.

*(Picture of Alex.)*

KAREN: Scum sucking parasite. Alex.

PSYCHOLOGIST: You're sure it's not Chris?

KAREN: Absolutely.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Because?

KAREN: They look different.

PSYCHOLOGIST: What if I told you they were the same picture?

KAREN: You'd be lying.

PSYCHOLOGIST: What if I told you they were all the same picture?

KAREN: You should get your eyes checked.

PSYCHOLOGIST: So this picture--*(Satan image)*--and this image--*(Chris image)*--appear to be?

KAREN: Different visually, identical thematically.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Very interesting.

KAREN: This doesn't make me dangerous. Please. I just want to go. I won't bother anyone.

PSYCHOLOGIST: We'll start your treatment on Tuesday.

KAREN: My treatment? What is my treatment?

*(The PSYCHOLOGIST wheels off.)*

### **VISITATION**

*(MILLER crawls across the floor, tapping a red poker chip. HIDE-OUT sits in the corner, maybe drooling a little. A pile of oversized red poker chips sits in front of him. STACK enters, kisses KAREN, and unwraps the cloth that binds her.)*

KAREN: Hi.

STACK: They made me check my pager and cell phone at the door.

KAREN: Loud noises set some people off.

STACK: It makes me uncomfortable. *(nods towards Miller)* What's he in here for?

KAREN: He can't tell the difference between Lite beer and regular.

STACK: Maybe this place isn't so bad. *(beat)* So, have they helped you?

KAREN: They're still working on me.

STACK: They have no idea how stubborn you are.

KAREN: How are things on the outside?

STACK: Oh, you know.

KAREN: Crazy.

STACK: New job's going gangbusters.

KAREN: You're the best.

STACK: I play with oversaturation like a research chemist.

KAREN: But you always go too far.

STACK: My big triumph takes place tonight. You shouldn't watch.

KAREN: Maybe you should just tell me.

STACK: It's a secret.