

A SOUND MIND

by
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OPEN:

Somber organ music plays.

Lights up to reveal CHARLOTTE standing center stage. She wears a black dress and black hat and a shawl. She holds a well used tissue in her hands. Her eyes are wet from crying, but she puts on a brave face.

The EXECUTOR enters. He arranges the chairs a bit, spots Charlotte and strolls over to her.

EXECUTOR

(Soberly.)

How are we holding up?

CHARLOTTE

(Sniffing.)

Fine...really...just fine.

EXECUTOR

Good, good...good.

(A pause.)

Good...fine. If there's anything you need--

CHARLOTTE

No, no...I'm fine, really.

Another pause.

EXECUTOR

Good...that's good.

He strolls away.

After a moment GAVIN enters. He is gawky and nearsighted. His suit is ill-fittng. He is a bit beleaguered from mourning. He stands awkwardly behind and to the side of Charlotte. She doesn't see him.

The Executor spots Gavin and strolls over to him, his hand extended.

EXECUTOR

Hello, and you are?

Gavin takes the Executor's hand. The Executor brings up his other hand, giving the bland "double-grip handshake."

GAVIN

I'm Gavin Schtumph. Mr. Willard is...*was* my uncle.

EXECUTOR
(Still double-gripping.)
Sure...right...uh-huh.

GAVIN
(Sniffing.)
God, it's all so sad, isn't it?

EXECUTOR
(Soothingly.)
Yes...sure...you betcha.

GAVIN
I mean, it was all so sudden, you
know? MY uncle seemed so fit.

EXECUTOR
Sure...

GAVIN
Did you know he jogged? Ten miles
every day through the park.

EXECUTOR
Wow...no kidding.

GAVIN
He ate right, watched his
weight...He just had a physical
last month and the doctors said he
had the heart of a horse. And now
he's gone. It's all...so sudden.

There is a pause as the Executor stares evenly at Gavin.
Then...

EXECUTOR
He was shot in the head, son.

GAVIN
I know. Just out of the blue like
that. Who knew?

EXECUTOR
Well, I'm sure you still hold fond
memories of him.

GAVIN
Boy, I sure do. I remember he gave
me the first piece of advice I ever
got.

EXECUTOR
Really? What was that?

GAVIN

He said, "Keep eating those Ding-Dongs, Doughboy, and you're gonna end up with the tits of a budding young girl!"

EXECUTOR

(Nodding.)

Wow...wow...Not a truer word spoken, huh?

Gavin looks over at Charlotte.

GAVIN

Golly, Aunt Charlotte sure looks beautiful, doesn't she?

EXECUTOR

Hmmmmmm, indeed.

GAVIN

When i was little, I used to think Aunt Charlotte was the most beautiful woman in the world. After my parents ran away, my aunt and uncle took me in. Aunt Charlotte used to tuck me into bed at night and kiss the end of my nose. And then I would dream of her, soaring over my head like a great, gliding bird. And Egret, or an Osprey. And I would ride on her back as she glided over the hills and the meadows and the oceans.

EXECUTOR

That's beautiful, son.

GAVIN

Then I'd wake up and my pajamas would be all sticky.

The Executor looks grimly at Gavin. He takes a step back, slightly repulsed.

EXECUTOR

Just have a seat when you're ready.

Gavin takes a seat.

Enter BARKER. He is slimy and full of himself. He checks out the room then goes over to the Executor.

BARKER
 Hey, Gomez Addams, you the head
 honcho of this shin-dig?

EXECUTOR
 I am the Executor...yes.

Barker shakes his hand.

BARKER
 The name's Barker. Me and the
 recently deceased were business
 associates. Entrepreneurials, you
 might call it. Let's just say,
 whatever you wanted, we could get
 it for you wholesale. Worldwide
 delivery. Here's one of my cards.

Barker hands the Executor his card. The Executor examines it.

BARKER
 I didn't catch your name, Mr.
 Uhhh...

EXECUTOR
 (In a low, suspenseful
 tone.)
 I...am the Executor.

BARKER
 Whoa. Just felt a cold wind blow up
 my anus. Hey Executor, you got any
 of those little shrimp plates
 around here?

EXECUTOR
 This is the reading of a will, sir.

BARKER
 Cocktail franks?

EXECUTOR
 We do not cater, sir.

BARKER
 Look, Bela Lugosi, since we're on
 the subject...

(He whispers,
 confidentially,)
 Did you happen to, maybe, take a
 peek at that Will of his? I mean,
 I'm expecting a little kickback
 from the old guy, you know?

(MORE)

BARKER (cont'd)

I Figure that cheap bastard owes me big time. I was the brains of our little operation, believe you me.

EXECUTOR

Obviously.

BARKER

The old dip-stick couldn't make a sound investment if you tattooed it on his rumpus. Not like me. I got a natural affinity for high finance. I bought into Rubik's Cubes in 1974.

EXECUTOR

Chilling.

Barker looks over at Charlotte.

BARKER

And to top it off, he gets Charlotte. That's the real knife in my gut. We were all friends back in Agri-Business School. We both wanted her. We both loved her. But she chose him. Because he was *handsome...and successful...and caring...and honest...and forthright...and never did jail time...and had a valid driver's license...and practiced regular hygiene...*

EXECUTOR

Your point is?

BARKER

He was everything I wasn't. But if I had her, she'd know what it was like to be truly loved. I can be tender. I can be caring. I can whip that skirt up over her head and give her the old "Bee Bop-A-Lula She's My Baby!"

Barker gyrates his hips.

EXECUTOR

I'm getting all misty. Have a seat, sir.

Barker takes a seat. The Executor pulls up a chair for Charlotte. She sits. The Executor sits behind his desk.

EXECUTOR

Well, let us begin, shall we?

The executor pulls an envelope from his pocket, tears it open, takes out the Will from inside and reads.

EXECUTOR

"I, Cledetus Q. Willard, being of sound mind and body, do hereby bequeath this to be my last Will and Testament, now and forever, so help me God...no lie. To my nephew, Gavin Schtumph, a devoted and valued member of the family, I hereby bequeath to you a third of my "Import/Export We Can Get It For You Wholesale With Worldwide Shipping" Business, my treasury bonds and a third of my stock portfolio, with the provision that you stop touching your wiener in public at inopportune times. To my Associate, H.C. Barker, a man whose business savvy is equal to that of a damp pine cone, and whose body odor could only be compared to a decomposing squirrel in the underwear drawer of an obese, quadriplegic garlic farmer, I leave all my business debts and my share, seven hundred and thirty-three cases, of unsold Rubik's Cubes. And finally, to my dear wife Charlotte. A woman of great steadfastness and beauty. Whose eyes are the color of azure, and whose hair glows like silken flax in a warm summer breeze...

He is obviously not reading from the Will.

EXECUTOR

Her skin, creamy and delicate. Her lips, full and red like a 1967 Mustang Fastback. Her hips, slender and petite, contrasted by round, shapely breasts that hang like perky goblets of fine pudding, topped with spunky little nipples in rigid salute...reaching up to the sky as if to say, "Tweak me! Tweak me! Tweak the tender little passion buttons! Now! Now!"

He throws the Will in the air.

EXECUTOR

Oh God, I can't take it anymore!
Charlotte! Charlotte, I want you!

He takes off his glasses. Charlotte stands slowly, staring at the Executor.

CHARLOTTE

Wait a minute...I know you.

EXECUTOR

Yes.

CHARLOTTE

You're Ed, from the Hardware Store.

EXECUTOR

Yes.

CHARLOTTE

And Frank, our mechanic.

EXECUTOR

Yes.

CHARLOTTE

Percy, the jeweler.

EXECUTOR

Yes.

CHARLOTTE

Googy, the barber.

EXECUTOR

Yes!

CHARLOTTE

Jean-Paul, the chef.

EXECUTOR

Oui!

CHARLOTTE

Pedro, the gardener.

EXECUTOR

Si!

CHARLOTTE

But...But why? I don't understand.

EXECUTOR

I did it to be near you, Charlotte.
I've wanted you ever since the
first moment we met. I can remember
it like it was yesterday.

THE LIGHT CHANGES - FLASHBACK SCENE

The Executor stands center stage, reading a paper. Charlotte hurries by and bumps into him.

CHARLOTTE

(Quickly.)
Sorry...

She hurries off, barely noticing him. He does a double take and stares out at the audience, overcome, as if he's glimpsed a piece of heaven on earth.

THE LIGHT CHANGES - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

EXECUTOR

From that moment on I knew I had to
be near you, by any means possible.
But watching you wasn't enough. I
couldn't stand to see you and him
together. The way he touched you.
The way he stroked the small of
your back as I stood by helplessly
on stilts outside your bedroom
window. I had to take action. I had
to get him out of the way.

CHARLOTTE

Oh my God...You did all this?

EXECUTOR

It was child's play. I plotted it
all down to the minutest detail.

He takes a stack of note cards from his jacket as Gavin and Barker enter with a lecture pad on an easel. The pad shows various, hilarious drawings that accompany the steps of his plan.

EXECUTOR

While gardening as Pedro, I could
trace his jogging route through the
park. All I had to do was get a job
at the telephone company, take the
Mobile Repair Course and Service
Exam and get assigned to do repairs
on a relay pole outside the Park
Terrarium. Simple enough.

(MORE)

EXECUTOR (cont'd)

Then I learned sharp shooting with high powered assault rifles through the Adult Summer Fun Classes at the YMCA. Piece of cake. Then all I had to do was call in sick as Pedro and wait for our health fanatic friend to come jogging by. One bullet, right in the premature bald spot, was all it took. From there it was a simple matter of completing the State Executor's Exam through the Civil Service Bureau and get a temporary job assignment with your husband's law firm in time to read his Will and finally reveal my true feelings for you.

CHARLOTTE

You...you killed my husband?

EXECUTOR

Because I love you, Charlotte. Other men can say they love you. They can give you flowers, rings, offering their heart on bended knee. But, Charlotte...sweetheart ...how many men will put a high powered elk slug through the back of your husband's cranium at two hundred yards, hmmm? Think about it.

The lights change, illuminating the Executor and Charlotte in a pool of blue light. Barker and Gavin exit.

CHARLOTTE

(To the audience.)

I was confused. Thoughts were racing through my mind at a million miles an hour. My poor husband was dead. And the man who killed him, a cold-blooded, homicidal maniac, was standing before me pledging his love. Sure, I was in mourning, I was grieving. I Was full of rage and despair. But...he was kind of cute. And if you think about it, girls, isn't he what we really want in a man? You see it on the talk shows everyday, women wanting a man who's devoted, hard working and steadfast. The guy holds down fifteen jobs with multiple personalities just to be near me.

(MORE)

CHARLOTTE (cont'd)

We also want a man to be affectionate, to prove his love through actions. He's willing to blow off the back of my husband's head. I'd call that going above and beyond the call. And...God, he really is cute. So what's a gal to do? Should I take the path most traveled, call the police, have him put away for life and get on with my shattered existence? Or dare I take a risk? Dare I stand out on the edge of that precipice called "love" and look down into the crevasse of broken hearts without fear or trepidation?

She turns to the Executor. They hold hands, facing each other.

CHARLOTTE

Do I look into the cold eyes of an obsessive, homicidal madman and say...yes.

EXECUTOR

Yes?

CHARLOTTE

Yes

They hug one another, their cheeks pressed together as they face the audience.

CHARLOTTE

Yes! Yes, yes, yes!!!

EXECUTOR

I love you, Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE

I love you, Pedro Jean-Paul Googy!

EXECUTOR

Oh Charlotte, I knew I could make you mine! And I swear, with all I have in my heart, that I will love you for ever and ever and ever! Until the last fires of the sun die out and the stars go dark, I will always love you!

CHARLOTTE

For ever and ever and ever!

There is a pause as they stand cheek to cheek. The Executors face changes. He steps away from Charlotte, slightly disgusted.

EXECUTOR

Uhhh, did you just fart?

BLACKOUT

THE END