

Duke's

by

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CHARACTERS

Amanda - mid 30's brunette, slim, tense, attractive

Ed - also middle 30's, a bit seedy but attractive

Television News Reporter - male or female

Setting

Ed's rundown apartment, downtown. Evening

ACT 1 SCENE 1 - ED'S APARTMENT, NIGHT

Enter Amanda and Ed. Amanda sits on the couch, the only piece of furniture in the room.

ED

I don't think I had enough cash for a decent tip.

AMANDA

They'll remember you.

Amanda rises and begins to leave

ED

Where are you going?

AMANDA

To the lobby. To smoke.

ED

You can smoke here; doesn't matter.

AMANDA

Fine.

ED

What's the matter? You look tense.

AMANDA

Yes. I'm tense, that's why I smoke. I have a lot on my mind.

(smoking)

Should I tell you again?

ED

That's hardly necessary.

AMANDA

You forget.

ED

You had a funeral to attend.

AMANDA

Yes, I had a funeral to attend. How I hate the thought of it. We're never around when they die but we're expected to show up when they're buried. I hate the thought of it.

ED

What can you do?

AMANDA

Damn that Steven. He was the worst.
Who knows if he deserved what
happened to him... but goddamn him.

(beat)

He was such a bastard.

(beat)

There were more mourners than I
thought there'd be. Who knew he was
so loved?

LIGHTS DOWN SLIGHTLY

Stage hands bring in a casket. Mourners gather to one side.

SCENE II - FUNERAL PARLOR, EARLIER THAT DAY

ED

Who knew?

AMANDA

Why did you come? You weren't invited
to the funeral.

ED

Pay my respects.

AMANDA

Respect? You didn't know him. What
respect?

ED

I knew him. I know what kind of guy
he was and I know the opportunities
he presented to us... I mean, to you.
Never would have met him except for
one of his parties that you always
attended. You were on the hunt.

AMANDA

He was easy prey.

ED

Yeah. I knew him before I met you.

AMANDA

You never heard of me before then.

ED

Sure I did. I was covering the industry. You were fairly well known as an actress or you had been. Doesn't matter now but you had a reputation then.

AMANDA

Then. Yes. Then.

(pause)

What did you think of him?

ED

He was a little scary. The business he was in. It's kind of dangerous.

(pauses)

He didn't love you, though, but you complimented him; you looked good together and he knew that. Eye candy.

AMANDA

I was eye candy once, wasn't I? Am I still eye candy?

ED

Sure.

AMANDA

You don't believe that. I'm past my prime.

ED

You're in your prime, just not as sweet.

AMANDA

Oh, what a wit! You come up with that on your own?

(Pacing and smoking)

In my prime. I spent my prime with him! Death is the only thing he's left me, and debt. Lots of it.

ED

What debt? You've got so much jewelry, clothes and gifts from him, you could sell half of it to pay off debts and still have a floor to yourself at Barney's.

AMANDA

Shut up! You don't know what I went through to get those things. Those are my things! I earned them and they cost me a lot more than just money. They were my things!

ED

Sorry.

AMANDA

Steven's death puts me in a big hole. Everything was in my name, you see? You know what that means?

ED

His name, his debts?

AMANDA

Aren't you brilliant? I took care of him; I covered when things got sketchy. Now, my reward is to lose him and everything I've earned.

ED

How's that? What's yours is yours.

AMANDA

Because we were married, you idiot!

ED

You were married?

AMANDA

Oh, fuck you.

ED

Not lately. Hey, so it's a little more complicated now.

AMANDA

I've got no protection.

ED

So what?

AMANDA

I'll tell you so what: he had "creditors" and now I owe them. I don't want those sorts coming after me, too.

ED

(laughing)

So, what happens, now? Are you going to run away and hide, like a little mouse?

AMANDA

If I had any brains.
(smoking)

ED

(glancing at the casket)

Do you believe in ghosts?

AMANDA

He can't hear you!

The crowd around the coffin leans forward to hear.

ED

I get the feeling somebody is listening to us.

AMANDA

[Oh, that's your imagination. The only ghosts we experience is our own guilt.]

ED

Guilt? How do you mean?

AMANDA

I mean for the sins you imagined you've committed in life.

ED

I don't know about you but I've committed a lot of sins in my life.

AMANDA

Well, what are sins, anyway? Aren't they just your personal choices, and not someone else's?

ED

You mean it's simple matter of who wins the argument? What about sins against what you know is right?

AMANDA

And what are those?

ED

What about actions you might take
that hurt innocent people?

AMANDA

Innocent of what? Show me an innocent
person and I'll show you someone who
has so far escaped judgment. We are
all guilty of something; you said so
yourself.

ED

I was talking about my guilt. I can't
speak for anyone else.

AMANDA

(Amanda paces and smokes.)

No kidding? You're hardly the type to
advocate for anyone's innate
goodness. Most people are rotten to
the core; there's no changing them.

ED

But don't you think it's worth it to
give them a chance? If they fail,
then let them make that mistake. I
find it hard to assume everyone is
rotten without giving them the chance
to prove otherwise.

AMANDA

Where did you get this pie-in-the-sky
viewpoint? I'm telling you, given the
chance, almost everyone will choose
the selfish course, not the
altruistic one. Hell, you never did.

ED

But I wish I had, sometimes. It might
ease my conscience some nights.

AMANDA

What has this to do anything with a
belief in ghosts?

ED

Aren't ghosts the remnants of our
guilt? Of our bad actions?

AMANDA

What difference does that make? If
you feel guilty about an action you

took that, let me point out to you,
you profited from, isn't that just a
way to make yourself feel better
about yourself when you don't? Isn't
that just a mechanism of culture to
keep you in line?

ED

But what if there are consequences to
our actions... in the afterlife?

AMANDA

Goddammit. Goddamnit! You're so
stupid! You know how stupid you are?
Goddamnit!

ED

What? What's you got into you?

AMANDA

There is no afterlife! Those are
fantasies! What next, are you telling
me that some bearded man that judges
our sins? Who is that?

ED

No, no old man; I think it's actions,
our past actions taking form in our
imagination that will judge us. Our
actions are the ghosts. I can't shake
mine. Don't you feel their weight
upon you?

AMANDA

Oh, you're either stupid of insane!
Our actions happen just once. They
don't linger like a stench.

ED

But they do linger! They cloud our
judgment and choices going forward.

AMANDA

I only care about one thing: what I
possess and what I don't... and you
better believe I want more because
what else is there? There's no
judgment day; that's all make believe
to keep people docile. Not me. I'm
getting what's coming to me.

ED

How can you live with that? We don't know when night die. Look at Steven there - do you think he knew when his time was up?

Amanda lights up another cigarette.

AMANDA

I should put this out in your eye. I live; that's all. I don't worry about death and when it might come or for that matter, what comes after.

ED

You're a hard woman, Amanda. There's no warmth in you, only heat, no warmth...

... so, now what?

AMANDA

I'll go back to the yacht and get his Will and Trust. I'll call you.

ED

I should expect your call... when you're ready?

AMANDA

Yeah, when I'm ready. Sure.

ED

OK, are you leaving? You'll call?

AMANDA

Yeah, I'll be at the boat.

ED

Shall I go with you?

AMANDA

No. I'll be fine.

Amanda stands over the coffin a moment, smoking.

Exit Amanda followed by mourners carrying the casket.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 3 - ED'S APARTMENT, EVENING

Ed turns on the television and exits. Enter Ed from bathroom with phone to his ear. TV is still on.

ED

(speaking to himself)

Where is she? How long does it take to pay off those bills? I got bills, too... God, I hate this answering service...

(speaks into phone)

Amanda, I'm still waiting.

Hangs up, paces, turns on TV but ignores it

(to himself)

What's the delay? I ought to be a high priority. Steven is dead. That means it's just me, right?

Turns up TV volume.

NEWS

... Let's turn to local news... but first, this.

Ed dials his phone and turns down the TV.

ED

(to TV)

Oh, shut up. OK, let's try this:
Amanda, fuckin' call me!

Throws phone on the couch. Suddenly, the phone rings and Ed desperately answers.

Amanda? What? Is this Amanda? What?

(pause)

No, no, I don't want to hold. Who is this? Is Amanda there? No, I'm not interested in consolidating debt! I have a very important call coming. Please hang up! Hang up!

(hangs up again)

Jesus! Where is she?

Despondent, he walks to the window and looks out.

(to himself)

It's so quiet outside. Where are all the birds? Why no birds out?

He turns back and his attention is caught by the TV. He grabs the remote and turns up the volume.

NEWS

"... police report the recovery of a woman's body entangled in the pilings of the Nicholas Street Pier. Detectives say there is strong evidence she was first murdered, then thrown from the pier, in a clumsy attempt to make it look like an accident."

Ed drops his water bottle in shock.

"... in the meantime, police are asking anyone who is acquainted with the victim, identified as Amanda Sinaloa, to contact them. Police fear this homicide may be linked to other murders connected to drug trafficking in the area."

ED

Holy shit.

NEWS

"... a previous death of a friend of Ms Sinaloa, Steven Paris, once ruled an accident, has now been reopened as a possible homicide. Police fear associates of Sinaloa and Paris may be at risk."

Ed quickly shuts off TV and scrambles offstage and quickly returns with a backpack and clothes hanging out. He stumbles around looking for his phone and dials.

ED

Come on, come on, come on, come on!
Yes! I need a cab. My name is Ed Klein. Right. You got my account and address. Great, great! Listen, tell the driver to come upstairs and knock, first, OK?

(hangs up and paces,
nervously)

(continuing)

OK. Get a grip. They don't know me. Do they? Do they? There were so many people at those parties. I met a lot of people... oh, shit! Who's this text

from? What the hell? Who's
threatening me with this shit? I
don't owe any money to... oh shit, oh
shit, oh shit! Jesus!

Throwing his belongings together chaotically. Suddenly, he stops,
turns off TV and listens. There are faint footsteps.

ED
(quietly)
Who's there?

A light knock
Who's there?

A loud knock startles him. The knock repeats, insistently. Ed
doesn't move.

A third knock, louder than ever.

LIGHTS OUT

A screenshot of Ed's phone appears on the back wall. It is an
image of a ride sharing program saying, "Ride Canceled"

(shouts in terror from the
darkness)
Who's there?!

End