

# **CHARLESTON**

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# **REVISITED**

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A drama in two acts

By  
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## Characters

Charlotte Butler, mid nineties,  
energetic

Mark Smythe, Nearly eighty

Virginia "Gin" Middleton, fifties

Jim Haywood, mid nineties, dapper, mid  
nineties

Jacob, a parrot

Jay, a blue jay

Madam Finch, a yellow finch

Radio Announcer

## Act 1

SCENE 1 SPRING AFTERNOON CHARLOTTE'S GARDEN ON LOGAN STREET IN CHARLESTON.

JAY

Good evening. My name is Jay. I am a bird in case you don't know it. I know Charleston and Charlotte Butler very well. Don't ever underestimate how much we birds know about what is going on in what is supposedly your world.

MADAME FINCH

You're such a braggart, Jay.

JAY

Not only are you another species of bird. You're also something worse.

MADAME FINCH

What's that?

JAY

A female.

MADAME FINCH

And Charlotte Butler?

JAY

That's none of your business. She's a good woman. Besides she's human.

MADAME FINCH

Jay, Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence.

JAY

You're a philosophic pest as well.

Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake plays in the background. Charlotte Butler, appears to be in her late seventies, works in her elaborate garden, consisting of seven rose bushes, petunias, inpatients, pansies, hibiscus, portulaca, azaleas, cosmos, geraniums, zinnias, and marigolds. Trees include a magnolia, fig, redbud, paper pear, and apple. Birds drink from three spouting fountains.

JAY

(To Audience)

I sometimes migrate south, but my nest is in Charleston.  
Sometimes I visit Savannah, but Charleston is home.

MADAME FINCH

This is a play about Charlotte Butler and a few other humans.  
We birds all love Miss Butler, but so do all the flowers and  
trees. Some humans too, but not all.

JAY

Now let us look in on what's happening on Logan Street.

CHARLOTTE

My dear family of flowers and birds. Good Morning. I hope  
you all slept well last night. Mother thought about you last  
night. I hope you are enjoying the music from Swan Lake. We  
are having a wonderful season. You have even all survived  
last week's torrential rains. Are you all pleased with our  
music selections this year. You all look so happy and  
healthy.

JACOB

I wish these uselss birds would all go away.

CHARLOTTE

Hush, Jacob! You are also a bird. Why, Good Morning, Mr.  
Jay. This marks your thirtieth visit this week. Not  
counting your visits when I'm not here. You too must like  
Swan Lake.

Gin, forties, can not be seen but can  
be heard shouting over the fence.

GIN (O.S.)

Can you turn that music down.

JAY

What a pest this Gin woman is!

MADAME FINCH

Hush. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good  
terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly;  
and listen to others,

JAY

Oh, brother.

CHARLOTTE

What's your problem, dear neighbor!

GIN  
I don't like classical music.

CHARLOTTE  
Because thou art a dope!

MADAME FINCH  
She's really not a dope.

JAY  
Shut up!

GIN  
Why do you keep playing this music/.

CHARLOTTE  
The flowers love it.

JAY  
So do the good birds.

GIN  
Why not try some rap music.

MADAME FINCH  
Oh, God.

CHARLOTTE  
Rap would kill the birds, the flowers, and maybe eventhe  
bricks.

GIN  
Neighbor dear!

CHARLOTTE  
Do I smell a cake!

GIN  
I did. For you.

She stands on a bench and can now be  
seen. She has a cake.

GIN (CONT'D)  
Charleston Chocolate Marble. To perfection.

CHARLOTTE  
Perhaps the flowers will forgive you for your bad taste in  
music.

JAY  
Not the birds.

GIN

Feed them the cake.

CHARLOTTE

I don't love them that much.

GIN

I have a favor to ask.

CHARLOTTE

I can only grant favors on a full stomach.

GIN

I have a fork and plate.

CHARLOTTE

Fork it over, baby doll. Or climb over the fence!

GIN

Your flowers might wilt if they hear gossip.

CHARLOTTE

My flowers love gossip as much as they love good music.

Gin opens the gate.

GIN

Not as agile as I was twenty years ago.

CHARLOTTE

Not bad for a seventy year old woman.

GIN

What! I haven't reached fifty yet!

CHARLOTTE

Ha! Now the gossip you promised?

GIN

Not so fast?

CHARLOTTE

Perk up or shut up.

GIN

How about the birds? They might hear. Madame dear!

Suddenly all the birds appear on the fence post.

CHARLOTTE

You don't think they like gossip?

GIN  
But they're birds!

JAY  
What a fool!

MADAME FINCH  
You're right this time

CHARLOTTE  
These are my birds and my birds like gossip.

GIN  
Your birds? You're so silly.

Suddenly Jacob, Charlotte's parrot  
shouts out

JACOB  
That's what you think, Turkey Lady.

CHARLOTTE  
You hear the guy.

JACOB  
Can't you get that dumb parrot to shut up

CHARLOTTE  
Hush, Jacob.

JAY (O.S.)  
That is the most detestable parrot in the world. I wish that  
neighborhood eagle would do something about him.

MADAME FINCH (O.S.)  
Oh, hush.

JACOB  
The gossip? (to Gin) Turkey!

GIN  
Hush!

JACOB  
I can make life miserable for you.

CHARLOTTE  
Be kind to our guests, Jacob.

JACOB  
She's your guest. Not mine.

CHARLOTTE

She's our guest. Now be quiet or you go into the house.

JACOB

Bitch!

CHARLOTTE

Into the house you go.

JACOB

No justice around here.

Charlotte picks up the cage and puts it  
in the house as Gin sticks her tongue  
out at Jacob.

JAY (O.S.)

This guy has got to go. He's a discredit to all birds.

MADAME FINCH

Hush!

GIN

Who's the turkey now!

JACOB

Revenge is on its way, Signora Turkey. And Charlotte, could  
someone please kill off that useless blue jay!

GIN

Take that loudmouthed crow into the house!

JACOB

A crow! I've heard YOU called worse!

JAY

Perhaps, Gin is a good woman, after all.

Gin examines the flowers while  
Charlotte brings Jacob into the house.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Who's the news about.

MADAME FINCH

Oh,oh!! The fireworks now begin.

GIN

Us. You, me, and the The new man in my life.

CHARLOTTE

Another one?



GIN  
This one is unique.

CHARLOTTE  
Another one.

GIN  
You've seen him before.

CHARLOTTE  
Who is it?

GIN  
Archdale Street.

CHARLOTTE  
There are no eligible single men on Archdale Street. Some very ineligible.

GIN  
This one's eligible.

CHARLOTTE  
There are no eligible unmarried men on Archdale Street!

GIN  
The Senator lives there.

CHARLOTTE  
We have former senators by the bus loads in Charleston

GIN  
This one's from New Hampshire.

CHARLOTTE  
You mean...?

GIN  
I think you have a crush on him.

CHARLOTTE  
How did YOU meet him?

GIN  
He's been asking questions about you.

CHARLOTTE  
Me?.

GIN  
He's young enough to be your son.

CHARLOTTE  
 He's nearly eighty!

GIN  
 About right he's 79.

CHARLOTTE  
 When is his birthday?

GIN  
 Why do you want to know.

CHARLOTTE  
 What day?

GIN  
 Middle of October.

CHARLOTTE  
 What specific day?

GIN  
 A bit nosy. October 17.

CHARLOTTE  
 You're sure?

GIN  
 Are you up to this astrological nonsense.

CHARLOTTE  
 I did yours this morning. And you are up for some surprises today.

GIN  
 You'll be pleased to know that he wants to meet you. How about tonight?

CHARLOTTE  
 I have no interest.

GIN  
 Come now, Lady Logan.

CHARLOTTE  
 Stop that nonsense. Neither one of us is a lady.

GIN  
 Why can't you come?

CHARLOTTE  
 I'm playing bridge tonight. Another time. Maybe.

GIN

The whole world is dying to meet this man. Remember when he was named the best looking member of Congress.

Gin's cell phone rings.

GIN

Just a sec. (Delighted) Oh, yes.... Yes, it's true. Will you be able to come to dinner?...Wonderful. Yes. I'm sure I can coax her into coming. Fine. Hold on.

CHARLOTTE

You really want me to come?

GIN

(Half heartedly) Of course.

CHARLOTTE

I'll take a rain check.

GIN

(picks up phone) She can't come. I'm so saddened by it ...I will ask her again...(turns to Haze) Can you come.

CHARLOTTE

No.

GIN

She can't come. "What time? See you. (to Charlotte) So sorry you can't come. I'd love to know why he has so much interest in you. MMMM.

CHARLOTTE

I have no idea.

Phone rings.

GIN

Oh, no. .... Yes, I'll be there at once. ...Who's with her. .... Tom! Oh, no! I will be there as soon as possible.

CHARLOTTE

What is it?

GIN

Aunt Flora's maid. My dear Aunt Flora fell! And that no good cousin Tom is with her. I must leave at once for Savannah.

CHARLOTTE

And the Senator?

GIN

I'm calling him now.

The phone rings.

GIN (CONT'D)

Hello... I was just getting ready to call you...We will have to cancel?... I understand...My Dear Aunt just had a serious accident... Right , next week..I'm sure you'll be fine. Goodbye, Sweetheart.

CHARLOTTE

What's wrong with sweetheart.

GIN

He also forgot that he has to get a minor procedure this afternoon and might be spending overnight at the hospital. We can reschedule. Gotta go. It's already nine o'clock.

Suddenly thunder and lightening emanate from the sky. The stage becomes dark for a second.

CHARLOTTE

Good God!

GIN

Where is that thunder from.

CHARLOTTE

God only knows.

MADAME FINCH

(Giggling) We know why.

Suddenly the sun shines and darkness and thunder disappear.

CHARLOTTE

(To the birds) Hello!

GIN

Why have these birds assembled here.

CHARLOTTE

God only knows.

JAY

That's right. Miss Butler hit the nail on the head

Ottorino Respighi's The Birds comes on in the background

## SCENE 2 7 0'CLOCK THAT NIGHT CHARLOTTE'S LIVING ROOM

Dvorak's Slavonic Dances plays in the background. Charlotte is asleep on a chair. She hears the doorbell ring and awakens

CHARLOTTE

Coming.

She opens the door.

Senator Mark Smythe, late seventies, tall, distinguished, with heavy gray hair. Well dressed in a suit. He carries a bouquet of flowers.

MARK

Mrs. Butler , excuse me for this intrusion, I'm...

CHARLOTTE

Mark Smythe!

MARK

I had been hoping you would be home.

CHARLOTTE

I thought you were in the hospital.

MADAME FINCH

I wonder what this is all about.

JAY

Time will tell. Now hush.

MARK

Oh, just an in and out thing. We found out quickly enough what the problem was. I'm fine. Gin had to cancel our get together. These flowers are for you.

CHARLOTTE

I thought I new every flower on the planet. I have never seen ones like these before. Where did you get them and what are they called.

MARK

May I come in?

CHARLOTTE

I'm playing bridge tonight.

MARK

I only can see you tonight..

CHARLOTTE

Unless there's a cancellation

The phone rings.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Excuse me. (Picks up phone) A cancellation? ....I was looking forward to playing. ...Have you and I played together before. ...

She signals Mark to come in

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Well, come in. To what do I owe this delightful visit?

MARK

Oh, just social visit.

CHARLOTTE

Why, of course!

MARK

I have wanted to meet the Grand Lady of Logan Street for some time

CHARLOTTE

I'm neither a lady nor grand. You've had a home here for ten years as I recall.

MARK

Quite a memory!

CHARLOTTE

Not bad for a 95 year old woman.

MARK

Ninety-five!

CHARLOTTE

Not a day younger.

MARK

I wouldn't admit to it.

CHARLOTTE

I usually don't.

MARK

Why with me?

CHARLOTTE

You're special.

MARK

I gather you know how old I am.

CHARLOTTE

I never look at public records.

MARK

Seventy- nine.

CHARLOTTE

I'm old enough to be your mother. Almost.

MARK

A mighty young mother.

CHARLOTTE

Will you have some coffee?

MARK

No, Thank you.

CHARLOTTE

Tea or wine or something stiffer? Jack Daniels?

MARK

You're acting like a Charleston mother.

CHARLOTTE

I'm sure your own mother is the same way.

MARK

She just died at 106.

CHARLOTTE

M-m-m. My mother also died at 106. May I ask you a deeply personal questions?

MARK

Go ahead.

CHARLOTTE

Do you play bridge?

MARK

Weak twos.

CHARLOTTE

Blackwood, Gerber?

MARK

Smallwood, Jacoby, transfer?

CHARLOTTE

How often do you play?

MARK

Often.

CHARLOTTE

Do you dance?

MARK

My first wife and I danced three days a week for fifty years.

CHARLOTTE

And do yo like oysters?

MARK

Eat them three times a week. Even sleep better when I eat them. Great question. Do you like flowers? You really do ask deeply personal questions. What are your non deeply personal questions like?

CHARLOTTE

Shall we go to the Garden? Follow me.

She begins walking out.

MARK

May I use your phone while you go into the garden?

CHARLOTTE

By all means.

JAY

He-he-he. We know what he's up to.

MADAME FINCH

You're terrible, Jay!!

Charlotte reenters and immediately disconnects the television, radio and telephone. Suddenly, thunder and lightening are heard. Charlotte rushes back in. Mark is looking at the photographs on the mantel.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

We'll have to wait till the rain is over.

MARK

Fine. I love to look at old photographs.

CHARLOTTE

Why?



MARK

They tell the story of a family. Is that your father?

CHARLOTTE

Yes.

MARK

Handsome chap.

CHARLOTTE

The grandson of a Civil War General. You know you bear a resemblance to him. He died of a heart attack when I was a child. My mother ended out being a widow for eighty years.

MARK

And these must be your children?

CHARLOTTE

All four of them. Two step and two biological. I treated them all alike.

MARK

This must be your husband.

CHARLOTTE

Andrew. My Love. He died ten years ago, and I think of him everyday. Seventy years of marriage. And ...

MARK

And these must be your grandchildren.

CHARLOTTE

Nine, and two great.

MARK

You must be a doting grandmother.

CHARLOTTE

I am not.

MARK

You don't gloat?

CHARLOTTE

Do I look like an idiot.

MARK

Aren't you proud of them.

CHARLOTTE

A grandmother has to be. Do you have grandchildren?

MARK

Eight and one on the way. Would you like to see their pictures.

CHARLOTTE

Not particularly. And how many children?

MARK

Four. Most people can't stop talking about their grandchildren.

CHARLOTTE

That's because they have nothing better to do.

MARK

Don't your grandchildren love you?

CHARLOTTE

Too much. Now let's get to a serious matter. (Beat) Astrology.

MARK

My first wife read hers every day in the newspaper.

CHARLOTTE

And your second wife?

MARK

Shall we change the subject?

CHARLOTTE

What is your birthday.

MARK

October 17.

CHARLOTTE

As I thought?

MARK

How do you know?

CHARLOTTE

Gut feeling.

MARK

And yours?

CHARLOTTE

My what?

MARK

Birthday?

January 17? CHARLOTTE

As I thought. MARK

How do you know? CHARLOTTE

Gut feeling. MARK

Here we meet for the first time and have gut feelings about one another. CHARLOTTE

We're "gutsy" people. (winking) Remarkable. MARK

(winking) Remarkable. I'd like to do your horoscope? CHARLOTTE

You can't do it. MARK

Why? CHARLOTTE

I know the day and year I was born but not the time. MARK

Your parents didn't tell you? CHARLOTTE

That was a complicated thing. MARK

I'll just guess a time. CHARLOTTE

You can't do that. MARK

Remember, this is Charleston. We can do whatever we want. CHARLOTTE

When? MARK

10:33 PM. Now let me proceed. CHARLOTTE

MARK

Shall we continue playing this game.

CHARLOTTE

What are you talking about?

MARK

Oh disregard what I said.

CHARLOTTE

Very well. October 17. (She pulls out astrological chart. Now let's see. A Libra. Your personal ruling planets are

"Venus and Saturn. Restraint, self doubt and sometimes cynicism can mar an otherwise great future for you. Your lucky colors are deep blue and black. Your lucky gems are blue sapphire, lapis lazuli and amethyst. Your lucky days of the week are Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Your lucky numbers and years of important change are 8, 17, 26, 35, 44, 53, 62, 71. Famous people born on your birthday include Arthur Miller, Rita Hayworth, Montgomery Clift, and Nathaniel West."

MARK

I don't need to know my future. My future is now.

CHARLOTTE

We all need a future. We're never too old. You need to express any unresolved issues of love and closeness that stem from parental involvement as this may resurface during your later relationships and social obligations. It is important for you to air out any grievances or grudges.

MARK

Where I am now, I have no grudges. Now let's stop.

Thunder and lightening are heard.

MARK

Does your astrology explain the thunder and lightening?

CHARLOTTE

No. You're a sassy young man.

MARK

You're a sassy woman.

CHARLOTTE

We have so many similar traits.

MARK

10:33 PM. A guess?

CHARLOTTE

A guess. Yes.

MARK

Telling the truth?

CHARLOTTE

You think I would lie?

MARK

Hope not. Because I WAS born at 10:33 PM

A knock is heard at the door. Charlotte answers. Mark leaves the room.

CHARLOTTE

Hello, Miriam. Let me check.

She picks up telephone and notices that it does not work. Goes back to door.

CHARLOTTE (cont'd)

It's out of order. Probably storm damage. Thank you. Will see you at bridge tomorrow. If the synagogue still has electricity. The telephone is not working. Must be the weather.

Thunder and lightening strike again. We hear birds off stage.

MARK

I'm surprised you don't have a dog.

CHARLOTTE

Had them for years. I love all animals. I had 16 dogs. See their pictures on the wall.

MARK

We always had dogs.

CHARLOTTE

I now travel too much. But I have thousands of pets.

MARK

Oh?

CHARLOTTE

Birds, squirrels, and one raccoon. Also, thousands of flowers. It's stopped raining. Shall we visit them.

MARK

Lead me, Madame

CHARLOTTE  
Parlez vous Francais?

MARK  
Pas Bien.

CHARLOTTE  
Shall we step into the garden?

They walk into the garden. The birds  
are all perched on the fence.

MADAME FINCH (O.S.)  
This story gets more interesting by the minute.

JAY (O.S.)  
Be quiet.

MARK  
Lovely garden. And are those birds really yours?

CHARLOTTE  
Of course.

JAY  
Let's get out!

Suddenly the birds flee.

CHARLOTTE  
They've never done that before.

MARK  
Did I scare them away?

CHARLOTTE  
No. It's the classical music.

MARK  
I don't hear any.

CHARLOTTE  
That's why they ran off.

MARK  
Miss Butler. You're charming! Do you really believe that?

CHARLOTTE  
You bet. Shall we go inside.

MARK  
The pictures. May I see some more. Your mother seems like  
an interesting woman

CHARLOTTE

We buried her ten years ago. Now tell me about your kids and grand kids.

MARK

I thought you weren't..

CHARLOTTE

Hearing about them once is OK. Twice is stale.

MARK

Well there's Mary, she's about to become Massachusetts lieutenant governor. She has four kids. Married three times. And Harry is a top Wall Street lawyer. Poor guy. Married twice, four kids. Now sleeping with a bimbo. Jean is a Florida housewife. And then the youngest. Bob.

CHARLOTTE

What about him?

MARK

A decade ago he came home with a spouse.

CHARLOTTE

How nice.

MARK

The spouse was a he.

CHARLOTTE

Well?

MARK

My first reaction was to strangle them. And then I slept on it, and decided that I would either love 'em or strangle em. And I love 'em both to is day.

CHARLOTTE

Good for you! I'm ready for my daily drink. Please join me. What will have you to drink?

MARK

Nothing.

CHARLOTTE

Not even water?

MARK

Nope.

CHARLOTTE

I will have my regular Jack Daniels.

MARK

With some water I hope.

CHARLOTTE

Nope. Pure. Over ice.

MARK

At 95.

CHARLOTTE

My doctor tells me that I will die if I continue to drink my daily JD.

MARK

And?

CHARLOTTE

He' been telling me this for over forty years. .

She pours herself a drink.

MARK

You're a remarkable woman.

CHARLOTTE

You're a remarkable man. (She looks out the window.) Why are all the flags being flown at half mast.

MARK

General Buttner died.

CHARLOTTE

I never heard of him.

MARK

A great general. (He picks up picture from mantel)

CHARLOTTE

You sure like these pictures.

MARK

Why do you think so?

CHARLOTTE

I know.

MARK

Oh?

CHARLOTTE

You know too.



MARK

I do?

CHARLOTTE

Still being coy, Senator Smythe?

MARK

Why, Mrs. Butler . Coy?

A fire-truck siren roars.

CHARLOTTE

There must be a fire in the neighborhood.

MARK

Do you like toy fire trucks?

CHARLOTTE

What a silly question to ask.

MARK

Well do you?

CHARLOTTE

Do you want to see my train set upstairs?

MARK

Not now.

CHARLOTTE

Are you coming again?

MARK

I like fire trucks too. I remember one I received when I was four.

CHARLOTTE

Do you still have it?

MARK

It's at my home in Massachusetts. It's my favorite toy.

CHARLOTTE

Even now?

MARK

Even now?

CHARLOTTE

Would you care to dance with me.

MARK

To music?

CHARLOTTE

It's the best way to dance.

MARK

The outlets aren't working.

She turns on the CD player and it works.

CHARLOTTE

It works. Isn't that weird. Let's dance.

MADAME FINCH

This is getting cozy.

JAY

But he's such a damned liar.

Mark and Charlotte dance to the Tennessee Waltz.

MARK

You're quite a dancer.

CHARLOTTE

You too.

MARK

We have much in common.

CHARLOTTE

I dare not say it.

MARK

Say what?

The fire truck siren blares loudly again.

CHARLOTTE

Mrs. Anderson must have left her gas burners on again. She's getting up there in years. Now 89.

MARK

But you're 95.

CHARLOTTE

She's her type of 89, I'm my type of 95.

MARK

So you're fascinated by fire trucks?

They stop dancing.

CHARLOTTE

Yes. Off course. And you too. You still have that fire truck since you were four.

MARK

Yes. It puzzles me to this day.

CHARLOTTE

Oh?

MARK

Yes.

CHARLOTTE

At 80?

MARK

Yes. I received it as a gift when I was four. I recall the night I was given that gift. A mysterious woman gave me that gift.

CHARLOTTE

Mysterious?

Mark's mind wanders off. Silence for awhile. Charlotte eyes remain upon him.

MARK

I was very sick. (his mind wanders off)n My mother and father were very concerned. I fell into a deep sleep, and then I awoke hours afterwards. Outside, I heard my mother speaking to a woman whose voice I had never heard before. I heard her mention Charleston, and that she had to get back to her husband.

CHARLOTTE

How interesting! From Charleston?

MARK

Perhaps you know her..

CHARLOTTE

I might. Sure you won't have some Scotch.

MARK

Nope.

CHARLOTTE

You always had a good liquor cabinet in your Capitol Hill home in Washington.

MARK

How do you know that!

CHARLOTTE  
(smiling) It's none of your business.

MARK  
I have one question to ask you.

CHARLOTTE  
Yes?

MARK  
Are you my mother?

CHARLOTTE  
I have a more complex question for you.

MARK  
Yes?

CHARLOTTE  
Are you my son?

MARK  
What?

CHARLOTTE  
You would know better than I.

MARK  
Why?

CHARLOTTE  
You've been searching for years.

MARK  
But..

CHARLOTTE  
So have I.

MARK  
Then...

CHARLOTTE  
Yes.

MARK  
How do you know?

CHARLOTTE  
I gave you a test.

MARK  
Oh?

Puzzled? CHARLOTTE

Yes. MARK

No, you're not! CHARLOTTE

All right. All right! MARK

Stop the nonsense. CHARLOTTE

Let's get to the point. ARE YOU MY MOTHER? MARK

IT'S TOO LATE AT NIGHT TO GET A BLOOD TEST! And what difference would it make.? CHARLOTTE

Well, for one, it would solve a mystery for me. MARK

Did you look at records? CHARLOTTE

Records? There were none. But I know. MARK

Know what. CHARLOTTE

That you are my mother. MARK

Can you prove it? CHARLOTTE

We've been playing. MARK

I feel it. CHARLOTTE

So do I. MARK

Then I pronounce us Mother and Son. CHARLOTTE

MARK  
You love to play games.

CHARLOTTE  
Are you my mother!

MARK  
Are you mine!

CHARLOTTE  
Yes.

The fire siren ring truck comes by.

MARK  
There's a fire!

CHARLOTTE  
Can this be coincidence!

MARK  
There are no coincidences.

CHARLOTTE  
Let me look out the window to see what's happening...it's Mrs.  
Annistan's house. ...She's left the burners on again...No  
problem.

MARK  
Let's hope.

CHARLOTTE  
I'm rushing over.

MARK  
Shall I come with you?

CHARLOTTE  
I shall be right back.

She picks up Gin's cake.

MARK  
Why are you bringing a cake to a fire.

CHARLOTTE  
Because she'll feel better.

MARK  
And if it's a real fire.

CHARLOTTE  
It isn't.

She rushes out and Mark begins examining the pictures closely. We hear the fire sirens again, indicating an end to the fire. He takes each photo and examines it closely. She returns.

MARK

Back early.

CHARLOTTE

Too much activity. I'll drop by tomorrow.

MARK

I'll have that drink.

CHARLOTTE

What will it be?

MARK

Jack Daniels on the rocks.

CHARLOTTE

You're drinking preferences are in your blood.

MARK

Another coincidence

She pours him a drink.

CHARLOTTE

On the rocks? Then my journey has not been in vain.

MARK

Yes.

CHARLOTTE

I don't think we'll need a maternity test.

MARK

You're my mother.

CHARLOTTE

I am not.

MARK

Why! You didn't want me?

CHARLOTTE

I only brought you into the world.

MARK

Do you have any motherly feeling?

Want the truth?  
CHARLOTTE

Yes  
MARK

No.  
CHARLOTTE

Is there ice water going through your veins?  
MARK

Nope. Had there been, you would not have been born.  
CHARLOTTE

It's hard to believe that your my biological parent.  
MARK

She lights a cigarette.

You know I clean my own house every day.  
CHARLOTTE

Five bedrooms I clean them myself.  
Therapeutic.

What does this have to do with this revelation.  
MARK

I Have to visit my broker in the morning.  
CHARLOTTE

There's no sequence to what you are saying.  
MARK

You find out a minute ago that I might be your mother and  
you're already arguing with me.  
CHARLOTTE

Madam, perhaps I should leave.  
MARK

Stop "Madaming" me. I am not a madam.  
CHARLOTTE

You are a difficult mother.  
MARK

I am not your mother!!  
CHARLOTTE

Then what are you?  
MARK



CHARLOTTE  
The woman who bore you.

MARK  
Shall I leave?

CHARLOTTE  
Why?

MARK  
I spend a lifetime searching for you...

CHARLOTTE  
And now you found me.

MARK  
And you won't even call me your son.

CHARLOTTE  
You already have a mother. Why did you come?

MARK  
To search my roots.

CHARLOTTE  
Now you found them. What else do you..

MARK  
You seem almost sanguine.

CHARLOTTE  
What the hell does that mean?

MARK  
Bloody.

CHARLOTTE  
First icy and then sanguine. Give me a break!

MARK  
Give you a break?

CHARLOTTE  
You Senators are always arrogant.

MARK  
How do you know?

CHARLOTTE  
I know them. Piles of 'em in my family.

MARK  
Then they are mine too then.

CHARLOTTE  
That's stretching it. But I suppose so.

MARK  
I think I'll leave.

CHARLOTTE  
But I know you especially.

MARK  
Me especially. You should...

CHARLOTTE  
No not for that reason...

MARK  
What then?

CHARLOTTE  
I've been in your home, and know your animals.

MARK  
What!

CHARLOTTE  
I was there six times.

MARK  
You were not.

CHARLOTTE  
Does 115 strike a bell?

MARK  
Not really?

CHARLOTTE  
Did you ever have an address with 115 in it.

MARK  
Yes.

CHARLOTTE  
There's your answer.

MARK  
What! I 'm confused.

CHARLOTTE  
And I loved your two dogs and cat.

MARK  
MADAME!

CHARLOTTE

Do not call me a MADAME. I ain't one.

MARK

Lady Logan

CHARLOTTE

I do not like that one either. I ain't a Brit. Hundreds of my ancestors fought against them in the Revolutionary War. .

MARK

How do you know about my two cats and four dogs?

CHARLOTTE

I only knew four of them. Essex, Cody, Yorkie, and Panda. Cute animals.

MARK

How do you know them!

CHARLOTTE

I walked both dogs. And played with Panda.

MARK

Panda!

CHARLOTTE

I loved that cat.

MARK

Please explain!

CHARLOTTE

You sound so senatorial. Think of 115.

MARK

(coming to a realization) Like 115 Third Street.

CHARLOTTE

North East.

MARK

Our Capitol Hill home in Washington. You were there?

CHARLOTTE

Six times.

MARK

What!

CHARLOTTE

And you remember Winks?

MARK

Had a tenant in my basement apartment with a cat by that name?

CHARLOTTE

A tenant?

MARK

Mary.

CHARLOTTE

Take a look at the gallery you like so much.

Mark peruses the gallery, and picks up one picture. He looks at it briefly.

MARK

Is that Mary!

CHARLOTTE

I thought you Senators were smart.

MARK

Is that Mary!

CHARLOTTE

Yes.

MARK

My sister!

CHARLOTTE

She lived under your roof for six years.

MARK

And how often were you there?

CHARLOTTE

Five times..

MARK

And you knew..

CHARLOTTE

I did not. I had a hunch.

MARK

And you said nothing! I still don't know why you...

CHARLOTTE

What did you expect me to do? Jump into your dining room and announce to you and your wife of the time and say : "look, I'm your mummy.

MARK

No, but..

CHARLOTTE

Are you glad you found the woman who bore you?

MARK

Frankly, I think she's a bitch.

CHARLOTTE

All right, Junior. You're here because I said yes.

MARK

Eighty years ago. Well why not say yes now.

CHARLOTTE

I've said yes. But now there is another turn.

MARK

Yes?

CHARLOTTE

There is no doubt that I am your biological parent.

MARK

What proof do we have?

CHARLOTTE

Why would I lie?

MARK

Perhaps faulty memory.

CHARLOTTE

Because of my age? You've got to be kidding.

MARK

I am not. No blood test.

CHARLOTTE

You said you liked bridge, you danced. All those traits...

MARK

Hardly scientific proof.

CHARLOTTE

Like any Senator. Highly legalistic. And the fire truck?

MARK

Coincidental

CHARLOTTE

Look, we need not play games. I look into your eyes and I know who you are. Now are you satisfied.

MARK

With that, I think I will go.

CHARLOTTE

I want you to accompany me somewhere

MARK

I don't feel obliged, Lady Logan.

CHARLOTTE

Senator, please.

MARK

What do you want?

CHARLOTTE

Can you accompany me somewhere.

MARK

Where?

CHARLOTTE

St. Phillips Cemetery.

MARK

What!

CHARLOTTE

St. Phillips Cemetery.

MARK

What for?

CHARLOTTE

I want to present you to the only man I love.

MARK

What?

CHARLOTTE

To the only man I have ever loved

MARK

Who is that?

CHARLOTTE

Andrew, my husband.

MARK

You did not love my father?

CHARLOTTE

I most certainly did not love the man who seduced me at 16.

MARK

Tell me about him first.

CHARLOTTE

A scoundrel of the first order.

MARK

Have you maintained contact?

CHARLOTTE

No.

MARK

I want to know more.

CHARLOTTE

I will tell you later. But first will you accompany me. It's just a short walk.

MARK

I would rather not.

CHARLOTTE

Please. Do you want to find the rest out?

MARK

Why do you want me with you?

CHARLOTTE

Because I must apologize to the only man I ever loved.

MARK

About what?

CHARLOTTE

You?

MARK

Me?

CHARLOTTE

You see, I never did tell him about you. And I want to go there and have you with me.

MARK

You want me to go to him to apologize about me?

CHARLOTTE

Please come. Help me to make it right by him. You see I never told him about you.

MARK

Why not?

CHARLOTTE

Because he would never have understood. I want to explain why to him.

MARK

And what role do I serve?

CHARLOTTE

It's the way it's gotta be. Will you please come

MARK

On one condition. That we avoid contact with any other people on the way.

CHARLOTTE

Why?

MARK

It's how I want it. And if you want me to come...

CHARLOTTE

At this time that should be no problem. Shall we go? Let me pick some flowers first.

MARK

As you wish. Madame Lady Logan.

JAY

Aren't these humans strange! (O.S.)

MADAME FINCH

Hush! This is such a dramatic moment. (O.S)

Act 2

SCENE 1 THE STREETS OF OLD CHARLESTON SHORTLY LATER

Charlotte and Mark walk through the streets of Charleston

JAY (O.S.)

I'd like to follow them but it's past our bedtime.

MADAME FINCH

I shall go alone.



JAY  
Suit yourself, Madame Nibby nose.

MARK  
This walk feels ghoulish.

CHARLOTTE  
Why?

MARK  
Like something out of a 1940's movie.

CHARLOTTE  
I feel fine. The brisk air makes me feel so much better.

MARK  
Do we have to go through this exercise at night?

CHARLOTTE  
I may never see you again.

MARK  
I live down the street from you?

CHARLOTTE  
You're rarely in town.

MARK  
Did I see Miss Pinckney peek through the window.

CHARLOTTE  
Peeking through windows is her occupation.

MARK  
Doesn't bring in much money.

CHARLOTTE  
Trust funds do.

MARK  
I saw another blind pulled up.

CHARLOTTE  
Don't you see the favor we're doing them.

MARK  
What favor?

CHARLOTTE  
We give them something to do.

MARK  
Now about my father?

CHARLOTTE  
I don't know anything about your father.

MARK  
No, the biological

CHARLOTTE  
THAT skunk!

MARK  
Is he from Charleston.

CHARLOTTE  
Once.

MARK  
Is he dead?

CHARLOTTE  
Hopefully so.

MARK  
There's someone coming.

CHARLOTTE  
So what?

MARK  
I said I want avoid people.

CHARLOTTE  
I can't control who's walking down the street. How could you want to avoid people if you... (She nods to a woman) Hello Alice. (to Mark) You see that Church we are passing?

MARK  
St. Michaels Catholic?

CHARLOTTE  
It means so much to me. That was Andrew's church.

MARK  
Then why is he buried in an Episcopal cemetery?

CHARLOTTE  
He was raised an Episcopalian, but converted to Catholicism. But he wanted to be buried with his ancestors.

MARK  
How does a Catholic manage to get buried in an Episcopal cemetery?

CHARLOTTE

He left each church a million dollars. They all shut up.

MARK

Why?

CHARLOTTE

Money talks.

MARK

Do you believe in religion?

CHARLOTTE

I've lived with it all my life.

MARK

Catholic too?

CHARLOTTE

Maybe. I raised the kids Catholic to keep Andrew happy. I did so much work that the Pastor decided to nominate me as South Carolina's Catholic Mother of the Year. Well to make a long story short, I campaigned against myself, and a few of the mothers wanted to even canonized me for being so selfless.

MARK

Why did you campaign against yourself?

CHARLOTTE

Because I wasn't Catholic. I just pretended to be one. And very active too. Charities, PTA, Soup Kitchens, sick and so on.

MARK

And I suppose you're against abortion too?

CHARLOTTE

I believe in the right to choose. A woman's right

MARK

Well how about the fetus of 80 years ago?

CHARLOTTE

I so not believe in MY right to choose.

MARK

And how did you manage this baby delivery?

CHARLOTTE

Not easy.

MARK

Did you mother know about it?

CHARLOTTE

Are you kidding?

MARK

By my calculation, you were 16.

CHARLOTTE

About.

MARK

And so how did you proceed? And unnoticed?

CHARLOTTE

Ask no questions? Just be grateful!

MARK

For what?

CHARLOTTE

You're being here.

MARK

How did you do it?

CHARLOTTE

I got a summer job working in Boston. And I was able to carry myself so that I didn't appear pregnant. And then there were the nuns..They were Godsend's. But in those days I wanted you raised an Episcopalian. And you know, they respected my wishes. You were given to some God-fearing Episcopalian's.

MARK

Why did you go through all this grief.

CHARLOTTE

I had to.

MARK

Because abortions weren't easy?

CHARLOTTE

They weren't but... I knew people who could help me if I wanted one.

MARK

Would you do the same today?

CHARLOTTE

Moot question. I can't have any more babies.

MARK  
You're so remarkable. Are you sure you can't.

CHARLOTTE  
Miracles do happen.

MARK  
My dear Lady Logan!

CHARLOTTE  
Again?

MARK  
Is it true that there are ghosts in these houses

CHARLOTTE  
Every street in Charleston has ghosts.

MARK  
Do you believe in the?

CHARLOTTE  
Every street in Charleston has ghosts according to two types of people.

MARK  
Who are they?

CHARLOTTE  
Real estate agents and travel agents. Ghosts have sold millions of dollars of real estate and drawn tourists to otherwise boring places. Do you believe in them.

MARK  
Yes. Our Capitol Hill house had them. Never told anyone, because.

CHARLOTTE  
Are you that naive

MARK  
Saw one once. More importantly, it's why I'm here.

CHARLOTTE  
You're a ghost?

MARK  
Of course not.

CHARLOTTE  
Then why?

MARK  
Because I'm here.

CHARLOTTE  
Meaning?

MARK  
Ever hear of Henrik Ibsen.

CHARLOTTE  
I starred in Hedda Gabler the year you were born.

MARK  
Ever read Ghosts?

CHARLOTTE  
By Ibsen?

MARK  
Yes.

CHARLOTTE  
I did that one too.

MARK  
There's your answer. The ghosts of our ancestors are always with us.

CHARLOTTE  
Or in our heads.

MADAME FINCH  
I thought you had left, Jay.

JAY  
It's been interesting.

MADAME FINCH  
Mr. Nibby Nose! Go back to your nest.

JAY  
These humans, and sometimes even Miss Charlotte, are crazy.

MADAME FINCH  
You don't understand human emotions. Wait till she finds out.

JAY  
She'll be shocked. Good night. I'll be back in a while.

SCENE 2 THE CHARLESTON CEMETERY MINUTES LATER.

Mark and Charlotte stand before graves.

CHARLOTTE

I have never seen so many stars shine over Charleston.

MARK

It's a clear night.

CHARLOTTE

I have live here 95 years and never seen so many stars over Charleston.

MARK

I have a hunch.

CHARLOTTE

Tell me.

MARK

You'll know tomorrow. Each star is looking over you.

CHARLOTTE

M-m-m

MARK

How many ancestors buried here?

CHARLOTTE

Hundreds. Butlers, Ravenels, Pickneys, Sasses, Hegers, Draytons, Middletons and Haywoods

MARK

Is that your mother's grave with the impressive stone?

CHARLOTTE

Don't remind me. I put up with her for 85 years.

MARK

And your husband?

CHARLOTTE

Eighty four years of marriage was not enough. And by your visit, you've made it possible to reconcile with him. I will love you forever.

MARK

I don't follow your logic. There's his grave.

She puts flowers on his grave.

CHARLOTTE

My beloved Andrew . All these years I have wanted to tell you something, and never quite was able to do so. I could never lie to you . But there are sins of omission and sins of commission, as you like to tell me.

And I committed no sin of commission, but did not dare tell you about this other person. The grief was with me and hurtful. Please forgive me

MARK

Being hard on yourself.

CHARLOTTE

Would you have wanted your wife to keep this secret from you?

MARK

No, but...

CHARLOTTE

There's your answer.

She kneels at the grave. The birds appear.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I cut our flowers for you. You're the only one I would get our flowers for. I think I can almost hear your heart beat. I no longer go to church, but every day I pray for you. Now please forgive me for my omission. And who knows better than you what a good mother I was. Our four children turned out fine. I think I hear you so all is fine. Someday we'll be back together again.

MARK

Do you feel better?

CHARLOTTE

I think I've made my amends. What's that shadow I see.

A noise is heard in the background.

MARK

I didn't hear anything.

CHARLOTTE

Listen.

MARK

I hear nothing.

CHARLOTTE

Listen.

The shadow of a man appears in the background.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Let's go.



I'm ready.

MARK

Suddenly a dapper and elegantly dressed man, Jim Haywood appears.

CHARLOTTE

Who is it?

MARK

He resembles someone I know.

CHARLOTTE

Someone I know too.

JIM

Why Hello. Lovely night. Charlotte and Mark.

CHARLOTTE

You look like James Haywood!

JIM

I am James Haywood.

CHARLOTTE

James Haywood, the devil himself!

JIM

No, Sweetie, it is I.

CHARLOTTE

Don't you Sweetie me. What in the hell are you doing here!

JIM

This is a free country.

CHARLOTTE

No thanks to you.

JIM

I was the Speaker of the General Assembly for 14 years and a member of Congress for eight.

CHARLOTTE

That proves one thing. This country was created by geniuses so that it could be governed by idiots.

JIM

Charlotte Butler! You never change!

CHARLOTTE

Don't intend to either.

JIM

Charley! Will you ever mellow?

CHARLOTTE

Don't ever call me that name. Only Andrew called me Charley.

JIM

I did too. Once upon a time.

CHARLOTTE

Once upon a time.

JIM

I see you have yourself a man.

CHARLOTTE

Why are you walking these grounds!

JIM

I belong to the church.

CHARLOTTE

The last time you saw the inside of a church was on your baptismal day! Avoid this man, Mark.

MARK

I know him.

CHARLOTTE

How?

JIM

You ask why! You don't read newspapers, woman, or you haven't for half a century!

CHARLOTTE

James Haywood. I thought you were dead!

JIM

I'm alive, obviously.

CHARLOTTE

No, no! You died a long time ago.

JIM

You're having old age delusions

CHARLOTTE

Age! You're two years older than I am!

JIM

Can't you be civil for once.

CHARLOTTE  
What the hell are you doing here!

JIM  
Ask that distinguished gentleman beside you.

CHARLOTTE  
You know this devil!

MARK  
Yes. And you know why he's here.

CHARLOTTE  
What!

MARK  
I invited him. We met recently.

CHARLOTTE  
What for!

MARK  
I learned something.

CHARLOTTE  
Learned what? What did he tell you?

JIM  
You know.

CHARLOTTE  
How do you know this man?

JIM  
We were in congress together

CHARLOTTE  
So what?

MARK  
Surely you knew?

CHARLOTTE  
I never gave it a second thought.

MARK  
How's that possible?

CHARLOTTE  
I never thought of this scoundrel.

JIM  
What is all this anger about? I love you once. And you me.

CHARLOTTE  
You're half right.

JIM  
For someone who claims to be descended from all of  
Charleston, you sound like a drunken truck driver.

MARK  
Jim, please stop.

JIM  
You ask me to stop!

MARK  
Charlotte. Treat him like a human.

CHARLOTTE  
Why?

MARK  
Because he's my father.

CHARLOTTE  
And you knew!

MARK  
For years.

CHARLOTTE  
And said nothing.

MARK  
No.

JIM  
Nor did you. And he's my son

CHARLOTTE  
You had nothing to do with it.

JIM  
I obviously had something to do with it.

CHARLOTTE  
Unknowingly!

JIM  
Exactly! Because you never once mentioned it to me.

CHARLOTTE  
Why should I?

JIM  
Because he's mine!

CHARLOTTE  
He is not There was no intention!

JIM  
All these years

CHARLOTTE  
Nearly eighty.

JIM  
You disappeared.

CHARLOTTE  
Disappeared?

JIM  
I came to see you one night and you said it was over.

CHARLOTTE  
Good memory.

JIM  
Why.

CHARLOTTE  
Because you were sleeping with every other women in town!

JIM  
I was not.

CHARLOTTE  
The proof was in the pudding.

JIM  
What!

CHARLOTTE  
You impregnated that poor Parker girl.

JIM  
She was not one of us.

CHARLOTTE  
I did not love you then and do not now. End of discussion

JIM  
You did at one time.

CHARLOTTE  
And then you...

It was consensual

JIM

You tempted me

CHARLOTTE

It takes two to tango. And why did you not tell me?

JIM

I did not know

CHARLOTTE

I would have married you.

JIM

That's what I was worried about.

CHARLOTTE

Selfish!

JIM

Selfish. I did bring him into the world.

CHARLOTTE

He was mine. And you withheld the information.

JIM

Now you know.

CHARLOTTE

You do realize that all those years I knew this man as a colleague there was no idea that he...

JIM

A shame. Mark how did you find out?

CHARLOTTE

Some papers. Some prying.

JIM

What?

CHARLOTTE

You gave my mother the information

MARK

I did not. '

CHARLOTTE

When I was sick.

MARK

CHARLOTTE

I don't recall.

MARK

The questions about genital defects.

CHARLOTTE

Well now you know.

JIM

You know for years we face one another on joint committees. He the liberal Yankee, and me the conservative Southerner always at loggerheads.

MARK

Could never even stand to look at you.

JIM

And then after a while he began looking at me funny.

CHARLOTTE

Looking at you funny?

JIM

In a different way. And I began having some doubts. I thought he might be one of them. You know we have a lot of those fellas up in Washington.

CHARLOTTE

How long have you known, Mark.

JIM

At least a decade..

CHARLOTTE

Well now you both know. Can I ask what was the purpose of this whole exercise?

JIM

To do it right!

MARK

Lady Logan, a growing boy suffers from having quarreling parents.

CHARLOTTE

Haywood, how did you know to get here?

JIM

I saw you walking up the street together and followed you.

CHARLOTTE

You don't even live here anymore.

My cousin Mary does. JIM

Shall we go, Mark? CHARLOTTE

I'm ready. Can you forgive? MARK

Nope CHARLOTTE

After eighty years. You were both young. MARK

I feel a sense of betrayal. JIM

Life is tough. CHARLOTTE

All those years. JIM

All those years. CHARLOTTE

Heard that confession to your husband. JIM

Hush, about that. He's sacred. CHARLOTTE

I hope never to see you again. JIM

Wishful thinking. CHARLOTTE

Good night! JIM

And I could swear you were dead. CHARLOTTE

Age has caught up to you. JIM

Drop dead! CHARLOTTE

Miserable woman. JIM



SCENE THREE THE FRONT OF CHARLOTTE'S HOME SHORTLY  
AFTERWARDS

MARK  
Mission accomplished?

CHARLOTTE  
To say the least.

MARK  
More or less.

CHARLOTTE  
Stop in for a drink?

MARK  
No, thanks.

CHARLOTTE  
This visit has changed my life.

MARK  
How?

CHARLOTTE  
I accomplished my final goal.

MARK  
You made it up to Andrew.

CHARLOTTE  
I could hear his heartbeat.

MARK  
And how about my biological father.

CHARLOTTE  
He isn't.

MARK  
But he is.

CHARLOTTE  
Thank God he isn't. Didn't you once hate him when you were  
both in Congress.

MARK  
Not now. Lighten up.

CHARLOTTE  
Did you accomplish what you wanted?

MARK

Yes. Now I've got to go.

CHARLOTTE

Will you come back?

MARK

Maybe? Do you want me back?

CHARLOTTE

Sort of. And about Gin?

MARK

What about her? Only friends at best.

CHARLOTTE

Will you give me a good bye kiss.

MARK

Yes, Lady Logan. Let me kiss you on the cheek.

CHARLOTTE

And have a good life.

MARK

I will.

CHARLOTTE

Good night.

MARK

Good night.

CHARLOTTE

But again, are you sure you won't come back.

MARK

It's hard for me to get away.

CHARLOTTE

From what?

MARK

My schedule, or whatever.

CHARLOTTE

You just live nearby.

MARK

The house is going up for sale.

CHARLOTTE

Why?

MARK  
I don't need it anymore.

CHARLOTTE  
Why not?

MARK  
Long story.

CHARLOTTE  
I have a right to know!

MARK  
Some other time.

CHARLOTTE  
Is that all the gratitude I get?

MARK  
For what?

CHARLOTTE  
For what he asks!

MARK  
Let's not end our last meeting with an argument.

CHARLOTTE  
One question, Son. Do you believe in coincidence?

MARK  
Somewhat.

CHARLOTTE  
So much has happened tonight.

MARK  
That's right.

CHARLOTTE  
Jim showed up, you came, the fire truck drove by, Gin's aunt.

MARK  
And so on and so on. Trust me.

CHARLOTTE  
Trust you about what?

MARK  
Coincidence. It wasn't.

CHARLOTTE

If you say so.

MARK

It wasn't coincidence. I'm in a position to know.

CHARLOTTE

You're so cute. Goodbye, Son

MARK

Remember what Albert Einstein once said.

CHARLOTTE

What was that?

MARK

There are two ways to live life. The first is as if nothing is a miracle. The second is as if everything is a miracle. Arriverdici.

He leaves. She waves to him. Blackout.  
Three birds, Jay, Miss Robin, and  
Madame Finch are heard from offstage.

JAY (O.S.)

Hello, Miss Robin and Madame Finch. You are two of the finest birds on the planet.

MADAME FINCH O.S.)

You too, Jay. And Madame Consider the infinite complexities

JAY

Isn't this a beautiful story.

MADAME FINCH

They all meet again. I could cry.

JAY

Wait till she finds out.

MADAME FINCH

These humans think we're stupid.

JAY

Not Miss Charlotte! How dare you say that!

MADAME FINCH

Well...

JAY

Let us not argue. We all love Charlotte Butler.

MADAME FINCH

One of the nicest humans on the planet.

JAY

As humans go.

MADAME FINCH

None of that condescending bird talk.

JAY

If she would just get rid of that parrot.

MADAME FINCH

Jacob is an overly bright but misunderstood bird.

JAY

Nasty as all hell.

MADAME FINCH(O.S.)

Let's not gossip. Let us ponder the universe. Count the stars, weigh the winds, and study the drops of dew that glisten in early morning.

JAY

Reflect upon the fires that heat the earth's core; examine the ice crystals that fall from the heavens, for no two are identical.

MADAME FINCH

Contemplate the beauty of night and of daytime, the glorious colors of moonlight and sunrise. And study the drops of dew that glisten in early morning.

JAY

Reflect upon the fires that heat the earth's core; examine the ice crystals that fall from the heavens, for no two are identical. Contemplate the beauty of night and of daytime, the glorious colors of moonlight and sunrise.

Thunder and lightening are heard.

MADAME FINCH

Watch the clouds as they form in strange patterns and wonder at the power of lightning. Measure the great heights, and hold the ocean in your hands.

JAY

Ponder the things that grow, each in its season. Study the great whales at play and listen to their mournful song.

MADAME FINCH

Watch the birds spread their wings and fly; survey the gentle cattle in the fields. And observe humankind in all its diversity.

JAY

Consider well, and you will not even have begun to contemplate the glory of God, who created all these things. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.

MADAME FINCH

It is so high that I cannot attain to it.

JAY

Enough terrestrial talk. Will Mark Smythe return?

MADAME FINCH

He might.

JAY

I don't think so.

MADAME FINCH

And she?

JAY

The universe has its hands full.

MADAME FINCH

But she's more precious than the precious.

JAY

Most of the time.

MADAME FINCH

And the scoundrel?

JAY

Judge ye not.

MADAME FINCH

Not a scoundrel. Perhaps a rascal.

JAY

Now let us go to Charlotte's garden.

MADAME FINCH

You know about all the bizarre things that happened a short while ago.

JAY

She'll find out in the morning. And we'll be there to give her our support in our own way.

MADAME FINCH

You really are a good bird, Jay.

JAY

Sometimes.

SCENE 4 THE NEXT MORNING

She looks at a photograph of the Senator as she sips her coffee. She hears loud knocking at the door.

CHARLOTTE

Hold your horses!

She opens door and Gin rushes in

GIN

Charlotte! You're alive!

CHARLOTTE

Yep! Why shouldn't I be.

GIN

I have been worried all morning. I just got in two hours ago and the whole world's gone crazy!

CHARLOTTE

What are you talking about!

GIN

You don't know what's been happening! Why is your telephone not working?

CHARLOTTE

An electrical problem. The thunder and lightning destroyed the phone and electrical service.

GIN

What thunder and lightning.

CHARLOTTE

We had thunder and lightning here yesterday after you left/

GIN

We did not.

CHARLOTTE

Look! We had thunder and lightning

GIN

There was no thunder and lightning.

CHARLOTTE

You were in Savannah.

GIN

Five people told me there was no thunder and lightening yesterday.

CHARLOTTE

I am not losing my mind.

GIN examines the phone and radio, and sees they are not attached.

GIN

Look, the phone and electrical outlet aren't working because they've been disconnected.

CHARLOTTE

I wonder how that happened.

GIN

You are of course aware that he died.

CHARLOTTE

Who?

GIN

Mark Smythe.

CHARLOTTE

He did not. He was here last night.

GIN

You have gone crazy!

CHARLOTTE

Crazy! I beg your pardon.

GIN

Did you go out last night!

CHARLOTTE

Just shortly

GIN

Where to?

CHARLOTTE

St. Phillip's

GIN

The Church is closed at night.



CHARLOTTE  
The Cemetery.

GIN  
Then the rumors are right.

CHARLOTTE  
What rumors?

GIN  
That you were seen walking alone through the streets of  
Charleston.

CHARLOTTE  
What's wrong with walking!

GIN  
And talking to yourself.

CHARLOTTE  
I was with someone.

GIN  
Everyone said you were alone

CHARLOTTE  
I was not.

GIN  
Who were you with.

CHARLOTTE  
A gentleman.

GIN  
Who.

CHARLOTTE  
A gentleman.

GIN  
Yet everyone said you were alone!

CHARLOTTE  
They were wrong.

GIN  
Who was he?

CHARLOTTE  
I won't tell.

GIN

Oh stop. I lose my husband- to- be and now I hear this!

CHARLOTTE

I will tell you who the man was.

GIN

Who?

CHARLOTTE

Senator Smythe

GIN

You're either crazy or ..

CHARLOTTE

I was pulling your leg....Now Don't even think of calling my four children.

GIN

Why would I?

CHARLOTTE

Don't even think of it. I am neither crazy nor senile!

GIN

I didn't say you were, but...

CHARLOTTE

I must go off to play bridge this morning.

GIN

Can you spend some time with me. . I've been abandoned by my aunt and renegade cousin, my husband to be dies.

CHARLOTTE

You only dated him a few time, for God's sake. Have my children called you?.

GIN

All four of them.

CHARLOTTE

What did you tell them?

GIN

I told them you were fine.

CHARLOTTE

I'll bet. I've got to go. I mind my own business.

GIN

I hope the other thing I heard was not true.

CHARLOTTE

What was that ?

GIN

That you heard cursing Jim Haywood.

CHARLOTTE

Who's Jim Haywood?

GIN

Come now. The former speaker of the South Carolina Assembly.

CHARLOTTE

Never heard of him.

GIN

Through the years I 'v herd rumors.

CHARLOTTE

Hush. You should get a job in a rumor mill. You'd become a millionaire. Now go.

GIN

Gladly.

Gin exits. The phone rings

CHARLOTTE

Hello....I'm Fine....No, I do not want a visit...Your Mother can take care of herself. ...Yes I did visit the cemetery...Why! Because it's our 75th anniversary! That's why!....What Neighbors!....No I was not talking to myself. ...You want to visit?...Why....I'm Fine! ....No you cannot come for a visit...And bring your shrink husband with you... Are you crazy...Stay away.... I'm going to bridge, then for my weekly workout, and then delivering some meals for Meals on Wheels. Goodbye.

She slams down the phone, which rings again.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Hello...your sister just called....No! I'm fine....I'm Fine.....I'M FINE!... If I hear any more such nonsense from you,,.....Well, Stop....Yes went to the Cemetery...Goodbye...no, do not visit....

She hangs up. She turns on the radio.

## RADIO ANNOUNCER

And Senator Mark Smythe of New Hampshire, who severed for 28 years in the United States Senate and 12 years in the House of Representatives, died in Charleston, SC. The son of a prominent Massachusetts family.,,t

She turns off radio and picks up the telephone.

## CHARLOTTE

Susan?...Charlotte, Here....You don't have to pick me up for bridge at the synagog. I would rather drive. I have to pick up a few items at Darcys hardware....I know that I've driven the last four times... Never mind...I also want to leave early...Betty is coming to clean the house...See You shortly.

She goes into the garden bringing her phone with her, and turns on Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony. Suddenly. All the birds appear perched on the fence.

## CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Good morning.

All the birds suddenly becoming perched on the fence.

## CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Welcome, fellas.

They all begin chirping.

## CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

You like Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony?

The birds begin humming.

## CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

(speaking to the flowers) The flowers I cut have gone on to a new life. They are with Andrew.

Suddenly, a rainbow appears in the sky.

## CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Look at that rainbow.

## JAY (O.S.)

You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars.

MADAME FINCH (O.S.)

You have a right to be here, And whether or not it is clear  
to you

JAY

No doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. With all its  
sham, drudgery, and broken dreams

MADAME FINCH

It is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be  
happy

Charlotte picks up the telephone.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Hello, is this Mary's nursery.....Charlotte Butler here...I  
want to purchase a persimmons tree....fine...how long do they  
need to bear fruit...ten years? m-m-m-m-m....I'll take  
one....I Need two....why?...to bear fruit.....a male and a  
female tree...never heard of such a thing...i learn something  
new everyday...yes. Deliver two of them. One male and one  
female....Please deliver by Thursday, because Mr. Boyce comes  
in that day and he can plant them for me....Yes, and I  
intend to eat of the fruit of the vine...I plan to be here.

The rainbow becomes even brighter.

CHARLOTTE

Andrew, do I see you in the rainbow?

The music gets louder, and the rainbow  
becomes brighter.

END OF PLAY