

# Le Astuzia

(The Ruse)

A Play in Three Acts by Robert K. Goddard

Contact:  
Robert K. Goddard  
124 Pine Ridge Circle  
Brandon, MS 39047  
601-966-6953

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[rkgoddard141@gmail.com](mailto:rkgoddard141@gmail.com)

CHARACTERS  
(In order of appearance.)

KYLE RICHARDS: A former professional tennis player and now the womanizing tennis pro at the local tennis club. (Late 20s/mid 30s)

KATIE BUCHANNAN: An ambitious and beautiful police Lieutenant who knows what she wants and how to get it. (Late 20s/mid 30s)

MATT TYLER: A self-sufficient guy, average build, former military, average looks, confident, likes women, trusting, and makes friends easily. (Late 20s/mid 30s)

LUCIEN GAUJON: A Cajun chef, a big, strong looking man, former college football player and professional wrestler, (Late 30s/40s)

MEGAN: A sexy young woman who uses her body to get what she wants. (mid20s)

BRANDI: A young female coed who is enamored of Richards and is his most recent conquest. (21)

HALEY STONE: A good-looking, athletic, divorced real estate agent/broker, who loves sailing. (Late 20s/mid 30s)

E.P. THURSTON: Attorney at law. (50s/60s)

## SETTING AND TIME

### SETTING:

Act I: The wet bar in Rulon House, a stately home on Murray Boulevard along the Ashley River in Charleston, S.C.

Acts II & III: The wet-bar wine room of Granville House, a stately three-story home adjacent to Rulon House.

### TIME:

Act I: The present, mid-April.

Acts II & III: The present, mid-August, a couple of weeks before the fall semester at a local university is scheduled to begin.

ACT I

Scene 1

*The den in Rulon House in Charleston, South Carolina at about 9:00 p.m. on Sunday night in mid-April.*

*At Rise: RICHARDS, wearing tennis garb, is sitting on the love seat with his elbows propped on his knees and his forehead resting on his hands.*

*(OFF, the sound of the front door opening and closing. RICHARDS appears not to hear it and remains sitting with his head in his hands. KATIE, wearing dark pants, a white blouse, and a navy blazer, steps briskly into the room from UL. A leather flap with a badge pinned to it hangs from her blazer pocket.)*

KATIE

*(Sees RICHARDS sitting on the love seat and walks toward him.)*

Okay, now what's so important that we must risk Lizette finding us together?

RICHARDS

*(Shocked by her voice, jumps up and rushes to her.)*

I thought you'd never get here.

*(Grabs her and pulls her tightly against him.)*

KATIE

*(Avoids his attempt to kiss her and breaks free of his grasp. She puts hands on her hips, brushing back her blazer and revealing a pistol on hip.)*

Where's Lizette? And I thought you weren't coming back from Savannah until tomorrow night.

RICHARDS

You don't have to worry 'bout Lizette. . .not anymore.

KATIE

Don't have to? Has she left you?

RICHARDS

*(Returns DR to love seat and sits, rubbing his face.)*  
We had a fight...and now she's gone.

KATIE

*(Stares after RICHARDS for a moment, then moves DL to the love seat and stands, looking down at Richards.)*  
Gone? Gone where?

RICHARDS

*(Gestures upward toward the second floor.)*  
Upstairs...on the bed.

KATIE

*(Stares at RICHARDS for a few seconds.)*  
Kyle, is she alright?

RICHARDS

*(Shakes his head.)*  
She's dead, Katie. Lizette's dead.  
*(Beat.)*  
I strangled her.

KATIE

*(Gasps.)*  
You killed her? You killed Lizette?

RICHARDS

*(Stands, puts both hands on KATIE's shoulders and looks pleadingly into her eyes.)*  
You've got to help me, Katie. I didn't mean to—I swear.

KATIE

*(Using both hands, shoves RICHARDS back down on the love seat.)*  
Help you? You've murdered Lizette and you expect me to help you?

RICHARDS

*(Jumps back to his feet.)*  
Come on, Baby. You can't let me go to prison.

KATIE

*(Shoves him down again.)*  
You expect me to throw away my life and career just because you screwed up?

RICHARDS

*(Gets back to his feet and grabs her arms, preventing her from pushing him down again.)*

It doesn't have to be that way, Katie.

*(Grabs both her hands and looks her in the face.)*

This house is worth more than two million, and I'll have it all now.

*(Beat)*

Please help me...help me make it look like she ran away.

*(Pulls her closer and wraps his arms around her waist. Now in a coaxing voice.)*

We can still buy a place in Tuscany, like you wanted, for you and Mona and me—only a better one. Help me, and we'll have enough for your dream of orchards...and vineyards...

KATIE

*(Removes his hands, turns and takes a few steps away, apparently considering helping him. Stops and turns to face him.)*

You're not on the deed—remember? If there's any reason to believe that Lizette is still alive, you won't be able to sell the house.

RICHARDS

*(Slumps down on the love seat, head in hands, then looks back up at KATIE.)*

I don't want to go to prison, Katie. Can't you help me? Please? For you...and me...and Mona...

KATIE

*(Runs both hands down her face, then gives a wave of dismissal.)*

I was a fool for believing she was going to give you half a million anyway. I guess I'm so desperate for a place in Tuscany, I'll believe anything.

*(Stares at RICHARDS for a moment, then sighs deeply.)*

I need a drink.

*(Crosses DR to the buffet, where several partial bottles of whiskey are visible.)*

RICHARDS

*(Remains seated but turns and watches her.)*

KATIE

Tell me how it happened while I make a couple of drinks.

*(Begins making a couple of cocktails.)*

RICHARDS

*(Takes a deep breath.)*

I came home from the tournament a day early because of the pain in my right knee. Got here 'bout nine. Lizette's car was parked out back, but she wasn't downstairs. So, I went on up to our bedroom. I found a pair of her suitcases on the floor at the foot of our bed. Right away, I figured she was leaving me while I was out of town. Then I heard the front door open and realized she must've been out with another man, or maybe next door at Joe's place.

KATIE

*(KATIE returns to the sofa with two cocktails and places one on the coffee table in front of RICHARDS, who grabs it eagerly and takes a long gulp.)*

Who's Joe?

*(Holding her cocktail, sits by RICHARDS on the love seat.)*

RICHARDS

Don't you remember? He's the professor who lives next door—in Granville House. He's the one who lures women to his place and makes porn videos. Anyway, she 'bout had a heart attack when she stumbled into the bedroom and saw me. Then she just stood there, wobbly 'cause she was high, and I noticed marks on her wrists and ankles, and whisker burn on her face, and choke marks on her neck that—

KATIE

*(With a frown.)*

Choke marks?

RICHARDS

Yeah, choke marks.

KATIE

*(Shakes her head.)*

I don't get it.

RICHARDS

*(Downs a quick sip of his drink.)*

Lizette liked to be choked during sex—to the point of passing out. She'd beg me to do it, but I was afraid I'd kill her, so I wouldn't do it anymore. I reckon old Joe obliged her. Anyway, she threw a DVD onto the bed and said, "It's your turn to find evidence of cheating." Then, I told—

KATIE

Had she found out about you and me and Mona?

RICHARDS

No, she didn't know about us. She'd been brooding over things ever since we made the deal for the half-million when the house sold.

*(Waves a hand in the air.)*

Anyway, I told her I didn't give a damn who or what she did, so long as she honored her promise to give me half-million when the house sold. She laughed at me then, and said I wasn't getting another cent from her...that I'd cheated on her since the day we came to Charleston...that I'd squandered most of her inheritance and that...that I was just a no-good, washed up, womanizing has-been tennis pro who would never amount to anything, and that she was leaving, filing for a divorce, and that she had plenty of evidence to use in court.

*(Chuckles.)*

That's when I snatched the DVD off the bed and told her that now, I had evidence of her cheating to show in a courtroom.

*(Shakes his head from side to side.)*

That's when she went nuts. She let out a shriek and attacked me, trying to get the DVD back.

*(A deep breath.)*

I guess I just lost it after that. I got behind her, threw her down on the bed and started choking her...

*(Wipes his face with both hands.)*

I don't know how long that went on...then...then I realized she wasn't moving, or breathing...

KATIE

*(Puts her glass on the coffee table and stands.)*

Take off your shirt and turn around slowly.

RICHARDS

*(Places his glass on the table, rises, and does as KATIE asked.)*

KATIE

*(Examines RICHARDS' hands, arms, shoulders, neck and back.)*

I don't see any defensive wounds. How'd you manage that?

RICHARDS

*(Putting his shirt back on.)*

When I pushed her down on the bed, I threw the sheet over her, jumped on top of her and pinned her arms to the bed with my knees.



KATIE

Have you watched the DVD?

RICHARDS

Why no, I-

KATIE

*(Places her glass on the coffee table.)*

Let's go upstairs. I'll examine her and then we'll watch the DVD.

*(KATIE and RICHARDS, carrying his drink, exit UR to go upstairs to the bedroom.)*

CURTAIN