

CHARLESTON

REVISITED

A drama in two acts

By

ANTHONY ERNEST GALLO

Anthony E. Gallo
Box 15414
Washington, DC 20003

202 544 6973

Agallo2368@verizo.net

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C HARLESTON

1. CHARLESTON, MY TOWN
2. THE BLUE JAY SONG: BIRDSONG
3. I LOVE LIFE: CHARLOTTE
4. HUMANS: MADAME FINCH AND BLUEJAY DIALOGUE
5. MY MAN: GIN
6. YOUR HOROSCOPE: CHARLOTTE
7. DUET 1: WE ARE SO MUCH ALIKE C AND M
8. DUET 2.: ARE YOU MY SON: C AND M
9. DUET 3: TAKE ME TO THE CEMETERY
10. YOU'RE A BITCH: MARK
11. ANDREW I LOVE YOU: CHARLOTTE
12. HATRED SONG: CHARLOTTE AND MARK
13. LET'S FOLLOW: THE BIRDS
14. LET'S PONDER THE UNIVERSE: THE BIRDS
15. LIFE IS A MIRACLE: MARK
16. I SHALL PLANT THE TREES
17. I SEE YOU IN THE RAINBOW, ANDREW

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.

MADAME FINCH

Oh, hush!

JAY

Remember what this very extraordinary human once said: Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they?

MADAME FINCH

Why shouldn't we be as important as they are?

JAY

Who cares. Now let's listen in.

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 (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?

CHARLOTTE
January 17?

MARK
As I thought.

CHARLOTTE
How do you know?

MARK
Gut feeling.

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

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

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

MARK
You can't do it.

CHARLOTTE
Why?

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

CHARLOTTE
Your parents didn't tell you?

MARK
That was a complicated thing.

CHARLOTTE
I'll just guess a time.

MARK
You can't do that.

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

MARK

When?

CHARLOTTE

10:33 PM. Now let me proceed.

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?

CHARLOTTE
Puzzled?

MARK
Yes.

CHARLOTTE
No, you're not!

MARK
All right. All right!

CHARLOTTE
Stop the nonsense.

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

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

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

CHARLOTTE
Did you look at records?

MARK
Records? There were none. But I know.

CHARLOTTE
Know what.

MARK
That you are my mother.

CHARLOTTE
Can you prove it?

MARK
We've been playing.

CHARLOTTE
I feel it.

MARK
So do I.

CHARLOTTE
Then I pronounce us Mother and Son.

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 he 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, indicator 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?

CHARLOTTE
Want the truth?

MARK
Yes

CHARLOTTE
No.

MARK
Is there ice water going through your veins?

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

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

She lights a cigarette.

CHARLOTTE
You know I clean my own house every day.

Five bedrooms I clean them
myself. Therapeutic.

MARK

What does this have to do with this revelation.

CHARLOTTE

I Have to visit my broker in the morning.

MARK

There's no sequence to what you are saying.

CHARLOTTE

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

MARK

Madam, perhaps I should leave.

CHARLOTTE

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

MARK

You are a difficult mother.

CHARLOTTE

I am not your mother!!

MARK

Then what are you?

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 Godsenders. But in those days I wanted you raised an Episcopalian. And you know, they respected my wishes. You were given to some God-fearing Episcopalians.

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, Hugers, 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.

MARK
I'm ready.

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.You will recall that
the tragic seduction occurred over this almost
sacred ground.

JIM
I do not recall trivialities, and it takes two
to tango.

CHARLOTTE
I hate you!

MARK
(glibly)I'm sorry I cam into the world then.

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

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...

JIM
It was consensual

CHARLOTTE
You tempted me

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

CHARLOTTE
I did not know

JIM
I would have married you.

CHARLOTTE
That's what I was worried about.

JIM
Selfish!

CHARLOTTE
Selfish. I did bring him into the world.

JIM
He was mine. And you withheld the information.

CHARLOTTE
Now you know.

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

CHARLOTTE
A shame. Mark how did you find out?

JIM
Some papers. Some prying.

CHARLOTTE
What?

MARK
You gave my mother the information

CHARLOTTE
I did not. '

MARK
When I was sick.

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.

JIM

My cousin Mary does.

CHARLOTTE

Shall we go, Mark?

MARK

I'm ready. Can you forgive?

CHARLOTTE

Nope

MARK

After eighty years. You were both young.

JIM

I feel a sense of betrayal.

CHARLOTTE

Life is tough.

JIM
All those years.

CHARLOTTE
All those years.

JIM
Heard that confession to your husband.

CHARLOTTE
Hush, about that. He's sacred.

JIM
I hope never to see you again.

CHARLOTTE
Wishful thinking.

JIM
Good night!

CHARLOTTE
And I could swear you were dead.

JIM
Age has caught up to you.

CHARLOTTE
Drop dead!

JIM
Miserable woman.

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
lightening destroyed the phone and electrical
service.

GIN
What thunder and lightening.

CHARLOTTE
We had thunder and lightening here yesterday
after you left/

GIN
We did not.

CHARLOTTE
Look! We had thunder and lightening

GIN
There was no thunder and lightening.

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