

THE LAST APPOINTMENT

By

Donald C. Drake

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4809 Trinity Place, Phila., PA 19143
215 726-5580 donalcdrake@gmail.com

TIME
The Present

PLACE
Small Town

CHARACTERS:

ALICE.....30s, beautiful with macho swagger

JOSEPH30s, very sensitive and attractive

SAM.....50s, flamboyant, melodramatic

FRANKIE*30s, mean and aggressive

* Is played by same actor playing Joseph

The Last Appointment

SET: A single unit set with areas suggesting a psychologist's office and waiting room, an ornate living room, and a police detectives' squad room. On the wall of the waiting room is a crudely-made banner with stitched letters that read: "A Man Without a Woman Is Like a Fish Without a Bicycle." Also prominently displayed in the waiting room are signs that read "Thank You For Not Smoking" and "Session in Progress." What looks like a golf bag is leaning in a corner of the book-lined office.

AT RISE: The forboding finale of Aida comes up, plays for a bit and then fades as a tightly focussed spot comes up, revealing Detective Altman. Altman is dressed in classic detective garb -- raincoat, fedora pulled down, cigarette in her hand. She takes a puff, looks out over the audience and finally speaks.

DETECTIVE ALTMAN

Altman's the name. Detective Altman, homicide division, Happy Valley P.D. At least it used to be homicide division. Now it's Detective Altman, community relations, Happy Valley, P.D.

(indicating her clothes)

All of this is a costume, just like my gun. You don't have to shoot a gun going to elementary schools and town-watch meetings. The props make me look more like a real cop, which I am, but I don't go after the bad guys anymore. Police work must be in the genes. My grandfather was a cop. My father was a cop. And my twin sister was a cop. We all loved the work. But sometimes homicide detectives have to do bad things. Like arrest people they're not sure are guilty and send them to jail for life or even worse. Some times they have to conduct interrogations that might be a little more vigorous than decent citizens think are appropriate. A few of us have shot and killed people. After a while you can't rationalize away all the bad stuff anymore and you have to do something else -- like community relations. Usually it's one investigation that puts you over the top. For Detective Alice Altman it was The Case of the Shrink-Wrap Killer.

The spot fades to black and the tomb music that opened the play resumes for a few seconds. As the music fades, lights come up to reveal the office and waiting room of Dr. Joseph Janson, who is practicing fencing techniques with a sword. Alice enters the waiting room.

Joseph hears her and puts away his fencing gear. Alice wears a gray suit, more masculine than feminine. Strolling about the room with a tough-guy bearing, she sees a coffee maker and fills a cup. She starts to pull out a pack of cigarettes when she notices the no-smoking sign. She debates it for a moment and lights up. Joseph opens the door and sees Alice, reading the fish sign with a smile. For several seconds he silently watches her, amused by her masculine mannerisms. Alice turns, startled to see him staring at her. She studies him.

ALICE

You finished, looking?

JOSEPH

You must be

ALICE

Altman. Detective Alice Altman, homicide division, Happy Valley, P.D..

JOSEPH

I'm Janson. Dr. Joseph Janson, private practice, Happy Valley Counseling Services.

Joseph pointedly looks at the cigarette in Alice's hand. She sees this, takes a generous puff and turns to the banner.

ALICE

"A man without a woman is like a fish without a bicycle." I take it you don't have many female patients.

She puts the cigarette out in the cup.

JOSEPH

Won't you please come in?

Alice follows him into the book-lined office, as impressed by his body and posture as he is with her's. Joseph starts to offer her a seat at the coffee table, but indicates the chair in front of the desk instead. He sits behind the desk. Alice studies Joseph and then surveys the room.

ALICE

I like books. Nice decorating touch.

She goes to the books and reads out loud some of the titles.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Make Testosterone Work For You. The Male Body -- A User's Manual. Minds, Muscles and Maturity.

She goes to the bag in the corner.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You play golf?

JOSEPH

That's not a golf bag. It's for my foils. I fence. On the telephone, you said you had questions about the murder.

ALICE

You're not what I expected. I don't know what I was expecting -- maybe someone who looked like Freud. You know, intense, with a goatee, neurotic.

She laughs. He waits tensely.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You don't look like that at all. Perhaps you would be more comfortable sitting over there?

(indicates the coffee table grouping)

You seem tense.

JOSEPH

We can sit there, if that's what you want.

(moving to the coffee table)

Miss Altman, would you please...

ALICE

Detective Altman.

JOSEPH

Detective Altman. I'd appreciate it if you...

ALICE

Did you know the deceased?

JOSEPH

It's difficult to think of her like that. But that is what she is now, isn't it?

ALICE

About as deceased as you can get.

JOSEPH

Yes, of course I knew her. Her office is just down the hall.

ALICE

When did you last consult with her?

JOSEPH

I don't consult with her.

ALICE

You're both psychologists with offices on the same floor of the same building and you don't consult?

JOSEPH

We have different types of practices.

ALICE

I don't mean consult like in consult. I mean consult like in, good morning, how are you doing?

JOSEPH

We didn't do that either.

ALICE

Why not?

He shrugs his shoulders

ALICE (CONT'D)

Why didn't you like her?

JOSEPH

I never said I didn't like her.

ALICE

Your body language says you didn't like her.

JOSEPH

(readjusting his body language)

My body language hasn't said a word.

ALICE

In my line of work, doctor, it's not what you say that's important, it's what you don't say. What's even more important than what you don't say is how you don't say it. And what your body hasn't been saying in our little exchange here has been a lot.

JOSEPH

You work pretty fast.

ALICE

I'm a detective, not a shrink. I can't spend years on a case.

JOSEPH

I neither liked nor disliked Dr. Andrews. She was irrelevant.

ALICE

Irrelevant?

JOSEPH

Irrelevant.

ALICE

Were you here last night, at about 8 o'clock?

JOSEPH

Is that when it happened? No, my late nights are Tuesdays and Thursdays.

ALICE

(appreciating his muscular build)

You work out on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

JOSEPH

Yes, as a matter of fact I do.

ALICE

I don't like exercising. I don't like sweat.

JOSEPH

No pain, no gain.

ALICE

You're a pretty versatile guy. You do head stuff, you do body stuff. Which you like better, working with your head or body?

JOSEPH

You look like you work out yourself.

ALICE

It's the squash.

JOSEPH

You play squash?

ALICE

You seem surprised.

JOSEPH

You don't think of cops playing squash.

ALICE

Yeah? What do you think cops like to play?

JOSEPH

Poker.

ALICE

Shit. What do you know about cops?

JOSEPH

I guess not much. I play squash.

(responding to her reaction)

You seem surprised.

ALICE

You don't think of shrinks doing anything that'll make them sweat.

JOSEPH

What do you think we like to play?

ALICE

Scrabble.

JOSEPH

Some day we ought play with each other. I suspect we're very well matched.

ALICE

Where do you work out? When do you go? How long are you there?

JOSEPH

Artful Aerobics on South Street. I'm usually there from 7 to 9. It's something to think that Andrews was being murdered only a few feet from here.

ALICE

But at the time you were at Artful Aerobics working out.

JOSEPH

Yes.

ALICE

Do you mind if I smoke?

JOSEPH

Yes, I do mind.

ALICE

I take it from the desk outside you have a receptionist.

JOSEPH

Yes.

ALICE

Was she still here at 8?

JOSEPH

He.

ALICE

He?

JOSEPH

My receptionist is a man.

ALICE

Why?

JOSEPH

Why not?

ALICE

Most receptionists are women.

JOSEPH

Most police detectives are men.

ALICE

This male receptionist of yours, was he here at the time of the murder?

JOSEPH

No, he goes to the gym with me.

ALICE

(disappointed that he may be gay)

Is that so?

JOSEPH

(seeing her disappointment, he purposely reenforces the misconception)

We like to work out together. We like to watch each other sweat. Do you mind if I knit?

ALICE

Oh, for godsake. It's a free country. Do what makes you happy. Why do I frighten you, Dr. Janson?

JOSEPH

(starting to knit)

You hardly frighten me, detective.

ALICE

(indicating the coffee table and desk)

The musical chairs when I came in? Hiding behind your big desk?

JOSEPH

Ignoring my no-smoking sign? We apparently both have our...issues.

ALICE

(tip of the hat)

Dr. Janson.

JOSEPH

(tip of the hat)

Detective Altman.

ALICE

You seem to be a very complicated man, Dr. Janson. I usually don't deal with complicated men in my line of work.

Alice is struggling with a headache and is having trouble concentrating. Alice takes out a bottle of aspirins.

JOSEPH

Do you think Andrews was killed by a burglar she happened to walk in on?

ALICE

Andrews was killed by a patient.

JOSEPH

What makes you think that?

ALICE

One of the pages in her appointment book had been ripped out. The killer had made an appointment with her and knew his name would be there. Do you mind?

She takes a cup from a stack of paper cups on Joseph's desk and fills it with water from a silver pitcher, also on the desk.

JOSEPH

You get a lot of headaches?

ALICE

Naw. Just one a day, but it's a pisser.

Alice is about to take aspirins, but Joseph stops her.

JOSEPH

(going to her)

Don't. They're bad for you. Here, let me help you.

He gets up and goes behind her.

ALICE

What are you doing?

JOSEPH

Sit back and close your eyes.

He positions her.

ALICE

I'm not your patient. I'm investigating a murder.

JOSEPH

And I'm not your doctor. But you've got a headache and I can help you get rid of it. Close your eyes.

She leans back and closes her eyes.

ALICE

OK, my eyes are closed and my head still hurts like hell.

JOSEPH

Picture the pain. Keep your eyes closed. What does the pain look like?

ALICE

It doesn't look like anything.

JOSEPH

Allow yourself to picture the pain. Give it a shape. A color.

ALICE

It's filling my skull so I guess it's round...yeah round...and red...no darker. Black.

JOSEPH

Good. On a score of one to 10, with 10 being the worst pain, how much does it hurt.

ALICE

Ten times a hundred.

JOSEPH

Breathe slowly, steadily, in and out. Good. In, out, in out. See the ball getting smaller. Just a little bit at a time, but it's getting smaller and smaller and smaller. Fading slowly. Black turning to grey. Getting lighter. Smaller. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in the refreshing air. Breathe out the pain. Good. Good. Refreshing air in. Pain out.

Alice breathes slowly in and out.

ALICE

God damn.

JOSEPH

Let it shrink. Let it fade.

ALICE

Yes.

JOSEPH

How much is the pain now?

ALICE

Nine. No eight. How the hell did you do that?

JOSEPH

I didn't do it. You did.

ALICE

The aspirins don't even work that good.

JOSEPH

I get bad headaches like that. Fortunately my therapist knows how to massage them away.

ALICE

You have a therapist?

JOSEPH

Of course. Don't you?

ALICE

Are you kidding?

JOSEPH

They're very helpful.

ALICE

(with pronounced masculine mannerisms)

Do I look like I need a therapist? What makes you think I need a therapist...for Christ sake?

JOSEPH

Do you think you need a therapist?

ALICE

Of course not.

JOSEPH

Then a therapist wouldn't help you, not if you don't think you need one.

ALICE

It's not that I don't think I need one. I know I don't.

JOSEPH

Everything is as it should be.

ALICE

Everything is fine, in that department.

JOSEPH

Are there many women detectives?

ALICE

I'm the only one. There used to be another one. My twin sister. You don't like cops, do you?

JOSEPH

I've never thought about it.

ALICE

I've thought about therapists.

JOSEPH

And?

ALICE

I don't like them. No one in the department thinks much of therapy.

JOSEPH

Who needs therapy when you've got a gun and a badge? I wouldn't want to be the only woman detective.

ALICE

It's not bad.

JOSEPH

No?

ALICE

They treat me like one of the guys.

JOSEPH

It must be difficult, always having to act like one of the guys.

ALICE

I'm not acting.

JOSEPH

But you're not a guy.

ALICE

I didn't think you noticed things like that.

JOSEPH

You shouldn't jump to conclusions.

ALICE

(pleased)

No?

JOSEPH

(appreciatively)

You're definitely not a guy.

ALICE

I am, when I'm with the guys.

JOSEPH

Being one of the guys is bad for your health.

ALICE

I'm just fine, doc.

JOSEPH

You can't cry in front of the guys, when you're sad, or scared or angry.

ALICE

I don't have to cry.

JOSEPH

With your kind of work, I'd be crying all the time.

ALICE

What is it, this room or something? People sit down in this chair and start talking all this gooey stuff. I'm a cop. I like being a cop. And cops don't cry.

JOSEPH

You're a person. And it's bad to hold it in.

ALICE

Now comes shrink stuff. You're all alike. My sister was going to a shrink when she... Forget it.

JOSEPH

When she what?

ALICE

(getting up to leave)

I don't like the people in your profession, doctor. They get paid a lot of money to mess up the lives of the innocent.

JOSEPH

You might profit from seeing someone in my profession, detective. You obviously have issues.

ALICE

The only issue I've got is solving this murder. Tell me something, Joseph, why...

JOSEPH

Oh, are we on a first name basis now?

ALICE

Does that bother you?

JOSEPH

Not at all, Alice.

ALICE

You didn't like Andrews, did you?

JOSEPH

I have to get ready for my next patient. Perhaps we can get into that in our next session.

Lights fade to black as the tomb music comes up and a tightly focussed spotlight lights up another part of the stage. Detective Altman, dressed as she was in the opening monologue, walks into the light and the music fades.

DETECTIVE ALTMAN

Andrews probably knew her killer because there was no sign of a struggle. She was stabbed once through the heart. Her body was found crumpled over her desk. What was most remarkable about the scene is that Andrew's head had been wrapped in shrink wrap. It was hard to believe but the killer went to the trouble of bringing a hair dryer with him to shrink the wrap that he had wrapped the shrinks head in.

SCENE 2: Joseph's office. Joseph is with Sam, a dramatically dressed older woman. Joseph is sitting with his eyes closed, as though he is meditating.

SAM

There's no one else here. Just you and me. It's safe to come out.

JOSEPH

(his eyes closed)

Yes.

SAM

Joseph is gone.

Sam waits. Joseph stirs some more.

SAM (CONT'D)

I want to talk to you about Joseph.

Joseph's voice and body language becomes belligerent.

JOSEPH

Who gives a fuck about Joseph?

SAM

Joseph is a lot stronger now.

JOSEPH

That asshole is never going to get better.

SAM

I know this has all been very hard for you. All these years, looking out for him.

JOSEPH

You keep talking about him. I'm the one in pain.

SAM

Joseph can take care of himself now.

JOSEPH

I want the pain to stop

SAM

You can rest now. He doesn't need you to protect him.

I want you to help me. JOSEPH

How? SAM

You know how. JOSEPH

Tell me again. SAM

I want to die. I want you to help me kill myself. JOSEPH

I don't want you to die. SAM

No reason to keep on going. It's not going to get better. It will never get better for me. JOSEPH

You've been very brave. SAM

I don't want to be lonely any more. JOSEPH

I don't like seeing you in so much pain. SAM

Then help me end it JOSEPH

You will feel the pain lifting as Joseph gets stronger. SAM

I broke my ass for him. JOSEPH

I know you did. Now it's time for you to rest. You are free to go. SAM

I'm not leaving Joseph. JOSEPH

SAM

He'll call you back if he needs you.

JOSEPH

He's a stupid son a bitch.

SAM

He's going to be all right. Just stay in the background.

JOSEPH

All right. But I'm not going far.

SAM

Fair enough.

JOSEPH

I'm hurting so bad. I want it to stop.

SAM

It will when you rest.

They sit silently for a few moments.

SAM (CONT'D)

(finally)

Torno vincitar. (phonetic spelling is TOR-no VEEN-chi-TAR) Let Joseph come forward while you rest. Let him do some of the hard work now.

Joseph sits back and closes his eyes.

SAM (CONT'D)

Joseph, it's OK to come forward.

Joseph looks around, trying to get his bearings.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hello, Joseph.

JOSEPH

Sam?

SAM

I think things are going to be more peaceful for you now.

JOSEPH

I don't feel so sure about that.

SAM

We have to take this a step at a time.

JOSEPH

It would be so good to be free of all this.

SAM

I know. We have accomplished a lot with this session.

JOSEPH

The headaches are much less frequent.

SAM

This is a very encouraging sign.

Sam looks at her watch.

JOSEPH

You have to go?

SAM

I just have time to get a glass of wine before the curtain.

Sam gets up and prepares to leave.

SAM (CONT'D)

It's such a waste, you having your office right next to the opera and never going. I have to drive an hour and a half.

JOSEPH

My office is also near the ballet, which I love.

SAM

I find the final scenes in ballet very disappointing.

Lights fade to black.

Spotlight comes up with Detective Altman standing in the middle of it.

ALICE

I tried to get a court order to open up Andrew's patient files but the judge said no. He didn't think I had enough evidence to justify the intrusion. That's the way it is with these liberal judges who think civil liberties are more important than protecting society. Even though I was convinced that the killer was one of Andrews's patients, Janson's lack of contact with a colleague working on the same floor nagged at me. So I interviewed him two more times and became convinced that it wasn't important. I was getting to like this guy. He was great for my headaches.

Spotlight fades to black.

SCENE 3: Joseph's office. Joseph's wearing a beautiful sweater he had knitted. Alice is regaining her focus, having just been treated for a headache. Joseph is knitting.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I'd like to keep you in my medicine cabinet.

JOSEPH

How long have you been having these headaches?

ALICE

A couple of years.

JOSEPH

When did they begin?

ALICE

August 17, 2001.

JOSEPH

You know the exact date?

ALICE

Yep.

JOSEPH

What happened on Aug. 17?

Alice shrugs her shoulders.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

You don't want to talk about it?

ALICE

It was the day I found my sister's body.

JOSEPH

How did she die?

ALICE

Murdered.

JOSEPH

I'm sorry. That must have been terrible, finding her body.

ALICE

She was curled up on the couch, clutching her diary. I thought she was asleep. An empty pill bottle on the floor next to the couch. Several months later I read the diary.

(reciting)

It's 5:15. The sun is setting. I just called Dr. S. and left a message. Told him it was urgent.

JOSEPH

Who is Dr. S?

ALICE

Steinhauser. Her therapist. Been treating her for depression.

(reciting)

Six thirty. Dr. S. still hasn't called back. Guess he's still seeing patients

JOSEPH

You've memorized all this?

ALICE

(reciting)

Eleven forty-five. Can't believe he hasn't called back. I told him it was urgent. He's tired of my whining. I'm fucking tired of it myself.

JOSEPH

Don't keep reliving this,

ALICE

(reciting)

Four thirty. I took the pills. Don't feel anything yet. Was going to wait for sunrise. Who gives a shit about sunrise?

JOSEPH

(going to her)

Enough.

ALICE

(reciting)

Five fifteen. It's beginning to work. I'm feeling drowsy. Hope it doesn't!....

(finished reciting)

That's all there was. The son of a bitch called her back that morning. A little before noon.

JOSEPH

You should see someone about this. Even the strongest people need help at times like these to move on.

ALICE

Help? Like from a therapist? You do have a sardonic sense of humor. It's because of a fucking therapist that I'm getting these headaches. Besides, it's all in the past now. I don't think about this that much anymore.

JOSEPH

You recite all the entries in her diary.

ALICE

Are you trying to do therapy on me again?

JOSEPH

This could be why you're having these headaches.

ALICE

No shit.

JOSEPH

It's called post traumatic stress disorder. Headaches, memory problems and other bad things. It happens to a lot of people who have been traumatized.

ALICE

I don't believe in that stuff.

JOSEPH

Sometimes it's the stuff we don't believe in that gives us the worst headaches.

ALICE

I said I don't want to talk about this anymore.

JOSEPH

We can talk about it later.

ALICE

You like being a shrink?

JOSEPH

I find the work very rewarding.

ALICE

Why'd you become a shrink?

JOSEPH

I like solving mysteries. When I was a kid, I wanted to be a detective.

ALICE

Yeah, sure.

JOSEPH

No, I'm serious.

ALICE

You don't get that many mysteries to solve. Most of the time it's pretty obvious who did what.

JOSEPH

When you get right down to it, psychologists and detectives are not that different. We solve mysteries of the mind. The big difference is that we cure our clients, or try to. You send yours to jail.

ALICE

You wouldn't happen to have any cold water?

JOSEPH

Plain or seltzer?

ALICE

Seltzer would be great.

JOSEPH

(getting the seltzer from a small refrigerator)

I thought I was the only person who liked plain seltzer.

ALICE

I didn't like seltzer when I started drinking it. Now Cokes and that other junk taste too sweet.

JOSEPH

I've stopped liking Cokes, too.

(he gives her a seltzer and resumes knitting.)

ALICE

You really do like that knitting.

JOSEPH

I made this sweater.

ALICE

Very nice. It's hard work making a sweater like that.

JOSEPH

No pain, no gain.

ALICE

You say that a lot. No pain, no gain.

JOSEPH

I didn't know that. I'll try to stop.

ALICE

No, it's OK. It's very true. You've got to work hard to get what you want.

JOSEPH

You have any hobbies?

ALICE

(debating whether to admit it)

No.

JOSEPH

(suspicious)

What do you do after work? Just have a few beers with the guys, go home and watch the games?

ALICE

I don't like beer and I'm sure as hell not going to drink seltzer in front of the guys.

JOSEPH

So you just watch the games.

ALICE

(with embarrassment)

Needlepoint. That's what I like to do.

JOSEPH

Needlepoint?

Alice shrugs.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I've always been impressed with people who can do that. Very intricate work.

She watches him knitting.

ALICE

It's funny how we both like seltzer.

JOSEPH

Yes, isn't it?

(toasting)

To the cop and the shrink, who both like seltzer.

Lights fade to black as the Aida music comes up and continues. A spotlight reveals Detective Altman in her usual dress. Music fades.

DETECTIVE ALTMAN

Exactly one month after Andrews was killed, the body of Susan Pershing was discovered, crumpled over her desk, a single knife wound to the heart. Another clinical psychologist had been murdered. Again a woman. Again on the first Wednesday of the month. Again a page ripped from the appointment book. And again the head was wrapped in shrink-wrap. Andrews and Pershing were classmates.

SCENE 4: Sam's office. Dressed in a flowing gown, Sam is drinking brandy and going through her CD collection, looking for the right opera. Finding it, she puts it into her player, advances the disk to the final track and turns up the volume. It is the final 60 seconds of La Traviata, the moment when the pain is disappearing from the body of the dying Violetta. Sam starts acting out the death scene. The doorbell rings, but Sam doesn't hear it. The bell rings again, and then loud knocking is heard. Sam turns down the music, hears the knocking, turns the music back up and, while still in throes of the aria, opens the door. It's Alice.

ALICE

Hello, Sam.

SAM

So, finally you've come.

ALICE

(yelling to be heard)

What?

SAM

I said finally you've come.

ALICE

I can't hear you. Could you turn off the music?

SAM

What?

ALICE

(yelling even louder)

The music. Could you shut it off?

SAM

I'm sorry. I can't hear you. The music.

ALICE

Will you shut it off?

SAM

I'll shut off the music.

She shuts off the music.

SAM (CONT'D)

Come. Come. Come. Sit down.

They sit down.

SAM (CONT'D)

What were we talking about?

ALICE

We weren't talking about anything, Sam, because we couldn't hear each other. The music?

SAM

Ah, yes, the death scene from La Traviata. Do you want to hear it?

ALICE

No, for Christ sake.

SAM

You look awful. You still can't find a man?

ALICE

It's none of your business.

SAM

You're quite right. So, tell me, are you married?

ALICE

No.

SAM

Be patient. It will happen.

ALICE

A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.

SAM

Fish shouldn't swim alone. A drink. Would you like a drink?

ALICE
Some club soda, if you have it.

SAM
(getting the drinks)
Still drinking that awful stuff.

ALICE
It's been a while, Sam.

SAM
Eights years since the Meter-Maid Murders.

ALICE
What a merry chase the Meter-Maid killer led us on.

SAM
It wasn't until the fifth murder that you consulted me.

ALICE
And still we didn't catch the bastard.

SAM
I've been expecting you.

ALICE
You have?

SAM
You discovered that Andrews and Pershing went to same school.

ALICE
Where you teach.

SAM
They were both in my class forensic psychology. You want to know about their classmates.

Sam hands Alice a newspaper clipping of a photograph.

ALICE
What's this?

SAM

A photograph of the graduating class. All of the students are identified on the back of the photograph.

ALICE

You just happen to have this?

SAM

I have all the graduation photographs. I like to keep track of my students. I'm always looking for their names in the newspapers.

She looks at the photograph.

ALICE

You wouldn't happen to have their addresses also?

SAM

You want me to do all your work for you? The American Psychological Association or the board of licensure should have their current addresses.

ALICE

Do you remember Andrews and Pershing?

SAM

Some students stay in your memory. Jill was a lovely, young woman. My favorite student in a class of lovely, young people. A feminine little thing, not like Susan who had a bit of a swagger to her. But I liked Susan, too.

ALICE

Did they have any enemies?

SAM

I'm sure they did. The secret to building a therapeutic relationship is getting patients to trust you. But sometimes the trust turns to love and then -- when the therapist does not return the same kind of love -- hate.

ALICE

Hating a therapist I can understand. It's the loving bit I find hard to believe.

SAM

Still the wounds from what happened to your sister have not healed?

ALICE

Goddamn therapists.

SAM

With your opinion of therapists, you shouldn't even be on this case.

ALICE

I'm the department's expert. I worked the other two serial killer cases.

SAM

Two serial killers in eight years. An awful lot for such a small town. Maybe the killings would stop if you ever solved a case.

ALICE

It's not the same person, Sam. Different type of victims. Different weapons used. The only common characteristic is that all the victims were in their 30s.

SAM

The media say the two new murders are similar.

ALICE

Not similar, Sam. Identical.

SAM

The news accounts make them sound more like ceremonial sacrifices than murders.

ALICE

This killer is an evil son of a bitch.

SAM

He's a saint, killing people at the peak of their careers. Better to die in the sunlight on the peak of the mountain than on the long, cold trudge down the dark side.

ALICE

Is there anything you can remember about these two students that could help me with my investigation?

SAM

(reciting)

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honors out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.

(not reciting)

A. E. Housman

ALICE

Did they stand out in any way?

SAM

(reciting)
Death is life's finest moment.
(not reciting)

Me.

ALICE

Can we get back to my investigation?

SAM

I hope I go out with a bang.

ALICE

Are you going to help me?

SAM

Perhaps the murders are linked to Andrews's and Pershing's long-standing relationship.

ALICE

What long-standing relationship?

Sam smiles

ALICE (CONT'D)

You're not going to do one of your lingering, melodramatic bits, are you?

SAM

You don't know what I'm talking about?

ALICE

Oh, Jeez, Sam.

SAM

You call yourself a detective, and you don't know?

ALICE

You're really going to string this out, aren't you?

SAM

I overestimated you.

ALICE

I'll wait.

SAM

Andrews and Pershing?

ALICE

Yes, Sam.

SAM

They were lovers. In a menage a trois. That ended badly.

Sam smiles. Alice waits.

ALICE

(finally)

You're not just going to leave it there, Sam.

SAM

What more is there to say?

ALICE

The third person in the menage a trois? Who was it?

SAM

That was one of the big mysteries. No one in the class knew who the third person was. They didn't even know if it was a man or a woman.

Lights fade to black as the Aida music comes up with the spotlight. Detective Altman walks into the light.

DETECTIVE ALTMAN

I was anticipating a third murder on May 7, the first Wednesday of the month. May 7 came and went with no more bodies of psychologists being found. I breathed a sigh of relief that the killings had stopped. Serial killers don't break their patterns. But then on May 10 we get a call from a detective in Chicago. He was working a murder case and thought we could help him. It was a psychologist who'd been killed the week before. "You won't believe this," the detective said, "but the victim's head was encased in shrink-wrap."

Spotlight fades to black.

SCENE 5: Sam's apartment. Sam is on her knees, bent over in prayer before three large candles. Under each candle is the photograph of one of the murder victims. The door bell rings.

Damn.
SAM

Struggling, she manages to get up. She opens the door. It's Alice

Hi.
(not happy)
ALICE

SAM
My, aren't we bouncy and bountiful tonight.

Alice walks in and sees the candles and pictures.

What the hell is this?
ALICE

SAM
They're in a far, far better place. I'm wishing them well.

ALICE
I'm afraid you're going to need another candle, Sam. There's been another ...
(seeing Jewel's picture in the grouping)
You've already got her picture hanging up?

SAM
I'm so happy for Jennifer. No one deserves happiness more than that fragile flower.

ALICE
How did you know she'd been killed?

SAM
The story was all over the evening news tonight. It was such a shock. Jennifer had moved to Chicago.

ALICE
How did you know she moved to Chicago?

SAM

She's written to me. Several times.

ALICE

You keep in touch with all your students?

(indicating the candles)

You have all their photographs?

SAM

I think of them all as my children. It looks like your menage a trois theory isn't working. What's your new one.

ALICE

All the victims have been women. Half the class was male. We should have a male by now. He hates women.

SAM

That's a nice theory.

ALICE

A working hypothesis, as you academics would say.

SAM

I can't wait until next month's theory.

ALICE

Did any of the students look like women haters?

SAM

You insist that the killer is one of the students.

ALICE

Who else could have known the make-up of the class?

SAM

A lot of people. Students from other classes. Support personnel. People in the registrar's office. Professors.

ALICE

Maybe I should be checking you out.

SAM

Maybe you should be checking yourself out considering how much you hate therapists.

ALICE

We checked the licensing board and got addresses for 26 of the students. Two weren't licensed. They weren't listed with the American Psychological Association either. Why would someone spend all this time learning this stuff and then not even bother getting licensed?

SAM

What were the two names?

ALICE

Susan Dangerfield. And Joseph Lynch.

SAM

Well that explains it. They both changed their names after they graduated. Susan decided to be licensed under her maiden name after attending school under her married name. Pershing.

ALICE

Susan Pershing was Dangerfield?

SAM

Yes. After five years in graduate school, her marriage was getting a little rocky and she wasn't so sure about her married name.

ALICE

And Lynch. Why did he change his name?

SAM

I'm not at liberty to say. What I can say is that Joseph was well known in the class for being a ladies' man.

ALICE

Was he intimate with any of the victims?

SAM

Wouldn't be surprised. He'd been with just about every woman in the class. Joseph was a serial lover. All the affairs started off like fairy tale romances. But after a few months the women told him to get lost and he was on to the next one.

ALICE

What did Lynch change his name to?

SAM

Janson.

Lights fade to black

SCENE 6: Police station, the next afternoon. Alice is interrogating Joseph.

ALICE

All right, then. Let's try again.

JOSEPH

How many times are you going to ask me the same questions?

ALICE

When were you last in Chicago?

JOSEPH

I told you. I've never been in Chicago.

ALICE

A major city, a short jet flight from here, and you've never been there?

JOSEPH

I've never been to Chicago.

ALICE

Tell me about Jennifer Jewel. Were you screwing her, too?

JOSEPH

I was not screwing Jennifer Jewel.

ALICE

Had you ever screwed Jennifer Jewel?

JOSEPH

What does this have to do with the murders?

ALICE

When did you last speak to Jewel and the other two?

JOSEPH

After graduation I cut off contact with everyone in the class.

ALICE

Why?

JOSEPH

It was a period of my life that I wanted to put behind me.

ALICE

Why didn't you tell me you were a classmate of the victims?

JOSEPH

I assumed you knew. You are a detective, aren't you?

ALICE

Why did you change your name?

JOSEPH

That has nothing to do with this investigation either.

ALICE

Trying to escape bill collectors? Or was it something far more serious?

JOSEPH

He was a bastard. I was ashamed to have the same name.

ALICE

Your father?

JOSEPH

Yes.

ALICE

So much of a bastard that you went to trouble of legally changing your name?

JOSEPH

He beat us, my sister and me. Poured boiling water on my mother. I can still hear her screams. I wanted to honor my mother.

ALICE

Her name was Jan?

JOSEPH

Yes.

ALICE

Did Jewel know you as Lynch or Janson?

JOSEPH

I didn't change my name until after I left school.

ALICE

So Jewel knew you as Lynch?

JOSEPH

Yes.

ALICE

When did you last speak to Jewel? Last month?

JOSEPH

I told you. I cut off contact with everyone after graduation.

ALICE

You haven't even called her on the phone?

JOSEPH

No.

Alice takes a tape recorder from her desk and turns it on.
It beeps.

VOICE ON TAPE RECORDER

Hello, Jennifer, this is...

JOSEPH

What's that?

ALICE

(stopping the tape)

From her telephone-answering machine.

She restarts the tape.

VOICE ON TAPE RECORDER

Hello, Jennifer, this is Frankie. My plane gets in Wednesday at five. I'll grab a cab and meet you at your office. See you then.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Why did you call yourself Frankie?

JOSEPH

That's not my voice.

ALICE

(bringing out papers)

Telephone records show that this call was made from your phone the night of May 5.

JOSEPH

That's not possible.

Alice hands him the papers. Joseph reads them.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

What day of the week was that?

ALICE

Monday.

JOSEPH

I work out on Mondays. I'm not in the office that late.

ALICE

You didn't work out May 5. The athletic club has no record of you signing in that day.

Joseph checks his Blackberry.

JOSEPH

You're right. I didn't work out that day. I had a meeting with Sam.

ALICE

In your office?

JOSEPH

Yes.

ALICE

What time did you leave your office?

JOSEPH

(consulting his Blackberry)

The meeting was over at 7:30. So I guess it was a little after that.

ALICE

That's when you made the phone call. After the meeting.

JOSEPH

I wouldn't be making a phone call when I'm with Sam.

ALICE

Why was she meeting with you?

JOSEPH

She stops by here when she goes to the opera.

ALICE

Do you have any patients named Frankie?

JOSEPH

No.

ALICE

Do any of your patients know any of the victims?

JOSEPH

I would doubt it.

ALICE

When you were in school, were you having sex with Jewel?

JOSEPH

You keep coming back to that. I don't see...

ALICE

Or any of the other victims?

He doesn't answer.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Did you have intimate relations with any of the victims.

JOSEPH

(finally)

Yes.

ALICE

Which women?

JOSEPH

All of them.

ALICE

Why did you break up with them?

JOSEPH

I didn't. They broke up with me.

ALICE

Amicably.

JOSEPH

More or less.

ALICE

Why did they break up with you?

JOSEPH

Do we have to get into this?

(her look says yes)

I don't know. At first everything was wonderful -- with all of them -- and then they just broke it off. They never gave a reason that made any sense.

ALICE

Are you involved with anyone right now?

JOSEPH

(meaning her)

I was beginning to think so.

ALICE

Why do you hate women?

JOSEPH

I don't hate women. I like women very much. I'm surprised you haven't noticed.

ALICE

Maybe you resent needing women so much. A man needs a woman like a fish needs a bicycle?

JOSEPH

You're a lot better cop than psychologist, detective.

ALICE

Why didn't you tell me you were these women's lover?

JOSEPH

I told you. It's not something I'm proud of.

ALICE

Did you have another reason for keeping it a secret?

JOSEPH

Yes.

ALICE

What?

JOSEPH

I didn't want to become a suspect.

Lights fade to black as the Aida tomb music comes up and continues for a few seconds. The spotlight comes up on Detective Altman.

DETECTIVE ALTMAN

Everything Joseph told me checked out. Sam confirmed that they had spent two hours together that night and had left his office together at about 7:30. Voice recognition experts said that the taped voice was not Joseph's. Joseph also passed a lie detector test. I wanted to believe that Joseph was innocent, but the fact that he had had all these problems with the murder victims nagged at me. The killer was obviously a woman hater. Then on June 4 I got good news. The body of a fourth psychologist was found. It was a man.

Spotlight fades to black as the Aida tomb music resumes, plays for a bit and then fades.

SCENE 7: Sam's living room. There are now four candles with photographs. Sam and Alice are talking.

SAM

I hardly remember Max. He didn't really stand out in the class.

ALICE

The serial killer is mocking me.

SAM

Aren't we getting a little paranoid?

ALICE

Every time I come up with a theory, the next murder knocks it to hell. It's as though the killer is sitting on my shoulder and knows exactly what I'm thinking.

SAM

It's your theory of the month. That's what the comedians on late-night television are calling your investigation.

ALICE

I was sure only former classmates would have known all of the names in the class.
(hands Sam a photocopy of a newspaper clipping)
So much for that theory.

SAM

What's this?

ALICE

The graduation photograph. It was published in the university's newspaper. With the names of every student listed. We found it under Max Levy's body.

SAM

The faces of all the murder victims have been circled. I like this guy. He's got a great sense of humor.

ALICE

A macabre sense of humor.

SAM

Joseph has a macabre sense of humor.

ALICE

No he doesn't.

SAM

The Joseph I know does. Why did you release him?

ALICE

He didn't do it.

SAM

When I was with him in his office that night, I saw Joseph making a phone call.

ALICE

After all this time, you remember such a thing?

SAM

He kept me waiting and we had an argument about it.

ALICE

Joseph doesn't remember that.

SAM

His memory is not the best.

ALICE

Why are you telling me this? I thought Joseph was your friend.

SAM

I was hoping that I was wrong in my suspicions. But each murder has made it more likely that Joseph is the killer. I can't sit back and let these murders continue.

ALICE

Joseph's not the killer.

SAM

Why are you closing your eyes to the obvious? I'll tell you why. Because you're in love.

ALICE

Don't be ridiculous.

SAM

I can understand your affection for him. He does have a nice body.

ALICE

It's not his body. It's his mind that I... That was very tricky, Sam.

SAM

It would be the perfect, modern marriage. A quick, simple ceremony and then you arrest him for the murders. He's sent to jail for life and you're a free woman again, but now everyone can call you Mrs., instead of detective. And you don't have to worry about your husband cheating on you, with other women at least.

ALICE

There must be something wrong with my ears. Or I've been sucked into a time warp.

SAM

I think my little fish finally wants to ride a bicycle.

ALICE

Joseph is not a bicycle, even if he does have nice handlebars.

Lights fade to black as the Aida music comes up, plays for a bit and fades.

SCENE 2: Sam's living room, the next evening. Joseph is with Sam, who's making drinks.

SAM

I find it intriguing that the caller identified himself as Frankie? You don't find that interesting?

JOSEPH

It's just a coincidence.

SAM

A very unusual coincidence, wouldn't you say?

JOSEPH

It couldn't be him. The symptoms are gone -- the headaches, the memory loss, the anger.

Sam gives Joseph a drink.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

What's this?

SAM

Your club soda.

JOSEPH

I didn't want club soda.

SAM

You asked for a club soda.

JOSEPH

I did? I don't remember. I've been under a lot of stress.

SAM

You said you never called anyone that night. I was in the waiting room and saw you on the phone.

JOSEPH

I never would have kept you waiting. Certainly not while I made a phone call.

SAM

Nuts?

JOSEPH

What?

SAM

(offering him peanuts)

Would you care for some nuts?

JOSEPH

I'm not having a relapse, Sam.

SAM

Does Alice think this is a coincidence?

JOSEPH

She doesn't know about Frankie.

SAM

You never told her?

JOSEPH

Frankie has nothing to do with this case.

SAM

Are you trying to fool me or yourself? Frankie called Jewel from your phone.
You must tell Alice about Frankie.

JOSEPH

And send her down another false trail? She's confused enough without dealing with the
Frankie you and I know.

SAM

We must stop these murders.

JOSEPH

Frankie couldn't be a murderer.

SAM

He hated everyone in the class.

JOSEPH

If there was any chance at all that Frankie was involved with this, I would tell Alice
everything.

CURTAIN ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: Joseph's office, the next morning. Joseph enters the outer office, carrying his attache case, unaware that Alice is behind him. He turns to shut the door and is startled to see her. She carries a paper bag filled with coffee containers and pastries.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

What the hell?

ALICE

(offering the bag)

A peace offering.

JOSEPH

My first patient is about to arrive.

ALICE

I won't stay.

JOSEPH

I have to prepare.

ALICE

I won't take off my coat. I won't even sit down.

JOSEPH

Is this some sort of police trick?

ALICE

I'm here to make amends for the ordeal we put you through.

JOSEPH

(moving into the interior office)

I never know what to expect from you.

ALICE

Since we're just starting our relationship, I don't know what pleases you in the morning. So I got everything.

(pulling containers from the bag)

Regular coffee. De-caf. Tea. Milk. Orange juice. I owe you an apology. I'm sorry.

JOSEPH

Time to play the good-cop role again?

ALICE

I don't want to be the bad-cop with you.

JOSEPH

If you have nothing else to say, detective, I'd appreciate it if you'd...

ALICE

Please try to look at this from my point of view. You say one thing. The telephone bill says another. That's one hell of a red flag to wave in front of someone who by nature and profession is suspicious. Friends?

JOSEPH

(shaking hands)

Friends.

Alice sits down.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I thought you weren't going to sit down.

ALICE

I'll get right up. I've got something else for you.

She takes out a large package wrapped in brown paper and hands it to him.

ALICE

Open it.

He carefully unwraps the package.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I made it for you.

He holds up the needlepoint. It says "No Pain, No Gain."

JOSEPH

This is lovely. Thank you so much.

ALICE

You like it?

JOSEPH

I know just where to put this.

As Alice eagerly watches, he goes to the waiting room, takes down the "like a fish without a bicycle" banner and replaces it with "No Pain, No Gain."

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Time for a change. That is very beautiful, delicate work, Alice.

They look at each other warmly.

ALICE

We asked you a lot of questions, but we didn't ask you the right question.

JOSEPH

What's the right question?

ALICE

Why would Sam want to implicate you in these murders?

JOSEPH

You think Sam is trying to implicate me?

ALICE

She said she saw you making a phone call at about the time Jewel received the phone call from Frankie.

JOSEPH

Maybe I did call someone that night. It's so long ago. I just don't remember. Can we talk about this later. My first client is due any moment. I have to get ready.

ALICE

(getting up to leave)

Thanks for accepting the peace offering.

Alice exits. Joseph sits for several seconds, very concerned, processing what has just happened.

Finally he opens his briefcase to get ready for his next patient. He is shocked by what he sees.

JOSEPH

Oh, my God.

Gingerly, he holds up an ornamental knife.

Lights fade to black

SCENE 2: Sam's living room, a few hours later. Joseph and Sam are talking. Joseph takes the sword from his briefcase and hands it to Sam.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I found it in my briefcase.

Sam inspects it.

SAM

Madama Butterfly used a sword like this to depart from her tormented world.

(handing the sword back to Joseph)

How did this get into your briefcase?

JOSEPH

I don't know.

SAM

You don't remember putting it there?

JOSEPH

Frankie put it there. Didn't he?

SAM

Could there be any other explanation?

JOSEPH

No.

SAM

You must tell Alice about Frankie.

JOSEPH

Frankie doesn't want me to.

SAM

Frankie needs you to be wiser about this.

JOSEPH

I'm afraid to tell Alice about this.

SAM

I will help you. I will show her what it means for you to be both Joseph and Frankie.

JOSEPH

I don't want to lose her.

SAM

Alice loves you. She will do the right thing.

JOSEPH

She does love me.

SAM

Of course she does. Do you want me to tell her for you?

JOSEPH

Maybe that's what we should do.

SAM

Then I have your permission to reveal information that you shared with me during our sessions?

JOSEPH

Yes.

Sam hunts through a nearby drawer stuffed with papers, finds a business card and dials.

SAM

Hello, this is Dr. Samantha Karcher. May I speak to Detective Altman, please?

Lights fade to black

SCENE 3: Sam's apartment. Sam turns on her CD player and the Aida music comes up.

SAM

To die! So pure and beautiful. He has been sealed forever in a tomb, alone. He contemplates the slow death that awaits him. Then he sees her. In the shadows. She had come to die with him.

The doorbell rings.

SAM (CONT'D)

Damn.

She shuts off the music and opens the door. Alice is standing there. She's wearing a dress.

ALICE

I just happened to be in the neighborhood.

SAM

(shocked to see Alice wearing a dress)

Oh, my God.

ALICE

Yeah, it's me.

SAM

You're under cover.

ALICE

Look, let's not make a big deal of this. I just felt like wearing a dress.

SAM

Where did you get it?

ALICE

What do you mean, where did I get it? My closet. The back of my closet.

SAM

Where's your gun?

ALICE

In my purse.

SAM

You have a purse, too? Why are you dressing up like a woman?

ALICE

Yes, Sam, I am a woman.

SAM

Words I never thought I'd hear you say.

ALICE

And, it's a beautiful day.

SAM

It's been raining.

ALICE

But it's summer time.

SAM

It's been cold. You're in love.

She knows that Alice is in love with Joseph but decides to play with him

SAM (CONT'D)

You' have fallen in love. With a policeman.

ALICE

Don't be ridiculous.

SAM

It's not one of those awful people you're always arresting, is it?

ALICE

The man you think you're referring to is kind of in your line of work.

SAM

You've dating a therapist? Oh dear. Transference.

ALICE

What the hell is that?

SAM

It's what you're doing.

ALICE

I don't know anything about transference, but what we're doing is not that.

SAM

Why are you in therapy?

ALICE

I'm not in therapy.

SAM

Look me in the eye and tell me you're not in therapy. But if you swear, I'll know you're lying.

ALICE

I'm not in therapy.

SAM

Yes, you are.

ALICE

You are one cock sure son of a bitch, Sam.

SAM

What do you talk about with this new friend of yours?

ALICE

All sorts of things. Knitting. Needle point.

SAM

You don't have to be sarcastic. What do you do when you're with this therapist?

ALICE

That's a little personal, don't you think?

SAM

I'm waiting.

ALICE

We go out. We talk about things. He listens, Sam. And he shows me a different way to look at things. Makes me feel good about myself.

SAM

How silly of me to think that you were in therapy.

ALICE

He's a very sensitive man.

SAM

I thought you knew only dead psychologists.

ALICE

This psychologist is very much alive.

SAM

That's nice.

ALICE

Very.

SAM

Very nice or very alive?

ALICE

Very alive. I have a surprise for you. I'm sort of dating Joseph. You don't look very surprised.

SAM

I've known all along about this affair.

ALICE

I've never said a thing about it.

SAM

Your body language has been saying you like Joseph, very much. But enough of this.

She puts the music up louder.

ALICE

(yelling above the music)

Did you call me over here to listen to music?

SAM

Could there be anything more beautiful?

ALICE

That's beautiful? Suffocating in a tomb?

SAM

She has such a wonderful voice.

ALICE

She's got a nice voice. It's 7 o'clock, Sam. And I've got a hot date.

SAM

(shutting off the stereo)

I wanted to talk to you about the murders. I have information you should have.

ALICE

Go on.

SAM

This is not easy for me. Therapists don't find joy in describing the sad, tormented, private lives of others. We're not journalists. Our joy comes from keeping secrets, not telling tales.

ALICE

Enough already, Sam.

SAM

But there comes the time when a therapist must balance the needs of society against the needs of her patient.

ALICE

It's 7 o'clock, Sam. I've got to go. I'm supposed to...

SAM

Joseph is not well, mentally. I thought I was seeing improvement but I was wrong.

ALICE

Are you his therapist?

SAM

He's been under treatment with me for several years.

ALICE

What's wrong with him?

SAM

He has a dissociative disorder.

ALICE

What the hell is that?

SAM

On second thought, I don't think I want to talk to you about this.

ALICE

Why not?

SAM

Because you won't try to understand what I'm telling you. You're going to call it a lot of bullshit. And once again I will be reminded of what a close-minded simpleton you are.

ALICE

You can't just tell me that Joseph has some weirdo problem and leave it at that. What is this thing?

SAM

It's a defense strategy the mind uses to protect itself.

ALICE

Against what?

SAM

Something that has happened to you that is so horrible it's too painful to think about. So the mind creates an alternate personality -- a different person, if you will -- to handle the trauma.

ALICE

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

SAM

Sort of.

ALICE

Bull shit.

SAM

I should have let you wallow in your profound ignorance.

ALICE

You're saying my Joseph is...

SAM

My Joseph?

ALICE

Is two different people?

SAM

Two different people.

JOSEPH

A kind, loving, sensitive man and a sociopathic killer?

SAM

That's your Joseph.

JOSEPH

You're crazy.

SAM

I'm not crazy. Joseph is. Though it's not a word we professionals like to use.

JOSEPH

There's not a trace of that other person in Joseph.

SAM

Suddenly you're an expert on multiple personalities?

JOSEPH

Cops have a good eye for that sort of stuff.

SAM

To think I wasted all that time learning to be a psychologist when all I needed was a badge.

JOSEPH

Joseph is not two people and he's not a serial killer. He's a sweet, caring, sensitive guy.

SAM

Have you ever wondered why you can't find Frankie? Frankie is Joseph's other personality. His alter.

Alice thinks about this for a while, as Sam waits.

ALICE

(finally)

When this other person, this....
(can't find the word)

SAM

Alter.

ALICE

When this alter is roaming around inside your body, do you know she's there? I mean, if I had an alter, would I know it?

SAM

Some times, the only symptoms are memory problems or headaches. It's as though a hunk of time has been taken away, leaving only a blank, when the alter had been in control.

ALICE

I get bad headaches.

SAM

(with exaggerated suspicion.)

That's interesting.

ALICE

Very funny, Sam. Even if there is a Frankie inside of Joseph, it's a huge jump to think that it's the same Frankie that's on the telephone recording.

SAM

You are one lovesick puppy. Look at the facts that are staring you in the face. The phone call came from Joseph's office. The caller identified himself as Frankie. Joseph knows all the victims. What more do you need? The killer's social security number?

ALICE

I find it very interesting that you are trying to implicate him like this.

SAM

Oh, excuse me. I'm trying to be a good citizen. And this is the thanks I get?

ALICE

The caller is one of Joseph's patients who hates him.

SAM

There's one more interesting fact in this case that I should share with you. Joseph found a ceremonial suicide sword in his briefcase.

ALICE

Ceremonial suicide sword?

SAM

Sounds like a pretty good murder weapon to me.

ALICE

How did this sword get into his briefcase.

SAM

Frankie put it there.

ALICE

Frankie?

Lights fade to black and music from the Aida tomb scene continues. As the music fades, a spotlight comes up, revealing Detective Altman.

DETECTIVE ALTMAN

Amateur detectives are easily misled by false clues, which the clever criminal will leave to purposely mislead the investigation. It appeared obvious that this is what the Shrink-Wrap Killer was doing. If Frankie did put the toy sword in Joseph's briefcase, would Joseph tell everyone about it, knowing that it would make him a prime suspect. Sociopaths are crazy but not stupid. No, the killer was trying to implicate Joseph in the murders, pretending he was Joseph's alter. But how many people knew about Joseph's alter?

Spot fades to black.

SCENE 4: Joseph's office, the next evening. Joseph is slumped over his desk. The sound of someone climbing the steps is heard. Alice enters the outer office, knocks on the inner-office door, which is ajar. Joseph doesn't move. Alice knocks again and then walks in. She is stunned to see Joseph like that.

ALICE

Oh no. Jesus Christ. God damn son of a bitch. It's the wrong Wednesday. Next week is the first Wednesday of the month. I should have protected him.

She pounds on the desk.

JOSEPH

(abruptly sitting up)

What the hell?

ALICE

Joseph.

JOSEPH

Who let you in here?

ALICE

You're alive.

JOSEPH

What time is it?

ALICE

You scared the hell out of me.

JOSEPH

It's almost 10. I was expecting you earlier.

ALICE

Are you OK?

JOSEPH

I was sleeping off one of those damn headaches.

ALICE

(collapsing on a chair)
My heart is beating like a son of a bitch.

JOSEPH

I'm sorry I scared you.

ALICE

You look awful.

JOSEPH

(tentatively, with concern)
Did Sam call you?

ALICE

She called me.

JOSEPH

She told you about Frankie?

ALICE

She told me about Frankie.

JOSEPH

Everything?

ALICE

God, I hope so. We talked for two hours, not counting the time spent listening to that damn music of hers.

JOSEPH

Did she happen to mention anything about a ceremonial suicide sword. Japanese.

ALICE

The sword she described sounded pretty fancy.

JOSEPH

It catches your eye.

ALICE

Sam thinks it could be the murder weapon.

JOSEPH

I think it could be, too.

That doesn't look good.

ALICE

He takes the sword out of his briefcase and shows it to her. Alice looks at it and breaks out laughing.

This is no murder weapon.

ALICE (CONT'D)

It's a long, thin blade.

JOSEPH

It's a toy.

ALICE

One hell of a coincidence, finding something like that in my briefcase.

JOSEPH

It must have been a surprise. What with all these people being stabbed to death with long, thin blades. But this isn't the murder weapon.

ALICE

Then what is it?

JOSEPH

A false clue. The killer has had me jumping to the wrong conclusions ever since I started this case. He's been having a ball.

ALICE

You don't think I'm the killer?

JOSEPH

Not a chance.

ALICE

I appreciate your faith in me.

JOSEPH

I'm not falling for it.

ALICE

I hate to say this, Alice, but I really think I'm the killer.

JOSEPH

Nope.

ALICE

JOSEPH

What more can I do to stop the killing? Commit suicide?

ALICE

Every time I come up with a theory the killer does something that forces me to rethink everything. He's always one step ahead of me.

JOSEPH

OK, have it your way.

ALICE

When you're here seeing patients, where do you keep your briefcase?

JOSEPH

Right there.

He indicates the side of his desk.

ALICE

So any one of your patients could have dropped it in.

JOSEPH

I'm really very pleased that you have faith in me. Why don't you think I'm the murderer?

ALICE

I've got to go with my instincts.

JOSEPH

I respect that, Alice.

ALICE

You read too many books to be a killer.

JOSEPH

I do like to read. Have you ever thought of getting married?

ALICE

I beg your pardon.

JOSEPH

Have you ever thought of getting married?

ALICE

Are you proposing to me?

JOSEPH

You've given my life back to me. And I want to do something with it.

ALICE

I have a problem with commitment.

JOSEPH

I want to have children. A nice home. The smell of biscuits baking in the oven. A fire in the fireplace. The whole bit.

ALICE

Did someone switch hormones on you when you were born?

JOSEPH

My dream is a big, old, rambling house on a hill in Vermont. I'd cut back on my practice so I could spend time with the kids. You could get a job with the village police.

ALICE

(eying him appreciatively)

I've never been to Vermont.

JOSEPH

You'd love Vermont.

ALICE

You make this all sound very nice. But there's one little thing we've got to deal with first.

JOSEPH

There is?

ALICE

I don't want to frighten you.

JOSEPH

You already have.

ALICE

He's going to kill you next.

JOSEPH

I beg your pardon.

ALICE

Next Wednesday.

JOSEPH

(with increasing agitation)

He's going to kill me next Wednesday? Why me?

ALICE

Someone's got to be next.

JOSEPH

What about all the other students who haven't been killed? The odds are 20 to 1 that I'll be next.

ALICE

Why are you getting so excited?

JOSEPH

You just told me I'm going to be murdered next week. Getting excited seems appropriate.

Alice hands him a piece of paper. He looks at it.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

What's this?

ALICE

The class list. The students are listed alphabetically.

JOSEPH

So?

ALICE

Read the first four names.

JOSEPH

Andrews. Dangerfield. Jewel. Levy.

(shocked realization)

The students in the class are being killed alphabetically.

ALICE

I should have seen that earlier. I was thrown off by Dangerfield's name being changed to Pershing.

JOSEPH

The next name is Lynch.

ALICE

It's a no-win situation for you. If I'm right, you get murdered next Wednesday. If I'm wrong, you get arrested for murder.

JOSEPH

I'm canceling all my appointments.

ALICE

You can't do that.

JOSEPH

The hell I can't.

ALICE

This is our only way of catching him.

JOSEPH

Suddenly I'm on vacation.

ALICE

We'll protect you.

JOSEPH

You'll have someone in my waiting room?

ALICE

That would scare him off. I'll be waiting in a car downstairs and you'll have a police radio.

JOSEPH

You want to use me as a decoy?

ALICE

With your cooperation, of course.

JOSEPH

And if I refuse?

ALICE

Then I have to assume you're the murderer.

JOSEPH

And arrest me?

ALICE

I'd have no choice.

JOSEPH

In that case, Alice, I'd be only too happy to volunteer.

ALICE

You're a good citizen, Joseph.

Lights fade to black as the opera music comes up. A spotlight lights up a corner of the stage. Detective Altman walks into the light as the music fades.

DETECTIVE ALTMAN

I didn't want to use Joseph as a decoy. It's a dangerous thing to do, especially with someone as clever as the Shrink-Wrap Killer. But if the killer showed up, I was sure I could get to Joseph in time. This type of killer likes to take his time and make his victims anticipate their impending death. Joseph was in no danger.

Opera music comes up, spot goes to black, the music fades.

SCENE 5: Joseph's office. Joseph is talking to the police radio on the corner of his desk. His foil is lying on the desk.

ALICE

(voice on radio)
Yeah, I'm here.

JOSEPH

My last patient just left.

ALICE

(voice on radio)
I can see him coming out now.

JOSEPH

So I guess that's that.

ALICE

(voice on radio, resigned)
That's that.

JOSEPH

For a minute I was hoping. You know.

ALICE

(voice on radio)
Sure you were. I'll be right up.

Joseph leans back in his chair and starts to cry. After several beats, steps coming up the stairs are heard. Alice enters and flops down in a chair. She looks at Joseph sternly.

ALICE (CONT'D)

It's the first Wednesday of the month. Someone was supposed to die today.

JOSEPH

I didn't think I was capable of doing such awful things. I kept coming up with reasons why it couldn't be me. Then Frankie called Jennifer from my office and I knew he had come back. And I couldn't control him.

ALICE

You therapists are so fucking smooth. You get people to trust you and then you disappoint them.

JOSEPH

I do love you. I didn't want to disappoint you, Alice.

ALICE

(picking up the foil)

You think you're so smart.

Alice presses the blade against Joseph's chest.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You therapists don't give a shit about your patients or anyone else.

Joseph tries to brush the blade from his chest but she doesn't let him.

JOSEPH

You're making me very uncomfortable, Alice. Maybe you should read me my rights and take me downtown.

ALICE

Finally, in a very small way, I'm settling an old score for my sister.

JOSEPH

Settling a score? With these killings?

ALICE

All of you are to blame for the pain you cause your patients.

JOSEPH

What are you saying, Alice?

ALICE

And you're not even aware of it. Now you'll pay the price.

JOSEPH

My God. Is it possible?

ALICE

You fooled me like all the rest. I fell in love with you.

JOSEPH

You had all sorts of opportunities.

ALICE

I want you to feel what it was like for my sister while she waited for the doctor to call her back.

JOSEPH

You were with me that night, too. You could have called Jewel from my phone. You could have put that sword in my briefcase.

ALICE

(pressing the blade against his chest)

Are you terrified, doctor?

JOSEPH

Yes.

ALICE

Are you shitting in your pants.

JOSEPH

I'm afraid like the others were.

ALICE

Her therapist could have saved her life.

JOSEPH

You're right. Maybe he could have. She was reaching out for help. And any good therapist would have realized that and been there for her.

ALICE

Would you have been there for her?

JOSEPH

I would have called her back the moment I got her message.

ALICE

You would have?

JOSEPH

There are good therapists and bad therapists. Just like there are good cops and bad cops.

ALICE

There are a lot of bad cops.

JOSEPH

I'm so sorry it's worked out like this. I was hoping one day we could go to Vermont.

ALICE

It's not right that you have to pay the price for what that son of a bitch Frankie did.

JOSEPH

A jury isn't about to...

Alice hears someone coming up the steps.

ALICE

Quiet.

Alice indicates the door. They listen. The sound of opera music is heard.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Did you have an appointment with her?

JOSEPH

No.

The sound of the footsteps and music grows louder. Quickly looking around the room, Alice sees a door.

ALICE

What's that?

JOSEPH

A closet.

Alice rushes to it and opens the door.

ALICE

Confront her about the killings. I'll be in here listening.

JOSEPH

What the hell are you talking about? She's come here to kill me. I'm getting out of here.

ALICE

We need evidence. As soon as she incriminates herself, I'll come out and arrest her.

JOSEPH

What if she incriminates herself by stabbing me to death?

ALICE

I won't let that happen.

JOSEPH
I'm not volunteering for this.

ALICE
Be a man.

JOSEPH
I am a man. A dead man talking.

ALICE
I'll be here. Listening.

She goes into the closet and shuts the door.

JOSEPH
Can you hear me?

ALICE
(from behind the door)
I can hear everything.

Sam enters with a big shoulder bag, a radio and cane.

JOSEPH
Sam, what are you...

Putting her finger to her mouth, she wants silence. She puts the radio on Joseph's desk and listens to the end of the aria while Joseph waits terrified. She shuts off the radio.

SAM
And so Norma and Pollione die together. In life they squabbled, endured jealousy, confronted impossible problems. But everything ends happily as they jump into a pyre together. Kind of makes you feel warm all over.

JOSEPH
Did we have an appointment?

SAM
Yes, of course we did.

JOSEPH
I don't remember.

SAM

I remember it clearly. Early curtain tonight. Let's get started.

JOSEPH

You didn't come here for a session. And you don't fool me with that cane. It's a cleverly disguised sword.

SAM

You're being melodramatic.

JOSEPH

Inside it is the thin blade that killed my classmates.

Sam at first seems shocked and then appears to appreciate the joke. She laughs.

SAM

You have such a wonderful sense of humor.

JOSEPH

(indicating the cane)

Thrust deep into their hearts. Then wiped clean and put back in the cane.

SAM

(barely able to say it she is laughing so hard)

I was Don Jose and each of them was Carmen.

JOSEPH

Give me that.

SAM

I'll give this to you when I'm ready.

Joseph goes for the cane. Sam grabs it. They wrestle. Joseph gets the cane.

JOSEPH

Those poor bastards. Not one suspected what lay hidden inside this cane. The instrument of their death.

SAM

The headstrong Carmen had no clue either.

Joseph pulls on the handle of the cane to bring out the sword, but it doesn't budge. He keeps trying as Sam's laughter builds. Finally he accepts the fact that he is holding only a cane.

JOSEPH

The sword is in your handbag,

SAM

The sword you think I'm going to kill you with?

JOSEPH

(repeating it loudly for Alice to hear)

You're going to kill me with a sword you brought in your handbag . That's what you're saying, isn't it?

SAM

Instant death, the grand finale of a useless life.

JOSEPH

(repeating it loudly for Alice to hear)

Admit it, Sam. You've come here to kill me.

Sam laughs.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

(so Alice can hear)

Why did you kill the others?

SAM

Who dies in youth and vigor, dies the best. Alexander Pope.

JOSEPH

(loudly to Alice)

Then you're admitting it. You killed all the others.

SAM

From a proud tower in the town, Death looks gigantically down. Edgar Allen Poe.

JOSEPH

Say it.

SAM

Enough of this game. We don't have much time left. Wagner won't wait. We must begin our session.

JOSEPH

You want to give me therapy before you kill me?

SAM

I couldn't very well do it after I killed you.

JOSEPH

You're crazy.

SAM

Look at me, Joseph.

JOSEPH

You are totally and completely...

SAM

Look at me, I said.

Joseph stops protesting and looks at her.

SAM

Listen to my voice. Torno vincitar. (phonetic spelling is TOR-no VEEN-chi-TAR) Let Frankie come forward.

JOSEPH

What?

SAM

TOR-no VEEN-chi-TAR

Sam waits. Joseph looks at her blankly.

SAM (CONT'D)

(with building frustration)

TOR-no VEEN-chi-TAR.

(with anger)

TOR-no VEEN-chi-TAR

JOSEPH

Well look who's here. The doctor bitch.

SAM

Frankie.

JOSEPH

What the hell do you want?

SAM

I've come for our appointment.

Joseph's demeanor and body language becomes that of Frankie. He looks sternly at Sam and then at his watch.

JOSEPH

Our appointment was for 7. Where the fuck have you been?

SAM

I was talking to Joseph.

JOSEPH

Wasting time with that asshole?

SAM

Joseph loves you.

JOSEPH

Yeah, sure. So why did you want to have this meeting?

SAM

Only you can stop the murders by going to Alice and telling her what you did.

JOSEPH

Screw that bitch Alice.

SAM

I'm sure you have. But now it's time to also confess.

JOSEPH

You're supposed to be helping me.

SAM

You need more help than I can give you.

JOSEPH

Confinement? Is that what you're suggesting?

SAM

For your own good. You won't begin to get better until you admit what you've done -- to yourself and to Alice.

JOSEPH

(getting his foil)
You didn't treat me any better.

He picks up the foil from Joseph's desk and presses it against Sam's chest.

SAM

Oh, my.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

This Alice bitch thinks she's such a brilliant detective. The serial killer is far more brilliant than she is.

SAM

Only the most brilliant mind could have conceived and executed these murders. Take pride in your work and boast about it to Alice.

JOSEPH

It's exciting being the subject of a big murder investigation. It's like rock climbing. The more dangerous the terrain, the more exciting the climb. But playing with this dumb cop is hard work. No pain, no gain. Isn't that what Joseph is always saying?

SAM

I'm sure he'll get rid of that banner the first chance he gets.

JOSEPH

I loved the way Alice had to keep revising her theories with each new murder.

SAM

Maybe I should go out there now and take down the damn thing for Joseph..

She moves to leave, but Frankie stops her with the sword.

JOSEPH

When Alice first showed up asking questions, the killer saw a rare opportunity.

SAM

Frankie, stop saying "the killer." You're the killer. You must admit this to yourself or you'll never get better.

JOSEPH

It was a coincidence, Andrews and Dangerfield being the first two victims. When the killer saw that their names were the first two on the class list, it was obvious to him that the murders should continue in alphabetical order. The newspaper clipping was a bit of overkill, if you'll excuse the expression. But without the clipping, the choice of suspects was getting much too small. Wrapping everyone up in shrink wrap was pure poetry. The symbolism was obvious. But the headline writers loved it. I think we've talked enough, don't you?

He gets ready to push the sword through Sam's heart.

SAM

(indicating the sword)

What's this all about?

JOSEPH

Isn't it obvious? I'm going to kill you by thrusting a long, slim blade through your heart.

SAM

(delighted)

You are?

JOSEPH

Your fate is sealed.

SAM

What a dramatic way to die.

JOSEPH

Are you scared?

SAM

I'm delighted.

JOSEPH

What do you mean you're delighted?

SAM

All these years I've been dreading a humiliating death, attached to medical devices, a pathetic, unconscious character trapped in a scene of excessive medical technology. But you're going to give me a death worthy of opera.

JOSEPH

I am about to thrust a thin blade through your heart and kill you. You should be afraid.

SAM

Such drama. An old woman, all alone at night, in an empty office building, confronted by a madman with a sword. A madman who...

JOSEPH

I'm not a madman.

SAM

...A madman who is about to push a long, slender blade through her heart. The madman strikes. She falls to the ground, clutching her chest, gurgling her last breaths as she talks of the man she loves.

JOSEPH

Are you finished?

SAM

Yes. I'm ready.

Sam bares her chest.

JOSEPH

What makes you think I'm a madman?

SAM

Do you really think you have to ask that question, Frankie?

JOSEPH

You never called me a madman before.

SAM

Because we were in a professional relationship. Obviously we no longer have that relationship. You're a nut, Frankie, plain and simple. This just isn't the right mood for the final scene. Do you mind?

She indicates her bag. Joseph nods that it is all right. She goes to her bag, brings out a CD and puts it into her player. She advances the CD and the music from the death scene from Carmen is heard. Sam bares her chest again.

SAM (CONT'D)

OK.

JOSEPH

This isn't working out the way I planned it.

SAM

Carmen rebuffs the jealous Jose. In the background can be heard the sound of the bullfight. Carmen's new lover, the matador, is about to slay the bull. The symbolism there is just too exquisite. Jose pulls out a knife. Carmen remains defiant. Jose plunges the blade into her heart.

JOSEPH

I know what you're up to. You're pretending that you want me to kill you so my perverse personality will rebel and let you go.

SAM

Goddamnit, Frankie. I'm standing here waiting to die dramatically and you're spouting all this theoretical nonsense. Kill me.

JOSEPH

Alice is right. You therapists are a shrewd bunch of bastards.

SAM

You're not going to kill me?

JOSEPH

Gurgling your last breaths. Don't make me laugh.

SAM

(shutting off the player)

You're a faker.

JOSEPH

I'm not a faker.

SAM

All talk and no walk.

JOSEPH

No.

SAM

Faker.

JOSEPH

I'm not a faker.

SAM

You're not the killer.

JOSEPH

I am the killer. I killed them all.

Alice bursts out of the closet, her gun drawn. Joseph is startled but keeps his eyes on Sam, the point of the sword only inches from Sam's chest.

SAM

(disappointed by the turn of events)

Son of a bitch. Murder interruptus.

JOSEPH

Is that you, Alice?

ALICE

I'm holding a gun on you.

JOSEPH

And I'm holding a sword on Sam.

ALICE

Drop it.

JOSEPH

Don't be silly.

ALICE

I don't want to shoot you. Joseph...

(correcting herself)

Frankie. You won't have to go to jail. You'll be sent to a mental hospital. The psychiatrists there could use some help from a good psychologist.

JOSEPH

Only a nut would prefer a mental hospital to jail. OK, Sam, here comes the curtain.

ALICE

The mental hospital is your only option.

JOSEPH

You forget suicide.

ALICE

Not an option.

JOSEPH

Of course it's an option. You're even going to help me.

ALICE

You need help.

JOSEPH

You can kill me or watch me kill Sam. Those are your only options.

ALICE

Don't make me do this, Frankie.

JOSEPH

Think of shooting me as state-supported euthanasia. Your tax dollars at work.

Frankie's muscles tighten for the thrust.

ALICE

No!

JOSEPH

(starting to thrust the sword home)

To the pyre, we do go.

Alice fires. Joseph falls to the floor.

SAM

Oh, God.

ALICE

(rushing to Joseph)

Call 911.

(cradling Joseph in her arms)

I'm so sorry.

Sam dials 911

SAM

(on the phone)

We need an ambulance....2020 Chestnut Street...There's been a shooting. Please hurry.

(hangs up)

Frankie has become Joseph.

JOSEPH

Alice. What happened?

ALICE

You've been shot. The ambulance is coming.

Joseph lifts his head and sees Sam.

JOSEPH

So it was you, Sam. Why? Why did you kill them?

(moaning)

I can hardly breathe. Am I dying?

Sam watches the unfolding scene enthralled by what is happening.

ALICE

You're going to be all right.

JOSEPH

Why the hell did you wait so long to come out of the closet?

ALICE

Don't talk. Save your strength.

JOSEPH

I'm scared.

ALICE

It's all right, Joseph. I'm here with you.

JOSEPH

I love you.

ALICE

And I love you.

JOSEPH

It's getting dark. I'm so scared.

ALICE

You're going to be all right.

JOSEPH

Hold me.

Alice holds Joseph tighter.

ALICE

The ambulance is coming. They'll fix you up in the hospital.

JOSEPH

I want to live.

ALICE

And when you get out of the hospital, we'll get married. And get that house in Vermont.

JOSEPH

Yes?

ALICE

A big yard for the children to play in.

The distant sound of an ambulance can be heard.

JOSEPH

Yes, children.

ALICE

And a dog. A golden retriever.

JOSEPH

A roaring fireplace?

ALICE

A roaring fireplace.

JOSEPH

I love you so much.

(with increasing difficulty breathing)

I love you. We shall be together always.

He collapses dead. Alice holds his head to her chest sobbing. Sam is also crying, from the emotion of the scene.

SAM

That was beautiful.

For a moment she can't continue because she is crying so much.

SAM (CONT'D)

(finally, clapping)

Bravo. Brava. Bravo.

The sound of the approaching ambulance increases as Alice tightens her embrace and sobs uncontrollably.

CURTAIN00