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All inquiries should be directed to:

pdavisny@yahoo.com

or

phil@eastsidephil.com

Summer Evening, by Philip Davis

Scene 1

*(In the darkness we hear two gunshots. The lights fade up on a young man, **Edgar** (67 years old, looks 23) and **Marie** (65, looks 21) on the front porch of an old country house. The porch is brightly lit; everything around it is totally dark, as if the porch is all that exists).*

Marie

What happened? How did we get out on the porch? Dressed like when we were kids?

Edgar

We were sitting on the damn floor where the forlorn guy and the tarty-lookin' girl tied us up.

Marie

How long were we tied up?

Edgar

Not sure. I've lost all track of time.

Marie

Me too. Strange, isn't it?

Edgar

I don't even know what day it is.

Marie

No idea of the time. It's dark, but night or early morning?

Edgar

Hmmm... (straining) mmmmmmm! Damn!

Marie

What is it?

Edgar

I can't move my damn arms. Marie, reach in my pocket and take out my watch.

Marie

(After a moment of imperceptible effort) I can't move mine either. Is this a dream?

Edgar

If it is, we're having the same one.

Marie

It wouldn't be the first time.

Edgar

We were tied up on the damn floor... and this guy comes in...

Marie

Good-looking guy...

Edgar

I wouldn't know. Damn bossy...

Marie

He had a gun...

(They both pause for a substantial period, trying to forestall the inevitable truth dawning on them both.)

Edgar

What are you thinking?

Marie

What are *you* thinking?

Edgar

Same thing you're thinking.

Marie

Could it be? I thought I heard.

Edgar

He shot us.

Marie

I should go clean up the mess.

Edgar

We're dead. You can stop cleaning up messes.

Marie

Somebody's going to find us. What will they think? Blood everywhere and... who knows what all?

Edgar

Let it go honey. There's nothing left for us to do. We're dead. Besides, we can't move.

(Pause)

Marie

We've died and gone to the front porch? Not exactly what I anticipated.

Edgar

I hadn't anticipated dying at all today. If it is today.

Marie

I think I've always anticipated dying. I just didn't expect the front porch.

Edgar

What were you expecting? St. Peter? Heavenly choir? Gift shop full of sparkly things?

Marie

No, you old fool. It wasn't so specific as that; it just wasn't the front porch. And I figured on being able to move.

Edgar

That is a disappointment. I don't even think the damn porch is real. It doesn't feel like our porch.

Marie

Have you ever been dead on our porch before?

Edgar

I think when you're waiting for the actual fun to begin, they put you in a... a simulation of something familiar so you won't go nuts about being dead. Seems like I saw that once on TV - Star Trek or something. Twilight Zone, maybe.

Marie

Edgar, I do believe death has weakened your brain.

Edgar

Nah, TV did that long ago. I wonder how long we'll be here? Forever?

Marie

I took a vow 'til death us do part. I made no promises about after that. Seems like Mama or Daddy would be here somewhere. It was their porch too.

Edgar

They're out there somewhere in the space-time doo-flotchy... You don't want to spend forever with me?

Marie

It would spice things up a bit if there were some variety.

Edgar

Like some eternal damn cocktail party.

Marie

At least we could mingle... *move*.

Edgar

Yeah, it's a waiting room of some kind

(pause)

I love this old porch.

Marie

Lots of sweet old memories. You proposed to me on this porch.

Edgar

Yeah, I did, didn't I?

Marie

Forty-four years ago.... today.

Edgar

If it is today.

Marie

You were a sweetheart that night. It was mid July, and a cool evening breeze broke a long hot spell.

(FADE OUT)

Scene 2 (Still on the front porch, forty-four years earlier)

Edgar

(Frenzied from lack of sleep) I was awake all last night, tossin' and turnin' and turnin' over in my head all about us. Thinking, "Boy, ain't this dandy, the way things are goin'." Me and you, you know, gettin' along and all.... in... in love and all. Just fine and dandy. Couldn't hope for more.

Then I start to thinkin'... it just gets more and more, deeper and deeper. And that's dandy, too. But, I was thinkin', if it gets more and deeper, don't it have to change? But then, I think, change to what? We've been gettin' together for some time now, and it seems to be serious... right? What's next? Engagement? Marriage?

Then I say to myself, "hold on!" Why does it have to change? It's just fine and dandy the way it is, so why change something that's already just... fine and dandy? Let it be. It is what it is. Just let it be what it is. We don't have to change a thing.

Right?

(Marie doesn't respond.)

Fine and dandy?

(No response)

What do you think? Isn't it great as it is?

Marie

I never noticed the Conwells had their well in the front yard.

Edgar

Marie! What do you think about what I just said?

Marie

We have to change.

Edgar

Okay, we could do that. Change. Uh...mmm...Say, let's see each other five nights a week instead of three. That would be a nice change.

Marie

You know what I mean.

Edgar

Six? That's most of 'em, right there.

Marie

I was thinking about seven.

Edgar

Seven nights a week?

Marie

... and seven days.

Edgar

Don't leave much left over.

Marie

Marriage is all the time.

Edgar

I have to see Mama and Daddy sometime.

Marie

You're always trying to get away from them as it is.

Edgar

That's 'cause I live with 'em. If I didn't live there I'd want to see 'em.

Marie

They'll just be half a mile away.

Edgar

What about Jimmy and Steve? I have to see the guys.

Marie

I know you love them.

Edgar

Whoa! We're guys...

Marie

I'll unlock the shackles now and then.

Edgar

But if I see them, I'll be away from you. I can't stand to be apart from you.

Marie

Then marriage might not be enough for you.

Edgar

Not enough and too much.

Marie

How is it too much?

Edgar

Takes all the mystery out of it. Makes it all about preachers and flowers and dresses and relatives we don't even like.

Marie

It's a promise of love.

Edgar

We can do that now. I promise my love is always there. You can count on that.

Marie

If you really mean it, you'll say it in front of our families and friends. In front of God.

Edgar

I got an even better idea. We could both of us marry other people and you could be my mistress. The excitement! You know sneakin' around makes me horny. They'd have to throw cold water on us to keep us apart, like a couple of dogs.

Marie

Edgar, you're disgusting. Why do I even want to marry you, anyway?

Edgar

If we go with my plan, you don't have too.

Marie

Don't you want to marry me?

Edgar

It scares me.

Marie

I scare you?

Edgar

Not you... it...*it*. I'm scared I'll get bored.

Marie

I'm sorry I bore you.

Edgar

Why do you say that?

Marie

I guess I'm not very interesting, am I?

Edgar

When we get together now it's excitin' and special. We have to get around stuff, and sometimes sneak behind your parents. Like we have somethin' secret just between us. It makes my juices run wilder.

Marie

What makes your juices run wilder? Me, or the situation, the obstacles? Marriage is full of obstacles.

Edgar

Like fightin' over the bathroom, or pullin' the blanket off each other. Now it's us against the world. Then it'll be us against each other.

Marie

I'm prepared for it. I want to share everything with you.

Edgar

Everything?

Marie

Everything.

(pause)

Edgar

Do you really need to smell every one of my farts?

Marie

I already do.

Edgar

It's a feast for the senses, ain't it?

Marie

I want to wake up next to you every morning until the last morning I wake up. I want to have your children, and raise them together. I want us to watch each other grow old and find each other more beautiful with each passing year. I want to smell... your hair, your neck.... and whatever else comes along.

Edgar

A woman who can tolerate my full repertoire of smells... well, that's about as romantic a thing as I can think of.

(He takes out a ring box and opens it.)

Marie, will you marry me?

Marie

You were planning this all along... you... you...

Edgar

I had to make sure of a few things first.

Marie

You were testing me?

Edgar

You have to kick a few tires before you buy a new car.

Marie

New car!

Edgar

Check out a horse's teeth before you shell out good money...

Marie

Edgar! Why do you do these things? Why can't you just express your love.

Edgar

You've known me long enough to know how I feel.

Marie

And you've known me long enough that you don't have to kick my tires or check out my teeth.

Edgar

At least I didn't kick your teeth.

Marie

You might as well.

Edgar

Come here, baby. I'm no good with words.

Marie

You're terrible

Edgar

(Taking her in his arms) Let me talk to you my way.

Marie

Why does that feel so good?

Edgar

Listen to me, baby.

Marie

I should hate you.

Edgar

You can't hate me. Not when I do this.

Marie

Oh, do that!.... and that... and that... Why do I let you...

Edgar

Here's how much I love you (*Big kiss... he slides the ring on her finger*).

Marie

I do... I will... I.... do it some more.

(FADE OUT)

Scene 3

(Three years later. Marie is in a hospital bed holding a baby wrapped in a blanket. Edgar stands behind her looking at the baby.)

Edgar

God! Look what we've done... Well, you did most of it.

Marie

He's ours... both of us.

Edgar

Amazing! Is everything there?

Marie

Yes, all the fingers and toes and... everything is there.

Edgar

He's yawning. He doesn't like me.

Marie

He's tired. He's been through a lot today. Babies sleep; that's what they do.

After your Daddy died in April, I decided if it was a boy, we would name him Thomas, after him.

Edgar

So he'll be a junior.

Marie

Actually, he'll be the second.

Edgar

This is great! I got a son. *We* got a son. I'm so happy. This is gonna change everything. You'll see. I'm gonna be a great father. And a better husband. I know I haven't been everything I should be to you, but this will change all of that. I'll get better. You and Thomas II, Little Tommy... I have a new reason to live. I'm going to be so good. I'm so glad I made this baby.

(FADE)

Scene 4

(Five years later)

Edgar

Marie, can't you please forgive me?

(Pause - no response)

I never meant for it to happen this way.

(Still no response)

We can fix it up. Can't we?

(No response - Long Pause)

I love you.

Marie

I hate you. But I love you more than I hate you, and I hate you less than I should.

(Edgar starts to touch her.)

Don't touch me.

Edgar

Hate me. I'm so low. I deserve your hate.

Marie

What do we do now? I have no idea.

Edgar

She didn't mean anything.

Marie

Damn liar! You don't fuck somebody over and over and over and over again if they don't mean anything.

Edgar

Damn, Marie, you said "fuck"! This is awful.

Marie

Why are you even telling me this? Why didn't you just keep me in the dark?

Edgar

You're my best friend. I have to tell you the truth.

Marie

Truth! After living a lie for two years. I guess while *she* was your best friend you didn't need to tell me anything.

Edgar

She was never... It was just sex. She was never anything more than...

Marie

Just sex! Was I no longer attractive enough for you?

Edgar

You're too good for me.

Marie

You were so adorable. All of the girls wanted you, but I got you. I just couldn't keep you.

Edgar

You were always too busy for me.

Marie

Bearing your children! Making your home! Do you think that it was all fun and games for me? I could have used... You could have made an effort. I needed you.

Edgar

I never thought you liked sex.

Marie

Only with you. You weren't so particular.

Edgar

I thought you just did it for me.

Marie

Do you think I was faking? It's why I married you. One reason. Passion came easy for you, harder for me. You brought it out of me. You made me feel things I only felt with you. You made me feel desirable. Now that's gone.

Edgar

I still desire you. *(He starts to touch her again.)*

Marie

Don't touch me! This will always be there. Time will be in two parts: before her and after her. You desired her, not me.

Edgar

I'll make it up to you.

Marie

You can't erase it. I will always believe you never desired me, just the act itself. Once you found someone gamier, I was disposable.

Edgar

It ain't so simple.

Marie

Do you deny the simple facts?

Edgar

You were so busy planning our future you didn't have time for the here and now.

Marie

Somebody has to be practical! It sure wasn't going to be you! I was the practical one, always running ahead of myself. You always brought me back to the here and now. Now you've done it again. But I don't like this here or this now.

Edgar

I never meant to hurt you.

Marie

You did what you did. Did you honestly have no idea that it would hurt me?

Edgar

I tried not to think about it. It's the saddest day of my life to think I hurt you. Please forgive me. *(He tries to touch her again.)*

Marie

Don't touch me! Not having had you for so long has hardened my heart. I don't know if I know how to forgive.

I just want to know why.

(Edgar starts to speak, but Marie interrupts him.)

Not the excuses or explanations. Really... why?

Edgar

I'm an animal. I need it like an animal. She gave it to me like an animal.

Marie

Like we used to.

Edgar

You're the mother of my children. You're like a saint to me.

Marie

I'm not a saint. I'm a woman. Your wife. She's like liquor: She'll pull you in, turn you on and then turn on you. I'm like water. Not exciting, maybe, but necessary, and like all necessary things, not appreciated enough. Maybe even resented for being necessary. But you're a farmer. You should know better.

Edgar

Can we ever get back where we used to be?

Marie

That place is gone forever.

Edgar

I can't live without you.

Marie

Nobody in my family has ever divorced before.

Edgar

Don't...

Marie

I could, you know.

Edgar

Please, no.

Marie

I have the law on my side. You wouldn't have any argument against me.

Edgar

No, please. You're all I've got.

Marie

Look what you've done to me. I don't even know what to do, and I've always known what to do.

(Edgar, from behind, puts one arm around Marie's waist; with his other hand he gently pulls her head towards his shoulder. Marie almost gives in with her body, but then stiffens.)

Oh Edgar, please... please don't touch me....

(FADE OUT)

Scene 5

(Twenty years later.)

Marie

I need you to be strong for me, Edgar.

Edgar

I don't think that'd be possible. I'm just a weak thing now.

Marie

Stop being silly! Doc Symms says you have a good chance of full recovery.

Edgar

I don't like my odds. I never had any luck.... except when I drew you. God's punishing me.

Marie

It's not punishment, and lots of men get it.

Edgar

Lots of men deserved to be punished. Damn! Cancer... of my damn prostate.

Marie

It's your damn prostate!

Edgar

You're getting foul mouthed, old woman.

Marie

It's called a prostate. Prostrate is when you lie down on your stomach.

Edgar

I might as well. Damn! I don't even know exactly what it is... except that it's related to my Johnson.

Marie

I still have that *Reader's Digest* article.

Edgar

I'm Joe's Man Gland. Damn glad to meet you! I even think Doc shook hands with it when he crawled up my damn butthole! What a damn break. Marie, I'm sorry I haven't provided for you better.... for when I'm gone.

Marie

You're not going anywhere. I'm not going to let you go. We're going to beat this. You and me and all of our friends and relations are going to pull together...

Edgar

No! We're not telling folks. This is private business. If you want to tell them after I'm dead, well I can't stop you. But I won't like it.

Marie

Oh, please! Don't you think it's time you finally grew up? I need you to behave like a man about this.

Edgar

I am! You're the strong ones. I'm behaving just like a man. Except where I counts. I guess I can't do.... you know... anymore.

Marie

What on earth do you mean?

Edgar

Awwww! Damn! Perform my husbandly duties.

Marie

Oh, Edgar, now...

Edgar

The old mule is too pooped to plow.

Marie

You have a one-track mind.

Edgar

Just don't leave me.

Marie

I'm not the leaving kind.

Edgar

Touché.

Marie

Have I ever forsaken you? Even once?

Edgar

No. You're as reliable as a Farmall tractor - but a lot prettier. I'm the only traitor in this marriage.

Marie

We put that business behind us.

Edgar

Yeah, I wish we had. Well, you surely don't have to worry about that now... not after this... this here...

Marie

Would I have reason to worry otherwise?

Edgar

Naw, I've done some pretty stupid things. But risk losing you? I'll never be that stupid again.

Marie

You won't lose me. This is the only place I want to be. Right here where I'm needed.

Edgar

I need you all right. Just show some need and there's Marie. Kicking into action. More reliable than the mail. Neither rain, snow, darkness of night, betrayal.... Always where she's needed. What about what you need? What about that?

Marie

(After a considerable pause of consideration) I've forgotten what I need.

(FADE)

Scene 6

(Fifteen years later)

(Lights come up on Edgar and Marie, bound and gagged, sitting back to back. We hear the sounds of muffled, unintelligible words behind the gags. Then Marie speaks clearly.)

Marie

Keep chewing. They used the most rotten fabric in the old rag bag. You can chew right through it.

Edgar

(Chews through his gag, then whispers) Not so loud! We don't want them to hear us.

Marie

But if I scream maybe...

Edgar

No. The only person in hearing distance is Jimmy and he's gone to Chicago for the convention.

Marie

What about Steve?

Edgar

He never wears his damn hearing aid except to church.

Marie

He keeps it turned off even then. We can't just sit here. He tied my wrists pretty tight, but if it's the same old ratty cloth... keep wriggling.

Edgar

It doesn't feel promising.

Marie

We've got to do something! They may plan to kill us... or just let us rot to death here.

Edgar

I always thought it would be cancer, and now...

Marie

Think positive! Don't go all wobbly on me now.

Edgar

Yes, ma'am, Pollyanna.

Marie

Buck up, damn it, Edgar! I don't have the patience!

Edgar

If you had remembered to lock the damn door...

Marie

That's your job. You do so little around here, it seems you could remember the few little things...

Edgar

Last night I asked you to do it. I was whittling my calluses.

Marie

Are you blaming me for this?

Edgar

No... no honey. I'm sorry. Maybe I forgot to ask you. You know how lost in thought I get when I'm working on my feet. It's my fault. If I had just...

Marie

Laying blame is not getting us anywhere. We have to do something.

Edgar

Right. Let's calm down. Calm down and think calmly. Save our energy until I figure out what to do. Calm... calm... relax...

Marie

That's right. Relax. Forget about everything except the bindings. Try to sense the path of the fabric, the shape of the knots..

(They are silent for a few moments as they contemplate the bindings. They try to manipulate their hands to get a feel of the fabric. Their hands meet and they hold hands.)

Marie

Oh, Edgar.

Edgar

I've got you Marie.

Marie

Your touch. It always... *(chokes back tears)*

Edgar

Who are these people? What do they want? Why us?

Marie

She looked bored. He looked kind of desperate. Dangerous.

Edgar

I thought he looked more dangerous to himself than to us.

Marie

How could you tell?

Edgar

The way his eyes turned back in on himself. They just need our house for a while.

Marie

It they had meant to kill us they would have done it right off, right?

Edgar

Right off.

Marie

Dear God, thank you for sparing our lives. We ask that you protect us and watch over us, and protect and watch over our captors...

Edgar

Whoa! What in heaven are you praying for them for?

Marie

Seems like the Christian thing to do.

Edgar

One more reason I stopped going to the damn church.

Marie

It's a sign of spiritual strength... forgiving your enemies.

Edgar

If you say so. You were always the strong one, not me. *(Pause)* I'm so sorry...

Marie

For what.

Edgar

For everything.

Marie

Let's just get through this and live the rest of our lives without anything to be sorry for.

Edgar
Deal.

(Pause)
You're the only thing that matters to me.

(Pause)

Marie
Hold my hand again. Together we're stronger. We will get through this.

Edgar
(Looks up)

Marie... we have company.

(Lights FADE as we hear two gunshots.)

Scene 7

(SLOW FADE UP. Back to the present.)

Edgar

I guess we just have to wait here. See what happens.

Marie

What if nothing happens?

Edgar

Something has to happen. It can't be just nothing. How does that work?

Marie

I wouldn't even know who to ask.

Edgar

Dial 1-800-what-the-hell-is-going-on?

Marie

You remember when you were a kid and you realized that one day you were going to die? Remember how you felt?

Edgar

Weird... lonesome...

Marie

But you kept on living, right?

Edgar

Up until a short while ago.

Marie

I had a similar moment early in our marriage, when I realized that I would *never* get what I needed. But I stayed with it.

Edgar

Why did you stay with me?

Marie

Even the selfish need to be loved. Maybe they need it more than the rest of us.

Edgar

I didn't deserve you. You're the most loving, giving person, Marie.

Marie

Or a sucker and a loser.

Edgar

Is that really how you feel?

Marie

Depends on when you asked me.

(FADE TO BLACK)