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Dramatic Publishing

ANY BODY HOME?

a whodunit farce

by

CARL RITCHIE and ELISE DEWSBERRY



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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ANY BODY HOME?

A Play in Two Acts
For 2 Men and 3 Women

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

SUSAN STRATHCONA A struggling real estate agent
who is trying to quit smoking. Tall, attractive, 40.

COURIER (Pradeep Johanson) A turbaned bicycle courier.
Played by actor who plays Danforth.

PRUDENCE WOBURN. The sweet old lady who lives
next door. Has led a rather colorful life.

JANITOR (Elvis Dundas) The Elvis Presley-impersonating
building superintendent.
Played by actor who plays Danforth.

BROCK PALMERSTON A tall, dark and handsome
male model.

COUNTESS VON SPADINA A fabulously wealthy
German matron. Played by actor who plays Danforth.

WARREN DANFORTH A successful and unscrupulous
real estate agent for a rival firm. Short.

AGENT DANA HIGHWAY Interpol Agent.
A “nothing but the facts”-type
who has been in therapy all her life.

NOTE: This production also requires a dead body. This should
be a heavily weighted cloth dummy that can stand up to a great
deal of manipulation.

ACT ONE

SETTING: An elegant condominium on the penthouse floor of an expensive high-rise. UC is a huge picture window overlooking a spectacular city view. To the right of this is the front door of the apartment, and the hall closet. Descending two steps downstage brings us into the tastefully appointed living and dining room. DR is a swinging door to the unseen kitchen. Left of the upper platform, there is a door to the bedroom. Exiting offstage left is a door to the unseen bathroom. In the far DL corner of the room are double French doors leading to a terrace.

There is a body sprawled across the living room sofa, partially wrapped in an afghan.

AT RISE: The French doors open and SUSAN STRATHCONA enters tentatively. She is an attractive, but frazzled woman, conservatively but tastefully dressed in a business suit. She carries a large over-the-shoulder purse.

SUSAN. Hello? Anybody home? Ms. Bloor? Daphne? It's me! Susan Strathcona? The front door buzzer didn't seem to be working so that sweet old lady next door let me go through her apartment onto the adjoining balcony...

(SUSAN has cautiously made her way into the bedroom, looking around.)

I'm sorry to be so pushy, but the Open House is in less than an hour. Ms. Bloor?

(As SUSAN begins to move carefully up the stairs and out of the bedroom onto the front landing, we hear a phone ringing.)

Phone! Daphne! Phone! Oh, wait. It's me...

(SUSAN reaches into her purse and pulls out a cellular phone. During this phone call she wanders around the living/dining room area absent-mindedly straightening chairs and pictures. She does not notice the body.)

Susan Strathcona, Sell-Mor Realty. We list for less. Oh, hello, Mr. Harris, sir. Well—Ms. Bloor doesn't seem to be here at the moment. Yes—I'm sure she knew the Open House was today. You can count on me, Mr. Harris—I am going to sell this apartment, and I'm going to sell it today—and that will be the end of my little slump. Well, no sir—I guess nine months isn't exactly a *little* slump but—all that is going to change with this listing. I plan on winning top sales agent in the city. Warren Danforth is history. He always wins because he is completely ruthless and unethical—even for a real estate agent. Of course I was joking. Ha. Ha. But Warren Danforth is such a snake! And he has no sense of taste or decency at all. I mean, did you see him at the Realtor's Masked Ball last week in that ridiculous Phantom of the

Opera get-up? He wore a full-length black evening cape? It was laughable. I mean, he's too short to wear a cape. Pardon me? No, I wasn't Lady Godiva, I was Marie Antoinette. My wig came undone. Oh, yes, of course, sir—I'm sorry—no, you're right, sir—idle chatter doesn't move property. Absolutely, sir—I will get right on it, sir. I will be ready for the onslaught of potential buyers by ten o'clock sharp, sir—and I am *dead* certain...

(SUSAN fluffs a pillow that is directly covering the corpse's face. She doesn't flinch, and continues to walk around the room. Suddenly, she stops dead, her back to the sofa. She speaks calmly.)

Excuse me, Mr. Harris, I have to hang up now.

(She hangs up the phone and puts it back in her purse. Turning slowly, she retraces her steps to the sofa, picks up the pillow, fluffs it, and screams.)

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

(SUSAN leans close to the body and speaks in a whisper.)

Ms. Bloor? Please tell me that isn't you... Oh, Daphne! Daphne! You look terrible. Are you breathing? Where's my compact?

(She fishes her compact out of the purse and holds it up to Daphne's mouth.)

You're not breathing.

(She checks herself in the compact mirror before putting it away.)

I don't look so hot, either. Maybe she still has a pulse. Oh, please have a pulse, please, please...

(SUSAN reaches down to take a pulse, then recoils from the body.)

Thanks a bunch, Daphne.

(She covers the corpse's face with the pillow and backs away across the room until she falls into a dining room chair.)

Omigod, omigod, omigod! What am I going to do? Must have a cigarette, must have a cigarette, must have a cigarette...

(She searches frantically in her purse and then suddenly stops.)

No. No. Stop. Breathe. They all say the most important thing is to breathe. Are you listening, Daphne?!

(She reaches frantically into her purse again, and stops herself once again and slaps her offending hand.)

No! No, no, no, no, no. I can do this. I am strong. I am in control. I am a worthwhile human being. I...

(She breathes deeply and relaxes. Then she looks over at the corpse.)

...am in deep caca. Omigod, omigod, omigod!

(She stands up and begins pacing around the room.)

What do I do...what do I do...what do I do. Obviously, I call the police.

(She takes her phone out of her purse, begins dialing, and then stops.)

I call the police. What do I tell them? Hello. Hate to bother you, but there's a dead body in the apartment so would you please come over and take it away. Thanks so much. You see, I'm trying to have an Open House. My Open House!

(She greets imaginary purchasers.)

Come on in. Yes, isn't it lovely? The owner took such good care. Why is she selling? Well, she's...she's... she's DEAD, that's why!

(She continues pacing.)

Okay, okay, okay. So maybe I can't have my Open House. I'm okay with that. I'm fine with that. I'll just call Mr. Harris first and explain.

(She takes out her phone and “practices” the conversation while dialing.)

Mr. Harris—I’m terribly sorry I hung up on you. Listen—I just thought you might like to know that my Open House is postponed indefinitely because—because—there’s a CORPSE ON THE SOFA! How could this be happening? I’ve only had it a day and already it’s a dead listing.

(She throws the phone on the sofa and rushes into the bedroom.)

Breathe. Breathe. Breathe. Okay. Face the facts. It’s over. My life is over. Oh, my god, I have such a headache. Oh, my GOD—it’s spreading right down to the nape of my neck. And my eyes—everything is so blurry, OMIGOD!

(She searches frantically in her purse, pulls out a small fat book, and begins leafing through it.)

Where is it, where is it—here it is—pulsating headache, blurry vision, difficulty swallowing—OMIGOD—I knew it. I’ve got a brain aneurysm. It could burst at any moment. Why is this happening to me—I’m so young. At least, I look young. Oh, who am I kidding? I’m not going to die from a brain aneurysm—I wouldn’t be so lucky. I’m going to die from a knife in my back when Warren Danforth finds out that I’ve lost this sale and figures out some way to steal the listing away from me!

(She goes back to the living room and kneels beside the body.)

Oh, Daphne, Daphne, Daphne. How can you just lie there, so cold and unfeeling? Oh, why couldn't you just be out jogging? We could all stand to lose a few pounds.

(She sits on the floor, buries her head in her hands, and begins moaning. Then she suddenly stops and looks up.)

Wait a minute—why couldn't you just be out jogging?

(She jumps up and stands behind the sofa, staring at the corpse.)

Nothing to it. All I have to do is hide the body, sell the apartment—*then* I can call the police. I'll just tell them I didn't notice her until *after* I made the sale... Get out of the way, Warren Danforth—I'm BACK.

(She begins to lift the body and starts to drag it off the sofa.)

Who needs nicotine when there are so many natural highs in life?

(She starts to drag the body toward the front door. Suddenly, there is a very loud and insistent knocking on the front door.)

Omigod! A customer! *(Calling.)* Just a minute. I'll be right with you.

(She looks around frantically, and drags the body to the kitchen door, dumping it into the kitchen. She then runs back to the front door. The knocking continues throughout.)

I'm coming, I'm coming—just wait until you see this fabulous apartment—it's got everything you always wanted...and then some...

(She opens the door with a flourish. Standing in the doorway, in mid-knock, is a short man with turban, black beard and mustache.)

COURIER. I am objecting to the treatment I have been receiving. First, I am ringing the buzzer over and over again and am receiving no answer. Then I am forced to be knocking on this hard wooden door repeatedly until my knuckles are nearly bleeding. Look.

SUSAN. I don't see any blood.

COURIER. I said "nearly"!

SUSAN. I beg your pardon?

COURIER. A little joke...

SUSAN. Oh, I see. A sense of humor is a fine thing. Fine. Well, I'll be honored to show you around this beautiful property—you are here for the Open House aren't you, Mr.—ah...

COURIER. Johanson.

SUSAN. Johanson? Are you Scandinavian?

COURIER. My father was. I am a Sikh.

SUSAN. What are you seeking? A one bedroom, I hope?

COURIER. No, I am a Sikh.

SUSAN. Yes, I got that bit. But what do you seek?

COURIER. It is a religion.

SUSAN. Ah. You'd like to turn the apartment into a temple of some sort? This is a nice big room. And there's tons of closet space.

COURIER. I don't want a temple.

SUSAN. Well, it makes a lovely home. Can't you just picture yourself living here?

COURIER. No, I can't. Not enough room. I have a family, you know.

SUSAN. Oh, of course. Well, if you'll give me your phone number I'd be pleased to find you something else. We have all sorts of listings. How big is your family?

COURIER. What are you implying?

SUSAN. I'm not implying anything.

COURIER. You're all the same. You are all thinking I am living in some basement flat with an extended family of thirty-five. Well, this is not the case. I am living in a pretty split-level in the suburbs with my wife and two kids. Okay? Okay?!

SUSAN. Okay.

COURIER. Now, where is the package?

SUSAN. Package?

COURIER. Yes. I've come for the package.

SUSAN. I'm sorry, I don't understand. What package?

COURIER. I-P-S—International Parcel Service.

SUSAN. You're not here for the Open House?

COURIER. No. I am here for the package. I have been sent by my company to pick up a package. Please to be giving me the package.

SUSAN. I'm sorry, Mr. Johanson—but I don't know anything about a package. I am just trying to have an Open

House. Ms. Bloor, who actually *lives here*—so to speak—is out right now.

COURIER. Out? She asked I.P.S. to send a courier A.S.A.P., and she is A.W.O.L? That is D.T.L.

SUSAN. D.T.L.?

COURIER. Darn the luck. Another little joke. All right. Now, where is she?

SUSAN. Ah, jogging.

COURIER. Jogging? That is very odd. Why would someone send for a courier and then go jogging? She must have left the package somewhere.

(He walks into the room and heads directly for the desk. SUSAN follows him.)

SUSAN. Wait a minute—wait a minute, Mr. Johanson! I'd really rather that you didn't come into the apartment—you see, I'm trying to keep everything just so for my Open House...

COURIER. But this is not a house. It is a condo. Now, don't worry. I only want to find my package and go on my way. *(He begins to search the desk.)*

SUSAN. Please, Mr. Johanson—I'm sure that if Ms. Bloor had intended for you to pick up a package, she would have left it in plain sight. I really must ask that you...

COURIER. Please, madam, do not be telling me how to do my job. If anyone can find a package—it is Pradeep Johanson. *(He turns the wastebasket upside down and begins searching the contents.)*

SUSAN. Mr. Johanson! Oh, look what you've done! What a mess! Can't you just come back later? I'm sure Ms. Bloor will be back this evening.