

DADDY'S LITTLE GIRL

BY JO MORELLO

(rewritten version of THE MARKHAM MYSTERY)

**A Full-Length Play in Two Acts
inspired by a recent crime in Southwest Florida**

AWARDS & DEVELOPMENT

AWARDS (as THE MARKHAM MYSTERY)

Finalist, 28th Annual ScriptFEST, Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre (SART)
Mars Hill, NC, January 2010

Finalist, 2009 "The Play's the Thing" New Play Contest,
The Players, Sarasota, FL

DEVELOPMENT (as THE MARKHAM MYSTERY)

Reading, 28th Annual ScriptFEST, Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre (SART)
Mars Hill, NC, January 24, 2010

This story was inspired by true events but has been fictionalized. Names, places, and dates have been changed and characters have been invented. The characters portrayed herein bear no resemblance whatever to the persons involved in the original crime.

Registered WGAW
(as VOICES OF REASON:
THE MARKHAM MYSTERY)
(c) by Jo Morello, 2010.
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CAST OF CHARACTERS
in order of appearance; 3M, 4F, some doubling

DEP. SHERIFF JOE ROMA.....Late 20s. A brash New Yorker; hard-working, dedicated.

SHERIFF REBA ANDREWS.....In her 30s or 40s. Efficient, caring; the county's top law enforcement officer. A native Floridian--one of the few.

PHIL MARKHAM..... 70. Doting husband of his second wife, Diane. A county commissioner and entrepreneur who parlayed his skill as an electrician into Markham Electrical Services, a business providing skilled workers during the now-past building boom on Florida's Gulf Coast. Hard-driving, impatient.

DIANE MARKHAM..... 50. Beautiful, petite, vivacious, dark-haired. Married for 25 years to Phil Markham.

CARLA MARKHAM.....52. Daughter of Phil Markham and his first wife, Madeline. A large woman who suffers from paranoid schizophrenia. Delusional and violent when off her medications.

MADELINE.....72 and may look even older. Like her daughter Carla, a large woman. Aging has removed any trace of femininity. Wild gray hair, glasses, a persistent cough and gravelly voice from years of heavy smoking and hard drinking. Likes shapeless cardigans over dark pants and tee shirt; sneakers;

SETH MARKHAM.....mid-20s. Son of Phil Markham and his second wife, Diane. Recent college graduate, working as treasurer in his father's company.

TINA MARKHAM.....Late 40s. Second daughter of Phil and first wife Madeline. Small, blonde, hard-edged, gutsy, realistic. President of Markham Electrical Services; doubled with Diane.

ROBIN ARTHUR.....Aggressive TV reporter; doubled with Madeline.

VOICES ONLY: (All Off; doubled by various actors)

TV ANNOUNCER

AIRLINE ANNOUNCERS

OFFICER ON POLICE RADIO

OPERATOR, OTHERS

MARTHA LANGSTROM, pre-recorded or doubled with Tina

HAL ANDREWS, doubled with Phil

Carla's voices (on headset):

MILEVA EINSTEIN (Austro-Hungarian accent), doubled with Madeline.

ZELDA FITZGERALD (Southern U.S. accent), doubled with Diane.

CIA AGENT DAVID BARLOW (brisk, business-like), doubled with Seth.

LIST OF SCENES

PLACE: The Sheriff's office and other suggested locations in southwest Florida

TIME: Two weeks in July. The present.

ACT I

- Scene 1 Lee County Sheriff's office. A Sunday evening in mid-July.
Boarding area, Cancun airport. Earlier that morning.
The Markham kitchen. Sunday evening.
- Scene 2 A dark doorway in a rundown section of Southwest Florida; Madeline's office/home. Sunday afternoon.
- Scene 3 Inside Sheriff's car; Markham's kitchen; Cancun airport. Sunday evening.
- Scene 4 Carla's dark doorway. Sunday afternoon.
- Scene 5 The Markham kitchen. Later Sunday afternoon
- Scene 6 The Markham kitchen. Sunday evening.
- Scene 7 Boarding area, Fort Myers International airport. Later Sunday night.
- Scene 8 Sheriff's office. Early Monday morning.

ACT II

- Scene 1 The Sheriff's office; hotel lobby; inside Tina's car. Monday afternoon.
- Scene 2 The bank of a retention pond after a rain; Carla's doorway; inside Tina's car. Tuesday morning.
- Scene 3 Sheriff's office. Tuesday, early afternoon.
- Scene 4 Inside Carla's car; Madeline's office. Tuesday afternoon.
- Scene 5 Inside the Sheriff's car; Tina and Seth's motel room. Tuesday afternoon.
- Scene 6 Madeline's office. A little later.
- Scene 7 Sheriff's office. A week later, late morning.

NOTES

The playwright recommends a suggested set with pools of light and a few props rather than furniture and flats to indicate the various scenes and keep the play moving.

Carla smokes cigarettes throughout, an important part of the play. The actor can fake smoking so long as the audience recognizes that Carla is a heavy smoker.

ACT I
Scene 1

A Sunday evening in mid-July. The Lee County Sheriff's office: two desks, each with a computer and phone. A picture on JOE's desk shows him in a Tampa Yankees baseball uniform. Two pictures are on Reba's desk: one of her as a younger woman with her parents; another of an older man in a police uniform. A TV is turned on LOUDLY to a baseball game.

DEPUTY SHERIFF JOE ROMA, in his uniform (with holstered gun), types idly at his keyboard, happily focused on the game.

TV ANNOUNCER (Off)

. . . and it's outta here! A grand slam homer puts the Yankees back on top. And the coach is heading for the mound. No surprise there. Looks like a pitching change for the Sox.

SHERIFF REBA ANDREWS, in casual clothes, enters with two sodas. JOE guiltily turns off the TV.

JOE

Evening, Sheriff. I wasn't expecting you.

REBA

So I see. Who's winning?

JOE

Yankees. Six to five, top of the ninth. First time I've seen you out of uniform, Sheriff—

REBA

Reba.

JOE

Reba. Sheriff Reba.... You look different in clothes.

REBA

Wishful thinking. On my part as well.

JOE

I meant street clothes.... I'm sorry about the TV--

REBA

(placing a soda on Joe's desk)

I don't sweat the small stuff. You'll catch on. Just get the job done. And by the book.

JOE nods appreciatively.

REBA

(picking up the picture from HIS desk)

Tampa Yankees?

(turning the TV on as she goes to HER desk)

Just keep it low.

JOE

Thanks.... Yeah, my days of glory. I moved down from New York to pitch in the minors. Lasted two seasons before they cut me loose. Now police work is my day job. I play with the Fort Myers Baseball League for fun.

(focused on the TV)

Yes!!!

(turning off the TV)

Yankees win again! Great team!

REBA

Forget them. We root for the Ray and the Marlins. Both of them can beat the Yankees.

JOE

(walking to HER desk and opening his wallet)

Not even combined. Care to put your money where your mouth is?

REBA

I'm not a betting woman but if I were—

JOE picks up the picture of the cop.

JOE

This looks like one tough cop. I'd put my life in his hands any day.

REBA

(putting the picture in her drawer and closing it firmly)

My father.

JOE

I say something wrong?

REBA

.... Seems pretty quiet tonight.

JOE

So far. How come you're here? Expecting trouble?

REBA

Always. But tonight I'm doing paperwork....You had dinner?

JOE

Not yet. Wanna split a pizza?

REBA

I've already eaten.... Go get a decent dinner, Joe. I'll cover.

JOE

You're not in uniform. If you get a call—

REBA

Spare uniform in the closet.

JOE

(exiting)

Thanks, Boss Lady. See you tomorrow.

SHE works until the PHONE RINGS.

REBA

Lee County Sheriff's office. Sheriff Reba Andrews speaking. How may I help you?

PHIL MARKHAM, in tropical vacation clothes, is in HIS kitchen.

MARKHAM

It's Sunday night. Is this a real person or a recording?

REBA

I'm real. Just like you.

MARKHAM

This is County Commissioner Phillip Markham, Sheriff Andrews. My wife Diane is missing. I believe my daughter Carla killed her. And maybe killed our son Seth too.

REBA

Your think your daughter killed her mother? And brother?

MARKHAM

Stepmother. Diane is my second wife, Seth's mother. Carla is their killer. Or will be.

REBA

Normally I'd say "keep calm," Commissioner, but that would be redundant,.

MARKHAM

I am a disciplined man, Sheriff. So far I just have suspicions.

REBA

Serious accusations.

MARKHAM

And I expect a serious response. I called 9-1-1 but they're only sending a patrol car.

REBA

A good start, wouldn't you say?

MARKHAM

Murder warrants more than a patrol car.

REBA

If a murder has been committed.

MARKHAM

IF??? Your landslide election will not save your job if you don't take me seriously.

REBA

Are you threatening me, Commissioner?

MARKHAM

Reminding you.

REBA

Commissioner, you will receive the same high level of service we give every citizen.

MARKHAM

Fine. Now, I want you to arrest Carla for my wife's murder. Fast. Before she gets to Seth—if she hasn't already.

REBA

How do you know Mrs. Markham is dead? Or your son?

MARKHAM

Carla phoned me this morning and threatened their lives. I was boarding a plane in Mexico. She said Diane was first. I just got home from the airport and they're both missing.

REBA

When did you see them last?

MARKHAM

I spoke with Seth by phone yesterday but got voicemail today. Diane was with me this morning at the Cancun airport.

LIGHTS DOWN on REBA's office and MARKHAM, up on FLASHBACK to the boarding area of the Cancun airport. ISLAND MUSIC plays, then FADES under dialogue. (During the following, REBA changes into HER uniform, either in dark or limbo lighting.)

DIANE is on her cell phone. A laptop bag and two identical carry-ons are at her feet.

DIANE

Tina, Honey, don't even worry about it. Seth can pick us up. We'll see you at the office tomorrow morning.... We love you too. Bye.

DIANE puts the phone into her purse and returns them to a flight bag as MARKHAM enters with their boarding passes.

DIANE

Tina sends her love. She can't meet us at the airport though.

MARKHAM

Problem at the office?

DIANE

No. Everything's fine at Markham Electrical.

MARKHAM

Not so good here. We can't fly home together. They're overbooked like every Sunday. We checked in too late.

DIANE

We're bumped?

MARKHAM

Just me. And our bags. Banished to Continental's next flight to Fort Myers.

(handing Diane her boarding pass)

You're going first, on Delta.... I don't want to leave you alone in a foreign country.

DIANE

I don't want to go home without you, Phil.... I'm afraid of Carla.

MARKHAM

I doubt she's even in Florida. Her calls come from Cleveland.

DIANE

Her cell phone. She could be anywhere. What if she's waiting at home to kill me?

MARKHAM

Diane, if you're that worried—

DIANE

You're not? . . . I know you love her, but she terrifies me.

MARKHAM

She's all talk. She wouldn't hurt a fly. She's changed since her therapy and meds.

DIANE

Not that I can see. After 25 years, she still calls me the evil stepmother.

MARKHAM

It's natural for a child of divorce to resent her stepmother.

DIANE

The “child” was 27! When I was 25.

MARKHAM

So I robbed the cradle. Sue me.

DIANE

It's not funny! I never did anything to hurt her. What is her problem?

MARKHAM

(holding her close)

Well, for one thing, you're beautiful. She never will be.

DIANE pulls away.

MARKHAM

If you're that worried, we'll stay over.

DIANE

But Tina's expecting us tomorrow. And my birthday party on Tuesday--

MARKHAM

You weren't supposed to know!

DIANE

Our friends can't keep secrets. But you sure surprised me with this trip...
(holding out her left hand, with a very large diamond surrounded by rubies)
...and this.

MARKHAM

Great idea, getting married on your birthday. At least for me. I only have to buy one gift.

DIANE

But the twenty-fifth anniversary is silver. Diamonds aren't until the fiftieth.

MARKHAM

Your fiftieth birthday.

DIANE

. . . and the rubies?

MARKHAM

Your birthstone.

(kissing her)

Happy birthday, Darling.

DIANE

(pulling back, embarrassed, as the kiss becomes passionate)

Hold that thought!

MARKHAM

To be continued. . . the minute I get home.

DIANE

This ring must have cost a fortune.

MARKHAM

Hey, we don't worry about money anymore.

DIANE

All those years of mac and cheese, hot dogs and beans--

AIRLINE ANNOUNCER (Off)

Todas las hileras de asiento del vuelo 530 de Delta con destino de Atlanta. Now boarding all rows for Delta Flight 530 to Atlanta, Georgia.

HE hands her the laptop bag and a carry-on,
NOT the one with HER purse and phone.

MARKHAM

See you soon.

SHE hesitates.

MARKHAM

All right. Maybe they'll swap our tickets, let me go first. . . Look, you land in Fort Myers at 3:27 and I get in around six. What could happen in two-and-a-half hours?

DIANE
(still hanging back)

With Carla???

MARKHAM
Go home, Sweetie. I'll be right behind you.

DIANE
If I must...I'll use the time to get gorgeous for my party. Do my nails--

MARKHAM
Your nails are perfect. You're perfect. Now get going.

AIRLINE ANNOUNCER (Off)
Final de la salida del vuelo 530 de Delta con destino de Atlanta. . . . Final boarding call for Delta flight 530 to Atlanta, Georgia

MARKHAM
I'll call Seth. If he's not there, take a cab.

MARKHAM picks up the other carry-on.
HE takes his phone from his pocket and makes a call. It RINGS several times.

SETH (recorded voice)
This is Seth. You know what to do, Man. Wait for the beep.

SOUND of a BEEP.

MARKHAM
Seth, it's Dad. Mom and I are on separate flights. She gets in first, at 3:27. I don't land 'til six. Will you pick her up? Delta 1075 from Atlanta to Fort Myers.

LIGHT OUT on MARKHAM. SOUND of REBA'S two-way radio. LIGHT UP on REBA in the office. SHE is now in uniform and putting on HER gun and holster.

REBA
(on the phone, to Phil)
Hold a minute, Commissioner.
(into a two-way radio)
Sheriff Andrews here.

OFFICER ON POLICE RADIO (Off)
We're at the Markham's, Sheriff. Nobody in sight anywhere. Want us to go inside?

REBA

(into radio)

No. I'm heading over. Wait outside until I get there.

(into phone)

Commissioner? The patrol car is outside. They don't see anybody but they'll stay until I arrive. I'll be there as soon as I pick up my partner. Meantime, lock your doors and windows. Close your blinds. Don't go outside. Don't stand in the light. Don't touch anything. Don't open the door for anyone else.

MARKHAM is in HIS kitchen, preparing a frozen dinner.

MARKHAM

How will I know it's you?

REBA

You want a password???. . . Geronimo!... It will take about twenty minutes. Stay near your phone. We'll call from the squad car.

MARKHAM

Use this same number. I'm keeping my cell free in case my wife or son calls

REBA

Can you tell us anything that can help us find your daughter?

MARKHAM

If I knew where she was, I'd go get her myself!

BLACKOUT

SCENE 2

A popular, plaintive SONG from the mid-'80s is heard (e.g., "I Want to Know What Love Is" by Mick Jones).

Homeless, mentally ill CARLA sits in a dark doorway in a rundown section of southwest Florida. She smokes a cigarette, holds HER smart phone and moves to MUSIC from her headset. HER dirty, androgynous attire is accented with a tattered scarf, earrings and large sunglasses from the mid-'80s. A worn duffel bag holds all HER possessions. Like many schizophrenics, she uses a headset to block auditory hallucinations—but the voices still come. SHE shows no surprise

and usually converses with them. MUSIC
fades as the VOICES begin.

MILEVA (Off)

Carla is not happy.

ZELDA (Off)

She's lonely. Florida is no better than Ohio.

CARLA

Who's there? Come out where I can see you.

MILEVA (Off)

Not today, Carla.... It's Mileva. Remember? Albert Einstein's first wife. That he left.

ZELDA (Off)

And Zelda Fitzgerald. Scott's wife. Who he locked up.

CARLA

You both know what it's like to be rejected.

ZELDA (Off)

Scott keeps me in clinics, asylums, hospitals. Never lets me go home.

CARLA

You're homeless. Like me.

ZELDA (Off)

No. I had no choice. You left a good job and nice home in Ohio.

CARLA

On orders from the CIA.

BARLOW (Off)

We never gave her that order.

CARLA

Yes you did! No wonder you won't show your face, Barlow.

BARLOW (Off)

I told Carla never to use my name. She's supposed to call me Agent Z-One.

CARLA

You said to claim my rightful place in my family. I couldn't do that from Ohio.

ZELDA (Off)

At least she has a family.

Her family doesn't want her. MILEVA (Off)

They want Diane. ZELDA (Off)

Everybody wants Diane. BARLOW (Off)

Nobody wants Carla. CARLA

Phil loves Diane. BARLOW (Off)

He's just like Albert. Another womanizer. MILEVA (Off)

He is not! He's under her spell, enchanted. Because she's beautiful. And I'm ugly. CARLA

Everybody loves Diane. MILEVA (Off)

Nobody loves Carla. ZELDA (Off)

It's not fair. I was here first. I was Daddy's little girl. CARLA

Carla can be first again. MILEVA (Off)

She can make Diane go away. ZELDA (Off)

Then Daddy will love me again! But Diane won't go away. CARLA

Eliminate her. BARLOW (Off)

That would be murder! CARLA

Not if she's a foreign agent. BARLOW (Off)

Is she?
CARLA

That's for me to know and you to find out.
BARLOW (Off)

CARLA
(pulling off the headset)
I can't find out. . . . And she won't go away.

MUSIC ends abruptly but VOICES
continue, overlapping, echoing.

MILEVA (Off) BARLOW (Off) ZELDA (Off)
Carla can make her go away. Carla can make her go away. Carla can make her go away.

STOP!!!
CARLA

SILENCE. After a moment. . .

CARLA
(selecting a song, putting on the headset)
It's too quiet.

MUSIC comes up softly: "Daddy's Little
Girl." SHE sits quietly, sadly. Then...

MILEVA (Off)
Carpe diem, Carla. [pron. CAR-pay DEE-em]

Seize the day.
ZELDA (Off)

Carla knows what she has to do.
BARLOW (Off)

Carla knows what she has to do.
CARLA

As MUSIC continues, HER RINGTONE
sounds. (e.g., "Are You Lonesome
Tonight?" by Elvis Presley). SHE answers.

LIGHT UP on disheveled MADELINE in
HER office/home, which is seen in cutaway:
a suggested exterior wall, door and window
allow the audience to see activity outside.

HER messy desk holds papers, atomizers, pill bottles, a phone, tape player and cassette tapes. Paint supplies litter the floor.

MADELINE

Carla?... Hello?... Carla?

CARLA

Mommy! Is it just your voice? Or is it you?

MADELINE

Don't be stupid! Of course it's me!

CARLA

Don't call me stupid!... Help me, Mommy. Please.

MADELINE

I can't. I closed my clinic. You have to save us both.

CARLA

But you have a home. I don't. I want to live with you.

MADELINE

I'm broke.

CARLA

So am I. Broke, broken-down, upside down, face like a clown, no home in town, you don't want me around.

MADELINE

Your father is happy in his mansion. Ask him for money.

CARLA

I did.

MADELINE

You have to say, "Daddy, Carla needs money now" . . . Wait. I'll get him on the line.

A CLICK. LIGHT OUT on Madeline.

CARLA

Daddy, are you there? Daddy? It's Carla. Daddy, I need money now.

MARKHAM (recorded voice)

You've got all you're getting from me. Not one cent more. And you know why!

CARLA

No I don't. I try to be good. Why don't you love Carla anymore, Daddy?

A CLICK.

Daddy? CARLA

Daddy loves Diane. MILEVA (Off)

Daddy loves Tina. BARLOW (Off)

Daddy loves Sethie. ZELDA (Off)

LIGHT UP on MADELINE.

Carla, are you there? MADELINE

He hung up on me! Cut me off! CARLA

Cut you off the phone. Cut you out of his will. MADELINE

He did not! The CIA would have told me. CARLA

We never told Carla that. BARLOW (Off)

They told me. MADELINE

They don't have your number! CARLA

They have everybody's number. MADELINE

Why can't I have your number? CARLA

The CIA said to tell you you're out of Daddy's will. MADELINE

You lie! Why would Daddy do that? CARLA

Why do you think?

MADELINE

Daddy loves Diane.

ZELDA (Off)

That bitch! Diane! She turned him against me! I knew from the day I met her!

CARLA

LIGHTS DOWN on CARLA and MADELINE, UP on FLASHBACK to 25-year-old DIANE, stylishly dressed for the mid-1980s with a designer scarf, big brightly colored earrings and large sunglasses. She carries a gift-wrapped box and expensive-looking perfume atomizer.

CARLA removes the headset and vintage accessories. SHE approaches DIANE as an awkward, sullen, plain CARLA at 27.

Carla, I'm so happy to meet you. Your father's told me so much about you.

DIANE

DIANE extends her hand. CARLA spurns it.

Any of it good?

CARLA

All of it.

DIANE

Yeah, I can imagine.... Don't expect me to call you Mom.

CARLA

Of course not. "Diane" is fine. I can't be your mother.

DIANE

You got that right, Lady.

CARLA

I mean. . . I don't want to force myself on you . . . or change your life--

DIANE

You already have. If you marry my father—

CARLA

DIANE

When I marry your father, I'd like you and Tina to be my bridesmaids.

CARLA

You only want big, ugly Carla beside you so sweet little Diane looks more beautiful.

DIANE

That never entered my mind!. . . And you're not ugly. You could be very attractive. Let's go shopping tomorrow. New clothes and a makeover. My treat. . . It'll be fun!

CARLA

I'm not good enough as I am?

DIANE

Please, Carla. I want us to get along.

CARLA

(singing, from the Rolling Stones)

YOU CAN'T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT.

Rolling Stones. Ever hear of them? Probably before your time, Kid.

DIANE

Don't be so smug!

CARLA

Ha! She fights back! I like that in an enemy!

DIANE

Carla, can't we be friends?

CARLA

Want me to sing that too?

DIANE

(shoving HER gifts into CARLA's hands and exiting)

I brought you some gifts. And Asiana, my favorite perfume. Take them or leave them.

CARLA, dumbstruck, opens the box to find a designer scarf and earrings. SHE puts on the earrings and wraps the scarf exactly as DIANE wore HERS. SHE sprays herself with the atomizer and puts on HER headset as SHE walks back into the present. LIGHT UP on MADELINE.

CARLA

She gave me gifts and took my father.

MADELINE
What are you going to do about it?

ZELDA (Off)
Carla knows what she has to do.

BARLOW (Off)
Make Diane go away.

CARLA
Cut her off!... Kill them all!... Carla knows what she has to do!

CARLA hangs up.

MADELINE
No, Carla! Wait! . . . Carla?

BLACKOUT

SCENE 3

LIGHT UP on REBA and JOE in the Sheriff's car. Their phone is on SPEAKER. REBA drives while JOE takes notes.

REBA
We're on our way over, Commissioner. Deputy Sheriff Joe Roma is with me. Will you describe your family for an All-Points-Bulletin? Start with your daughter.

LIGHT UP on MARKHAM in HIS kitchen.

MARKHAM
Carla Markham. C-A-R-L-A M-A-R-K-H-A-M. Age 52. Height five feet eight. Weight around one sixty-five. Brown eyes, dark brown hair. Maybe gray by now.

JOE
Commissioner, this is Deputy Roma. Does your daughter wear glasses? Have any moles, scars or other distinguishing characteristics?

MARKHAM
Not that I know of. But she's a paranoid schizophrenic. Off her meds and dangerous.

JOE
Noted. Do you know what she's driving?

MARKHAM
She could be walking for all I know.

REBA

By the time we get to your home, three patrol cars will be out looking for your family.

MARKHAM

Find Carla first. She's going to kill Diane and Seth. She told me this morning.

LIGHT OUT on the car. SOUND of MARKHAM's pompous RINGTONE (Beethoven's Fifth?) as HE walks into FLASHBACK.

LIGHT UP on the Cancun airport. MARKHAM looks at the caller ID.

MARKHAM

Hello, Carla. Is something wrong?

LIGHT UP on CARLA.

CARLA

How can you even ask, Daddio?

MARKHAM

Because you keep calling. But when I answer, you hang up. Why do you cut me off?

CARLA

You cut me off.

MARKHAM

No, I'm talking to you.

CARLA

Earlier.

MARKHAM

I didn't—

MILEVA (Off)

Her family doesn't talk to her.

BARLOW (Off)

Doesn't love her.

ZELDA (Off)

Doesn't want her.

MARKHAM

Carla? Are you still there?... Are you all right???

CARLA

All except my heart.

MARKHAM

Have you seen a doctor?

CARLA

Different part of my heart. Your part.

(singing, from Cole Porter)

YES, MY HEART BELONGS TO DADDY.

DA, DA, DA, DA, DA, DA, DA, DA, DAAAAD.

Am I in your will, Daddy?

MARKHAM

Tell me where you are.

CARLA

Nowhere. No home. No job. No family. Free as a bird. Big bird, ugly bird, flerd, word, nerd bird. Flying in to visit. Fly away, break of day, there to stay, you'd better pray when I take away... Diane and Seth!

MARKHAM

Leave them alone! I'll give you whatever you need.

CARLA

I only want what I'm entitled to as your heir. Like before. After Mom, before Diane. Remember how happy we were? You, Carla, Tina, Grandma.... Why'd you dump Mom?

MARKHAM

She knows why. I'm not surprised she won't tell you.

CARLA

Oooh, a family secret? That little ole Carla can't know? We'll see about that!

MARKHAM

What do you want, Carla? I've provided for you.

MILEVA (Off)

Daddy loves Diane.

BARLOW (Off)

Daddy loves Tina.

ZELDA (Off)

Daddy loves Sethie.

CARLA

Not like you should. You gave your company to Tina and Diane's wimpy son Seth.

MARKHAM

Diane's and my son. Your half-brother.

CARLA

Whatever. . . . But you forgot about me. Forgot to love me. Cut me out of your will. Don't deny it. I have my sources. My friends. The CIA. The FBI.

MARKHAM

Not that again. You're off your meds. You never worked for the CIA or FBI.

CARLA

Shows what you know.

MARKHAM

Carla, I'm at an airport. I'll come for you. Tell me where you are.

CARLA

You're away! That's why your house is dark!... How come you changed your locks?

MARKHAM

You're at the house???? I'll send Tina right over--

CARLA

Baby sis wants nothing to do with Carla. Too bad Diane's with you.... Hey, Diane IS with you, isn't she?

BARLOW (Off)

Diane has gone away.

MARKHAM

Let's stay focused on what you need.

CARLA

I need my inheritance. Now.

MARKHAM

I'll pay for your care but I won't give you cash. Not as things are.

CARLA

Then I'll change things.

BARLOW (Off)

Diane must go away.

MILEVA (Off)

Don't wait. *Carpe diem!*

Seize the day!

ZELDA (Off)

STOP!

CARLA

Stop what?

MARKHAM

I wasn't talking to you.

CARLA

You need to get back on your meds.

MARKHAM

Diane has gone away

ZELDA (Off)

CARLA

So Diane finally left you. It was just a matter of time. Should have picked on somebody your own age instead of your daughter's. . . . Hey, Philsie, did she take your money?

MARKHAM

Diane and I are still together.

CARLA

But Zelda said...? Well, I can fix that. I know what you want.
(imitating Markham)

"I want Diane to get off my back."

MARKHAM

Every husband says that at times. But I love her. And Diane will never leave me.

CARLA

You said that too.
(imitating Markham)

"Diane will never leave me. I'll see to that."

MARKHAM

Carla, you're in trouble. I hear it in your voice.

CARLA

Too bad you can't hear my other voices. I hear yours....And your words hurt! ... And I hear my mother... my real mother. Not your trophy wife. You remember Madeline? Mother of your two lovely daughters?

MARKHAM

Will you please stop changing the subject?

CARLA

Will you? Don't ignore me! Why are the women always ignored? Mileva. . .Zelda—

MARKHAM

Who?

CARLA

Geniuses. Like me. Hidden in the shadows of history. They did the work; their men got the glory. Mileva Einstein should have won the Nobel, not that scumbag Albert. She says there's nothing wrong with me. Albert used to say, "The question that sometimes drives makes me hazy: Am I or are the others crazy?" But he was sane. And I am too.

MARKHAM

Carla, please--

CARLA

Do you know who wrote Scott Fitzgerald's stories when he was drunk? He stashed Zelda in a nuthouse, where she wrote lonely, lovely letters. They're in his novels, under his name. Zelda is very upset. She told me, "Plagiarism begins at home."

MARKHAM

Have you stopped your therapy too?

CARLA

You bet. Life is too lonely when my friends are gone. But now they're back and they all say the same thing. "*Carpe Diem*." Know what that means?

MARKHAM

Seize the day. In Latin. *Carpe diem*.

CARLA

Say it the way you spell it! "Car-pay DIE-em." All of 'em die. Your whole family. Seize the day, for tomorrow they die.

MARKHAM

Stop it!

CARLA

How ironic if your young wife should die before you. And silly Sethie, your son and heir.

MARKHAM

He's barely out of his teens! Leave him alone! What did he ever do to you?

CARLA

He was born!

MARKHAM

Tell me where you are!

CARLA

That's for Carla to know and Philsie to find out. . . . You sound really worried, Daddio! . . . All right. Just Diane. To start. You're safe, Philsie. At least until you change your will.

MARKHAM

Then why would I change it?

CARLA

If you don't, your family will be *carpe* DIE-ing all over the place.

MARKHAM

That's enough! I can't deal with your madness if you won't help yourself. . . . Call me when you've handled your responsibilities. You know what you have to do.

HE hangs up.

BARLOW (Off)

Carla knows what she has to do.

ZELDA (Off)

Carla knows what she has to do.

MILEVA (Off)

Carla knows what she has to do.

CARLA

Carla knows what she has to do. . . . But I'm afraid.

LIGHT OUT on CARLA.

MARKHAM

(making a phone call)

Come on, Seth. Answer.

SETH (recorded voice)

This is Seth. You know what to do, Man. Wait for the beep.

MARKHAM

(after the BEEP)

Seth, it's Dad. This is urgent. Make sure you're at the airport when Mom lands. Three twenty-seven. Both of you check into a hotel. Don't go near the house. Carla's stalking it. She's off her meds and dangerous. She wants to kill Mom and you too! Call the Sheriff right away. I'll call Mom. Please! Let me know you got this.

HE hangs up and punches another number. A nearby cell phone RINGS a distinctive TONE. HE realizes DIANE'S phone is in

the carry-on at his feet. HE opens it and the RINGING stops.

MARKHAM

Diane's bag. Her purse. Her phone. . . .

(looking at Diane's phone)

"You missed a call." . . . Mine. . . .and voicemail.

HE punches in numbers.

OPERATOR (recorded voice)

You have one new message, received at 8:15 a.m. today, from 216-555-5555. To hear this message, press 1.

HE presses and listens.

CARLA (recorded voice)

(sarcastically)

Hello, Mom. Happy birthday. You're almost as old as Carla. Again. Too bad you'll never catch up. Truth is, Diane, you've lived too long already. I'll fix that. I'm bringing the ultimate birthday gift for Mommy-Dearest and baby brother.

Frightened, MARKHAM replaces DIANE's cell and dials HIS again. After two RINGS--

DIANE (recorded voice)

Hi! You've reached the happy home of Diane and Phil Markham. We can't chat right now. Leave your number and we'll call you back.

SOUND of a BEEP.

MARKHAM

Diane, get out RIGHT AWAY! Carla's after you and Seth. She's watching the house. Drive to the sheriff's station. And make them find Seth. I'll be home soon. Hang on. I love you both.

AIRLINE ANNOUNCER (Off)

Final boarding call....

LIGHT OUT on airport. MARKHAM walks back to present, to HIS kitchen.

MARKHAM

That was over eight hours ago, Sheriff. God know where Carla is or what she's done.

BLACKOUT