

“Servants”

A Play in One Act

Written by

Kevin T. Baldwin

Casting 3 men, 3 women

Cast of Characters

MAN OF THE HOUSE – Handsome gentleman. Manic, seemingly debonair one moment, but then quite cruel the next. Flexible casting over the age of 20.

BUTLER – Looks, dresses and acts like a stereotypical household servant. All movements and speech are being controlled by some unknown force which never gets revealed. Flexible casting over the age of 20.

MAID - Looks, dresses and acts like a stereotypical household servant. All movements and speech are being controlled by some unknown force which never gets revealed. Flexible casting over the age of 20

LADY OF THE HOUSE – Elegantly dressed, almost as if going to an old style ball. Also quite manic in behavior. Seemingly refined one moment, but then can be quite cruel the next. Flexible casting over the age of 20.

GENEVIEVE – A young girl, age range 8 through 14. Wide range of emotions. Must be able to play expressionless, brooding and introverted up until the climax of the play when she then becomes extremely violent.

ELDERLY MAN – Older English man. Working class. Flexible casting over the age of 20.

ELDERLY WOMAN – Older English woman. Working class. Flexible casting over the age of 20.

(All speak with British accents)

A prayer to goddess Isis: "Oh Isis, protect me from all things evil and red"

Synopsis – A couple find themselves prisoners, trapped serving as butler and maid to a hedonistic wealthy couple who treat them with extreme manic and sadistic cruelty. What could they have done to earned such a fate?

(LIGHTS UP on a European-style mansion. There are no stage walls or flats, only furnishings to represent the surroundings. There is an elegant staircase stage left which leads up to far offstage left. Downstage right there is a dining room table with a fancy table cloth draped over it and five chairs around it. Center stage sits the MAN OF THE HOUSE, reclining in a chair at a nice looking desk. He is dressed in a tuxedo with a dark red tie. He is reading over what appears to be the résumés and references for the new BUTLER and MAID who enter from opposing sides to come stand before him. BOTH are already dressed in proper servant attire, he in a tuxedo and she in a French Maid uniform with black nylons. ALL speak in British accents)

MAN OF THE HOUSE – Right. Everything checks out. Paperwork has been squared away. I believe we have everything in order and now we can begin. Are you ready to proceed?

BUTLER and MAID – (Simultaneous, but staggered, uneasy) Yes, your Lordship.

MAN – Very good, very good. You'll begin immediately. Of course, proper attire must be worn at all times. The color of the house is red. Blood red. (Looks at their hands) Well? Do you do have them?

BUTLER and MAID – (Simultaneous, but staggered) Yes, your Lordship.

MAN – Excellent. (After a beat) Well, put them on, then.

BUTLER and MAID – (Simultaneous, but staggered) Yes, your Lordship.

(BUTLER and MAID look at each other nervously then each puts on a pair of thin dark red gloves. They each hold up their hands to show the MAN)

MAN – Good. Now, your duties will commence without delay. You understand your responsibilities as they have been explained to you? (BUTLER and MAID nod) Fine. (Rises, comes around to one side of the MAID and slaps her hard across the face. She feels the pain but does not react or retaliate. He then approaches the BUTLER and punches him squarely in the stomach. The BUTLER drops to his knees in pain but then immediately stands back up at attention and also does not react or retaliate. The MAN puts his arm on the shoulder, steadying the BUTLER and showing genuine concern) Are you all right?

BUTLER – (Confused, in pain) Sir?

MAN - How clumsy, old chap. You've got to be more careful. You mean so much to this family. (Grabs the BUTLER by the head) We love you, old man. (Kissing him on the forehead, laughing, returns to his desk)

BUTLER – Aye, your Lordship. (The MAID comes to the BUTLER and helps steady him)

MAID – (To the BUTLER, quietly) Why didn't you do something?

BUTLER – (Aching, also quiet) I couldn't. I tried, but I couldn't. Why didn't you?

MAID – I couldn't, either. (BUTLER doubles over in pain) It was like I was helpless.

MAN – What are you two blathering on about?

MAID - (Forcing words out of her mouth that are not her own) Will the Lady of the House be needing any tea this afternoon, your Lordship?

MAN – Yes! Excellent! Very good question. Let’s find out. (Rings a bell sitting on the desk then walks to the bottom of the staircase and calls up) Dear, the servants need to know if you would like some tea. (Freezes, his back is to the SERVANTS who are free to talk for the moment)

MAID – (To the BUTLER, quietly) Are you all right?

BUTLER – (Aching, also quiet) Bleedin’ hurts.

MAID – Why didn’t you strike him back or something?

BUTLER – I can’t. I don’t even know how we got here. Last thing I remember was goin’ to sleep.

MAID – Same here. I went to bed. Now here I am in this mansion.

BUTLER – It looks familiar, somehow, but it’s like I can’t say or do anything on my own.

MAID – Me neither. It’s as if we’re bein’ managed.

BUTLER – More like controlled. No...*manipulated*. That’s it. (Looks at the MAID) I know you, don’t I?

MAID – Aye. I think...I think we’re married. I want to leave but I don’t see any doors.

BUTLER – No windows, neither. If we are being controlled, they wouldn’t let us leave, anyway.

MAID – Who?

BUTLER – Aye, there’s the question, now, isn’t it? I...

MAN – (Unfreezing) Look alive, you two. (The MAID and BUTLER straighten up, no longer free) Here she comes now.

(The LADY OF THE HOUSE enters at the top of the staircase. She is dressed elegantly in a dark red dress as if going to a ball. She comes down)

MAN – You look ravishing, my lovely.

LADY OF THE HOUSE – You are far too charming, dearest one.

MAN – I am forever yours, my darling. The new help wanted to know if you’d like some tea.

LADY – Oh, that sounds just lovely. Perhaps brunch?

MAN – (Looks at his watch) Delightful idea, my love. Just in time. (To the BUTLER) You’ll prepare toasted pikelets with butter. She always enjoys toasted pikelets with butter. (Freezes)

BUTLER – (Wanting to say something else but forced to say) Aye, your Lordship. (To the MAID) Come with me. (SERVANTS start to exit off right)

LADY – Stop!

(The BUTLER and MAID stop. The LADY slowly walks around the two SERVANTS, examining them with a harsh, critical glower then speaks to them in a harsh tone)

LADY - You are a pathetic pair of sots, ain't'cha? You disgust me. Just look at you. Straighten yourselves proper. (BUTLER and MAID pull shoulders back and stand at attention. The LADY pulls out a small sharp knife and shouts) I said straighten yourselves up! (Cuts the left hand palm of the MAID who screams in pain. The BUTLER wants to do something but the LADY looks at him sharply and says) What? You want to say something, do ya?

BUTLER – (Struggles, but cannot move or speak freely) No, Milady.

LADY – (Puts the knife away, then grabs the palm of the MAID, expressing concern and sympathy) Oh, my dear. Will you look at what I've done, then? (Apologetic) I'm so sorry. I didn't realize. It won't happen again. (MAN unfreezes)

MAN – (Smiling) Perfectly all right, dear. She knows it was an accident. (Threatening the MAID) Don't you?

MAID – (Cannot say what she wants to say, so she instead nervously nods her head) Aye, sir.

LADY - You better go upstairs straight away and put a bandage to that. Now you're sure you're all right, dearie?

MAID – (Again forcing words out of her mouth that are not her own, almost crying) Yes, mum. It's all right. (Looks at her and as if she's speaking words she's heard before) I know you didn't mean it.

LADY – (Hugs her intently) Of course I didn't. You mean the world to me, now, don't'cha?

MAID – (Wondering why she said that, the MAID looks at the LADY, whose words have a familiar tone. All she can do, though, is respond in a sad yet assuring manner) Y-Yes, mum.

LADY – (Kissing the MAID on the cheek) I love you so much. Now go off and get that bandage and we'll have a jolly good time when you get back. (All smiles as the MAID continues to walk upstairs, holding her hand as she exits. The LADY freezes)

BUTLER – (To the LADY, forcing out words beyond his control) Shall you be requiring my services, Milady?

MAN – (Becoming enraged) Of course she will be requiring your services. Why do you think we retained you, you imbecile?

BUTLER – I only meant, sir...

MAN – (Screams) Don't talk back to me. (Punches the BUTLER in the stomach again)

BUTLER – Bloody hell! (Holding his abdomen in pain, wants to respond in anger but is instead forced to be apologetic) Sorry, sir. (Stands erect as he tries to continue) I...

MAN – (Slaps the BUTLER's face, cautioning) Watch your foul mouth! Speak nothing of this. To anyone! (Pulling the BUTLER close) It will be our little secret, eh? (Looking at the BUTLER's face, once again changing his demeanor, this time almost apologetic albeit defensive) Why must you make me so angry? I told you what we expected of you, didn't I? Didn't I?

BUTLER – (The words sound familiar to the BUTLER, as well) Yes, your Lordship.

MAN – (Contemptuous) Was I not clear on your...responsibilities? (MAN freezes)

BUTLER – (Again forcing words out of his mouth that are not his own) I...I...Aye, sir. I'm sorry, your Lordship. It is my fault, sir. It's all my fault, sir. (Beat, stands erect) So, you want I should do....what, my Lord?

LADY – (Unfreezing) I already told you what I needed. What are you? Stupid?

BUTLER – (Realizes the MAN is frozen, speaks to the LADY) Um, you did, your Ladyship? (Thinks, nervously asks) When...when was that, Milady?

LADY – (Annoyed) The tea. Where is the tea?

BUTLER – Aye. Well, actually it was the maid who was asking, but I...

LADY – (Screaming) Are you disagreeing with me?

BUTLER – (Uneasy) No, Milady. I can get brunch for you now, if'n you'd like.

LADY – (More annoyed, comes up and grabs the BUTLER's testicles, twisting them, threatening) Of course I want it. Why wouldn't I want it? And you want to give it to me, don't you?

BUTLER – (Anxious) Um, Milady, I... (The LADY again twists the BUTLER's testicles hard. He recoils in pain)

LADY – I'll dig my bleedin' nails into you, I will, if you talk back to me again!

(The LADY lets go of the BUTLER and goes to stand next to the MAN. The BUTLER, more confused than ever, begins to limp across stage right toward the unseen kitchen area)

MAN – (Unfreezing, pleasantly calls to the BUTLER) And when you return, you must join us for brunch.

BUTLER – (Stops, turns around, sees the MAN unfrozen, confused) Your Lordship?

LADY – (Pleasant) Of course. We're family. We will all sit together at the dining room table. (She freezes)

BUTLER – We are...we will, Milady? (Nervous, to the MAN) Your Lordship?

MAN – (Shouting) Well? Don't just stand there like a bleedin' tosser! Go get the goddamn tea and brunch!

BUTLER – (Confused) Aye, sir. (Exits as the MAID returns down the stairs)

MAN – (Smiling) Ah, look who it is! (Freezes as the LADY unfreezes)

LADY – (Unimpressed) 'Bout bleedin' time. What took you so long?

MAID – I'm sorry, mum. I had some trouble findin' the bandages and...

LADY – (Screaming) Stop giving me excuses! Just get down here! Now!

MAID – (Fearful) Yes, mum. (Comes to the bottom of the stairs)

LADY – (Takes her hand, genuine concern) Did you wash these like I told you to? We wouldn't want it to get infected. (Freezes as she holds the MAID's hands, MAN unfreezes)

MAID – Like you...but you never said...(Afraid, decides to just agree) Yes, your Ladyship. I washed them. Like you told me to.

MAN – (While the LADY remains in a freeze he chastises the MAID) Don't you lie to her. (Grabs the MAID's wounded palm and squeezes it) After all she's done for you? Don't you *ever* lie to her!

MAID – (Struggling to keep from crying) No, your Lordship.

MAN – (Letting go of the MAID's hand, he looks at the MAID's legs) Wait a minute. Wait just a minute. Those stockings. Those aren't "proper" attire.

MAID – (Looks at her tights and then asks) They aren't, sir?

MAN – I gave specific instructions.

MAID – You did, your Lordship?

MAN – (Annoyed) At the top of the stairs. In the upstairs supply closet. There's a proper pair of tights. You shall wear them at all times. Do you understand?

MAID – Aye, your Lordship. (Unsure what to do. After a beat) Shall I go and change now, then, sir?

MAN – (Smiles) Of course.

LADY – (Unfreezes, let's go of the MAID's hand) And when you come back down we're all going to have brunch together. (To the MAN) Oh! Toasted pikelets and butter! We must have those, as well.

MAN – Already taken care of, my love.

LADY – (Excited) Wonderful! (To the MAID) Won't that be just scrumptious?

MAID – Together, mum?

MAN – (Smiling) Of course, together. We're family.

MAID – (Thinking) "Family"? Aye, your Lordship. (Exits upstairs)

LADY – (To the MAN) Did you notice her hand?

MAN - (Reassuring) Merely a scrape, dear. No one will notice a thing. You shouldn't blame yourself.

LADY – (Assured) Oh, I won't. I won't.

(The MAN freezes. The BUTLER returns pushing a tea cart up to the table)

BUTLER – (Again forcing words out of his mouth that are not his own) Tea is ready, your Lordship, your Ladyship. (Begins to pour the tea into cups and sets them on the dining room table) The tea is very hot. You may want to let it cool before...

LADY – (Angry) Well, it is surely about time. (To the MAN, who is still in a freeze) I mean, really, darling, how long does it take to make a simple pot of tea? (Sits down at the dining room table across from the MAN's chair at the head of the table. She sips her tea) Eww. It's cold. (Throws the hot cup of tea at the BUTLER who screams in pain. The MAN unfreezes)

MAN – is there a problem, dear?

(The BUTLER tries to say something but cannot utter a sound. He is only able to dry himself off)

LADY – (Pleasant) Oh, not at all, not at all. The tea was a tad cool. Just not as warm as I like, but it will have to do. I am far too famished to wait for the help any longer. (To the BUTLER) Brunch will be toasted pikelets and butter. Have you got that?

BUTLER – (Forced to utter the words) Yes, Milady. (Struggling) Already... taken care of. Brunch shall be...shall be ready momentarily.

MAN – (Annoyed) What are you going on about?

BUTLER – (Confused) Sir?

MAN – We obviously are not all here. Where is little Genevieve?

BUTLER – (Puzzled, the name rings a bell but he doesn't know why) Genevieve?

LADY – (Smiling, but in a mocking manner) Oh, my! Genevieve. We simply cannot eat without ALL "family members" present. What were you thinking?

BUTLER – (Apologetic) I'm sorry, Milady. Shall I go and fetch her?

MAN – (Snide) Of course.

BUTLER – Yes. Right. (Looking around) Ummm...where would she be now?

LADY – (MAN holds out chair at the dining room table for LADY and she sits) Upstairs in her room, of course, you simpleton. Go and fetch her. I am simply ravenous today. (MAN sits across from LADY at the head of the table and sips his tea)

BUTLER – Yes, Milady. (Goes up the stairs as the MAID returns down the steps now dressed in blood red fishnet stockings. THEY exchange a glance between each other but are not able to control what they do. The BUTLER continues past the MAID and exits off at the top of the stairs)

MAN – (Not pleased with the tea, either) Oh, really. This tea is cold.

LADY – I warned you. Now, darling, you must tell me what you did with those contracts our lawyers needed signed straight away.

MAN – (Searching for a cigarette) I cannot find my cigarettes. (Sees the MAID and glares at her)

LADY – (Not seeing the MAID) Smoking is bad for you, sweetheart. The contracts, dear?

MAN – What? Oh, they are in the desk. Why not fetch them and we can sign them after brunch.

LADY – Very well. (Goes over to the desk as the MAID approaches the MAN) Honestly, it becomes harder and harder to find anything of value in this house. (As the LADY starts searching the drawers, the MAN slaps the MAID. He grabs her throat, let's go and then lifts her onto the dining room table, undoes his pants and pantomimes raping her) Now, what drawer would they be in? (The MAID tries to scream but no matter how she tries she cannot utter a sound. She tries to resist, but the MAN slaps her brutally several times. The LADY is unaware of the rape as she finds the desk locked) This drawer is locked. (Checks another drawer) This one, as well. Goodness, me. How am I supposed to see what I am supposed to see if things are locked up all the time? (Considering) Ah! The key. Is the key around, somewhere, darling? I can't get the drawers open. Perhaps under the middle desk drawer. (Looks under the desk as the MAN spins the MAID around and rapes her from behind. After a moment, ad libbing as needed, the LADY comes out from under the desk) No. Not there, either. Oh, how tedious.

MAID – (Manages to finally cry out as the MAN tears at her clothing) Please, mum. Help me!

LADY – (Oblivious) Do you have a spare key, darling?

MAN – (As he continues to physically abuse the MAID) Upstairs in the top right hand drawer of my night stand, dear.

LADY – Very well. I only hope that drawer isn't locked, as well.

MAN – (Building up to a climax) Jolly good one, love. Jolly good one. Jolly good...

LADY – (Crossing to the stairs still oblivious to the rape) Yes, yes. And just where is the help? Here I am in need and they are nowhere to be found. I swear they are both slacking off. (The MAN climaxes and the MAID shrieks in agony as the LADY climbs up the stairs to exit) Well, I find it totally unacceptable and I want you to deal with it straight away, darling. Do you understand? (Exits)

MAN – (Out of breath) Yes, darling. Straight away, then. (He spins the MAID around and slugs her across the face. She drops to the ground behind the table, bloodied. She lies there motionless as the MAN pulls his pants back up, pulling out a pack of cigarettes) Would you look at that? There's my smokes. They were in my trouser pockets the entire time. (Pulls out a cigarette and lights it up for a smoke)

(The BUTLER returns with a CHILD, GENEVIEVE, beside him. The CHILD wears a red polka-dot dress with red shoes. She appears quiet, expressionless)

BUTLER – (For a moment he finds himself able to speak freely) You are...Genevieve? (GENEVIEVE nods but still appears quite emotionally withdrawn) There is something so...familiar about you. (Looking around) Familiar about all of this. It's like I've lived every part of this before.

MAN – (Seeing GENEVIEVE, rushes to her at the stairs) Ah, there's the little angel. How are you, dear? Are you ready for some brunch? (Grabs GENEVIEVE from the BUTLER then callously scolds the BUTLER) Give her to me. You have no right to her! You hear? No right! (Pleasantly, to GENEVIEVE) I have had a nice meal prepared for us, sweetheart.

(As they reach the bottom of the stairs, the BUTLER sees the MAID.)

BUTLER – (Anxious) My God. What happened here? (Struggling to be angry) What did you do to her?

MAN – (Nonchalantly) What? That? Oh, nothing. She...she fell. (To GENEVIEVE) We have your favorite toasted pikelets and butter! (GENEVIEVE does not react. The MAN sits her at the table, center chair with two chairs on either side of her for the BUTLER and MAID to sit at. He has trouble walking around the limp body of the MAID) Just have a seat right here. (Looks at the BUTLER then heartlessly commands) Don't just stand there. (Pointing to the MAID) Take her away. Get her cleaned up. (Sits down at one end of the table) Can't have the disgusting bint sitting at the table all mussed up like that. And hurry back with the food before the tea gets colder.

BUTLER – (Truly wanting to show his anger, but is visibly unable to work up the nerve) Aye, your Lordship. (Lifts the MAID to her feet and helps her off stage right as the LADY returns)

LADY – I couldn't find the key, sweetheart, so we shall have to search again after brunch. (Sees GENEVIEVE) Oh, there's the precious little dear! (Runs down and hugs GENEVIEVE at the table) So glad you could join us. What have you been doing all morning? It seems like we never spend any quality time together. (The MAN and WOMAN laugh. GENEVIEVE remains emotionless, withdrawn)

MAN – Well, that should change momentarily, right love? (THEY laugh again GENEVIEVE remains emotionless)

LADY - Oh, you found your cigarettes. Might I have one, darling?

MAN – I thought you said they were bad?

LADY – Bad for you. Not for me. (The MAN hands her a cigarette) Light? (The MAN lights the LADY's cigarette) Where is the help now?

MAN – Getting themselves cleaned up. Can't believe how...filthy...they are.

LADY – Yes, well quality help is so hard to come by these days.

MAN – True. True. Oh, here they come.

LADY - It's about bleedin' time.

(The BUTLER and MAID return. The BUTLER is wheeling a food cart. The MAID enters on her own but is visibly shaken. She manages to sit down at the table. She then looks at GENEVIEVE and is startled. There is something hauntingly familiar about the child)

MAID – (Frightened, rises) She's dead. Why isn't she dead? She's supposed to be dead. I thought she...

BUTLER – (Comes up to the MAID) Here, now. What're you talking about?

MAID – She...her throat, it was...(Looks at GENEVIEVE again, wants to explain, but can't remember) I...I don't know.

MAN – (Commanding the MAID) Sit down. (Pleasantly) Tea's on.

(The BUTLER eases the MAID back down into her seat next to the LADY then returns to the food cart and examines the meal)

LADY – It better not have gotten cold.

BUTLER – No, My Lady, it appears (Notices GENEVIEVE and also sees that there is something very familiar about her)...just right. Shall I start serving, your Lordship?

MAN – Of course. (Takes four prepared trays from the food cart and puts them in front of the LORD, LADY, GENEVIEVE and MAID. He then sits down next to the MAN. The MAN smiles, takes another long drag of his cigarette, then nonchalantly puts the cigarette out on the BUTLER's face, tossing the butt in the BUTLER's tea. The LADY then puts her cigarette out on the MAID's neck and tosses the butt into the MAID's tea. The MAID and BUTLER scream in agony but cannot otherwise physically respond. They remain seated. Again, GENEVIEVE does not react. The MAN and LADY return to eating their meals as if nothing just happened. The MAID and BUTLER simply hold onto their painful wounds)

MAN – (Mocking) What is wrong with you two idiots?

LADY – (False congeniality) Aren't you eating?

BUTLER – (Rises, wanting to vent his hostility but again is unable to) If it's all the same with you, your Lordship. I'm not very hungry. (Sits back down)

MAID – (Also struggling, gently pushes food away) Neither am I.

LADY – (To the MAN) What strange help you hired.

MAN – I say. Well, this just won't do. Nope, this won't do at all. I'm afraid there is only one way to resolve this. Hands on the table, please. (The BUTLER and MAID look at each other then back at the MAN) Come along. Let's go. Hands on the table. (The BUTLER and MAID try to resist but their hands slowly rest on the table. The MAN rises and walks over to the tea cart)

BUTLER – (Struggling, says to the MAID) Don't do it.

MAID – I don't want to, but I can't help it.

BUTLER – Neither can I. Something...forcing me.

MAID – (Struggling, crying to the BUTLER) Why? Why can't I resist?

(The MAN pulls out a large sharp knife from underneath a slip cover on the food cart)

LADY – (Thinks about it for a moment, then asks the LADY) Darling, don't you think it would be more appropriate if Genevieve did it? (Freezes)

BUTLER – (Horrified) Oh, no, sir. Please.

MAID – (Equally horrified) Please, your Lordship. Not the child. (Frightened) Not the child!

MAN – (To the LADY) You know, I do believe you're right, my love. (Hands the knife to GENEVIEVE who looks at the knife, examining it. The MAN freezes)

MAID – (Struggling to get the words out) No, my Lord. I beg of you, sir. P-P-Please not my little baby.

BUTLER – (To the MAID) That's it. The girl. That's what it is. I remember now. We have lived through this all before. Over and over again. She...this is...(Realizing, looks at GENEVIEVE who becomes menacing. The BUTLER becomes terrified) No. It can't be.

MAN – (Unfreezes, says to the LADY) Why not? I mean, after all, that would make sense, now, wouldn't it?

MAID – (Also realizing, becoming terrified as GENEVIEVE puts the knife over her hand) She..she is...

LADY – (Unfreezes) Of course, darling. I mean in the end...she is their OWN child.

(The MAN and LADY laugh as GENEVIEVE, during the following diatribe, begins to cut off the hands of the MAID and then the BUTLER)

GENEVIEVE – Please, mummy! I promise I won't tell anyone! I know you won't do it again! I told them I fell down the stairs! I told the nurse I walked into a door! I told the doctors I fell off me bicycle! I was playin' with me mates! It was a football injury! Don't worry, daddy. It's our secret! (Mocking the MAID's words when she was raped) Please, mum. Help me! Please, mum. Help me! (GENEVIEVE maniacally tosses the SERVANT's "hands", the red gloves, away. The BUTLER and MAID scream as GENEVIEVE then climbs up onto the table fiercely wielding the knife as the LIGHTS DIM)

(TRANSITION TO FAR STAGE RIGHT. As the stage is re-set, LIGHTS UP far right on an ELDERLY BRITISH COUPLE sitting on a park bench. The ELDERLY WOMAN is knitting or crocheting. The ELDERLY MAN is reading from a newspaper that has a headshot of the BUTLER and MAID, dressed in luxurious clothing and looking pleased. The headline reads "RAMSEY MANSION CURSED?")

ELDERLY MAN – "Lord and Lady Ramsey found dead in their sleep. Facial expressions 'frozen' in terror, but bodies show no visible marks or wounds. No murder weapon found. Scotland Yard spokesman says investigation into cause of death continues." Boy, that's a strange one, now, isn't it?

ELDERLY WOMAN – Weren't they the couple from the telly last year? You know, the ones in the news?

ELDERLY MAN – Aye, they were. The pair acquitted of murdering their own little girl.

ELDERLY WOMAN – (Recalling) Poor defenseless child. Hands and throat all cut up with a kitchen knife, and the bleedin' Barrister gets the two of 'em off, citin' a lack of evidence. Pure rubbish.

ELDERLY MAN – (Turning the page) Yes, love. I remember readin' how the Ramseys tried to blame it on one of their servants.

ELDERLY WOMAN - But there wasn't anyone else on the premises when they found the child bludgeoned to death. Don't'cha remember?

ELDERLY MAN – (Nodding) Right, right. And it was only their own fingerprints what was found on the knife.

ELDERLY WOMAN – Well, if you ask me, it was the prosecutor what certainly swayed me.

ELDERLY MAN – (Reading) Aye, love, so you've said, so you've said.

ELDERLY WOMAN – Well, he did! He proved how them Ramseys mentally and physically abused that little girl for years. Bruises, cigarette burns, knife wounds. My God, they even raped the poor thing.

ELDERLY MAN – (Turning the page) Yes, love.

ELDERLY WOMAN – (Putting her knitting away in her bag) So awful. Just sickens me. People with all the money in the world think they can just do as they feel, be as cruel as they like. How can God let things like this happen?

ELDERLY MAN – (Puts newspaper down and pats her shoulder) Now, shush, dear. Don't make a fuss. It's not fair to blame the rich. The poor folk and those in between can knock about a young'un just as much as the rich folk.

ELDERLY WOMAN – Aye, but the rich folk think they can cover it all up with their money, which makes them all the worse, far as I'm concerned.

ELDERLY MAN – Well, I'm sure now that the day of reckoning has come there'll be a special kind of Hell for people like them two. I'm just sorry we won't be around to see their comeuppance. (Rises) Now, enough of this depressing talk. It's a lovely day. How about a walk and some brunch, then?

ELDERLY WOMAN – Ooh! Some toasted pikelets and butter, then? Aye. That sounds like a splendid idea. (Rises, looks around and up at the sky) My, you're right. It is a lovely day, isn't it? (Smiles as LIGHTS DIM and the ELDERLY COUPLE exits off far right)

(TRANSITION back to the European-style mansion. LIGHTS UP FULL. Everything is set up exactly as the play began. The MAN OF THE HOUSE sits again at his desk. He is still dressed in his tuxedo and tie. He is once again reading over what appears to be the résumés and references for the BUTLER and MAID who return from opposing sides of the stage to stand once again before him. BOTH are again dressed in proper servant attire, he still in his tuxedo and she in her French Maid uniform back in her original black nylons. Everyone is neat in appearance)

MAN – Right. Everything checks out. Paperwork has been squared away. I believe we have everything in order and now we can begin. Are you ready to proceed?

BUTLER and MAID – (Simultaneous, but staggered, uneasy) Yes, your Lordship.

MAN – Very good, very good. You'll begin immediately. Of course, proper attire must be worn at all times. The color of the house is red. Blood red. (Looks at their hands) Well? Do you do have them?

BUTLER and MAID – (Simultaneous, but staggered) Yes, your Lordship.

MAN – Excellent. (After a beat) Well, put them on, then.

BUTLER and MAID – (Simultaneous, but staggered) Yes, your Lordship.

(BUTLER and MAID look at each other nervously then each puts on a pair of thin dark red gloves. They each hold up their hands to show the MAN)

MAN – Good. Now, your duties will commence without delay. You understand your responsibilities as they have been explained to you? (BUTLER and MAID nod) Fine.

(The MAN rises, comes around to one side of the MAID and slaps her hard across the face. She feels the pain but does not react or retaliate. He then approaches the BUTLER and punches him squarely in the stomach. The BUTLER drops to his knees in pain as LIGHTS DIM)

(Blackout)

The End