

James Walters and the Case of the Miramar Murders

written by

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Rehearsal Draft

Characters:

Name	Sex	Age	Description
James Walters	M	40's	Detective. Cares, but behind a no nonsense exterior
Trip Mason	M	67	Grizzled theatre caretaker. Described as absent minded
Marcia Fredrick	M	50	Veteran actress, she survived casting couches by making them work for her.
Glenn Kilbourn	M	28	The leading man of the company. Has his own morality that some may question, but works for him.
Anna Newberry	F	22	The young starlet. Insecure about her talent, but badly wants to be the star.

SCENE 1: THE DISCOVERY.

In darkness.

VOICE OVER/LIGHTING EFFECT

Based on a true story.

Lights up on JAMES WALTERS, Private Eye, as he makes his way down the riverfront by the Miramar Theatre.

JAMES WALTERS

(V.O.)

It was the kind of story that would begin "The fog rolled in thick off the bay," if only I could tell stories, and if this wasn't River City. The only bay around here is Old Lady Helfaer's front window.

JAMES (40's) stops under the marquee of the theatre. The doors are locked. Above, the marquee reads "TONIGHT'S PERFORMANCE IS CANCELED."

JAMES WALTERS

(V.O., continued)

Maximillion Kendall, River City's self-appointed protector of all that is artistic, dedicated his life to turning downtown into a cultural destination. That's why he bought the old Miramar Theatre in 1986. It stayed in his hands, too. At least until he was discovered this evening, suffering from a case of 'dead.' That's when they called me, James Walters, Private Dick.

TRIP MASON (67), the theatre's grizzled caretaker, steps out of the shadows. Keys in hand, he is about to open the door to the theatre, when he notices James.

TRIP MASON

(hiding keys)

The show's been canceled.

JAMES WALTERS

I heard that. I'm looking for Trip Mason.

TRIP eyes him, suspiciously.

TRIP MASON
What do you need?

JAMES WALTERS
To talk with Trip Mason, is he here?

TRIP MASON
Could be.

Awkward pause.

JAMES WALTERS
Could you send for him?

TRIP MASON
I could.

JAMES WALTERS
Why are you being so secretive, sir? Are you
hiding Mr. Mason with those keys in your
pocket?

TRIP MASON
(nervous laughter)
You saw that, did you?

JAMES WALTERS
I'm a private eye, I don't miss much.

TRIP MASON
Mr. Walters? You're James Walters?

JAMES WALTERS
Mr. Mason?

TRIP MASON
Well, I wasn't expecting you so... quickly.
I've got them all inside, just waiting for
you. No one's come, no one's gone, just like
you asked.

JAMES WALTERS
Do they know what's happened?

TRIP MASON
I don't think so, sir. Everyone tends to keep
themselves to themselves this close to
showtime. Of course, they know the show's been
canceled. They just don't know why.

TRIP MASON unlocks the doors, and
follows JAMES WALTERS into the
theatre.

The lobby of the Miramar Theatre is a slick, art deco, room with clean lines and an easy traffic flow. TRIP MASON turns on the lights.

JAMES WALTERS

Where's the body?

TRIP MASON

Down the hall, in his office. It's sad about Mr. Kendall, really. Loved this place, built it with his own two hands.

JAMES WALTERS

Is there any obvious cause of death?

TRIP MASON

Oh, yes. (chuckles nervously) His hands are missing.

JAMES WALTERS

(V.O.)

I followed Mason down the hall, past racks of costumes and rooms of props. The smell of sweat and broken dreams hung in the air.

TRIP MASON unlocks the door and they enter the office. Bookshelves filled with scripts, drafts of sets, contracts and assorted papers surround the room. Memorabilia fills the walls. The desk, by contrast, is bare, except for a photograph of Kendall, ANNA NEWBERRY and GLENN KILBOURN. Kendall sits in his chair, bent with his face on the desk, dead.

TRIP MASON

Sorry about all the secrecy. Kind of nervous, if you take my meaning. We don't get a lot of dead people around here. Well, that aren't in the audience, anyway.

JAMES WALTERS

Is that him?

TRIP MASON

Yes, sir. The only dead guy in the room, that would be Mr. Kendall.

JAMES WALTERS

(V.O.)

I studied the man, this titan of the community, now slumped over his desk; his arms unceremoniously ending in cuffs.

JAMES WALTERS

(spoken)

I was under the impression that Mr. Kendall was beloved by the community.

TRIP MASON

Oh, he was sir. As long as he was the public face of the Miramar Theatre, he was a real charmer. It's when the lights went off, that's when you saw the real colors come out.

JAMES WALTERS

What do you mean?

TRIP MASON

It's these theatre folks, sir. They can be really vicious. Stab ya in the back just as easily as giving ya a hug. Sometimes, at the same time.

JAMES WALTERS

Who's the first person you thought of when you heard about the murder?

TRIP MASON

I don't know, sir. Any one of the lot had reasons to love him and despise him, if you take my meaning.

JAMES WALTERS

(V.O.)

I wasn't sure I did.

JAMES WALTERS

(spoken)

I'm not sure I do. What were your reasons for loving him?

TRIP MASON

Ah, he kept me off the streets, sir. Give me job and a place to stay. It's just a little room in the basement, but it's home. If it weren't for Mr. Kendall, I'd be living on the street! As long as there are ticket sales, I have a home.

JAMES WALTERS

Sounds like you had a great affection for the man.

TRIP MASON

He saved me life, sir.

Suddenly, the door to the office explodes open, and in bursts ANNA NEWBERRY (22), GLENN KILBOURN (28), and MARCIA FREDRICK (50).

MARCIA FREDRICK

Trip! There you are! We just heard the most horrible rumor!

GLENN KILBOURN
(noticing body)

Which seems to be true...

ANNA NEWBERRY

And why is the show canceled??

Glenn points to the body, and ANNA lets out a sob. She buries herself in Glenn's embrace.

ANNA NEWBERRY
(continued)

No! Who would do such a thing, Glenn?

GLENN KILBOURN

I'm sure the authorities will figure it out.

MARCIA FREDRICK

Ha!

James turns his attention to MARCIA.

JAMES WALTERS

And why is that so funny?

MARCIA FREDRICK

Have you seen the authorities in this town? A brisk walk will leave them behind!

GLENN KILBOURN

I'm sorry, who are you?

JAMES WALTERS

The authorities, for hire.

MARCIA FREDRICK
(sheepish)

Oh.

Trip softly laughs.

JAMES WALTERS

I'm James Walters, Private Eye.

ANNA NEWBERRY

(nervous giggle)

Oh, hello. I'm not sure why we'd need a private eye. I think our eyes are working just fine. Mr. Kendall is in a heap on his desk, and all of our careers are over.

Anna is becoming increasingly agitated.

MARCIA FREDRICK

Oh, sweetie, you need to calm down. Don't be so delicate.

ANNA NEWBERRY

(not calm)

I am perfectly calm! You all think that I'm some sort of unhinged crazy girl, but I'm not! I'm not delicate. I just don't like certain words. Like "dead," and "murder," and "unemployed." I'm not like you, Marcia! I can't do the things you do!

MARCIA FREDRICK

(with a smirk)

I know, Max told me.

TRIP MASON

Ha! Two points for Miss Marcia!

ANNA NEWBERRY

How rude!

GLENN KILBOURN

Now is not the time for this! Mr. Kendall is in a heap on his desk, and I'm sure that the detective would like to begin his investigation.

JAMES WALTERS

Thank you, Mr...?

GLENN KILBOURN

(shaking hands)

Kilbourn. Glenn Kilbourn. You may call me Mr. Kilbourn. This rising star of emotion is Anna Newberry. And, I'm sure you've heard of...

JAMES WALTERS
(interrupting)

Marcia Fredrick. I've seen you around town,
usually on the arm of Mr. Kendall at charity
events.

MARCIA FREDRICK
(smugly)

Guilty as charged.

ANNA NEWBERRY
(overly relieved)

Really? Oh good, we can all go home now.

GLENN KILBOURN

Oh, sweetie, that's not what that means.

MARCIA FREDRICK
(to Anna)

Is that a new haircut?

ANNA NEWBERRY
(to Marcia)

Just had it done.

MARCIA FREDRICK
(to Anna)

I like it, it suits you.

ANNA NEWBERRY
(skeptical, to Marcia)

I never know if you're telling me the truth.

MARCIA FREDRICK
(to Anna)

I know.

JAMES WALTERS

Please focus.

TRIP MASON

Ms. Fredrick's been with the company forever.
Mr. Kendall always said that having a strong
talent with a pretty face would put this
theatre on the map.

MARCIA FREDRICK

That he did.

ANNA NEWBERRY

He said the same thing to me!

MARCIA FREDRICK

Oh, sweetie, he said it to all the young
starlets. But, I'm the only one that's still
here.

GLENN KILBOURN
(in shock)

Mr. Walters, if we could address the problem on the desk. I can't help but notice that Mr. Kendall's hands are...

TRIP MASON

Missing.

GLENN KILBOURN

Yes.

ANNA NEWBERRY

My goodness! Is that how he died?

JAMES WALTERS

No, he was poisoned.

ANNA NEWBERRY

Really?!

JAMES WALTERS

No, his arms were bound and his hands cut off. If I may, did anyone here have a personal relationship with Mr. Kendall?

ANNA, GLENN, MARCIA

We were lovers.

MARCIA FREDRICK
(reacting with a laugh)

Well, now. It's finally all out in the open!

ANNA NEWBERRY

Glenn?! How could you?

GLENN KILBOURN

My motivations were pure!

MARCIA FREDRICK

Please, let's not pretend that this is a shock. We all knew, everyone knew. It's what kept this place running.

TRIP MASON

I didn't know.

The group ignores him.

JAMES WALTERS

Let's skip the domestic dramatics, please. When was the last time that you all saw Mr. Kendall alive?

ANNA NEWBERRY

This morning.

GLENN KILBOURN

I didn't need to know that. We had... Lunch... together.

JAMES WALTERS

And you, Ms. Fredrick?

MARCIA FREDRICK

(slyly)

I was dessert.

JAMES WALTERS

So, if I dust Mr. Kendall for fingerprints, I'll find all of your prints?

TRIP MASON

And mine.

JAMES WALTERS

Really?

TRIP MASON

(embarrassed)

I shook his hand this morning. Well, you know, back when he had hands to shake.

ANNA NEWBERRY

Ugh! I feel so dirty!!

MARCIA FREDRICK

That's show business, kid. Get used to it.

JAMES WALTERS

I was under the impression that Mr. Kendall was a meticulous dresser. Always clean and pressed.

ANNA NEWBERRY

Oh yes, always!

MARCIA FREDRICK

He was a "Dress Classy, Be Classy," kind of guy.

GLENN KILBOURN

I always admired him for it.

MARCIA FREDRICK

You would.

ANNA NEWBERRY

(to Glenn)

You have your own style, that's just as special.

MARCIA FREDRICK

Please, your'e both imitators, and you know it.

GLENN KILBOURN

At least we are trying to be better.

MARCIA FREDRICK

Better that what?

JAMES WALTERS

Focus, people. These pants are wrinkled, and badly. That's a huge patch of dirt on his back.

James bend down and looks and the cuffs.

JAMES WALTERS

And I do believe that is sawdust where his cuffs should be.

MARCIA FREDRICK

So? Apparently he needed to have his clothes laundered.

Glenn and Anna begin to quibble.

JAMES WALTERS

(Stopping before it devolves into name calling)

Is this how you three are going to be? All snarky and biting?

TRIP MASON

Well, they're actors, sir...

JAMES WALTERS

Fine! Since this is the way it is, I will need you to return to your dressing rooms and wait. I'll be with each of you in just a bit. Trip, can I trust you to make sure that they make it to their rooms?

TRIP MASON

Yes, sir! I'll make sure they'll stay there, too. They'll have to pry these keys from my cold, dead, hands.

They all turn to look at Trip, who slowly realizes what he just said.

TRIP MASON

(getting it)

Oh... Right. Sorry.

They all start to leave the office,
when a thought occurs to Glenn.

GLENN KILBOURN
Mr. Walters?

JAMES WALTERS
Mr. Kilbourn?

GLENN KILBOURN
Do you know where his hands are?

Anna wretches.

JAMES WALTERS
Not at the moment.

ANNA NEWBERRY
So, they're missing??

James looks at her with a twinkle
in his eye.

JAMES WALTERS
That's why it's a mystery.

They all exit, leaving JAMES alone
with the body.

JAMES WALTERS
Alright, Mr. Kendall. What do you have to say
for yourself?

Lights out.

SCENE 2: RATHER INTENSE DISCUSSIONS.

Lights up on Marcia's dressing
room. It is a neat and orderly
space, free of clutter and
sentimentality. It is a room whose
functionality is built upon years
of experience.

Marcia sits in an easy chair,
casually reading a script.

There is a knock on the door.

MARCIA FREDRICK
Come in.

James enters. He shuts the door behind him, and stares at Marcia for a moment.

JAMES WALTERS

Am I interrupting?

MARCIA FREDRICK

(not looking up from her script)

Not at all. I, like the body of my lover, am not going anywhere.

James looks around the room for a second chair.

MARCIA FREDRICK

(continued)

There isn't one, I'm afraid.

JAMES WALTERS

One what?

MARCIA FREDRICK

Another chair. I won't allow it.

JAMES WALTERS

Doesn't that make it difficult for visitors?

MARCIA FREDRICK

That's exactly the point, Mr. Walters. Another chair would encourage visitors, and that is something that I just won't have.

JAMES WALTERS

I see.

MARCIA FREDRICK

Do you, Mr. Walters? I go out that door, and I am whomever the world needs me to be. Mother, daughter, farm hand, or Lady MacBeth. And yes, sometimes even the companion to a popular and influential civic leader. And I was loving, supportive. I attended all the parties, laughed at all the jokes. And they were always the same jokes, told by the same people, and the same party, over and over again. And it was my *honor* to play that character. But in here, here I can be me. And I don't have to worry about pleasing anyone. I don't have to play a role. I can just be. So, correct, Mr. Walters, it does make it difficult for visitors.

The have a brief stare down, the
silence in the room speaking louder
than words.

JAMES WALTERS

Forgive me for saying so, Ms. Fredrick, but
you didn't seem surprised to see the body. I
would imagine that discovering your lover had
died by amputation would come as a bit shock.

MARCIA FREDRICK

Mr. Walters, the only shock I feel is that it
didn't happen sooner.

A beat.

JAMES WALTERS

Pardon?

Marcia laughs the laugh of someone
who knows the punchline of a sad
joke before the joke has finished
being told.

MARCIA FREDRICK

Do you know who I am Mr. Walters? I'm the next
big thing. I'm the 'it' girl of your youth. In
'95 I played Jennifer in the Musical Theatre
Witchita production of "Paint Your Wagon," and
I was on my way. I fought for every role I
won, I took lessons. I studied, I rehearsed.
And I did things that am not too proud of, but
I am not ashamed of either. And, some of those
things I downright enjoyed. But, I worked,
Mr. Walters. Can you appreciate that? Steady,
consistent employment. And when I met
Maximillion Kendall, my world opened up. He
flung my star higher than I could have
thought.

JAMES WALTERS

That must have thrown some water on your
dreams, then. You don't end up in Hollywood,
or New York. You ended up here, in River City.

Marcia smiles a long, slow smile.

MARCIA FREDRICK

Big fish in a tiny, tiny pond.

JAMES WALTERS

But you must have...

MARCIA FREDRICK

(interrupting, hotly)

Let me be blunt, Mr. Walters. I came here and I was adored. People stopped my in the street and asked for my autograph. I didn't care what I needed to do to keep that feeling. Want me to go to a party, and laugh at some dumb jokes? Fine. Want to parade me around for some stupid fund-raiser? Wonderful. I'll even hold my legs in the air for you... Just don't take that feeling away from me. But don't you ever think that I believed that I was the only one. I knew that I wasn't. Hell, he *showed* me that I wasn't. Every once in a while, he'd trot the new, younger, model out for my inspection, then, he'd go and make a "star" out of them, too. They would all leave, in the end. And I'd still be here, giving him legitimacy while he kept me adored. We used each other, Mr. Walters, in the end. Pure and simple.

Silence.

JAMES WALTERS

Did you kill him, Ms. Fredrick?

MARCIA FREDRICK

Mr. Walters, I'm afraid that don't have it in me to murder anyone; I'm too bitter and jaded for that. Besides, I wasn't finished with him yet, and I'm too old to start over.

JAMES WALTERS

Nonsense.

MARCIA FREDRICK

(slyly)

My, my, my, Mr. Walters. Is that an offer? I could help you, I know... things... after all.

JAMES WALTERS

Ms. Fredrick, I'm afraid that the things you know won't help me with the cases that I solve.

MARCIA FREDRICK

What a pity.

JAMES WALTERS

Who, then? Who do you think has it in them?

MARCIA FREDRICK

Glenn is too arrogant to do it. And, Anna...

(MORE)

MARCIA FREDRICK (CONT'D)

I don't know if she could keep it together to pull it off. One loud noise, and she'd break down. Honestly, it's someone who didn't understand the game. Someone who didn't understand how he works. Someone who wanted the reward without working for it.

JAMES WALTERS

Who would that be?

MARCIA FREDRICK

(smirking)

Well, that's the real question. The Miramar, like every theatre, has had money issues of late. I've had to do more than my share of "Civic Panhandling," as I like to call it. It would take all our effort just to keep a lightbulb on. So, I'm not sure if you're asking the right questions, sir.

JAMES WALTERS

And what are the right questions? Something like "Who has the most to lose?"

MARCIA FREDRICK

No, no. Something like, "Who doesn't understand reality?"

Lights out.

SCENE 3: THE DIAMOND WAY.

Lights up on the hallway that connects all the dressing room. James Walters stands alone, deep in thought.

JAMES WALTERS

(V.O.)

My discussion with Ms. Fredrick disturbed me a bit. It wasn't the casualness in which she spoke of her past, I actually appreciated that. She had a lifetime of knowing what she wanted, and was willing to play the game to get it. But now, the game was changing on her, and she wasn't quite the player that she once was. Could she be unhinged enough, behind her cool exterior, to freeze her moment in time? To stop playing the game by murdering the person that enabled her to keep playing? Did she understand the reality beyond her need for public approval?

James begins to walk down the hallway to the next dressing room, when Trip appears.

TRIP MASON
(calling for attention)

Mr. Walters!

JAMES WALTERS
Yes, Mr. Mason?

TRIP MASON
Oh, you can call me Trip. I've never been one for 'Mister.'" With me living in a basement, and all.

JAMES WALTERS
Fine, Trip. What can I do for you, Trip?

TRIP MASON
We're out of rags, sir!

Pause.

JAMES WALTERS
That's interesting. Normally I hear when people find things, not when they don't.

TRIP MASON
(Happy that he's being useful)
Exactly, sir! I'm glad I can help!

James is a little lost as to why this discussion is happening.

JAMES WALTERS
I take it you normally have rags? At least, more than zero?

TRIP MASON
Oh yes! Just the other day, we bought a big box of them. They'd last us months!

JAMES WALTERS
Good rags, are they?

TRIP MASON
Oh yes!

A dramatic guitar chord strums.

JAMES WALTERS
Super absorbent?

TRIP MASON

None better!

Another dramatic guitar chord
strums.

JAMES WALTERS

Absorbent enough to, say, wipe up a large
amount of blood?

TRIP MASON

(thinking)

You'd probably need a mop too.

A third dramatic guitar chord
strums.

JAMES WALTERS

What was that?

TRIP MASON

What was what, sir?

JAMES WALTERS

It sounded like dramatic guitar chords.

Guitar music plays.

TRIP MASON

Oh, that? That's just Mr. Kilbourn. He always
plays guitar this time of night. It's like,
religion, or something.

James walks to the door of Glenn'S
dressing room, and listens for a
moment.

JAMES WALTERS

Trip? Can you gather all the mops you can
find? I'll meet you in the shop in a bit.

TRIP MASON

Yes, sir!

Trip exits, while JAMES WALTERS
stands at the door, listening to
the music.

It's a sad little tune, both
mournful and optimistic.

He's about to knock, when he hears
some faint singing. Lyrics to the
song only enhance the mood of the
song.

He quietly opens the door, and slips in.

Glenn sits on a stool, facing away from the door. On the makeup table there is a glass of bourbon and a cigar smoldering in an ashtray.

James stands quietly against the door, enraptured by the music. He is clearly quite moved.

After a moment, the song ends. Glenn takes a drink of the bourbon and a drag from the cigar.

GLENN KILBOURN

(without turning around)

Don't you think that it's a little presumptuous to enter a room uninvited, Mr. Walters?

JAMES WALTERS

You didn't hear my knock.

Glenn turns to face him.

GLENN KILBOURN

That's because you didn't knock. Mr. Walters, I'm many things. I'm arrogant. I'm honest to the point of rudeness. And I am self indulgent.

Glenn sips drink, takes another drag from the cigar.

GLENN KILBOURN

(continued)

But I'm not a murderer.

JAMES WALTERS

Do you know who looks at me and says "Hey, I'm a murderer?" No one. No one just announces that they're a murderer. So that means that everyone, including murderers, looks at me and says "I'm not a murderer."

GLENN KILBOURN

I understand.

JAMES WALTERS

So, Glenn, why should I believe you?

Glenn slowly and deliberately finishes his drink.

GLENN KILBOURN

I'm a Buddhist. I value life in all it's forms.

James stares at him for a bit,
before a small laugh of disbelief
comes forth.

JAMES WALTERS

Is that a Boyd Desirous that you're smoking?

GLENN KILBOURN

You know your cigars! Indeed it is.

JAMES WALTERS

That sort of undermines the whole Buddhism thing, doesn't it? Shouldn't you be denying such temptations?

GLENN KILBOURN

There are many ways to enlightenment. Some will deny themselves, as if abstinence is a virtue. I'm on the path that seeks to be free of temptation by indulgence. It isn't the temptation that is the problem, it's the denial.

JAMES WALTERS

To each their own.

GLENN KILBOURN

Exactly.

JAMES WALTERS

(taking a breath, focusing)

Tell me about your relationship with Mr. Kendall. You said, you all said, that you were lovers.

GLENN KILBOURN

In a fashion. I don't want to speak ill of the dead, nor do I want to speak out of turn for my colleagues. But, appearances to the contrary, I do wish to help you. and I hope we can bring the murderer to justice.

JAMES WALTERS

(with a smile)

See, we want the same things. So I am looking forward to your cooperation.

GLENN KILBOURN

Let's begin.

JAMES WALTERS

You seem very close with Miss Newberry. How jealous of your relationship with Mr. Kendall was she?

GLENN KILBOURN

Well, that's the thing, isn't it? You'd expect someone like Anna to be jealous. She's so young and...

JAMES WALTERS

Naive?

GLENN KILBOURN

No... inexperienced. I wouldn't say naive. Sweet? Absolutely. Eager? Maybe too much. But, not naive. She found someone to emulate in Marcia, and emulate her she will. Almost line by line from the playbook of Marcia Fredrick.

JAMES WALTERS

Everyone needs a role model.

GLENN KILBOURN

Yes, but Anna isn't as calculating as Marcia is. Her emotions can, and often do, get the best of her. Cloud her judgment, as it were. Sometimes, you need to leave your emotions out of it. I would like have Anna learn that lesson from Marcia.

JAMES WALTERS

You seem jealous, Mr. Kilbourn. Of all the attention that Anna gives her

GLENN KILBOURN

(with a laugh)

Hardly! Anna is special to me, and I suppose I do love her, but her jealousy can be a little much. We were working on it, Mr. Kendall and I. Trying to get her to work better with the real world. But trust me when I say that it's the love for a younger sister. I can see the mistakes that she's making, but they are her's to make. I'm only going to give advice when I'm asked. Everyone has their own path to walk.

JAMES WALTERS

That's true, I suppose. How did that affect your relationship with him? Did you ever...

GLENN KILBOURN

Mr. Walters, I'm going to stop you right there, before you embarrass yourself. Maximillion Kendall was from a different time, and he was keenly aware of his status in this community. And those days, and in other places, it might have been alright to be hush-hush and look the other way. But, you couldn't do that here. Not in River City. He had to live the lifestyle that he projected.

JAMES WALTERS

Tragic, but not uncommon.

GLENN KILBOURN

Yes, and that is the real tragedy.

JAMES WALTERS

Did Marcia know?

GLENN KILBOURN

I would assume so. She's many things. But she isn't stupid.

JAMES WALTERS

You're just a detached observer, is that it?

Glenn quietly weighs the consequences of continuing with the discussion.

GLENN KILBOURN

(resigned)

Mr. Kendall and I were discussing having a few drinks after rehearsal one day, when he felt the need to confide in me. I don't know if he was making assumptions about my sexuality, or if he simply had too much to drink and was feeling comfortable. But it was clear to me that he was suffering. That, Mr. Walters, is something I do care about.

JAMES WALTERS

And you decided to end his suffering?

Silence.

GLENN KILBOURN

(sternly)

That is a poor choice of words, and I do not appreciate your insinuation.

Silence.

Glenn and James size each other up.

JAMES WALTERS

My apologies.

GLENN KILBOURN

If I "ended his suffering," it was by someone giving him permission to be honest and true to himself. I'm not his murderer, I'm the one who gave him permission to live his life the way he was meant to be. To be free of suffering by finally succumbing to his temptations. And becoming free and honest in the process. "Lovers?" Absolutely! I loved the man and I wanted to him to be happy.

His last words hang in the air.

JAMES WALTERS

(cutting the tension)

How did Anna take your interfering with her plans like that?

GLENN KILBOURN

You are cold. Did you know that, Mr. Walters? Very cold.

JAMES WALTERS

Everybody's something.

A beat.

GLENN KILBOURN

Anna is a wonderful talent, and a very sweet young woman. But her plans for success depended on Mr. Kendall's continued suffering. And that, by any measure, is unacceptable.

JAMES WALTERS

Thank you for your time, Mr. Kilbourn. Let me, respectfully, ease my suffering by saying that I'm not sure that I believe you.

GLENN KILBOURN

Well, there are many paths to enlightenment.

Lights down.

SCENE 4: AN UNEXPECTED REVILATION.

Lights up on the scene shop. Tools, both hand and table, are everywhere. All are well loved, except for the band saw, which is new. There is evidence of sets under construction, but otherwise, everything is neat and orderly. And surprisingly clean.

Bins, containers, and trash cans line the wall.

Along the back wall, there is a stairway leading to the dressing rooms.

In the back corner, behind an open door, there is a stairway that leads down to Trip's room.

Trip is there, lining up an assortment of brooms and mops as if for military inspection.

In the distance, the sound of a door closing is heard, and Trip excitedly rushes to the stairway door to close it.

No sooner is the door closed when James enters.

JAMES WALTERS

(noticing what Trip's doing)

What's behind the door?

TRIP MASON

Nothing, sir.

JAMES WALTERS

Trip...

TRIP MASON

Nothing, sir. Honestly, it's just the stairs to my room in the basement.

JAMES WALTERS

Then why the secrecy?

TRIP MASON

Well, it's embarrassing, sir. Man my age, and all I have to show for it is the kindness of a man who lets me sleep in his basement. Except he's dead.

JAMES WALTERS

Don't you have a family? Someone who can take you in? A roof with pity is still a roof.

TRIP MASON

Oh, yes, sir. I have a family, I even know where they are. I talk to my daughter a lot.

JAMES WALTERS

Well, there you go. Stay with her.

TRIP MASON

I appreciate your encouragement, sir. But she's made certain sacrifices for her career, I'd only get in the way.

JAMES WALTERS

I'm sure it's...

TRIP MASON

(cutting off)

I've got your mops for you, sir.

James ignores the mops, something else has caught his eye.

JAMES WALTERS

New equipment?

TRIP MASON

Excuse me?

JAMES WALTERS

The band saw. It looks brand new.

TRIP MASON

We take care of our stuff, there isn't enough money for new equipment.

James examines the band saw.

JAMES WALTERS

No, this thing is very well cleaned. Here, you can see several of the teeth are bent out of shape.

TRIP MASON

Are they?

JAMES WALTERS

Some are even missing.

TRIP MASON

(interrupting)

Would you care to examine the mops, Mr. Walters?

Attention is turned to the mops,
James quickly proclaims...

JAMES WALTERS

That one.

TRIP MASON

What one?

JAMES WALTERS

That one, right there.

TRIP MASON

You've lost me.

JAMES WALTERS

That's the one that they used the clean up the
blood with.

TRIP MASON

How could you know that?

JAMES WALTERS

The pole, it's too scrubbed. That's not wear
and tear, that's someone deliberately trying
to clean something up.

James thinks for a bit.

JAMES WALTERS

(continued)

My thinking is that someone struggled with Mr.
Kendall, knocking him out, and dragging him to
the band saw. They cut off his hands, and
dragged him to his office, tying him to his
chair, they let him die.

Anna appears, unnoticed, at the top
of the stairs. She is now dressed
in a satin dressing gown and
watches the conversation below with
detached amusement.

TRIP MASON

That would leave an awful mess.

JAMES WALTERS

Yes, but would it? You said it yourself,
you're missing an entire box of rags. And that
mop is far too worn down to not have had to be
cleaned up itself. Bind the wounds long enough
to keep the mess down until he reaches his
office. Come back down here to clean up the
mess.

JAMES WALTERS

(v.o.)

I couldn't help but notice Trip's mind race as he struggled to process the scenario that I just told him. You could hear him think "What else has he seen?" That's when I noticed young Anna, lurking above us like a gargoyle, struggling to be an ingénue. The Mary Pickford of the eavesdropping set.

TRIP MASON

That's a theory.

JAMES WALTERS

Yes, it is. What do you think, Anna?

Anna straightens at the sound of her name, and makes her way slowly down the stairs.

ANNA NEWBERRY

(a more serious tone in her voice)

Well, I don't know. You have a body, you have a murder weapon... well, in a fashion... But you have no motive or murderer. Isn't that how it works? That's what the movies always say.

JAMES WALTERS

This isn't the movies, Anna.

ANNA NEWBERRY

No, it isn't, Mr. Walters. This isn't even a staged reading on a computer. This is real life. Actions have consequences, and people do seriously get hurt.

TRIP MASON

What is wrong with you, Anna?

ANNA NEWBERRY

(using the sweet and innocent tone)

Oh, Trip, how can sweet little Anna know about the big bad world like that? I don't know how the world works, because it's so scary! Oh, a loud noise!

Anna screams in mock terror. It is shrill, but ultimately ends in a slow, deep, vicious laughter.

ANNA NEWBERRY

(continued)

Trip, you of all people should know me better than that. You taught me, after all. You taught me to do whatever I had to do to survive.

TRIP MASON

(visibly disappointed)

Not like this, never like this. This isn't what I meant.

ANNA NEWBERRY

(sharply)

What you meant was that you wanted me to be someone else! So, here I am, someone else!

Glenn and Marcia rush in.

MARCIA FREDRICK

What in the name of...?

GLENN KILBOURN

Anna! What's wrong? Is everything alright?

Anna fixes her gaze squarely on James.

ANNA NEWBERRY

(making fun of her own naive image)

Gee wilikers! I'm so scared! Mr. Walters was just about to accuse me of murder! (in her normal voice, with a laugh) And he'd be right.

JAMES WALTERS

I wasn't though, but I'll take a confession.

A fire spontaneously ignites in one of the garbage cans.

MARCIA FREDRICK

Well, that's weirdly dramatic.

James turns to Trip.

JAMES WALTERS

You use a lot of solvents and oil paints, do you?

Trip nods.

JAMES WALTERS

Just found the missing rags. Probably the hands too, am I right?

Anna pulls a small pistol from her bodice.

ANNA NEWBERRY

Well, Mr. Walters, aren't you the clever one? What can I say, incinerator via a caretaker with poor judgment.

TRIP MASON

I'll put out the fire, before my judgment goes bad again.

Trip smothers the fire.

GLENN KILBOURN

Anna, no! you're better than this!

ANNA NEWBERRY

I'm not, though. I am only as good as the person better than me will allow.

MARCIA FREDRICK

I think she's talking about me here. Sweetie, I've put in my time. I've done the work and paid my dues and suffered. You don't get the good roles, you earn them.

ANNA NEWBERRY

(turns the gun on Marcia)

Shut up! You're on your way out like yesterday's garbage! I'm the hot new it girl. I'm the next big thing. So, sit down, you old broad, and get out of my way!

Anna raises the gun to fire at Marcia, when Trip step in the way.

TRIP MASON

Anna!

Anna falters.

TRIP MASON

(continued)

Put it down, Anna.

Tripp leans in, so that the gun is touching the center of his chest.

TRIP MASON

Anna, stop this. Stop taking your anger out on the world. You are not this girl anymore, show the world the woman I knew my daughter would become.

ANNA NEWBERRY

You left! When I needed you, you left! You barely even knew that girl!

TRIP MASON

But I'm here now, and I will be here from now on. Just, Anna, put the gun down.

GLENN KILBOURN

Wait, "daughter??"

All let out a surprised gasp at this revelation.

MARCIA FREDRICK

Well, this is a surprising plot twist!

ANNA NEWBERRY

Yes, Trip is my father. And he left us...

TRIP MASON

I was in prison!

ANNA NEWBERRY

You left me! I had to figure out how to survive on my own! And I did, I survived!! And no thanks to you, *Dad!*

JAMES WALTERS

Did he know? Mr. Kendall, did he know that Trip is your father?

ANNA NEWBERRY

Of course he knew! Why do you think that he let him sleep in the basement?

JAMES WALTERS

Then why did you kill him, Anna? I can't seem to see why.

GLENN KILBOURN

Why did you do it Anna? This is not the way.

MARCIA FREDRICK

I did *not* see this one coming!

ANNA NEWBERRY

I just got you back, Dad. And, with all the money problems, I was afraid of what would happen. If he was going to let me go, I was going to lose you again!

GLENN KILBOURN

Why would Mr. Kendall let you go?

ANNA NEWBERRY

(sharply)

Because of you, Glenn! Mr. Kendall didn't need secrets any more. And, I don't have the talent to make it on talent alone! You made me irrelevant!

MARCIA FREDRICK

Oh, Glenn, not good.

GLENN KILBOURN

I didn't know!

During the following lines, Anna loses control of her emotions. Becoming fully unhinged, she travels from seeking approval, to anger, to excitement. We see now how flimsy her grasp on reality is.

ANNA NEWBERRY

So I came up with a plan! I just wanted to have Mr. Kendall give me more time, let me take more classes, let me get better. Hell, I'd even slut it up like that one over there.

MARCIA FREDRICK

Well, that was just totally unnecessary.

ANNA NEWBERRY

(continued)

But, please, don't let me go. Don't separate me and my dad again! I threw myself at him!

Anna runs around the shop as she tells this story, reliving the moments.

ANNA NEWBERRY

"Don't let me go! I'll do anything for you, just let me stay." And I pressed up against him and gave him a kiss. "Take me, I'm yours! Do whatever you want to me!" And, thanks to this one (waves gun at Glenn) he rejected me. Said he didn't do that anymore. I screamed at him, "Then why is that bitch still here?"

MARCIA FREDRICK

Hey, now!

ANNA NEWBERRY

He grabbed me, and you know what he said? He said... He said..."Because she can act." So, I punched him. And I punched him. And he just held on to me tighter and tighter. So I punched him again.

Silence.
Anna cries.

JAMES WALTERS

A punch doesn't lead to murder, Anna.

TRIP MASON

It does when your father sees the fight and comes to help. I came into the room, and saw them fighting. I saw that he was attacking her, and I needed to stop him before he did anything to Anna. I just got her back, and I wasn't going to let anything happen to her. Not in front of me, and not if I could help it. I grabbed him, and laid him out with one good punch. He fell, and I picked him up and banged his head against the base of the band saw. Over and over again. I figured, if I was going back to prison, I was going to do it protecting my family. Hands, it turns out, come off really easily when the person is unconscious.

MARCIA FREDRICK

Stuff like this never happened in Wichita.

GLENN KILBOURN

I bet.

Anna is rather despondent at this point, and Trip continues his tale.

TRIP MASON

We gauzed up his wrists, and carried him to his office.

ANNA NEWBERRY
(despondent)

I got blood in my hair!

MARCIA FREDRICK

That explains the new haircut!

GLENN KILBOURN

To cut out the blood!

JAMES WALTERS
(to Trip)

Then why did you cut off the hands? There are much faster ways to kill someone.

MARCIA FREDRICK
(knowingly)

That's true.

ANNA NEWBERRY

I did that. He just held the body. Can you imagine what it was like, Mr. Walters? Being on the footstep of greatness, and having it taken away? (shouting at an unseen memory of Mr. Kendall) Fine! You won't touch me? You won't let me be famous? Then you can't touch anyone. Ever again!

Anna turns to James, a fresh bloodlust in her eyes.

ANNA NEWBERRY

(continued)

He hurt people, Mr. Walters! Did you know that? He'd fill them with all this hope, and then he'd throw them away when he was done. He's the real murderer!

TRIP MASON

(resigned, confessing)

I held Mr. Kendall's body, and watched as Anna told me what happened. He wasn't hurting her, he was just trying to keep her from hurting herself. But, I figured it out too late, and the hands were gone.

ANNA NEWBERRY

Stop it, Daddy!

TRIP MASON

That's when I called you, Mr. Walters. Then I stepped out for a walk.

JAMES WALTERS

Why would you call me? You're the murderer.

TRIP MASON

We had hoped that you were less competent than the actual police. That way we could throw you off the scent. Try to frame someone else.

ANNA NEWBERRY

(screaming to stop the confession)

DADDY, STOP IT!!!

A gunshot, and Trip falls to the floor.

GLENN KILBOURN

Anna!

ANNA NEWBERRY

I bought us so much time together! No one could going to separate us again. We can be together, forever! I'll be whoever you want me to be! We finally have our story!

TRIP MASON
(faintly)

Anna... I....

Trip dies.

Silence.

MARCIA FREDRICK

Nope, I stand corrected. Stuff like this *does* happen in Wichita.

GLENN KILBOURN

I bet all the time.

ANNA NEWBERRY
(sobbing)

Oh, Daddy... Oh, Daddy... We're together forever now... Just like in the stories... Just like when I was young...

JAMES WALTERS

You're going to jail, Anna. Crime never pays.

ANNA NEWBERRY

We're together now, Daddy. We have our story... A father gets out of prison to find his child working as an actress, takes a job to be with her... Only to be ripped apart because of the tastes of an old man changed? These are the stories that people want. Maybe it's not a movie, or even in a novel. But at least it's a one act for a community theatre!

JAMES WALTERS

I don't know about that, I'm not much for telling stories. But, I've seen the ending of this one. And it ends with you in jail.

James pulls handcuffs from his pocket, puts them on Anna, and begins to lead her out of the room.

GLENN KILBOURN

Hey! What about Trip?

JAMES WALTERS

He's not going anywhere. I'll make sure they bring the coroner when they come to pick up Anna.

James escorts Anna out.

Awkward silence between Marcia and Glenn.

GLENN KILBOURN

You never liked me all that much.

MARCIA FREDRICK

I thought you were good in Carousel.

GLENN KILBOURN

Thank you.

MARCIA FREDRICK

But, no. I don't particularly like you.

Pause.

GLENN KILBOURN

And that's ok. I am at peace with that.

MARCIA FREDRICK

What will you do next?

GLENN KILBOURN

I don't know. Audition somewhere, find a new theatre. Meditate. And yourself?

MARCIA FREDRICK

I'm not sure either. This was supposed to be my swan song. But now... There aren't many spots left for an aging starlet. And, besides, my tricks don't seem to work anymore.

GLENN KILBOURN

There's many more years ahead of you! And with your talent, you don't need tricks.

MARCIA FREDRICK

That's kind. I don't know. Maybe I'll head somewhere new. Somewhere where no one knows me and I can just start fresh. Maybe... Minneapolis.

Lights down.

JAMES WALTERS

(v.O)

It was nighttime in River City, and all was quiet. Old Lady Helfaer sat in her window, lazily reading before bed.

(MORE)

JAMES WALTERS (CONT'D)

The restaurants were closing up for the night. Down the street, two actors were leaving a theatre for the last time. And downtown, Anna Newberry sat in a holding cell. Peace falls on the town, the moon casts silvery shadows, and the river continues on.

END.