

Act I

Charlotte Jameson steps out in front of her house.

CHARLOTTE

This used to be our house. Just your basic cape cod, really. Three bedrooms, one bath. We sold it last year for \$165,000. Our realtor told us we could have gotten more if we had held out. And she's probably right. But we decided to sell it to a small family. A father, a mother, a son and a daughter. Perfect size for this house, I think. Sometimes, on weekends, Tom and I drive up just for the heck of it, just to sneak a look at them. And I see the little girl peaking at me from our old living room window, her stuffed animals lined up on the window sill. She's five at most. We wave at each other. I know she has no idea who I am. At least I don't think she does.

This used to be our house.

But it isn't anymore. It's someone else's.

Blackout.

A year earlier. John Jameson appears on the front stoop of the house. A few moments later his wife, Alice, comes out after him with his jacket.

ALICE
You want your jacket?

JOHN
I'll be okay.

ALICE
It gets chilly by the lake. Take your jacket.

JOHN
Alright. (As he does so; she slips a piece of paper in his jacket pocket) Alice.

ALICE
Just in case.

She exits; John takes the piece of paper from his pocket, reads it, crumples it, and tosses it in the yard and exits. A moment later, Charlotte his daughter enters. She finds the piece of paper in the yard and begins to read it silently. Younger John appears at the door, calling to her.

YOUNGER JOHN
Charlotte!

Charlotte stuffs the paper in her pocket and looks up.

YOUNGER JOHN
It's almost six-thirty. We're late. Hubba-hubba. The meet starts in an hour.

CHARLOTTE
I can't find my bathing cap.

YOUNGER JOHN
Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE
I just had it. I just had it this afternoon.

YOUNGER JOHN
You don't have an extra?

CHARLOTTE

It's got a hole in it. (she becomes hysterical) I can't swim without it!

YOUNGER JOHN
Check your bag.

CHARLOTTE
I did already.

YOUNGER JOHN
What about the bathroom?

CHARLOTTE
Not there.

YOUNGER JOHN
(weary) I don't know what you do with your things, Charlotte. I really don't.

CHARLOTTE
I just had it!

YOUNGER JOHN
Nevermind. Someone will have an extra. But tomorrow you and your mother are going to buy a bunch of caps. You're going to buy a bunch of caps and you're going to put them in a safe place so this doesn't happen again.

CHARLOTTE
I thought I already did put it in a safe place. (he looks at her) Let me just check the house one more time.

YOUNGER JOHN
We're late—

CHARLOTTE
It'll take me two seconds--

YOUNGER JOHN
Charlotte we don't have time.

CHARLOTTE
It's my lucky cap. I stink without that cap.

YOUNGER JOHN
Honey, you just have to get a little organized. Write a list if you have to. Okay? I'm tired of going through this every time we go to a meet. C'mon, we better get going. You're going to miss the warm-up. (Charlotte doesn't respond) Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE
I can't help it. I don't try to lose things on purpose.

YOUNGER JOHN
I know.

CHARLOTTE
It's just the way I am. That stupid cap. (she is beside herself)

(silence)

CHARLOTTE
I don't even feel like swimming now. I stink anyway.

(silence)

YOUNGER JOHN
You did great last week. Your backstroke never looked better. Mom said so too.

(Charlotte makes a face)

YOUNGER JOHN
Look, honey, I know you try not to lose things.

(silence)

YOUNGER JOHN
I lose things too. Ask Mom.

(silence)

YOUNGER JOHN
Hey, it's just a stupid cap, right? It's not the end of the world.

(silence)

YOUNGER JOHN
We can get more tomorrow. We'll get fifty if we have to.

CHARLOTTE
Fifty?

YOUNGER JOHN
Or a hundred.

CHARLOTTE
Dad.

YOUNGER JOHN
Even a thousand. Whattya say?

CHARLOTTE
(she laughs) Okay.

YOUNGER JOHN
There's my girl.

He exits; Charlotte stands there for a moment and pulls the paper out again to read it; she then sees Michael emerge from the house, carrying a ladder. He goes to the garage. A moment later, she sees him emerge from the garage carrying a toolbox. Alice Jameson appears at the front stoop.

ALICE
Michael? Are you going to be able to fix the faucet?

MICHAEL
I'm getting ready to do it right now.

ALICE
Because it's leaking like crazy.

She exits; Michael follows her into the house; a moment later he emerges, frustrated.

MICHAEL
I can't fix the damn faucet if I don't have the right tools now can I?

(he heads to garage)

(Alice appears at the door)

ALICE
Every tool we own is in that toolbox.

MICHAEL
You don't have a wrench?

ALICE
Of course we do!

MICHAEL
It's not in the toolbox.

ALICE
For heaven's sake. We always keep a wrench in the toolbox.

MICHAEL

Well. It's not there!

ALICE

We'll have to go the hardware store then.

MICHAEL

(emerging from the garage) No. I'm not going back to that hardware store. Not again. That'll be three times today. (he retreats to the garage)

ALICE

Well, how else are we going to fix it? I don't want to have to call a plumber. If I call a plumber, that'll be \$200 just for walking in the door. Highway robbery.

(she waits)

ALICE

Michael? I know we had a wrench in that toolbox. I know it. Maybe I should have another look. What do you think? Should I have another look?

CHARLOTTE

Oh my God.

ALICE

You might have missed it.

(Michael flies out of the garage)

MICHAEL

I didn't miss it. There isn't a wrench in the toolbox!

ALICE

Well, I just thought that... Oh, Lord.

She exits; Michael returns to the garage and emerges a moment later, wrench in hand. He notices Charlotte.

MICHAEL

Hey there.

CHARLOTTE

Hey.

MICHAEL

I thought I heard a car. You just get here?

CHARLOTTE

Just about a minute ago. You?

MICHAEL

Last night. In time for dinner.

CHARLOTTE

Ah.

MICHAEL

How're you doing?

CHARLOTTE

Okay. You know. (a beat) You?

(he shrugs)

CHARLOTTE

You look good. (teasing) I like this. (she touches his beard)

MICHAEL

Thanks. Mom said it makes me look professorial.

CHARLOTTE

She's already got you busy doing things, I see.

MICHAEL

Trying to fix her faucet. Twenty years of beating it to death and she wants it fixed in five minutes.

CHARLOTTE

Hmm. Dad around?

MICHAEL

Out for a walk.

CHARLOTTE

He's okay to do it by himself?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

CHARLOTTE

Oh. Good.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

CHARLOTTE

I wouldn't have thought that--

MICHAEL

He usually takes a little piece of paper with the directions on it, just in case—

Charlotte looks at him and pulls out the paper.

MICHAEL

Where'd you get that?

CHARLOTTE

It was in the yard.

MICHAEL

Shit.

Alice appears at the door.

ALICE

You're home. I didn't hear your car.

CHARLOTTE

I just got here.

ALICE

I thought you were going to be up earlier.

CHARLOTTE

I was hoping to. But I got a late start. And the traffic was heavy.

ALICE

On the Turnpike?

CHARLOTTE

I didn't take the Turnpike. I took the Parkway - -

ALICE

The Parkway? Well, no wonder. The Parkway is terrible on a Saturday. I don't know what would have possessed you to take the Parkway. (to Michael) You found the wrench.

MICHAEL

Yes. (he enters the house)

ALICE

(to Charlotte) Poor thing comes up almost every weekend to fix things. Last week he straightened out the entire garage. The entire garage. It was getting so we couldn't even park the car in there.

CHARLOTTE
Hm.

ALICE
I don't know what we'd do without him. He does so much. Thank goodness he's close by. (to Charlotte) You look thin. You've lost weight. How much weight have you lost?

CHARLOTTE
I haven't lost weight.

ALICE
You need to be careful. You lose too much and you start to look drawn. (a beat) Everything alright?

CHARLOTTE
Everything's fine.

MICHAEL
(entering) Do you know what time Dad set out for his walk?

ALICE
Oh, I don't know. Maybe about half an hour ago or so. Why? Is there a problem?

MICHAEL
Nope. (he exits)

ALICE
Do you think you'll be able to paint the shutters today?

(Michael re-enters)

MICHAEL
The shutters?

ALICE
Well, if you can't get to them, it's alright. But you did say that you were going to try and paint the shutters.

MICHAEL
I thought that was next weekend's project.

ALICE
Yes, I know that's what we planned. But I'm worried that the weather will turn and you won't be able to get them done. And they're so awful.

MICHAEL
I'm sure the weather will be fine.

ALICE

I don't know. There's a cold front in the mid-west. Chicago's already getting snow. Can you believe that Chicago's getting snow?

MICHAEL

Do you want me to try and paint them this weekend?

ALICE

What do you think?

MICHAEL

I think we can wait until next weekend.

ALICE

Well, that's what I thought too. (a beat; he begins to exit) Until I saw that weather report. And I just hate to go through another winter with those shutters looking the way that they do. But if you think that--

MICHAEL

I'll paint the shutters, okay? Let me fix the faucet first. One thing at a time. (he returns to the house)

ALICE

You think the color we got is alright?

MICHAEL

(calling from the house) It's going to have to be because I'm not driving back to the hardware store.

ALICE

(to Charlotte) We got gray. I like gray. How long are you here for?

CHARLOTTE

Just the weekend.

ALICE

Clean sheets are in the linen closet. I didn't get a chance to make your bed.

CHARLOTTE

That's okay.

(Alice turns to the door)

ALICE

You want some lunch?

CHARLOTTE

No. Thanks.

ALICE

I think you worry too much about your weight.

CHARLOTTE

I'm not worried about my weight. I just don't like to eat when I'm not hungry, that's all.

ALICE

I've got some nice olive loaf. Just bought it this morning. There was a sale at the A&P.

CHARLOTTE

That's okay.

ALICE

I've got roast beef for your father. That's all he eats in his sandwiches lately. You sure you don't want some roast beef?

CHARLOTTE

No, thanks.

ALICE

Dinner isn't until 5:30. You'll be hungry by then. A sandwich would hold you over. I've got tuna. I could make you half a sandwich. (she waits)

CHARLOTTE

I'm fine—

ALICE

I make it differently now. I use dry mustard. And little bits of celery. You can't believe how good it tastes.

CHARLOTTE

Mom. (she gives up) Alright. I'll have half a sandwich.

ALICE

I knew you were hungry. How could you not be?

She exits. Michael enters.

MICHAEL

You feel like taking a quick walk around the lake?

CHARLOTTE

(alarmed) Why? Do you think I need to take a quick walk around the lake?

MICHAEL

It's probably fine, but.

CHARLOTTE

Sure. (through the screen door) Mom? I'm just going to have a walk around the lake first.

ALICE

Well, what on earth? It's lunchtime.

CHARLOTTE

I just feel like having a walk, that's all. Okay?

ALICE

Alright. Whatever you want. (she exits)

Younger John appears on the stoop.

YOUNGER JOHN

Always wait an hour after you eat before you go in the water.

CHARLOTTE

I will. (she looks after him) Dad--?

He exits.

Charlotte stands there a minute.

She watches the house as night falls. She enters the house where the family is seated in the living room. She goes to put a blanket on her father who is now sleeping in his chair.

