

CHILD'S PLAY

A Comedy in Two Acts

By Jacqueline Lynch

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Margaret Miller is an aggressive literary agent, a self-styled "barracuda," whose new client, Shane Velasco, star of action films, is expected for dinner and contract negotiations. Her routine business meeting becomes a comedy playground when her associate (and ex-husband), Hank, shows up with his own client, Madame Guadelupe Montevideo, "world famous" hypnotist. When Margaret insults her, Guadelupe turns her own fiery temper and flare for the dramatic upon Margaret, hypnotizing her into a shy five-year-old child. Fortunately for Margaret, she has people to help her through her "regrowing" pains: her roommate Janet, a bored executive looking for adventure only a guy like Shane Velasco can give, and Dr. Norman Simcovitz, Janet's long-time boyfriend, who happens to hate the adult Margaret's guts. Janet and Norman fall in love, but not with each other. Janet's visiting uppercrust grandparents are the final straw that pushes this slapstick comedy, and Janet's nerves, over the edge. But for Margaret, it is all child's play.

TIME: Early evening in the present.

PLACE: House in a New York City suburb.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

- MARGARET MILLER:** A New York literary agent, about 35-40. She is an aggressive, competitive woman, very successful in her career. Normally a barracuda, her personality takes a distinct turn when she is hypnotized into thinking she is a shy 5-year-old. NOTE: When assuming personality as a child, the actress should not affect a different pitch to her voice or take on a childlike way of speaking. She should speak with the same adult voice, dress in her same fashion-forward style, but show her psychological and emotional immaturity in her physical activity and in Norman and Janet's reactions to her.
- JANET COLLINS:** An investment banker, about 30-35. She is Margaret's housemate and is equally successful in her career, but she is unhappy. She does not have Margaret's competitiveness or zeal for success. There is a strong part of her which wants to run away to a tropical island.
- NORMAN SIMCOVITZ:** A psychologist and Janet's current beau, about 35-40, and is an old friend of Janet's moneyed family. He despises Margaret, but his attitude softens considerably toward her when she becomes a child and he must help take care of her.
- SHANE VELASCO:** A free-spirited movie actor, about 30-35. He is about to sign with Margaret's firm to sell his book. He discovers much in common with Janet.
- HANK GRUMBACHER:** Margaret's ex-husband and current partner in their jointly owned literary agency. He is as aggressive as she is, but without the style. He is loud and rough, and their competition with each other over clients continues with Shane.
- GEORGE COLLINS:** Janet's grandfather, about 65-80. He is a retired banker, a formal gentleman of the old school, who is still all-business.
- ENID COLLINS:** Janet's grandmother, 65-80. A sweet lavender-and-garden club lady, who is a little dotty but shows more modern savvy than her husband, at least about relationships.
- GUADELUPE MONTEVIDEO:** Hank's current prospective client. She is a "world famous" hypnotist looking for the right agent to help her sell her life story. She is flamboyant, flirtatious, and has a fiery temper, which she demonstrates on Margaret by hypnotizing her back to her childhood.

SET DESCRIPTION

The living room of Margaret and Janet's house in a suburb outside New York City. The back wall has large windows. DSL is a hallway to the bedrooms and bathroom. There is a couch and coffee table placed at an angle DL, with a bar behind the couch. There is an oval or rectangular dining room table at an angle DR, and a swinging door to the kitchen. Next to this is a small table with a phone or cell phone. USR is the door to the outdoors. While the furnishings and decor should illustrate that this is the home to two successful professionals, their financial success should not be displayed as gaudy or ostentatious.

SOUND EFFECTS

Phone rings, doorbell rings, crashes, sounds of a fight.

PROPS

MARGARET - Wine glasses, apron, earrings, spoons, storybook.

JANET - Briefcase, trench coat, blanket, vase for flowers, forks, plates, apron with cosmetics.

HANK - Quarter.

SHANE - Indiana Jones hat, yellow roses.

NORMAN - Orange juice, handkerchief, notepad, pen, paper bag with Barbie doll, jacket, bath towel, grocery bag.

SET PROPS - Place settings for dinner party, mail, phone, crackers, pâté, children's books, coloring books, crayons, stuffed animals, Legos, blankie, bowl of mints, can of polish.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: The dining room table is partially set. MARGARET enters from the kitchen and continues preparations for a small dinner party. She is dressed for the evening, but wears an apron over her dress. She sets wine glasses on the table. JANET enters from outside using the door USR. She is dressed in a suit and trench coat, and carries a briefcase. She drops the briefcase onto the couch, wearily paces back and forth behind the couch, glancing at mail on the bar, and watching MARGARET'S preparations. SHE plops onto the couch as if depressed.)

JANET: Hello. I hate my job.

MARGARET: *(Still busy.)* Hi. You say that every day. Go change for your date. My client will be here any minute, and I don't want your Norman Von Poindexter here to bore him into a coma before I sign the deal.

JANET: He's not my Norman Von ... I wish you'd stop calling him that. I wish you and Norman could just get along. *(SHE settles into the couch, listlessly.)*

MARGARET: You have excellent taste in everything, my dear, except men.

JANET: Hah, this from the woman who married Hank Grumbacher!

MARGARET: I was young then. He had more hair. You know how it is.

JANET: And yet, now, you can't stand him.

MARGARET: What do you mean, now? I always couldn't stand him, from the moment I met him, to the night he proposed, to our final fight in front of the judge in courtroom 6, when I sent him to the hospital.

JANET: You sent Hank to the hospital?

MARGARET: They kept him overnight for observation. *(As an afterthought.)* The judge was treated and released.

JANET: And you married him because you couldn't stand him? Explain that logic to me.

Child's Play

- 6 -

MARGARET: There is no logic in l'amour. He set my blood on fire. It was a passion thing.

JANET: That's not passion, that's hypertension.

MARGARET: It became hypertension. Anyway, he helps me keep my competitive edge. That's why we're still partners. Our agency is so successful because of the ruthlessness we bring out in each other.

JANET: You're always knifing each other in the back, stealing each other's clients.

MARGARET: Competition is healthy. Just because I can't live with the jerk doesn't mean I can't work with him. He's going to be furious when he hears about the coup I pulled off. Shane Velasco is coming here tonight. Ta-daa!

JANET: Shane Velasco? The movie star? He does all those action films? He's your new client?

MARGARET: Yep. I'm going to sign him for a book deal. Wine him, dine him, and sign him before his 15 minutes of fame are over. Hank's been trying to get him for months. He hasn't had a deal with a major celebrity since *Rags the Dog with Telekinetic Powers*.

JANET: A dog had telekinetic powers?

MARGARET: No, no, that was just the name of the TV show. Then Rags was hit by a car when Hank was meeting him to sign the deal. He was fit-to-be-tied. Hank, not Rags. Rags should have been tied.

JANET: A dog was going to sign a book deal?

MARGARET: No, no, his owner. Jeez, you're literal. Get off the couch and go meet your date, you boring little thing.

JANET: I know I'm boring. I do envy the people you get to meet. Famous actors. Former presidents, former prostitutes. Dogs with telekinetic powers. All I ever see in my job are share quotes and the bottom line. Bottom line is, I'm sick of it.

MARGARET: Look, pal, I'll sympathize with whatever life crisis this is you're having, later. Right now, get your depressed little butt out of here.

(PHONE rings.)

End of Freeview

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