DON'T UNLOCK THE DOOR!

A Thriller in Two Acts

By Sam Craig

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STORY OF THE PLAY

State Senator Tyson Avery, candidate for governor, has received numerous death threats, presumably related to his years as district attorney. As the pursuer draws closer, Avery and his wife, Charlotte, escape to a secluded mountain cabin owned by the family of the Senator's top aide, Clayton Carlson. Once he is securely locked away in the cabin, Avery learns his wife intends to divorce him after fifteen less-than-blissful years. Now that Charlotte has her own career as a successful newspaper columnist, she doesn't relish any part of the governor's mansion, especially with Avery. He refuses, because a divorce, only a few weeks before the election, could cost him everything he's worked for.

To worsen his situation, Charlotte finds a dead rat neatly tucked away bearing a message: "The only good rat is a dead rat." Avery now realizes whoever is after him knows exactly where his victim is hiding.

While the Senator is out trying to phone the police at a store two miles down the road, his secretary, Agnes Hampton, surprises Charlotte. Agnes has brought word that she received a name with the latest message: Sam Mulaney. When he returns, Avery, upset at Miss Hampton's appearance, explains Mulaney was a small-time hood convicted of murder years before and had later died in prison. Perhaps, Charlotte suggests, one of Mulaney's children is stalking Avery. The horror of the situation hits home when a knock at the door admits Clayton Carlson - shot and dying.

Tension builds when a voodoo doll, dressed like Avery, is found and Agnes suddenly sees a horrible figure wandering outside the cabin. Taking the offensive, Avery grabs his gun and charges out to kill the intruder. It's then we learn why Agnes really came to the cabin, and what plan Charlotte has up her sleeve. Suddenly, the intruder breaks in and the terror begins.

CAST OF CHARACTERS *(2 M, 2 W)*

TYSON AVERY: About 40, a dynamic state senator who is currently enjoying the front-running position in the gubernatorial election. He is a man of action, even at the expense of others. Although he is ethical when the situation is safe, he can be completely unscrupulous when he needs to be. He is, in private, a driven man who cares little about those around him, except for how far they can advance his goals.

CHARLOTTE AVERY: Near 40, his wife and a successful newspaper columnist in her own right. She is a very career-conscious woman, though underneath her daily routine there stirs the desire for something more basic and lasting than a successful job. She has covered this need so well, that for fifteen years she convinced herself that she didn't have it at all.

AGNES HAMPTON: About 25, a highly efficient, precise executive secretary. She is bright, well-spoken, and very business-like. In her own way she is as ambitious as her boss, except that her ambition is for him. She cares a great deal about what happens to Tyson Avery, and will go to great lengths to protect him.

CLAYTON CARLSON: Also about 25, a thorough, yet seemingly meek political aide. Very intelligent. Helps manage Avery's campaign with tremendous efficiency, although Clayton himself has very little personal dynamism. He is very much a boy-next-door who has found himself doing important things.

***THE APPARITION:** Ageless, representing the fears of all the characters, coupled with their weaknesses. He is horrible, relentless, and uncaring.

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

ACT I

Scene 1: A Friday afternoon in early spring.
Scene 2: Two hours later.

ACT II

Scene 1: An hour later.
Scene 2: A few minutes after that.

THE SETTING

The play takes place at a cabin high in the mountains above the largest city of the state, approximately a two hour drive from downtown. The cabin is a pleasant place, a warm wooden interior, furnished with rustic pieces that blend in a kind of eclectic harmony. The main door is SR, complete with a lock. Next to the door is a coat rack, used regularly by the players. USC there is a low counter, above which we find a window or two. They should have curtains that provide a homey effect. USL there should be a small kitchen table with two chairs. On the kitchen table sits a box of computer disks. Also SL are several shelves filled with the books and games mentioned throughout. DSL is a fireplace, complete with wood box, hearth rug, and other comfortable accents. A couch and chair are roughly at CS, a small coffee table is in front of the couch. Various pictures hang on the walls also, with perhaps, snowshoes ... and anything else that might give the appearance of a mountain habitation. An arch entrance at SL leads to the bedrooms and bathroom of the cabin.

PROPS

CLAYTON: Several suitcases, logs for fireplace, newspaper, box of canned goods, cereal, etc., notepad, hacksaw blade, gruesome mask, make up kit and small mirror, box of proposals.
AVERY: Camp stove, pot, pill bottle, male doll (bloodied and mutilated), gun.
CHARLOTTE: Gun, dead rat with a note, glasses and pitcher, laptop computer, Trivial Pursuit game, watch, coat, generic bottle of alcohol.
AGNES: Large purse with driver's license, credit cards, mail-in rebate offer, small jar, steno pad, plate, keys, sausage, cheese steak knife, threat note, scarf, gloves, hat, coat, pencil, lipstick, police coat.

(See back of book for Sound Effects.)

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: The blue light of a deep winter afternoon filters through the windows of the cabin. A moment later we hear FOOTSTEPS just outside the door. After the CLINK OF KEYS, CLAYTON CARLSON enters, carrying two armloads of suitcases. SENATOR TYSON AVERY follows him into the cabin.)

CLAYTON: This is it, Senator. Needs to get warmed up a bit ... and I guarantee it'll be nice and cozy for you and Mrs. Avery.

AVERY: It's got a certain charm, Clayton. Real charm. Why don't you set those bags down? You're not a bellhop, you know.

CLAYTON: Anything to help, sir. *(HE sets bags down, then begins uncovering furniture, making the room more presentable.)*

AVERY: *(Good-naturedly.)* You haven't seen me tip!

CLAYTON: It's an honor just to work for the next governor of the state.

AVERY: I appreciate your confidence, Clayton. *(Looking around the room.)* You say your grandfather built this place?

CLAYTON: Back when land up here was cheap. He bought up about twenty acres. Built this one cabin. The land's been in the family ever since.

AVERY: Good investment.

CLAYTON: We keep it as a kind of game refuge. No hunting allowed, so during the winter you can spot all kinds of wildlife up here. I'll get a fire going so Mrs. Avery can warm up.

AVERY: *(Looking out window.)* Looks like snow.

(At fireplace, CLAYTON tosses on logs and "builds" fire.)

CLAYTON: They're predicting six inches down in the valley. You'll get at least fifteen up here.

AVERY: Good. It'll cover our tracks.
CLAYTON: *(Somberly.)* No one will ever find you, sir.

(CHARLOTTE enters SR.)

CHARLOTTE: *(Dryly.)* Why the hell didn't you tell me to bring my ski boots, Tyson? It's snowing!
AVERY: Right on schedule. Glad you could join us, Charlotte.
CHARLOTTE: *(Sarcastically.)* It's that or terminal frostbite. I don't know which would be worse.
AVERY: Detect that chill in the air, Clayton?
CLAYTON: *(Sheepishly.)* Yes, Senator.
AVERY: That's the fallout of 15 years of marriage. All for the wrong reasons.
CHARLOTTE: Now, what would poor Clayton know about that? All he knows is how to dote. Isn't that right, Clayton?
CLAYTON: *(Bravely.)* I graduated from Columbia, Mrs. Avery. I know more than you think.
CHARLOTTE: *(Surprised.)* Are you ... standing up to me?
AVERY: *(Bored.)* Retract your claws, Charlotte. Don't be concerned, Clayton ... my wife is just exercising her jaw.
CHARLOTTE: That's right. Actually, I have a tremendous amount of faith in you, Clayton. I mean, between you and the police, you WILL find out who's threatening my husband, won't you?
CLAYTON: We'll try, ma'am.
CHARLOTTE: Clayton ... look around you. Now, I know it's very sweet of you to offer us this little ... hideaway ... for the weekend. But do you know who I am? I'm Charlotte Avery ... syndicated columnist ... I reach 13 million readers weekly with my column, "Marriage Can Be Murder." I'm used to the finer things in life. Does this place fit into that category, Clayton?
CLAYTON: I guess not.
CHARLOTTE: *(Firmly.)* Then clear this mess up.
AVERY: Poor Charlotte. You act like you're the only one inconvenienced by threatening notes and phone calls.

End of Freeview

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