

TEMPORARY HELP

A Thriller

by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

KARL STREBER--40's, 50's, strong, intelligent, cruel, with sense of irony and mocking humor. A modern, educated farmer.

FAYE STREBER--40's, 50's, intelligent, attractive, highly-strung with artistic pretensions and strong sexuality. Karl's wife and contemporary.

RON STUCKER--40's, 50's, bright, strong, sensitive flirtatious.

VINCENT CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO--20's, rugged, handsome, not very bright but cunning and dangerous. Itinerant worker.

ACT I

SCENE ONE

The present.

The Streber farmhouse, Cascade, Nebraska.

SCENE: The living room-dining room and adjoining kitchen of the Streber farmhouse. The kitchen is separated from the other rooms by a door. The living room and dining room are not physically separated. A door, SR leads from the outdoors to the living room. A door SL leads from the outdoors into the kitchen. A staircase leads from living room to bedrooms upstairs. There is a small section of porch SR so we can see anyone at the front door. There are modern appurtenances in the house, such as a television, etc, but the house is old and the feel of the decorations and furnishings is somber and Gothic.

A SHOT IS HEARD before Curtain goes up. The shot comes from a .22 rifle and is a muffled pop, not a resounding bang. It must be clearly heard but slightly ambiguous as to its source.

AT RISE: KARL STREBER is rolling something up in a canvas dropcloth on the kitchen floor. The object is large, unwieldy, as big and awkward as a human body, but as it is already covered by the canvas, we can only speculate. ENTER FAYE STREBER.

KARL

Get me some rope.

FAYE

(Distressed) In the house?

KARL

It's not a science, Faye.

FAYE offers him a roll of twine.

KARL

Get some clothesline rope.

FAYE

Was there any . . . any pain?

KARL

(Mocking her tender feelings) Awww.

FAYE

I mean it. There's wasn't any pain, was there?

KARL puts his arms around her from behind.

KARL
(A bit too elaborately) Awwww. Of course not.

FAYE
Karl, your hands. You have to clean them.

STUCKER ENTERS onto porch, KNOCKS ON DOOR. FAYE and KARL freeze.

FAYE
Who. . .?

KARL
Shhhh!

They wait, silently.

ANOTHER KNOCK

KARL
Go look out the window.

FAYE
What are we going to do?

KARL
If you'd got me the damned rope when I told you to...

STUCKER
Streber? It's Ron Stucker.

FAYE
Sheriff Stucker!

KARL
Calm down.

FAYE
Karl...

KARL
He doesn't know anything.

FAYE
Why is he here?

KARL
Probably to see you.

FAYE
Stop it!

KARL
You just go out there and
entertain him for a few minutes.
You know how to do that.

FAYE
You go.

KARL
Sure. You want to stay here
and take care of this?

FAYE turns away from the canvas with a shudder.

KARL (cont'd)
I'll come in when I'm done.

STUCKER
Streber!

He KNOCKS again.

KARL
Just be as honest as you can. I'll
need a few minutes.

FAYE CROSSES SR, out of the kitchen towards living room door. As FAYE plays out the following scene with STUCKER, KARL deals with the object in canvas. Using the twine, he ties it up as best he can, then drags it towards the back door. He looks out the back door window, decides it isn't safe to go that way. He opens the cabinet under the sink, removes the articles there and manages to squeeze the object into the cabinet.

FAYE
(Opening the door) What a racket!

STUCKER
Sorry.

FAYE
You make enough noise to wake the
dead.

STUCKER
I thought maybe you were napping.

FAYE
A lady needs her beauty sleep.

STUCKER
Not you, Faye. You get prettier
every year.

STUCKER steps past her and into the house.

FAYE