

Act Two - Scene Eleven

(Outside the front door of Karlaboy. The Present.

BILL alone.)

BILL. Karla said she wanted a man who would fall in love with everything that was ugly about her. *(a pause)* Well I guess that's me. When you write about people who are dead, people who exist only in black and white or saturated Technicolor... or grainy pictures from the morgue, you can make certain rationales to yourself: they're something more than human... or more often, they're something less than human. But Mr. Bachman had the nerve to exist. To breathe so close that I could feel his breath. To weep in front of me. And goddamnit, I never asked for that! *(a pause)* To hell with him! Why should I believe in Harold's ghosts? All I saw was Harold Bachman pointing a gun at his own head. And even if the ghosts were there - they're not my ghosts! I won't be intimidated by them... or by her.

(Lighting reveals the BILL'S AGENT is talking to REPORTERS.)

AGENT. ...Mr. Lauder's addendum will reveal, among other things, that it was Harold Bachman, not Karla, who took a gun in March of 1953 and ended his wife's misery.

(There are gasps from the crowd, murmurs. People are stunned at this bombshell.)

AGENT. We expect to release the addendum in time for the book's second printing.

(REPORTERS shout out questions on top of each other.)

AGENT. Folks, I'm sorry, Mr. Lauder has been through quite an ordeal tonight. We'll have a full statement released later today, so -

(A question rises above the rest.)

REPORTER #1. Mr. Lauder, did you know that Harold

Bachman was planning to take his own life tonight?

BILL. No. Of course not.

REPORTER #2. What has he been doing inside Karlaboy for all these decades?

(BILL ponders this. Maybe for the first time all night.)

BILL. I really don't know.

REPORTER #1. Can you elaborate on your agent's statement that Bachman gave your book his blessing tonight and called it - quote - an act of great love and integrity - unquote.

(BILL has no response.)

REPORTER #1. Mr. Lauder?

AGENT. Okay, folks, it's really been a long night for all of us. So if you'll just...

(REPORTERS try to shout questions. The AGENT tries to drag BILL along.)

BILL. No! Wait a minute!

(BILL pulls away from the AGENT's grasp. The crowd quiets down, waiting for his statement.)

BILL. Harold Bachman did not call my book "an act of great love and integrity." He did not give my book his blessing. *(a pause)* And after talking with him ... neither can I. My thesis is false. My book is... not the truth.

(There are murmurs from the crowd. Questions are shouted out once again.)

BILL. I'm sorry. I have nothing more to say.

(BILL heads into the darkness and finds himself right in front of - KARLA DAVEN. In that moment, all else freezes.)

(The sudden appearance of her - mere inches in front of him - knocks the wind out of BILL. He is frightened.)

(KARLA moves toward him. He stares at her fearfully.)

(She continues advancing opening up her arms. BILL is frozen from both awe and terror.)

(KARLA is now upon him. With her open arms - KARLA gently embraces BILL.)

(He is shocked. Stiff in the embrace. She continues to hold him. All at once, BILL starts to cry tears of great release.)

(KARLA continues to hold BILL soothingly, maternally, stroking his head.)

(Lights fade.)

End of Play