

© 2013 by C.S. Hanson. Reprinted with permission from the author. All rights reserved. For performance rights, contact C.S. Hanson (cshansonplays@yahoo.com). No changes may be made to the text of the play without prior written permission from the author.

## CHARACTERS

**BIRDIE COMBS:** 18, female. She is dressed in jeans and a shirt.

**PINKY WALKER:** 18, male. He is chunky and is dressed up for Halloween as a glamor girl in a tight dress, stiletto heels, and plenty of dangling jewelry.

## TIME

The present.

## BETTING

A room in a nursing home with minimal furnishings.

*BIRDIE and PINKY are alone in a sparsely furnished room. The front door has just slammed shut.*

**BIRDIE:** Is she going to be—? She's not gonna . . . ?

**PINKY:** Die?

**BIRDIE:** Don't say that. I never meant to . . .

**PINKY:** I saw it. I saw it with my own eyes.

*BIRDIE tries to open the door, but it is locked.*

**BIRDIE:** She was still breathing, wasn't she? Let me outta here. I need to see her.

**PINKY:** Can't see her now. She's out for observation.

**BIRDIE:** What's with the door? Why doesn't it . . .

**PINKY:** This is the Alzheimer's Unit. When that door locks, there's no getting out from in here.

**BIRDIE:** Call someone. Please. Call someone.

**PINKY:** I got my orders: "Keep her here 'til the cops come."

**BIRDIE:** All I was doing was . . . giving her a neck massage.

**PINKY:** I seen what I seen, and now I need to commit it to memory.

**BIRDIE:** Commit what to memory? My grandma is crazy. That's why she said what she said.

**PINKY:** Save it for the police. Here. Stay busy.

*PINKY tries to give BIRDIE a stack of magazines—People, Entertainment Weekly, Star, etcetera—but BIRDIE doesn't take them.*

*BIRDIE pulls her wallet out of her bag.*

**BIRDIE:** I got twenty-five, six, seven—twenty-seven buck. Let me out, and all this cash is yours.

**PINKY:** What don't you understand about lockdown? That door is made to lock people in. Gotta lock the patients in their rooms. Else they'll be walking out on the streets, on the railroad tracks, all hours of the day and night.

**BIRDIE:** Geez.

*She takes a bottle out of her handbag and takes a swig.*

**PINKY:** What's that?

**BIRDIE:** Kool-Aid. . . . What? Might as well. I'm as good as in jail.

**PINKY:** Doesn't work that way, honey. First I gotta testify. Before that, they gotta read you your *Miranda* rights. I'm gonna make sure they do, too. I watch my *Law and Order*. If they don't read those rights, you might go free and I'll miss my chance to go on the witness stand.

**BIRDIE:** Your chance? Like you've been waiting for something like this to happen so you can . . .

**PINKY:** I never said. Just that, I'm familiar with the proceedings. I watch all the cop shows. When I'm not working, I sometimes watch for ten hours in a row: *CSI*, *Criminal Minds*, *Breaking Bad*, *NCIS*, *NCIS-Los Angeles*, *Bones*, *The Mentalist*, reruns of *Law and . . .*

**BIRDIE:** You think anyone will believe anything you have to say? Look at you.

**PINKY:** This is my Halloween costume. Where's yours? *Pause.* Couldn't think of nothing? I say to myself every day, "Pinky Walker, invent something new." And I do, every day. Last week, I experimented with lip gloss. You know you can mix them together right on your lips? Mmmm. For Halloween, I'm not just a regular glamor girl, I'm glamor girl to the extreme.

**BIRDIE:** Glad I didn't dress up. At this rate, won't make it to the party anyway.

**PINKY:** You got invited to a Halloween party?

**BIRDIE:** Haven't been to a party in, like, two years. What does it matter? I'm going to jail, because you got this idea life is like a *Law and Order* episode—which it isn't.

**PINKY:** Let the facts stand for themselves, honey. I am the only

witness. I saw you trying to strangle that sweet old lady to death. To death.

**BIRDIE:** She's not sweet. She's never been sweet. So don't call her sweet.

**PINKY:** Don't matter. You're the prime suspect. They gonna take you in a room and there'll be two cops—good cop and bad cop. And one of them is gonna bang on the desk and rough you up, while the other says sweet things in your ear and pretty soon you'll be crying and grinding your teeth up and writing every detail on a piece of paper. And, if there are things you don't remember? No problem, girlfriend. I have now committed to memory everything I saw, and I can even demonstrate how you did it if called upon to do so.

*He mimics with his hands the act of strangling someone around the neck.*

**BIRDIE:** Some people should be dead. Don't you think? *Pause.* You work here. Don't you ever think so?

**PINKY:** I am a health-care professional.

**BIRDIE:** Professional? You're an aide. You're one step up from janitor.

**PINKY:** Oh, girlfriend, you make me wanna slap your face, but I am on duty as a health-care professional and I am going to keep my hands at my side.

**BIRDIE:** Slap me. The police will like that part of the story.

**PINKY:** They know me. From when I worked over in assisted living. The demented people was always escaping and the cops would round 'em up. I was a star witness as to the direction they might have gone. Since I got promoted to the Alzheimer's Unit, I don't see them as much. But they remember me. 'Cause I got style. Everywhere I go. Pinky Walker has a certain style. Never met a shade of lipstick that didn't look good on me. I make old men smile like sweethearts. Old ladies admire me for my sophistication. It's important for the job. Keeps us all alive.

**BIRDIE:** What's the good of being alive if you're out of your head? If you have to be locked up so you don't go walking out, getting run over?

**PINKY:** Your grandma's not every minute out of her head. We

discuss the news.

**BIRDIE:** Referring to the magazines. You call that news?

**PINKY:** Stop talking. I'm not listening to an attempted murderer in the first degree. I gotta keep my memories intact.

**BIRDIE:** Grandma used to put brandy in my hot cocoa. That's a good memory.

**PINKY:** I'm sure your cell mates will be very interested.

**BIRDIE:** Once grandma and I were in rehab at the same time. She got a new hip and I, well, I was in a different kind of facility.

**PINKY:** None of this is news to me. I know you're in trouble with the law, Birdie.

**BIRDIE:** You don't know nothing about me or my family.

**PINKY:** I do so. They gave you that name 'cause you chirped like a bird instead of cried like a baby. Ha. What a name you got, Birdie. They shoulda named you after a wild animal. I bet you got expelled more times than me. You ever learn to cry, Birdie? Not quite human if you didn't.

**BIRDIE:** If I'm so inhuman, maybe I should go all the way and kill you, too.

**PINKY:** Police gonna be here. I think I hear a siren. You got no time for another killing.

**BIRDIE:** There's no siren. They won't waste the siren on me. I been in the backseat of a police car before. I been in handcuffs. The more you twist, the tighter they get. Kind of like strangling someone around the neck. Crack, done, dead. I should have been quicker. I'd like to do it again.

**PINKY:** Again? There. You admitted it. You're guilty.

**BIRDIE:** I might as well go for broke. Come here.

**PINKY:** Don't kill me. You can take my new alligator bag if you want. It's in my locker. I'll get it when they open the door.

**BIRDIE:** Is it as fake as those long fingernails of yours?

**PINKY:** Keep your hands off me. The judge is gonna hear about this.

**BIRDIE:** If I go to jail, who's gonna visit her? Not my mom. Not the other relatives. Everyone's so busy, right? No one likes the

Alzheimer's Unit. Know what they say? "She won't remember anyway."

**PINKY:** Don't try to soften me up. Murder is big. Maybe they'll call the DA. That's "district attorney," honey. And some investigators for sure.

**BIRDIE:** You don't know what you're talking about. If dispatch got a hold of this, my PO will get here before the rest.

**PINKY:** PO?

**BIRDIE:** Told you it's not like on TV. Probation officer. He put me on a three-year plan. I promised to follow it so I don't have to go to jail. My PO, get this, told the judge that I am a person of good character. Two years now, going to meetings, staying clean. I'm so clean I don't even have to shower. Now you're gonna ruin all that?

**PINKY:** This PO guy? He can keep you outta jail after you strangled your own grandma?

**BIRDIE:** No, Pinky. He probably can't. I'll get hauled in. Busted. For what good? All because you wanna live out your dream of being on that witness stand?

**PINKY:** Some people just get crazy on Halloween. But that's no excuse for murder.

**BIRDIE:** Halloween's got nothing to do with it. Sometimes when I see her I can almost taste the hot cocoa and that gets me to craving the brandy. But no, that's not why you saw me doing, you know. I just plain can't stand her being out of her mind. Today, she yells at me, "Why'd you have to drive with the baby in your lap? You shouldn't be driving with the baby in your lap."

**PINKY:** She remembered the baby?

**BIRDIE:** I don't have a baby. I could have had three babies by now but God knows I didn't let . . .

**PINKY:** She was thinking you were Britney.

**BIRDIE:** And then she looks right at me and calls me a bitch.

**PINKY:** Well now that is something.

**BIRDIE:** I come here every week to visit her and she calls me a—? I mean, it's just, I didn't need that. Don't go to parties anymore. Go to school every day. And after that I'm working cash register in the grocery store. Counting change for tight asses who, I love this,

who throw those dumb magazines in their cart at the last minute, sorta cover 'em up, like they're too good to read *National Enquirer*. Everybody reads crap. You know how I get my kicks? I squeeze lemons and make the sourest lemonade I can, so sour it's hard to drink. But I drink it. And I put Tabasco sauce in my coffee. Never see my old friends any more. There's so much I . . . avoid. And she calls me a bitch?

**PINKY:** Maybe it wasn't like "bitch" bitch. Maybe it was warmly bitch.

**BIRDIE:** I think you're the bitch. You're the high-maintenance bitch. With your nails and painted face and hair and tight-ass way you dress. I used to dress like you. Dress like I was having fun. Not anymore.

**PINKY:** Something you need to understand: When Britney put her baby in her lap and drove the SUV, you remember that?

**BIRDIE:** Who?

**PINKY:** Long time ago. Britney Spears. She drove with her baby in her lap, she mighta been drunk and I don't think she buckled up, and she got arrested.

**BIRDIE:** So?

**PINKY:** Your grandma loved that story. She made me read it over and over. And every time, she'd say, "I love that bitch." And I just went with it and pretty soon we was calling each other bitch. "Good morning, bitch! How ya doing, sweetie bitch? You gonna be okay, bitch? Okay, I see you tomorrow, bitch." Kinda means "I love you."

**BIRDIE:** But you saw me. And my grandma knows I tried to . . . She's probably gone by now. Like, dead gone.

**PINKY:** No way. She's kicking ass. And tomorrow she'll be pissing and pooping on the floor. And I'll be cleaning up and I'll give her a big smile and go to her, "How's my darling bitch, huh, how you doing?"

**BIRDIE:** Take care of her when I can't be here, okay?

**PINKY:** What you talking about?

**BIRDIE:** I'm going to jail.

**PINKY:** I, uh, I just giving you a hard time 'cuz you still in school

and you got a lot going for you. I dropped out, so I gotta make the most of this, see? You got a Halloween party to go to.

**BIRDIE:** The cops are coming for me. I know how this works. The party? It's just the grocery store people. Not a big deal.

**PINKY:** Look, crazy people always accusing people of murder. Most people who come in here to visit, you can tell, they just wanna strangle their relations and put them out of their misery. Out of everyone's misery. But then, I'd be out of a job if that happened. Girlfriend, you's the first time we got close to a real murder. Hey, look at that, my shift is over. What time's the party?

**BIRDIE:** My grandma is going to be talking about this. If I confess, at least she won't seem crazier than she already is.

**PINKY:** She don't remember what she ate for breakfast. She's not gonna remember a little neck massage. Her memories, they're from long ago. She goes on and on about screwing a governor and getting shut-up money to keep quiet. Wouldn't be surprised if he's your grandpa. And she has a keen memory for Britney Spears. Don't ask me why.

**BIRDIE:** What are you saying? Can I leave?

**PINKY:** Girlfriend, I shop at your store on a regular basis. I would give anything to go to that Halloween party. I'll take care of the police. You think any of those boys who work behind the counter slicing up meat gonna be at the party? Got my eye on one of them.

**BIRDIE:** I don't have a costume.

**PINKY:** Oh yes you do. Birdie Combs, you're going as The Girl Who Tried to Strangle Her Grandma.

**BIRDIE:** *Smiling.* Okay, bitch.

END OF PLAY