

Cast of Characters

MOTHER
DAUGHTER

Setting

A porch.

Time

Present Day.

Acknowledgments

On The Porch One Crisp Spring Morning premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2009. It was directed by Sean Daniels with the following cast:

MOTHER Katie Kreisler
DAUGHTER Nancy Noto

and the following production staff:

Scenic Designer Paul Owen
Costume Designer Emily Ganfield
Lighting Designer Nick Dent
Sound Designer Benjamin Marcum
Properties Designer Mark Walston
Stage Manager Paul Mills Holmes
Assistant Stage Manager Debra Anne Gasper
Dramaturg Julie Felise Dubiner
Assistant Dramaturg Rachel Lerner-Ley

*Special thanks to Jose Aviles, Anne Gundersheimer, Colleen Hughes,
Lindsay Harris & Elle Mc Comsey.*

**ON THE PORCH
ONE CRISP SPRING MORNING**

by Alex Dremann

(A MOTHER and DAUGHTER sit on a porch on an early spring morning sipping General Foods International Coffee. Both inhale coffee aroma in unison with much satisfaction.)

DAUGHTER. Good coffee, Mother.

MOTHER. Reminds me of that time in Rome.

DAUGHTER. Antoine, our strapping young waiter.

MOTHER. Ah yes, Antoine.

(Both inhale their coffee aroma and exhale in unison with fond remembrance.)

DAUGHTER. Mother?

MOTHER. Yes, Darling?

DAUGHTER. I'm not feeling quite so...fresh.

MOTHER. I too sometimes have those not-so-fresh days, Dear.

DAUGHTER. No, I mean mentally, spiritually.

MOTHER. I see. Is there something troubling you?

DAUGHTER. You could say that, I suppose.

MOTHER. You know you can talk to me about anything, Dear. Everything. I'm here for you.

DAUGHTER. That's good to hear, Mother.

(DAUGHTER sips her coffee.)

MOTHER. Meaning I'm here for you now.

DAUGHTER. Right. OK, so this is the deal, Mother.

MOTHER. Yes, sweet-pleat?

DAUGHTER. I'm in kind of a bind.

MOTHER. I know.

DAUGHTER. You know?

MOTHER. I've read your file.

DAUGHTER. My file?

MOTHER. Of course. I'm an agent for the CIA.

DAUGHTER. Oh, I see.

(*MOTHER sips her coffee.*)

MOTHER. This really is good coffee.

DAUGHTER. You know *everything*-everything, or just everything?

MOTHER. I know you're a trained assassin and you were hired by Lenape to kill me and now you're not feeling quite so fresh mentally, spiritually or (*Whispers:*) vaginally (*Normal again:*) because the one person you'd even consider going to for advice on such a tricky moral dilemma would be your loving mother—the same woman you were hired to kill.

(*MOTHER sips her coffee. Beat.*)

DAUGHTER. I've poisoned your General Foods International Coffee.

(*MOTHER puts her cup down. DAUGHTER sips her coffee.*)

MOTHER. That's unfortunate, because I too have poisoned your General Foods International Coffee.

(*DAUGHTER puts her cup down.*)

DAUGHTER. Well, this is rather awkward.

MOTHER. Indeed.

DAUGHTER. Three or four minutes, you reckon?

MOTHER. If we're lucky.

(*Beat.*)

DAUGHTER. Well, it is good coffee...

(*They both pick up their coffee again and inhale.*)

MOTHER. Is that a hint of almond?

DAUGHTER. That's the strychnine.

MOTHER. Ah.

(*They both inhale the coffee aroma deeply, then sip.*)

I suppose I should tell you that I love you.

DAUGHTER. I suppose I should tell you that I am, in fact, a double-agent for a top secret special-ops division of the CIA, posing undercover as a trained assassin for Mr. Lenape. I work under CIA agent Raymond Wilma.

MOTHER. Oh, I see.

DAUGHTER. I thought that name might sound familiar.

MOTHER. Then you know the truth about Agent Wilma.

DAUGHTER. I want you to say it.

MOTHER. Raymond Wilma and I have been having an affair for many years.

DAUGHTER. And?

MOTHER. And what?

DAUGHTER. And Raymond Wilma hired Mr. Lenape to kill you.

MOTHER. Yes, but I convinced Raymond Wilma to hire you through Mr. Lenape to kill me.

DAUGHTER. That doesn't make any sense.

MOTHER. It was the only way I could expose you and your double-agency—which I have long suspected but have been unable to prove until this very moment. And I knew you would never poison your own mother's General Foods International Coffee without bringing the antidote. Your moral fiber would not allow it. Hence your lack of freshness. I'm guessing there's a vial in your coat pocket as we speak. Hand it over.

DAUGHTER. You have banked your life on my moral fiber?

MOTHER. I have raised a classy young double agent with both ethics and aplomb.

DAUGHTER. The question is, do *you* have the antidote to the poison in *my* coffee?

MOTHER. No.

DAUGHTER. No?

MOTHER. You betrayed me by actually going through with poisoning my coffee, and for that you must pay.

DAUGHTER. I think you're bluffing. I think you do have the antidote.

MOTHER. Perhaps that's what I want you to think.

DAUGHTER. Well, kudos Mother, for successfully exposing my double-agency, but what you don't know is that I am in fact a triple agent, working for Mr. Lenape, posing as a CIA agent, working undercover for Mr. Lenape. It was my plan all along to make you think I had secretly joined the CIA to please you and your moral fiber, but in fact it was to *kill you*, Mother. You see, I've known all about your affair with Raymond Wilma since the third grade when I was first

learning how to wiretap and I vowed then and there to exact my revenge on you for betraying Dad. So there is no antidote.

(DAUGHTER *takes a languorous sip of her coffee.*)

MOTHER. You're adopted.

(DAUGHTER *barely avoids the obligatory spit-take.*)

DAUGHTER. W-what?

MOTHER. It's time you knew.

DAUGHTER. I—

MOTHER. But you are my biological daughter.

DAUGHTER. The poison has begun to feed at your brain, Mother.

MOTHER. I was in Tokyo on assignment and my yen for the sake is legendary. When I found out I was pregnant, I spent months trying to hide it—

DAUGHTER. But—

MOTHER. —baggy clothing, standing strategically behind large ferns, the whole thing. Your "father" was oblivious. Toward the end, I had Agent Wilma put me on a long-term assignment in Holland, where I gave birth and put you up for adoption. I came home and four months later your still-oblivious father and I adopted you. So you're both my biological daughter and my adopted daughter, but your father is not your father.

DAUGHTER. I'm... Japanese?

MOTHER. Technically Dutch.

DAUGHTER. You're bluffing. You're bluffing about all of it! My father is my father, and you do have the antidote to the poison you put in my coffee. Your "moral fiber" wouldn't allow otherwise.

MOTHER. Of course I don't.

DAUGHTER. That's because you didn't poison my coffee at all.

(DAUGHTER *takes a big gulping swig of coffee.*)

DAUGHTER. Sweet Jesus, that's good coffee.

(*Alarmed, MOTHER takes a vial from her coat pocket and slaps it to the table.*)

MOTHER. All right. A trade.

DAUGHTER. I knew it.

MOTHER. Antidote for antidote.

DAUGHTER. The difference here is that I want you dead and you still love me.

MOTHER. Just because I love you doesn't mean I don't want you dead.

DAUGHTER. And just because I want you dead doesn't mean I don't love you.

MOTHER. As I suspected.

DAUGHTER. And I do need to live long enough to kill you...

MOTHER. I propose we both live to kill again.

(DAUGHTER *reluctantly takes a vial from her coat pocket.*)

MOTHER. Ah, that's my girl. Triple-agent or no, you do have a moral fiber after all.

DAUGHTER. Who'd have thought it would come to this, Mother?

MOTHER. On three, we exchange vials. One.

(*They each roll the vials part way across the table toward the other.*)

DAUGHTER. Where is my father now?

MOTHER. Inside, reading the paper, I'd imagine. Two.

(*They roll the vials closer toward each other.*)

DAUGHTER. Not my father, my *father*.

MOTHER. Bethesda.

DAUGHTER. Bethesda?

MOTHER. Does that alarm you?

DAUGHTER. Should it?

MOTHER. Does it?

DAUGHTER. Lenape is in Bethesda.

MOTHER. Perhaps that's a coincidence. Three.

(*Neither move.*)

I said three.

DAUGHTER. Mr. Lenape is my father?

MOTHER. I didn't say that.

DAUGHTER. Are *you* a double agent?

MOTHER. I didn't say that either.

DAUGHTER. Has Lenape ever been to Tokyo?

MOTHER. Yes.

DAUGHTER. Oh my God.

(Without moving their vial hands, they both take a sip of coffee. Then, in one fluid jolt, both women snap back their vials, stand, and pull guns on each other.)

MOTHER. Honey, please, the vial. We're running out of time.

DAUGHTER. My father is an assassin?

MOTHER. You are an assassin.

DAUGHTER. An assassin with moral fiber.

MOTHER. Then hand over the vial, dear.

DAUGHTER. You work for Lenape too, don't you?

MOTHER. Yes and no.

DAUGHTER. What do you mean?

MOTHER. I work for your father.

DAUGHTER. Agent Wilma is my father?

MOTHER. Yes.

DAUGHTER. But Lenape was the one in Tokyo?

MOTHER. Yes.

DAUGHTER. Then Lenape and Agent Wilma are...

MOTHER. Yes.

DAUGHTER. The same man.

MOTHER. I'm sorry.

DAUGHTER. But that means—

(DAUGHTER sits back down. MOTHER keeps gun pointed at DAUGHTER.)

DAUGHTER. He orchestrated this whole thing, didn't he?

MOTHER. Orchestrated what whole thing?

DAUGHTER. He wants us to kill each other.

MOTHER. How so?

DAUGHTER. As Wilma, he probably tricked you into convincing him to hire himself as Lenape to kill you to expose my double-agency. Don't you see?

MOTHER. No.

DAUGHTER. And then he hired me to kill you, knowing my moral fiber would prevent me from killing you without bringing the antidote, which I did, but knowing that, he switched this antidote—and that antidote—for poison.

MOTHER. But.

DAUGHTER. He wants us both dead.

MOTHER. Agent Wilma is not that smart.

DAUGHTER. But Lenape is.

MOTHER. WHAT?

DAUGHTER. Mother, we have to work together. We have to form an alliance that will bring down Lenape-slash-Wilma. And he mustn't know that we know. I think we should exchange antidotes.

MOTHER. But you said your antidote is more poison.

DAUGHTER. Of course! If I actually do kill you, he will never know I'm on to him. It's perfect. Here, drink this.

MOTHER. But—

DAUGHTER. You'll be dead, but you'll be *in on it*, so it's OK.

MOTHER. I don't believe you. I don't believe my Raymond wants me dead, but I do believe that he wants you to think he switched the antidote for poison so it wouldn't raise suspicion when I actually died. So I'll take it and *pretend* to die.

DAUGHTER. OK then.

MOTHER. OK.

(They cautiously put their guns on the table. They cautiously hold out their vials.)

DAUGHTER. On three. One.

MOTHER. Two.

DAUGHTER & MOTHER. *(In unison:)* Three.

(They exchange vials and uncork them.)

MOTHER. On three. One.

DAUGHTER. Two.

MOTHER & DAUGHTER. *(In unison:)* Three.

(They drink. They look at each other. Beat. Beat. They collapse dead, instantaneously and simultaneously. BLACKOUT.)

End of Play