

DEATH'S DOOR, by Deborah Savadge

ACT ONE, S c e n e O n e

SET

*The entryway and living room of a tastefully furnished Manhattan co-op apartment belonging to JEANNA and GIL. On view at LIGHTS UP is the exterior vestibule in front of an elevator at right. A wall sconce illuminates this hallway. At extreme right a door to the neighboring apartment is visible.*

LIGHTS

*up on extreme stage right only.*

*As the elevator doors open a dark-haired man, wearing a green raincoat, running shoes and gloves enters the foyer carrying an open athletic bag from which he takes a large stuffed animal and a ski mask. He puts on the ski mask and uses the stuffed animal to keep the elevator from closing completely. He unscrews the lights from the sconce beside the elevator and produces a flashlight from the bag. He shines the light briefly on the door to his left which leads to the onstage apartment, then proceeds to the door at the extreme right edge of the stage. He rings the doorbell once firmly and takes a foreign-made automatic pistol with a silencer from the athletic bag. He waits. After a moment he holds the gun up to the peephole of the door. Light appears through the peephole and then is blocked by the person inside putting his eye to the opening. The man in the raincoat fires the pistol into the peephole. There is the sound of a person falling. The man listens briefly, then puts the pistol into his pocket, takes the stuffed animal from the elevator door and puts it into the bag, enters the elevator, presses the lobby button, removing his ski mask as the elevator door closes.  
The stage is in black.*

MUSIC UP

*Several measures of Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony, the fourth movement, then*

MUSIC OUT

## S C E N E   T W O

*The elevator doors open. The LIGHT in the elevator reveals GIL who steps out into the dark entryway. HE is in his thirties, dark, intense. HE wears an expensive, conservative suit and a trench coat and carries a suitcase and a briefcase. When the elevator door starts to close HE discovers the darkness and stabs at the elevator door button.*

GIL

Dammit.

*When the elevator door opens HE puts his bag in the door to hold it open. In the light provided by the elevator HE flicks his finger at the light bulbs in the sconces. When HE discovers that this has no effect HE tries screwing the bulbs in which causes them to light. HE releases the elevator and carries his bags to the door to his left and lets himself in with a key. Before HE can turn on a light in the entryway HE bumps into a baby carriage and sends it rolling into the living room. JEANNA, who has been asleep on a converted sofa bed, cries out.*

JEANNA

Who's there?

*GIL turns on the light. JEANNA is thirty-six, fair, six-and-a-half months pregnant.*

GIL

What the...?

JEANNA

Oh, Jesus.

GIL  
What are you doing...?

JEANNA  
Jesus.

GIL  
Jeanna?

JEANNA  
To wake up like that is -

GIL  
I wasn't expecting -

JEANNA  
Jesus, Gil, you scared me.

GIL  
Why are you sleeping there?

JEANNA  
I like to sleep in here when you're -

GIL  
*(referring to the baby carriage)*  
What the hell is this?

JEANNA  
My mom gave it to us.

GIL  
Doesn't she / realize

JEANNA

*(overlapping)*

I keep telling her we / don't have

GIL

Did you take back the playpen?

JEANNA

- space for every kind of baby contraption.

GIL

Well, tell her again.

JEANNA

She's just so excited.

GIL

Everything is moved around.

JEANNA

I've been getting / things (ready for the baby) -

GIL

God, how do people sleep on airplanes?

JEANNA

I've been making room for the baby.

GIL

*(coming over to her to kiss her)*

Making way for the short person, eh?

JEANNA

Making space for the piglet.

GIL

Getting things in shape for the invasion.

JEANNA

That's not the way to talk about your son.

GIL

Daughter. I thought - daughter.

JEANNA

*(overlapping)*

I don't know. The way she kicks and flails around I think she's a boy.

GIL

Or the next female soccer champion.  
You know, it's not too late to get the results.

*HE is taking off his  
tie.*

JEANNA

I like the suspense.  
God, you scared me when you came in. I wasn't expecting you  
/ until

GIL

Yeah. When I called you the plane was supposed to be  
delayed / but

JEANNA

What time is it?

GIL

Six-thirty.

JEANNA

You said you'd be late and you're two hours early.

GIL

You wouldn't believe the ugly grey airport over there. The  
"lines" are just crowds. They announce a delay - and I'm  
concentrating like mad just to keep up with the  
announcements. Which are in this kind of idiomatic...My  
Russian got a lot better this trip. I didn't always need  
the translator Rizahtsky gave me...Which is good 'cause you  
can't trust them to really...

*HE sits on the edge of the fold-  
out sofa to remove his shoes.*

And this is sensitive stuff.

JEANNA

Those language tapes really / made a

GIL

I told Berman if we can just keep our guy from getting bumped off by some Mafia hit man we've got a pretty/ good

JEANNA

Did Berman fly back with you?

GIL

No. He had to come back...I think he got back yesterday.

JEANNA

I wish you could have come back -

GIL

How are you doing? Did you see the midwives while I / was

JEANNA

My blood pressure's fine. Everything's fine. I talked to another woman who's having her first baby who's almost as old as me.

GIL

Ahhh. Another ancient crone.

JEANNA

*(Witchy voice)* Old, but wise. *(Resumes own voice)*  
You should come. I get to hear the heartbeat every time.

GIL

I'd like that. To hear the heartbeat.

JEANNA

Are you okay? You seem down.

GIL

I'm just tired.

JEANNA

Lie down with me for awhile.

GIL

Tempting, very tempting. *(HE lies back, propped up on pillows.)*

JEANNA

I think my students are giving me a surprise baby shower. Their parents anyway.

GIL

*(getting up again)*

Are you going to be able to act surprised? *(SHE laughs.)*  
I should get a shower. I've got to talk to Berman.

JEANNA

Why are you so jumpy?

GIL

I'm not jumpy.

JEANNA

That sounded jumpy.

GIL

I'm probably a little -

Jesus Jeanna. Moscow is like the Wild West...You wouldn't believe...And there's no guarantee our guy is going to be able to do business over there. This whole shadow economy. Everybody's got their hand out -

JEANNA

I'll be glad when this is over and you / can -

GIL

It's unbelievable the mess they're in over there. And the traffic...My book has these neat chapters: "Changing Money," "Where to eat," "Driving in Moscow." Under "Driving in Moscow" it says, "Do not try to drive in Moscow."

And the idea that they're going to be delivered from their misery by a couple of hotshots from Traub, Gardner /is pretty

JEANNA

Do you and Berman see eye-to-eye/ on

GIL

Berman doesn't seem to find the disparity between the very rich and the very poor quite as...These babushkas with their mops trying to get the mud and slush off the floors...And the government is trying to get people interested in religion so they won't notice what a fiasco -

JEANNA

Are you still getting hassled by the Ministry guys?

GIL

Yeah. Everybody is (*Russian accent*) former KGB. Then there's the Ministry of Regulations, the Ministry of Special Privileges, the Ministry of Red Tape. They love American dollars; they hate American hours. Their idea of a breakfast meeting / is

JEANNA

(*putting on her robe*)

Are you going to be able to wind this up / before

GIL

I told Berman he's got to carry the ball on this one if it goes past your due date.

JEANNA

Three weeks before, really, to be on the / safe

GIL

I told him.

JEANNA

Do you want some juice or / tea or

GIL

No. No thanks. You go back to sleep, can you?

JEANNA

I'll go to our bed.

*SHE begins to fold up the convertible sofa.*

I just like to sleep here when you're not home. It makes me feel safer for some reason.

GIL

That's crazy. Anyone coming in through the front door would get to you faster if / you're

JEANNA

I don't know why. I / just

GIL

Is the paper...? (*HE goes toward the front door.*) I didn't notice on the way in... It was dark out there. Have you been having trouble/ with the hall lights?

*HE is at the front door.  
Discovers the paper is not there. Looks across at the neighboring apartment.*

JEANNA

The paper won't be up yet.

GIL

*(leaving the door open and returning)*

What's wrong with Margolin's door?

JEANNA

What?

GIL

What's wrong with Margolin's door? It looks like it's been bashed.

JEANNA

Probably some kids.

GIL

No. Come here. The eyehole thing. Take a look. It looks like it's been poked / out

JEANNA

*(joining him at the door)*

I don't see any...Oh that. How'd you even notice that?

GIL

I was wondering if he swiped our TIMES again. So I / was looking

JEANNA

Shhhhh.

GIL

I don't care if he hears me.

JEANNA

*(going toward Margolin's door)*

He must be a hundred. I think he just gets confused.

GIL

He gets so confused he steals our newspaper?

JEANNA

Is it too early to ring his bell to ask him if he's all right?

GIL

Ask him if he made off with today's paper.

JEANNA

It's too early for the paper.

GIL

*(bantering)*

That's what you always say on days when he's pinched it.

JEANNA

I sometimes make excuses for / him

GIL

I've known you to go down to the corner for another paper rather than expose him / for the

JEANNA

Anything's better than your wrath.

GIL

My wrath? What about your deception?

JEANNA

I replace your newspaper so you don't start the day in a rage - And you call that deception?

GIL

I certainly do.

JEANNA

As my late father would say, *(character voice)* "What would you do if you had a big problem?"

GIL

Your father and I would never have gotten along.

JEANNA

He would have known you were only interested in me for my money.

GIL

I knew there was a reason.

*THEY kiss. SHE starts to close the front door.*

Hey, what about Margolin?

JEANNA

I'm sure he didn't take your precious paper.

GIL

No. The door.

JEANNA

I'll ring. He gets up early.

*SHE crosses to Margolin's door. Rings the bell once at length.*

Maybe it's nothing.

*PAUSE. GIL looks at his watch.*

GIL

He couldn't have gone out yet.

JEANNA

Unless there was some kind of robbery or something. And he went to tell the police.

GIL

This is dumb. People don't break into apartments through the peephole.

JEANNA

*(examining the door)*

I just can't figure how that could have happened.

GIL

We could call Orlowski.

JEANNA

She'll never answer her phone at this hour.

*SHE comes back into the  
apartment.*

GIL

Right. The unwritten law.

JEANNA

"Thou shalt not call thy super before nine-thirty."

GIL

Or anytime she decides to turn off her phone.

JEANNA

Like during her favorite soap operas.

GIL

Anyway, what's she going to do about it?

JEANNA

You mean, even if we get her to come up, after she rings  
his / doorbell

GIL

When he doesn't answer what's she going to do?

JEANNA

Well, she probably has a key.

GIL

Yeah, but she's not going to use / it

*HE exits briefly to the  
kitchen.*

JEANNA

Unless she had some other reason to / suspect

GIL

*(from off)*

Like if the mail starts to accumulate.

JEANNA

And the menus.

*GIL returns with a carton of*

*juice and a glass which he fills. HE has a dish towel over his shoulder.*

GIL

And by that time the smell will reach us.

JEANNA

Smell?

GIL

*(mock menacing)*

The foul stench of the dead body.

JEANNA

Would it really?

GIL

Course his place kinda smelled anyway.

JEANNA

Oh, please. He's not such a / bad

GIL

*(imitating Margolin in a Middle European accent)*

If it's an overcast day he says, "Theese weather ees killing me."

JEANNA

And on gorgeous days he / says

GIL

"Da sun hurts my eyes."

JEANNA

Other than that -

GIL

Other than that he was a grand old neighbor.

*HE salutes with his glass, drinks.*

JEANNA

You're already talking about him in the past tense.

GIL

I'm already thinking about him in the past tense.

JEANNA

I've had worse neighbors.

GIL

Can you imagine the spread we'd have if we broke through?

JEANNA

Cornelia June could have her own wing.

GIL

Willis Drewelle can have his own indoor running track.

JEANNA

But could we ever afford it?

GIL

The running track?

JEANNA

Breaking through.

GIL

Depends. Depends.

Maybe Margolin ought to hang on til we see what the bonuses are like this year.

JEANNA

Is this a bit macabre?

GIL

It would be - except that he's just the type to be written up in the "Daily News" for living to be a hundred and nine.

JEANNA

He'll probably make the "Today Show".

GIL

We'll get our fifteen minutes of fame by living next door to the oldest man in New York.

*(HE hands her the orange juice carton.)*

Think fast. *(HE tosses her the dish towel. SHE catches it.)*

JEANNA  
(not amused)

Think fast.

GIL

Toast. A toast.

JEANNA

To Mr. Margolin.

GIL

To his continued health and well-being.

*HE toasts her juice  
glass with his carton.*

JEANNA

May he live long and prosper.

GIL

*(in Margolin's Semitic, Middle European accent)*  
From your mouth to God's ears.

*GIL finishes his juice.  
JEANNA turns to the  
kitchen to put the  
carton away.*

CROSSFADE

## S C E N E   T H R E E

At *LIGHTS UP* we see the same except that the hallway in front of the elevator is no longer visible. The baby carriage is gone. JEANNA is sitting on the arm of the sofa. SHE wears a blue maternity jumper and an ivory cotton shirt. MRS. ORLOWSKI is standing at right of the sofa wearing pants, shirt and a carpenter's apron. SHE is the building superintendent whose native country is Poland. SHE holds a three-foot length of orange tape of the type that police use to indicate a crime scene.

MRS. ORLOWSKI

*(in heavily accented English)*

...still the nephew asks can orange...*(SHE holds up tape)* come down. So the police tell me, "Okay."

JEANNA

Did the police -

MRS. ORLOWSKI

Is more respect to the dead without...*(indicates orange tape)*

JEANNA

Did the police find out who - ?

MRS. ORLOWSKI

Police say don't have gun. Don't have reason anybody is killing very old man. Don't know nothing.

JEANNA

*(in the manner of a teacher of English to foreign students)*  
So the police have no weapon and no motive. They really don't know anything.

MRS. ORLOWSKI

Police. So many. In. Out. Frighten everybody. Get dirty shoes on lobby, on elevator. Cigarettes make bad stink everywhere. Talk. Take pictures. Still don't know nothing.

JEANNA

That policeman who talked to us? He was at the funeral. Along with a couple of uniform guys.

MRS. ORLOWSKI

They ask me, "You hear anything in the night?" I say, "In

MRS. ORLOWSKI CONT'D.

the night I am mind my own business."

JEANNA

There was an article in the TIMES about how many unsolved murders there are in New York every year. Way up from last year.

MRS. ORLOWSKI

I don't...(understand)

JEANNA

*(slower and more enunciated)*

The newspaper says, "In New York many murders are never... understood." More than ever.

MRS. ORLOWSKI

I don't...Not here building. Not here neighborhood.

JEANNA

You don't think Mr. Margolin was dealing drugs?

MRS. ORLOWSKI

Mr. Margolin? Poor old, nice man?

JEANNA

I'm kidding really. Joking.

MRS. ORLOWSKI

Nice men shot in eye. You make joke?

JEANNA

I liked him. He was always...

MRS. ORLOWSKI

Complain. Always he complained. I know.

JEANNA

No. He was always around. And he was looking forward to the baby.

MRS. ORLOWSKI

Who is not looking forward to baby? Baby is wonderful blessing.

JEANNA

Yes.

*MRS. ORLOWSKI turns to*

*go. Stops. Turns back.*

MRS. ORLOWSKI

I wish to tell you there is problem with you painter.

JEANNA

Oh? You mean out in the -

MRS. ORLOWSKI

He is mixing up A apartment with B apartment.

JEANNA

Really?

MRS. ORLOWSKI

Yes. After he paint, put up nice, very nice wallpaper, he make mistake on doors.

JEANNA

I didn't even -

MRS. ORLOWSKI

You painter. I like. He is very nice. Very friendly. (*SHE touches her hair.*) But he mixes up A and B apartments.

*SHE puts the crime scene tape on an end table and takes some brass objects from her pocket.*

JEANNA

(*amused*)

We'll have to get him back here. Or maybe you wouldn't mind just

MRS. ORLOWSKI

He very good - your painter. Good worker. But he take down the apartment letters to paint. And he put them up so you are nine B and Mr. Margolin - may he rest in peace - is nine A.

JEANNA

Thank you for taking them down. We'd be grateful to you if you'd put them right for us.

MRS. ORLOWSKI

Sure. I don't even know this 'til that policeman keep saying "Blah blahblah 9A. Blah-de, blah-de blah Apartment 9A." I say, "No. Is 9B". And then I come up and check and painter has screwed.

JEANNA

Screwed up.

MRS. ORLOWSKI

Screwed up? Screwed up the wrong letters.

JEANNA

Oh. Screwed in the wrong letters.

MRS. ORLOWSKI

Yes. Yes. He screwed in it.

*SHE moves toward the front door. JEANNA follows.*

JEANNA

Well, thank you for your trouble. I don't know that we care whether we're nine A or B so long as we get our mail.

MRS. ORLOWSKI

You're welcome my trouble. Doorman would welcome my trouble. Otherwise he don't know where he send visitors.

JEANNA

Thanks again. I know Gil will want to give you something -

MRS. ORLOWSKI

*(going out the door)*

You welcome.

*The door is nearly closed on Mrs. Orłowski. JEANNA pulls it open.*

JEANNA

How long ago was this?

MRS. ORLOWSKI

That painter -

JEANNA

That the painter mixed up the -

MRS. ORLOWSKI  
(shrugs)

Is Friday.

JEANNA

Friday?

MRS. ORLOWSKI

Friday. I remember because -

JEANNA

The day of the night that Margolin was killed?

MRS. ORLOWSKI

Day of night?

JEANNA

That's what the police told me.

MRS. ORLOWSKI

The nephew say -

JEANNA

Yes. Yes. But even so the letters had been changed -

MRS. ORLOWSKI

(sensing JEANNA's agitation SHE speaks soothingly)  
Don't worry. I fix.

*SHE exits. JEANNA returns to the living room. SHE picks up the orange "Crime Scene" tape. She is perplexed and concerned. A moment. And then the doorbell rings. JEANNA approaches the door with trepidation and before she gets to it calls.*

JEANNA

Who's there?

GIL

(from off right)

Jeannala, it's me. I forgot my -

*JEANNA opens the door,*

*admitting GIL who wears  
sweaty running clothes. HE  
holds some pieces of Crime  
Scene tape.*

JEANNA

God! This thing has me so spooked.

For the rest of the script, please contact the playwright  
or the Graham Agency.