

SUCH DREAMS AS STUFF IS MADE ON

A one-act play

By Dan McGeehan

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CHARACTERS

POPPY, upscale wife.

TUCKER, upscale husband.

CHIP, downscale burglar.

SPARKY, downscale burglar.

SETTING

Poppy and Tucker's living room. One sofa, one floor lamp.

TIME

The present. Night.

Such Dreams As Stuff Is Made On

It's night; not too late. A very nice living room suggested by a very nice sofa with two very nice throw pillows on it, and next to it a very nice floor lamp with a very nice shade on it.

(POPPY enters. She is smartly dressed as if from a dinner party. She's still wearing her coat. She enters the room a bit excited.)

POPPY *(Calling off.)*

Did you check...? Tucker, honey, did you check the basement?

TUCKER *(Off.)*

Yes, Poppy, everything is fine.

POPPY

And the wine?

(TUCKER enters. Also, nicely dressed and still wearing his coat.)

TUCKER

(A little out of breath.) I checked that first. The racks are untouched. Even that '61 merlot we just bought, thank goodness. We should call the police.

POPPY

This is exactly what happened to the MacKenzies last year. Remember? And Cici and Jason ended up as the talk of the town for weeks, the lucky bastards. Stupid TV people couldn't get enough of them.

TUCKER

We should call the police.

POPPY

You should take a quick look up in the attic. Just to be thorough. I'll look here.

TUCKER

Good idea.

(POPPY's cellphone begins to ring.)

We should call the police.

POPPY

Hold on. Let me get my phone.

(TUCKER exits anyway. POPPY takes a phone out of her coat pocket and checks the caller ID. She makes a face, gives a grunt, but answers it anyway. Suddenly, brightly:)

POPPY (*Cont.*)

Cheryl! It was a lovely party! We couldn't talk about anything else on the way home. You do know how to throw the best get-togethers.... What's that?.... Oh, my! Did I?.... Well, I must have placed it down when I was chatting with Cici and Jason MacKenzie, then just forgot about it. You know how I am. Could you be a dear and hold onto it until the tennis club next Thursday? I'll pick it up then. That is, of course, unless Cici has already snatched it up for herself. She's always had an eye for my things, the little wannabe. (*She laughs.*) Oh! Speaking of Cici, you'll never guess what happened!Well, believe it or not but we've been robbed!... Yes! Broke in through the front window. There's glass and footprints all over the floor! It'll take Maria forever to clean it all up.... I know! It's just like the MacKenzies! Well, not *exactly*. *Our* burglars seem more like professionals. They really knew quality stuff when they saw it I'm sure....

(*TUCKER enters, brooding and confused.*)

Oh, sorry, Cheryl. Got to run. We'll talk later. See you Thursday. 'Bye.

(*POPPY hangs up.*)

Well, what's the damage?

TUCKER

Nothing.

POPPY

No. No. I mean, what's been stolen.

TUCKER

That's just it— nothing.

POPPY

Nothing?

TUCKER

Nothing.

POPPY

The Chinese vase?

TUCKER

No.

POPPY

The sword collection?

TUCKER

No.

POPPY

The landscape painting?

No.
TUCKER

The—
POPPY (*pointing upstairs*)

—No.
TUCKER

The—
POPPY (*pointing downstairs*)

—No!
TUCKER

POPPY
So.... whoever it was, broke in, walked around a bit, and just.... left? Without stealing *a thing*?

Not a thing.
TUCKER

(A moment of reflection. They gaze about the room.)

Huh.
POPPY

(Simultaneously, they sit on the sofa. Beat.)

What's wrong with our stuff? I mean, we have good stuff, right?

The best.
TUCKER

POPPY
Why wouldn't anybody want to steal our stuff? We have great stuff to steal. Some of our stuff could be in museums. I mean, this place should be all torn up and emptied out. Somebody could be making a mint right now at some pawn shop with our stuff. Instead, it's all still... *here*.

Untouched. Unspoiled. Unwanted.
TUCKER

POPPY
What's wrong with our stuff? Why wouldn't thieves want it? Talk about the ultimate snub! If it ever gets out that *robbers* turned their noses up on it, we'd — Oh no! I already mentioned it to Cheryl on the phone! We just can't have a police report to verify it! Whatever you do, don't call the police!

TUCKER
Oops. Already have. I called while you were on your phone. They said they won't be here for a while. Something about burglaries being low priority tonight. That's so insulting.

POPPY

Tucker, you have to call them back. Tell them... it wasn't you. Say somebody else called.

TUCKER

"Somebody else"? Who? The cat?

POPPY

No, no. They aren't going to fall for that again.

TUCKER

What?

POPPY

Oh, this is so embarrassing! The MacKenzies are going to have a field day when they find out!

TUCKER

Now hold on. Let's calm down and focus. Remember my ad campaign for the Adlerbeck Corporation? Remember the slogan? C'mon, it was on all the billboards. "Don't think hard; think smart." *(He taps his temple.)* That's what we have to do here. *(Tapping his temple.)* "Think smart."

POPPY

(Tapping her temple.) "Think smart."

TUCKER

(Tapping.) "Think smart." Now what can we do to turn this situation more to our advantage?

POPPY *(Looking about.)*

We can.... we can.... oh! We can mess up the place ourselves so when the police show up it'll look like somebody *tried* to burglarize us!

TUCKER

Set the scene! That's great! Then we can say we scared them off before they took all our stuff! That's thinking smart! OK. We really need to ransack this place!

POPPY *(In the spirit now.)*

I'm on it!

(POPPY quickly scans the room, unsure where to start. Finally, she crosses to the floor lamp, unscrews the bulb, and gently places it on the floor. Then grabs one of the throw pillows and simply drops it.)

TUCKER

(Pleased.) I think that'll do.

(The doorbell rings.)

The police! That was fast. Guess we'll wing it from here. OK, get on the sofa and start crying.

POPPY

What kind of crying? Is it “the maid didn’t dust the china collection *again*” kind of crying or “the Lexus dealership didn’t have my shade of blue” kind of crying?

TUCKER

“Aunt Jeannette didn’t name you in her will” kind of crying.

(POPPY wails.)

That’s it. *(Calling out)* Come in!

(POPPY sits in a mournful position. TUCKER consoles her.)

The door’s unlocked. Come in. *(To POPPY.)* There, there. Don’t cry. It’s all over now.

(CHIP and SPARKY respectfully enter. They are wearing typical burglar clothing; perhaps even stereotypical burglar clothes.)

Oh, officer! It was awful! We had a lovely evening far, far away from home only to come back and find the window all smashed, and an *army* of angry miscreants hellbent on robbing us blind. They were big and mean! But when I rolled up my sleeves and showed them my pronounced biceps—

POPPY

(Through the tears.) He’s been working out.

TUCKER

Thank you. —those cowardly deviants turned tail and I—

(TUCKER stops as he finally sees the two visitors.)

Who the hell are you?

(POPPY stops her wailing and stares.)

CHIP

(Almost timidly.) ‘Evening.

POPPY

What’s going on?

CHIP

Um. We’re the ones responsible for your window. I’m Chip and this here’s Sparky.

SPARKY

Hi.

(They all engage in an extended round of unenthusiastic hi’s)

CHIP

(Clears throat.) Well, this is awkward. Look, we're real sorry about the window. And we want to make it up to you. We.... Gee, we didn't make *this* mess.

TUCKER

No, we did. I mean.... it.... What do you want anyway?

CHIP

As I said, we want to make it up to you. We broke in and cased the joint but we thought, gee, we can't do this to these people. I mean, look at this stuff. You're practically as bad off as we are.

SPARKY

Trust us, we wouldn't have broken in if we knew beforehand the place was filled with crap.

CHIP

Now, Sparky, please. The preferred term is "desirably impaired."

SPARKY

Ah. My apologies.

CHIP

So, anyway, we went back to the hideout and spoke to some of the guys, and... well, we took up a collection. *(Pulling out some bills.)* We were able to get up about thirty-seven dollars.

SPARKY

(Pulling out some coins.) And fifty cents.

CHIP

We want you to have it.

SPARKY

In Jesus's name.

TUCKER

(Standing.) First of all, your opinion of our possessions is meaningless. And second, thirty-seven dollars—

SPARKY

And fifty cents.

TUCKER

—and fifty cents is an insult.

POPPY

(Standing.) I'll have you know this house is filled with the finest antiques and artwork. They're worth a heckuva lot more than thirty-seven dollars.

SPARKY

And fifty cents.

POPPY

And fifty — Oh, shut up.

CHIP

Look, lady, I don't want to brag or nothing but we're the ones who broke into the MacKenzie's house last year. You know the MacKenzies? CiCi and Jason?

POPPY

Yes, yes, we know them.

SPARKY

Nice people.

CHIP

Anyway, we knocked over their house last year and I can tell you they had far better stuff than you have. I mean.... (*Motioning about the room.*) I think you need this money more than we do.

POPPY

Get out!

CHIP

I admit I'm no connoisseur but — *this sofa?*— my P.U. meter is clicking off the chart right now.

POPPY

It's bad enough that you smashed my window but I'll be damned if I let you insult my sofa. Out!

CHIP

Alright. We're going. It's not our fault the MacKenzies had better stuff than you. At least that's what the guys in the hideout say. Come on, Sparky. Let's go.

TUCKER

Wait. Are you saying you two discussed this with others already?

CHIP

Well, not "discussed" per se. More like a little backroom chatter among available gang members. We won't hold a formal meeting 'til the weekend when we'll have a quorum. Then it's all-cards-on-the-table. From there, well, who knows where that information goes. Let's go, Sparky.

TUCKER

Now, just.... just wait a minute. Um, Poppy. Confab, please?

(TUCKER escorts POPPY off to the side.)

TUCKER (*Cont.*)

This situation is quickly getting out of hand. If these two and their associates start talking indiscriminately, we are going to be the laughing stock of the city.

POPPY

You're right! The MacKenzies will never let us live it down. What'll we do?

TUCKER

We've got to come up with a plan, and fast! Remember *(he taps his temple.)*

POPPY

(Tapping her temple) "Don't think hard; think smart." Right.

TUCKER

OK. How's this? We overpower them with a series of precise and highly-effective karate maneuvers that render them unconscious. Then we can have them neatly trussed up for the police when they eventually arrive! Instead of being victims, we'll be heroes! *Superheroes* even! On the evening news!

POPPY

Tucker, that's brilliant! I didn't know you knew karate!

TUCKER

Well, I don't. I was hoping you did.

POPPY

Oh, dear....

CHIP

(Clears throat.) If I may offer a suggestion....?

TUCKER

You might as well. We've got nothing.

CHIP

We're pretty low stoopers. We wouldn't be opposed to a bribe. You know, to keep our mouths shut.

POPPY

What kind of bribe?

CHIP

Mmm. Make us an offer.

POPPY

Alright. What about.... these throw pillows?

CHIP

Sparky, I believe this is your area of expertise.

(SPARKY takes out a pair of glasses, and a small notebook. After putting on the glasses, SPARKY leafs through the book.)

SPARKY

Let's see.... throw pillows. Here we are. With those we can keep quiet for.... the next fifteen minutes.

POPPY

Fifteen minutes? That's it?

SPARKY

Technically it's fourteen and a half minutes but since you're new to this we're gifting you the extra thirty seconds.

CHIP

I would think you'd be a little more appreciative, wouldn't you?

TUCKER

I would appreciate it more if you kept quiet *forever!*

SPARKY

Oh, well, for that you're going to have to sweeten the pot.

TUCKER

How sweet?

SPARKY

Try us.

POPPY

Alright. Let's add in.... that lamp.

SPARKY (*Checking the book.*)

Now you're up to 2 am.

TUCKER

Oh, come on!

CHIP

The MacKenzies had much nicer lamps. Just sayin'.

POPPY

We have a beautiful Qing Dynasty vase upstairs.

SPARKY

Very good. Very good. That'll take us to next Thursday.

POPPY

That's it?

CHIP

Well, the MacKenzies had a Ming. Just sayin'.

TUCKER

Now, hold on. We're not through. We have an antique sword collection in the den. It's better than anything the McKenzies have.

SPARKY

Hm! That would do nicely.

POPPY

Plus a gorgeous 19th century English landscape painting.

SPARKY

Now you're talking. That's good for a few months.

CHIP

Keep it coming. You're on a roll.

TUCKER

Poppy, you get the silverware and I'll get the stamp collection.

CHIP and SPARKY

No stamps!

TUCKER

OK. Oh, we've got plenty of fine wines including a 1961 merlot, north vineyard.

SPARKY

(To CHIP.) Excellent year.

CHIP

We'll accept that.

TUCKER

OK. OK. Stay there. Come on, Poppy.

(POPPY and TUCKER hustle off. CHIP and SPARKY casually make themselves comfortable on the sofa.)

CHIP

Bet they'll even load the truck for us.

SPARKY

Just like the MacKenzies.

CHIP

Ya see? It's like all those billboards said: "Don't think hard—"

(POPPY interrupts, entering with two tall glasses of ice tea.)

POPPY

Here, please. Have some ice tea. We may be a while.

(She gives them each a glass.)

How are we doing?

CHIP

You're doing great. Keep it up.

(POPPY smiles brightly and scampers off. CHIP and SPARKY share a look, then tap their temples.)

CHIP AND SPARKY

“Think smart!”

(They clink glasses.)

(Blackout.)