

OUT, OUT

by

Matthew S. Hinton

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

RICH, *husband to Carol*CAROL, *wife to Rich, possessed by a demon*

SETTING

The master bedroom. A king-sized bed flanked by nightstands commands the space. A mountain of pillows at the headboard can be maneuvered or discarded as needed, as well as the sheets, duvet, etc. On each nightstand are a lamp and alarm clock, both identical. A pair of dressers are an afterthought - they do not match – but somehow it is clear whose dresser is whose. A rug brings color to most of the floor and really ties the room together. To one side is a window; on the opposite wall is a door which leads to the (offstage) bathroom. Another door leads to the rest of the house.

Enter RICH in near darkness – and a subtle bit of fog - on tiptoe.

RICH: Carol? Carol honey? You up?

(He stubs his toe on the bedframe)

RICH: (*sucking his teeth*) Cock-sucker-mother-fucker!

(The stage is suddenly bathed in deep red. CAROL sits upright. When she speaks, her voice reverberates in a supernatural disharmony of pitches – the voice of a demon.)

CAROL: Who dare disturbs my slumber?!

RICH: Sorry hun.

CAROL: Silence mortal!

(beat)

RICH: Still fighting that sore throat, eh?

(CAROL breathes heavily – like a beast that won’t calm down.)

RICH: Looks like your fever hasn’t broken. You’re sweating buckets. The sheets are like washcloths. Let me just feel your forehead-

(He reaches to do so. She snaps at him. He narrowly avoids being bitten.)

RICH: Well, I can’t help you if you won’t let me. Carol. Honey? Are you possessed again?

CAROL: Lemme ask – (*in a mocking voice*) – Satan, honey, are I possessed again?

RICH: You don’t have to have an attitude abou-

CAROL: (*her most demonic – Satan himself*) YEEEEEEEESSSSSSSSSS!

RICH: -Goddammit.

CAROL: Damn straight, hubby! Why don’t you climb with me? I’m a demon in the sack!

(CAROL gyrates wildly, laughing. She reaches for RICH, trying to pull him into the bed with her. She is both frisky and frightening.)

RICH: No. NO! You bite when you’re like this. I don’t like it, I told you!

(CAROL continues to taunt him – ad libs promises of eroticism. RICH is nearly drawn in, but ultimately resists, and instead searches for something in the bedroom. He digs through a drawer or two, ends up under the bed.)

CAROL: (*still reverberating, but sounding most like herself for a moment*) Aw, c’mon, sinna-buns! You hiding from me already? You know you always give in. Always. What’re you looking for? A rubber for your boot? Don’t worry I won’t get prego-not-ragu.

RICH: Nope! (*He comes up from under the bed with a book*) Looking for this.

CAROL: Funny looking bible, pilgrim.

RICH: It ain’t no bible, Beelzebub. This here is (*reading the title*) “Exorcising Made Easy” That short gal didn’t work. Those priests were a flop. This here is our “D-I-Y to S-A-T-A-N”. Written by one M.S. Hinton.

CAROL: Good luck, buttercup.

RICH: Thank you, Satan sweetie. Okay – lemme see here. (*Skimming chapter titles*) “Devils down in Georgia” ...

CAROL: Nope.

RICH: "Sympathy for the Devil" ...

CAROL: That'll work.

RICH: Nice try, Old Nick. Hmm. "Get Behind Me, Satan" ...

(He flips through pages and finds the chapter.)

CAROL: I'm way ahead of you, Lash LaRue.

RICH: (*reading*) "First, feel the skin of the possessed. Lay hands upon the forehead. Is it hot to the touch?"

(RICH looks at CAROL, who is grinning. Her tongue wags back and forth as she grunts and chuckles. Beat. RICH calmly sets down the book, digs into a drawer, and comes up with two leather belts. CAROL reacts accordingly. RICH makes two loops out of the belts, and after a bit of a struggle, commandeers each of CAROL's wrists and straps them to the headboard. CAROL ad libs.)

RICH: There, that isn't so bad, is it?

CAROL: Now we're talkin'! We're speaking in tongues!

(Book in hand, RICH once again reaches for CAROL's forehead. She snaps at him a bit, but he is successful. His touch actually calms her slightly – she breathes rapidly, trance-like.)

RICH: No more puns, she-beast. There. A kind hand. Whew - You are on fire. (*reading*) "If hot to the touch, test the possessed with a thermometer." Okie. Back in a flush.

CAROL: Very punny, *Hunee Bunny*!

(RICH exits to the bathroom, returns with a digital thermometer.)

RICH: Okay, open up.

(CAROL grits her teeth – a terrifying sight.)

RICH: This has to go under your tongue. Do you hear me, Carol?

(Her tongue slithers out, but her mouth remains closed.)

RICH: Dammit Care-bear.

(She laughs, opening wide. He takes advantage of the opportunity, puts the heel of his hand in her mouth, gets bit, then somehow gets the thermometer in, shushes her – ‘shhh..shhs..shhh’ – and presses the button to a ‘beep’.)

RICH: There! Sheeezus. Now. It’ll take a minute. Don’t touch it until it beeps. I’m gonna read ahead a bit.

(CAROL hums “Goosey Goosey Gander” and bobs her feet in time.)

RICH: Would you stop that, please?

(CAROL doesn’t stop.)

RICH: (*reading*) “Presence, Pretense, Breakpoint, Voice, Clash, Expulsion.”

(The tune takes RICH over. He sings and bobs along to the nursery rhyme. The thermometer beeps, breaking the spell at last, and CAROL spits it out onto the bed. RICH picks it up.)

RICH: Okay. 9,000 degrees. Perfectly normal. Presence established. (*reading*) “In the Pretense phase, you must discover the demon’s name. Here are some questions and names to try.”

CAROL: Hah!

RICH: What’s your name?

CAROL: Carolyn.

RICH: What’s *your* name?

CAROL: Carol.

RICH: *What* is your *name*?

CAROL: Care-bear! Care-package! HANDLE WITH CARE! Care to dance? Devil-may-care!

RICH: (*progress*) A-HA!

CAROL: Shit!

RICH: Reveal your name. Reveal yourself to me! Abraxas.

CAROL: No-chance-as!

RICH: Ba-rong!

CAROL: Too long!

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