

LIFE, LOVE AND THE PURSUIT

A Play in Two Acts

by

Shelley Chester

This script is copyright protected and may not be reproduced, distributed, or disseminated without the prior written permission of the author.

Cast of Characters

- MAXINE STAFFORD: 67, attractive, but in need of an updated look. Retired, widowed, funny, active, and intelligent. She is genuine and a straight shooter who calls it as she sees it. Volunteers as a mentor for children with disabilities.
- RYAN ALLEN SQUIRE: 55, very attractive, salt, and pepper hair. Tall, well-built, well-dressed, well-spoken. He is easy going and even tempered. A novelist and poet, Ryan is looking for his soul mate.
- LORI: 43 and the daughter of MAXINE. Feisty and loyal.
- SHARON: Late 40's. Very plain. A bit heavy a businesswoman driven to get what she wants using whatever means necessary. She thinks she's all that. Life for her is acquiring her desires. Race open
- NADINE: Mid 40's. Ryan's younger sister. She has long blond hair and is very attractive.
- LYDIA: Waitress. Late 30's. Socially ignorant. Race open

Scene

A secluded park overlooking the ocean in Santa Monica. Act II scene 4 is a beachside café outdoors.

Time

Present.

SET VISION

Foliage surrounding the sides and back wall. Trees with 3 sides including full leaves, fall leaves, and no leaves that can be turned as the seasons' progress. A slight ramp to the opening upstage left where azalea bushes partially cover the opening. Stage right has an area that can be dug. Grass to cover the stage floor and a nice bench downstage. Far downstage left a partial fence to simulate a fence overlooking the ocean.

SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1	Exterior Park	Late morning
Scene 2	Exterior Park	The next afternoon
Scene 3	Exterior Park	The next afternoon
Scene 4	Exterior Park	Two months later
Scene 5	Exterior Park	Several weeks later
Scene 6	Exterior Park	The next afternoon
Scene 7	Exterior Park	The next day - lunch

INTERMISSION

ACT II

Scene 1	Exterior Park	Two weeks later - late morning
Scene 2	Exterior Park	A few days later - early evening
Scene 3	Exterior Park	A few days later - late afternoon
Scene 4	Exterior Beach Cafe	Next day - mid-morning
Scene 5	Exterior Park	One week later - mid-morning

ACT IScene 1SETTING:

Exterior in a park overlooking the ocean. Late morning. May. There are a comfortable park bench and a slight hill with a well-worn path from upper stage right to the bench. Azalea bushes almost cover the opening to the path. Trees, bushes, and flowers line the park. This is an overlook on a bluff totally secluded and hard to find. A partial waist-high fence is downstage left simulating a total fence.

AT RISE:

MAXINE is off to stage left kneeling as she buries a bird in the flowerbed. She cries softly. She needs a new hairstyle and new look yet wears nice casual clothes and exudes strength and warmth. Upper stage right, through the well-worn path, RYAN and SHARON enter. RYAN is sure-footed and knows the park with his eyes closed. RYAN carries a tape recorder and is dressed in a very nice casual jacket over jeans. He is well-groomed. SHARON holds onto his arm as they carry on a conversation. They do not notice MAXINE.

SHARON

...And it's overlooking the lake!

RYAN

Sounds nice.

SHARON

The best part there is room for an office. As big as you want!

RYAN

Sharon, I'm ...

SHARON

There's a hot tub and lots of open space. The wildlife is spectacular and it's far enough from the neighbors you wouldn't see anyone for a mile!

SHARON (CONT'D)

Picture it! You and me sitting in the hot tub on the deck sipping wine and listening to the birds. That heavenly scent of wildflowers wafting through the air.

RYAN

I'm sure it's a great property but the weather in Big Bear means snow many months out of the year.

SHARON

That's the beauty of this home! Outside it may be snowing but inside there are three fireplaces where a crackling fire is the music and the smell of pine the stimulus. I can picture you writing with a hot toddy and me painting in the great room. Love fills the air as we both pursue our passions. When you feel the need to be alone with your thoughts, you can retreat to your office and another fireplace waits to inspire you. There's even a fireplace in the master bedroom!

RYAN

Still, snow is...

SHARON

It snows in the winter but the spring and summer have fabulous weather, and without the extreme heat, L.A. has. There's an open area where you can write overlooking the lake. Your very own park with birds and a soft breeze filled with the smell of fresh air and the lake. Oh, Ryan, wait 'til you see it! I want a horse and one for you too.

RYAN

Horses.

SHARON

Sure! We can ride all over the trails. Think how great it would be for Matt and your grandson. I know how hard you have been trying to reconnect with Matt after all these years. This would be the perfect home to get to know your son and show him your ex was the villain and not you! Who could resist the mountains and skiing, not to mention that beautiful lake? There's fishing and boating and I'll bet Megan would love to visit some of the great shops and spas. Big Bear offers so many wonderful experiences. You would be a hero and the best part is you would have your son, his wife, and your grandson staying under the same roof!

RYAN

I love that you found Matt. I am so grateful that you did that.

SHARON

That's what people do for their loved ones!

SHARON (CONT'D)

And don't give the money another thought! It was worth hiring that PI just to see the look on your face!

RYAN

I hope Matt will someday want to know me and let me in.

SHARON

Who can refuse your charm? Now that you Megan are texting, it's just a matter of time! She'll work on Matt, just watch! I searched for a home big enough that when you stay there your family can visit. I'll do whatever you need to see Matt has a comfortable place to bring Megan and your grandson.

RYAN

Honey, I like to dream too, but the winters! Living there would be a serious challenge for me.

SHARON

We'll get someone to shovel and plow. It doesn't snow all the time and you'll have your office. Oh, Ryan it's perfect! Three stories and plenty of room for your family to visit. I would never bother you while you're working and I can have space for painting or music or just to hang out with friends. Think of the parties we could have! Why Britney Spears has a home just a couple of doors down. Lots of celebrities... but this would be a great retreat for you. So peaceful.

RYAN

Sharon, I brought you here to show you where I work. This is my office. I make my living writing here. The weather is always perfect. I can walk to this secluded sanctuary where I have fresh air and the surf to motivate me. Honey, I feel comfortable here, motivated here. I get my inspiration here! It took me six months to find a place that gives me what I need to create. This is it! Sharon, you know how long it took me to get comfortable here. Do you know what you're asking of me?

SHARON

Yes! I know what I'm asking, but Ryan, believe me, you won't miss this park. Trust me, I know what you need and you can't do it in your condo! Where would Matt and his family stay? A hotel? That won't give you much face time. You need someplace to have good one-on-one without the interruptions a big city brings. Big Bear is progressive and laid back. This home gives you lots of land and wildlife to spark a conversation. Of course, I am just thinking about our future and what would make you happy. I want you with me!

RYAN

What's the price tag on your dream home?

SHARON

It shouldn't come down to just money. It's a lifestyle!

RYAN

How much?

SHARON

Imagine the sounds of crickets and the breeze blowing through the trees. The birds on the lake.

RYAN

How much?

SHARON

I couldn't swing it alone, I'd need help.

RYAN

What kind of help?

SHARON

(flirting)

You, silly! I know you haven't asked me to marry you. What am I saying? Forget I said that. It's just... I just know we are destined to be together. We love each other! Oh, Ryan this is the perfect home for us! It's just two million.

RYAN

Just two million??

SHARON

Ryan, darling, you're a celebrity! Your condo is nice but you need a great place to bring publishers and agents and a big house to share with your family. Besides, I'll help with the down payment! Ryan, lover, we've been together for almost a year. We have such a great time together, we love the same things. What are we waiting for? Move in with me!

RYAN

You know I don't believe...

SHARON

That just slipped out. I know living together isn't for you, but if I had the home when you are ready to... I promise you would be so happy we bought it! I'll fix it up just like you want. And you can stay there any time!

RYAN

Sharon, I am not buying a two million dollar home for you!

SHARON

You're on the best seller's list again and you've got another book close to being published. Think of it as an investment in our future.

RYAN

My life is here in Santa Monica. I don't want to put a huge chunk of my retirement money on a house in Big Bear! What about my church? My rowing team, my friends, and my sailing crew is here. The arts and theatre and music are all right here. Big Bear is snow and mountains.

SHARON

Don't forget the lake! You can sail and row there. I checked and they have a rowing club. Your friends can come up and visit. We can find a church and be a family! Just let me show it to you!

RYAN

How will you pay for all the other incidentals like insurance and power and...?

SHARON

I got my raise and a big bonus! Besides, everyone carries a little debt!

RYAN

You're having trouble making ends meet now.

SHARON

That's behind me. I had a little hiccup. It won't happen again. I'm already in a better financial position.

RYAN

And the IRS?

SHARON

It was an accounting oversight. I've got it under control! This home won't last! It's a steal! It will double in value in no time! Think investment! Think about Matt!

RYAN

Just for argument's sake, if we did something like this, I'd be willing to compromise. I'd consider moving someplace in Los Angeles as long as I could get to this park. Would you be willing to look around here for a home?

SHARON

Santa Monica is so crowded!

RYAN

There are very nice areas, not as crowded and not nearly as pricey as Big Bear yet still close to this park.

SHARON

Ryan, I need to find a place right away! I have until the end of the month. I don't want to find something and then have to move again. I really want this house!

(kisses RYAN)

Promise me you'll at least think about it.

RYAN

I'll think about what you've said.

SHARON

That's all I ask! Tell you what; I'm going to make you a very special dinner tonight. All of your favorites!

RYAN

I'm on a roll with this scene. I really want to finish it.

SHARON

How about Friday night? We could make it a hot tub night. Saturday we could drive up and I'll show you the house!

RYAN

I'll see how the writing goes. I have so many ideas about this book I want to ride that wave while I can.

SHARON

(takes RYAN to the railing)

Well, I've got to admit, this is a great spot.

RYAN

I'm glad you finally saw it. I wanted to show you this park so you could see why I need to be here.

SHARON

I get it. It's quiet and yet inspiring. Just like the mountains. Wait until you get a lung full of that cool crisp mountain air. The lake is so romantic! We can do midnight picnics and we'd be far enough from town that it will seem we own the whole mountain. I can telecommute! It's perfect, just like you!

(suddenly looks at her watch)

Oh, darling, I have to run! I have my company luncheon in less than an hour. I have to go if I want that VP position!

RYAN

I'll walk you out.

(SHARON kisses RYAN and snuggles on his shoulder. They head to the exit. SHARON sees MAXINE in the garden.)

(After RYAN and SHARON exit, MAXINE finishes and stands and walks to the bench. She drops the trowel by her feet as she sobs quietly. A long beat later, RYAN re-enters and heads for the bench. He is so quiet, Maxine doesn't notice until he sits. She is startled. Ryan pulls out a handkerchief handing it to MAXINE.)

MAXINE

I didn't think I was crying that loudly. Thank you.

RYAN

You're welcome. Mind if I sit here?

MAXINE

No.

(looks him up and down)

You're nicely dressed for a mugger. And polite too.

RYAN

(laughs)

I'm Ryan. Ryan Allen Squire.

MAXINE

What a grand name! I'm Maxine hate-my-middle-name Stafford.

(RYAN smiles intrigued.)

RYAN

I don't believe I've ever met a Maxine. You were crying, are you okay?

MAXINE

Yes. I feel a bit stupid crying.

RYAN

Never ignore your feelings. They make us human. Want to talk about it?

MAXINE

It's nothing earth-shattering.

RYAN

I've always found it easier to talk through things with a stranger. I have a free shoulder.

MAXINE

I don't want to bore you.

RYAN

A woman with a unique and inventive middle name, couldn't possibly bore me. Lay it on me.

MAXINE

I heard this very loud peeping about two this morning and went out to investigate. On the other side of the complex, there was the sweetest baby bird that fell two stories. Pore thing was sitting on the bottom step covered in mites, but he stopped peeping and let me take him in the house. I stayed up half the night with that precious ball of feathers. I wanted to get him back in the nest this morning when I could actually see what I was doing, but... he didn't make it. I don't know why I'm crying. Stupid.

RYAN

He was suffering and you tried to help. That's beautiful.

MAXINE

I buried him in the flowers over there. I was okay until I covered him up. It brought back... memories.

RYAN

You brought comfort to a creature in need. You should feel proud, Maxine.

MAXINE

Proud...

RYAN

Unless you were speaking of someone... Painful memories?

MAXINE

Bittersweet. They're like ninjas. Out of nowhere, they pounce.

RYAN

I'm intruding. I'll leave.

MAXINE

Please stay. I'd much rather talk to a handsome mugger than wallow in old ghosts. Those boos can get loud.

(pause)

I was looking for a nice plot of ground to... I stumbled across this amazing area.

RYAN

This is my office. A little oasis in a big noisy city. It's off the beaten path. Most people don't know this park exists.

MAXINE

Usually I knock before I barge into someone's sanctuary.

RYAN

You are welcome anytime!

MAXINE

If you're sure, I'm not intruding. You said this is your office?

RYAN

Let me show you around.

(RYAN extends his hand and
MAXINE takes it. RYAN
escorts her around the
park.)

RYAN (CONT'D)

Here is the reception area.

(A SEAGULL squawks a
laughing squawk on cue.)

RYAN (CONT'D)

(to the gull)

Now, now, Grizelda, we have a guest!

MAXINE

She sounds a bit unstable.

RYAN

Na! She just likes a good joke. Now over here we have Nadine's office. I would be lost without her!

MAXINE

Behind every great man is a woman organizing his life.

RYAN

I'd offer you a cup of coffee but alas, the machine is on the fritz.

MAXINE

Nothing for me, thanks. I just had tea with the queen of Sunset Boulevard.

RYAN

Queen, eh? She would fit right in. Here is my throne. Would you care to sit?

MAXINE

How did you find this place? Is there a secret knock or a treasure map?

RYAN

No map. Fred the gardener showed it to me.

MAXINE

Bribery, I like it! You're an enterprising man, Ryan Allen Squire! You bought yourself a slice of heaven with an ocean view for a few bucks!

(noticing the handkerchief)

Great! I got mascara on your handkerchief.

RYAN

Keep it.

MAXINE

It's monogrammed and they're not even my initials. I'll wash it for you. So, Ryan Allen Squire, what is it you do here in this secluded office?

RYAN

I'm a writer.

MAXINE

You have my attention! What have you written?

RYAN

'Twin Tornadoes at Dawn', 'The Solitary Tree', 'Justice Wears a Blindfold'...

MAXINE

'The Solitary Tree'! That's my daughter's favorite book! What brilliant imagery. You're not just good you're exceptional! I'm in the presence of a celebrity! I've never met one of you. Is there a protocol like bowing?

(RYAN laughs.)

RYAN

A simple kiss of the ring will do! Seriously, I'm just a writer who enjoys his work.

MAXINE

I've always wanted to know, how do writers come up with the story ideas?

RYAN

I can't speak for all writers, but I had several adventures, especially when I was younger. I like to use them in my writing.

MAXINE

So the books are all from your life?

RYAN

Not all of the stories but you might find me in every book if you look hard enough.