

*Sweet Sulfur*  
A One-Act Play

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Date of Birth: 07/22/1988

Program: MFA in Writing for the Stage and Screen

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

CORNELIA: As the play progresses, she changes age from 12 to 18. She has low self-esteem, but is a very good chess player with a dry sense of humor.

CECILE: CORNELIA's sister. She also progresses with age as the story progresses. She is two years older than CORNELIA. She is very vain. Her hair is her pride and joy. The character makes it a point to be forever playing with and admiring her hair.

DEVIL: The Prince of Darkness. He wears a mask and adapts commedia style movements and mask work.

STACY: Friend of CORNELIA

JOANNE: Friend of CORNELIA

MARCUS: Friend of CORNELIA

DAN: CORNELIA'S Chess Tutor and eventual love interest.

## LOCATION

The play takes place mostly in CORNELIA's bedroom and in one other large room in her house. The bedroom has a twin size bed that is made up with pinks and blues. Her whole room is filled with dolls and lace, but will also overtime acquire chess trophies. She has a desk, and a dresser, and there is a door that leads in and out of her room. The large room is mostly decorated by lighting, a chandelier, one table and a few chairs are situated around the space to make it seem like a party area. Parts of the play also take place in the large room which transforms into a nightmare world in which she is being manipulated by the Devil. During the Devil segments light and instrumental music will be the main sources of stage setting. The room should always be present on stage, but hidden by darkness when not in use. The devils nightmare world will have no boundaries, even the audience is a part of his world.

## SCENE 1

*The stage is black. CORNELIA Mayland, at age 12, is standing in the middle of the stage. The light hits CORNELIA where she is standing facing the audience in a skin colored leotard with her arms outstretched in a "T" formation and she has a wide smile on her face. She resembles a doll. CECILE in a pink dress skips in with a doll in her hand and a dress in the other. She places the doll at CORNELIA's feet and then she begins to dress CORNELIA in a blue laced dress that makes her look both young and doll-like. CORNELIA unable to move looks back and forth only with her eyes trying to figure out what is being done to her. CORNELIA is finished being dressed. CECILE haughtily examines her handy work. Then she taps CORNELIA's hands and elbows one at a time to make them go down. Then she taps her cheek to stop her smile and she taps her head to make it bend down. Then, CECILE, pleased with herself, smiles devilishly at the audience, skips off tossing her hair as she goes. Once CECILE leaves CORNELIA turns her head slightly in the direction CECILE went then she looks back down. At her feet is the doll. She picks up the doll that is at first an identical miniature of CECILE. She takes a moment and looks at the doll and she becomes envious and briefly examines the doll lovingly. Then she quickly becomes jealous and begins to vigorously take the dolls clothes off and she takes out scissors from a pocket in her dress and she cuts the dolls hair in aggression. She then looks at the doll and is remorseful. She puts the scissors away and gently takes out a small blue dress, identical to her own, and puts it on the doll. Then she looks at the doll. The doll looks like the miniature version of her, with the same hair style and dress. She cradles the doll and then there is a knock at the door. She jumps. With the first knock dim lights begin to show her bedroom as she is snapped out of her personal moment. She rushes to hide the doll under her pillow on the bed. Then she hides the hair and other doll dress in a secret compartment in one of her throw pillows. With the second knock the room is fully illuminated as she jumps on the bed.*

CECILE

*(Off stage. Knocking)*

CORNELIA! CORNELIA!

CORNELIA

Come in!

*CECILE is age 14. She enters the room wearing a similar version to the dress the doll had on in the beginning. Her hair is also the same length as the doll's was in the beginning.*

CECILE

About time! Have you seen my purple skirt?

CORNELIA

Oh...(shakes head) No. *(She is trying to conceal the doll from CECILE)*

CECILE

Yeah right. You borrowed it last. This is where all my lost clothes end up.

CORNELIA

No it's not.

CECILE

Right, like my green sweater, and my pink top, and *(spotting and finding white sandals under the bed)* my white sandals. We don't even wear the same size shoe. What are these doing in here?

CORNELIA

Oh, yeah. Sorry? *(CECILE looks exasperated)* I... really like them?

CECILE

Yeah, well, you can forgive me for not believing you when you say you don't have my stuff. *(CORNELIA rolls her eyes. CECILE looks in the mirror and fixes her hair. She then raises her voice)* Why don't you get off your bed and help me look. You obviously don't know if it's in here or not.

CORNELIA

*(She thinks to herself for a second.)*

Yeah I do.

CECILE

If you know, then get it for me.

CORNELIA

*(maneuvering to keep the doll out of sight under the pillow)*

I don't have it. Why don't you just keep looking somewhere else.

CECILE

Are you hiding something?

CORNELIA

No.

CECILE

Why won't you get off the bed? *(pause)* You're hiding something... What is it? It's my skirt, isn't it. I knew it. Give it back.

*CECILE advances on CORNELIA trying to reach for what's under the pillow. CORNELIA tries to fend her off.*

CORNELIA

No, it's not your skirt. It's nothing. Get off of me.

*The two girls begin to wrestle and jump on and off the bed. The wrestling turns into playfulness until CECILE hits CORNELIA in a way that makes her double over. Then CECILE puts her foot on CORNELIA's back to boost herself up as she reaches for whatever is under the pillow. She pulls out the doll. Looks at it and then screams.*

CORNELIA

*(slightly smiles)*

I improved her?

CECILE

You ruined her. She's ugly now.

CORNELIA

I'm sorry.

CECILE

Why did you do this? You're such a...I...I wish...argh...I wish you just weren't around. What's wrong with you. You mess up everything. Leave-my-stuff-alone.

CORNELIA

It's not like I ripped her head off.

CECILE

Ahh! *(CECILE screams at CORNELIA in frustration. She then goes in to slap CORNELIA, but instead throws the doll at her.)* She's ugly. *(She runs out the door. Heard off stage.)*  
MOM!!!!

*CORNELIA sits on her bed. She has one hand in her pocket where the scissors are.*

CORNELIA

*(Mockingly)*

She's ugly now. *(She takes out the scissors from inside her pocket and begins to twiddle them in her fingers. More serious)* She's ugly. Well, who'd wanna look like you either?

*She looks at her hands as she plays with the scissors than as her left forearm faces her she gets the idea to cut herself. Contemplating hard she looks from scissors to forearm. Then she makes on small swiping motion across her arm. She then drops the scissors. She then looks at her arm waiting to see something. Her right hand examines the left arm and from under her sleeve the left hand pulls out a small red silk ribbon representing the blood. CORNELIA stares at it in amazement and then looks up and weakly smiles with satisfaction.*

## SCENE 2:

*As the lights dim on the bedroom, a spotlight comes up onto a figure dressed in black slacks and a black shirt with a mask on his face. This is the Devil. He slips the ribbon from CORNELIA'S arm as she goes offstage. He is smelling it.*

## DEVIL

*(Breathes in, touching the red ribbon to his nose. Addressing himself)*

Mmm, what a delicious smell. Oh hell. Here is another one ripe for the challenge. Here is one who's seasoned...(smells) to my advantage.

*Noticing the audience the Devil addresses them. As he speaks and dances around doing acrobatics, he also goes into the audience and plays around with whatever he wants!*

Hello!

Do you know me?

Do you remember who I am?

Let me refresh your minds.

I don't solve equations, I make them.

I don't fix problems, I create them.

I create alliances, and break them.

Have a hint?

Well, I am the deviant bastard that tricks the masses

*(sweetly)*

I pit friends against lovers, join sex with mothers and brothers

I contrive your moves like a chess game

I'm sure by now you know my name

I'm the queen that loves to seduce

I'm the king that rapes to reproduce

I'm a liar, fire's my armor

*(Introduction)*

I'm the deceiver, the reaper, *(winks)* a charmer

*(He is appealing and reassuring)*

But,

I do heal men's wounds of inadequacy, gifting them with wars full of comforting fallacy

I calculate and mark the date for your debauched states

to spawn generations full of serpents that know nothing but hate

*(grins)*

Now ain't that great!

I organize your spots in my desert paradise,

I keep up and hold your final resting place.

I dine on the minds of the pernicious,  
 Mmm, now ain't that delicious  
*(Shakes head as if sorry for them)*  
 Your consciousness is egregiously woeful  
 I see your pain and your pitiful sorrow.  
 Excellent, you're mine for the borrow.

But I'm getting ahead of myself, as I often do  
 For there is one whom awaits for my passion to ensue  
 A plan that is festering but not yet entertained  
 A plan that has desperately been calling my name.  
*(He says this line as if reading her desires from her blood)*  
 To give her the power, the will, and the strength  
 To outshine her sister, and cause her disgrace

OH YES, I must meet this girl face to face

### SCENE 3

*(CORNELIA is age 14. She is wearing a yellow summer dress that is designed for a modest teenage look. She is being tutored in chess by Dan the Man. She has one medium sized bandage on her left arm to cover up her cuts. The two are sitting in her room at a table where a chess game is set up. There is a board and a chess clock and they are on either end of the chess board. He has the white pieces, while she has the black ones. Dan is 19. He has been tutoring her in chess for almost a year, ever since she started competing. )*

DAN

Knight goes to 3D.

CORNELIA

Knight to 3D.

DAN

So now, what if I do this?

CORNELIA

Hmm. *(She makes a move).*

DAN

Ooo. Excellent. Good move. *(They continue to play. Dan notices her arm.)* What did you do to your arm?

CORNELIA  
*(taken off guard)*

Oh. *(recovered)* Nothing really, mosquito bites, I just... scratched too hard. *(She touches her arm and looks at it briefly)*

DAN

Ouch.

CORNELIA

No biggie.

DAN

Well, umm, I'm going to teach you the Sicilian Defense. *(He begins to re-set the chess board and starts talking about the strategy.)*

*CORNELIA is not listening. The devil has stepped into the room. He chuckles a little as he moves quickly into the room and jumps on her bed. Neither DAN or CORNELIA can see him, but CORNELIA feels his presence. She starts to look around.)*

DAN

CORNELIA, CORNELIA... Are you paying attention?

CORNELIA

What. No. Sorry. Did you hear that?

DAN

No. What? What was it?

CORNELIA

I don't know but I thought I saw something?

DAN

You saw something? I thought you heard something?

CORNELIA

I did... I thought I did. It's strange. *(pause)* You think I'm crazy don't you.

DAN

Yes, but most geniuses are crazy.

CORNELIA

*(smiles)*

I'm not a genius.

DAN

Well, if you've already mastered the Sicilian Defense, you are.

CORNELIA

Oh. Ha, ha. Alright, I get it, teach me.

*(As Dan explains he moves the white pieces and directs CORNELIA to move certain black pieces)*

DAN

Focus is the key. We need to get you ready for the Freshman tournament.

CORNELIA

I'm focused!

*Devil plays around and mocks Dan to the audience.*

DAN

So in the Sicilian Defense, when white does a King pawn opening to E4, black plays the pawn to C5. It's going to give you control over the central square D4 and also destabilizes the white's E and D pawns. So when white plays its knight out to F3, Black is going to play pawn out to D6 and now white plays pawn out to D4 and...

CORNELIA

*(She reacts like it's a no-brainer)*

I take the D4 pawn.

DAN

Genius. *(CORNELIA rolls her eyes and shakes her head.)* Which is then countered by white taking your D4 with his Knight. What you want to do then is...

*Dan keeps explaining, but goes soft, almost inaudible, as the Devil starts to play his trick. As CORNELIA pays attention to Dan and moves a piece when Dan says, the Devil comes over and looks at the board and the audience. He gives the audience insight into his plan. The Devil looks at the game and knows what the next move is going to be.*

DAN

White goes to *(moves piece)* and so then *(indicates for CORNELIA to move her piece)* now this is tricky.

*The Devil then goes over to Cornelia and, in a manner of speaking, joins the game! The Devil uses an invisible string to tie around CORNELIA's wrist to control her left hand and makes it do the next move almost like a marionette. The Devil guides CORNELIA to the right spot on the board.*

DAN

Wow, yes, that was it. How did you know that? It's one of the most difficult moves in this whole strategy.

CORNELIA

I don't know.

DAN

Yeah, well, sometimes you really surprise me.

CORNELIA

*(smiling)*

Me too.

DAN

*(He moves a piece.)*

So now what's next?

*CORNELIA reaches for the right piece as Dan looks on approvingly, but suddenly the Devil moves her hand to another piece and makes her do a very wrong move.*

Oh...uh...I would have thought that that move was obvious. What you just did opens it up for white to put your king in check. Did you see that?

CORNELIA

*(embarrassed)*

Yes...I...I don't know why I did that?

DAN

Forget it. So after that, white will most likely do this *(he moves a white piece as his voice goes softer)* which will leave you open to do what?

*CORNELIA hesitates, but then picks up the right piece, but then the Devil tries to move it to the wrong spot, but this time she fights to get it to the right spot. To her and Dan it looks like she is fighting an invisible force. To Dan her movements are sporadic and a bit crazy. She finally wins and places the piece down where she wanted it but has knocked down almost all the other pieces in the effort.*

CORNELIA

*(As she places the piece down she shouts)*

HERE!

*The Devil is thrown off of CORNELIA and he is upset. He storms out of the room through the door. Dan and CORNELIA don't notice.*

DAN

Yes, Miss Feisty. But, next time you might want to gently place the piece down, even if you are putting someone in check.

CORNELIA

Ummm, *(recovering)* Just trying to live up to your aggressive playing reputation, I guess.

DAN

What have you heard?

CORNELIA

Well, I heard you stood up on a chair and shouted “Finisher” when you beat Francis Driscoll...

*They start to pick up the fallen pieces. They are becoming closer and closer as they pick them up. DAN gets a little embarrassed.*

DAN

Uh...yeah I...

*Suddenly CECILE opens the door and steps in. The Devil grinning prances in behind CECILE as if he brought her there.*

CECILE

What was all that noise for? You know Mom says that you’re supposed to have this door open when you’re having your little chess meetings.

CORNELIA

There lessons.

CECILE

Yeah, well, whatever.*(glances at DAN)* Hi. Dan...the Man.

DAN

*(Clears throat)*

Oh. Ha. Hi Cecile.

*CECILE and DAN stare at each other for a bit. CECILE tosses her hair. CORNELIA picks up on the attraction.*

CORNELIA

What do you want?

CECILE

Doesn’t look like much of a lesson is going on in here.

DAN.

Oh umm. We were just taking a short break.

CECILE.

Uh huh. Well, I don’t think my mother pays for breaks?

CORNELIA

CECILE!

DAN

Of course not. Were getting back to work.  
Cornelia just got a bit worked up.

CORNELIA

*(gesturing for him to stop)*  
No. don't...Um...Stop.

CECILE

Tell me about it. She gets so worked up over every little thing. This morning I suggested that she might want me to do a little something to her hair, put some make up on, you know, something to make her a bit more presentable and she got mad at me. Our poor little Cor, Cor. Plain and Simple, that's how she likes it.

*CECILE strokes CORNELIA's hair. CORNELIA swipes at CECILE's hand. Then CORNELIA shoves CECILE and tries to push her out the door.*

CORNELIA

Stop it. Ugh. Why don't you just get out of here.

CECILE

Gosh, you don't have to be so violent...Especially in front of...Okay...Okay...

*CORNELIA realizing what she is doing begins to stop, but not before the Devil gets a hold of her and makes her push CECILE out the door.. She then slams the door.*

CECILE

*(off stage whimpers)*

OUCH!

*The devil prances around with glee as CORNELIA whips around in surprise at her own action.*

CORNELIA

*(looking at Dan who is a bit frightened)*

Huh. *(Then looks at Dan)* Sorry. *(pause)* Did I just do that?

DEVIL

*(To audience)*

It was me!

DAN

*(breathy)*

Yeah.