

Choice In The Matter

by

Joseph Arnone

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Cast of Characters

CHERI: 25

PATRICIA: 26

Place
Gardens

Time
Early Afternoon

Setting: The enormous gardens of Cheri and Charlie's home.

At Rise: Cheri and Patricia walk along the gardens not far from the front gates.

PATRICIA: I want you to know that this is all so sudden.

CHERI: Sudden...

PATRICIA: Of course.

CHERI: Hmm.

PATRICIA: Honestly, Cheri, the last thing I would ever wish to happen has happened.

CHERI: You do realize that you've caused quite a stir between my husband and I. He has forbid me to ever see you again and I don't blame him. If he finds out that you've come to visit me, I can't fathom his reaction.

PATRICIA: Surely, this has all gotten way out of hand.

CHERI: You don't know my husband...

PATRICIA: But Cheri, I promise you, I am innocent.

CHERI: Did you not speak out?

PATRICIA: I did, only my own husband. I had no idea it was being overheard.

CHERI: But why Patricia, why after I already told you not to utter a single word, did you?

PATRICIA: But it was to my husband in confidence.

CHERI: Not good enough!

PATRICIA: ...I cannot tell you how very sorry I am.

CHERI: Unfortunately, I am bound by my duty as a wife and---

PATRICIA: But our husband's get on as well. We have had many occasions where we have spent an ample amount of time over one another's homes. Our children play and go to school with one another, we have even gone on holiday together...we have truly bonded over these past few short years, have we not?

(beat)

I cannot imagine not continuing on with our friendship.

Please, allow my husband to speak to your husband, to explain things. It truly was taken out of context and I guarantee there was no ill intention whatsoever on my part...

As I've said, I wouldn't do anything to ever hurt you or your family's well being...it was an innocent error and I own up to it entirely.

I could not feel worse. If I could go back in time I most certainly would, Cheri.

I am so terribly sorry and I care so much about you, the children, your husband...I am shattered, utterly devastated...

CHERI: ...I trusted you and you took that trust away.

PATRICIA: We can make amends.

CHERI: When you promise someone that you weren't going to utter a single word and you do, that's more than a slip up. (beat) It's my fault. I should have been wise to you, your character...I really don't know what in hell got into me to have been so personal with you...sure, I had a glass of wine but I didn't think I was that tipsy...I'm to blame because I went along with our conversation and you know what's funny, deep down inside, there was a tiny voice yelling up to my ears, trying to get me to stop talking.

That's the real kicker. I knew! I knew as I was talking to you about my husband's business matter, I should have kept quiet...and look now, look where it's gotten me.

I do hope that you are smart enough to know that it's game on between us. Whatever it takes Patty, I will hit back and I will hit back very hard!

PATRICIA: Cheri, you must calm down, please...this has all been an enormous misunderstanding!

CHERI: Oh, has it? I find that hard to---

PATRICIA: I spoke to my husband and some culprit overheard, why is that so hard to accept?

CHERI: Accept? I find it hard to *believe!* How perfectly timed, how situated, how easy! It's all so coincidental that Mr. Marion just so happened to be within earshot of what must have been music to his ears.

PATRICIA: He must have pieced what I was saying together because I didn't go into much detail with my husband.

CHERI: Mr. Marion is a smart man...he must have taken the facts he overheard and investigated the matter, only to come up with more information and now we have riots on our hands.

Do you not realize that my family fears for its life? With all these newspaper reports, blasting my husband as a crook, a corrupt businessman, calling him names I can't even repeat, receiving death threats and hateful letters...

PATRICIA: I have read the trades.

CHERI: Our entire reputation, all that we stand for in our community, church, charities...all hang in the balance because of what you said...

No, no, I'm the one who is sorry...for having trusted you.

I cannot believe I was so foolish to think that I had a true friend in you.

PATRICIA: You do! You do!

CHERI: Liar! How much did Mr. Marion pay you? HOW MUCH?

PATRICIA: I cannot believe what---

CHERI: How much?!

PATRICIA: He did no such thing...Cheri, I don't know what---I am so shocked.

CHERI: You must leave. I'll walk you to the front gate.

PATRICIA: This is all such a nightmare.

CHERI: It certainly is.

PATRICIA: There must be a way for us to make this right.

CHERI: We've already been through this...there is no such way.

PATRICIA: My husband has tremendous influence with the printed press. Perhaps he can sway them to alter their findings.

CHERI: Alter their findings? There should never have been anything to find. My husband is a good man...he is honest...if someone is owed a penny he sees to it that it gets given...and they make a mockery out of him for something that was being negotiated and all the workers in town hate upon us without even hearing our side of the story.

Oh no, this will take time, much time. Your husband's influence won't do us any good...

PATRICIA: But surely it will...please, let him exercise it. Anything, anything to help set this right.

CHERI: ...I see...I will talk to Charles...I will mention your husband's influence and willingness to help...perhaps that is a way for things to come together and settle this business of ours...but I am not too optimistic...the devil has been let out of his cage and I'm not so sure he will ever go back inside.

PATRICIA: Let us try...please.

CHERI: We have no choice in the matter.

END OF PLAY