

The Chain of Heredity

by

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Cast of Characters

<u>GREGORY</u> :	56
<u>ALICE</u> :	53
<u>ANGELA</u> : (ANGIE)	23

Place
Old Westbury

Time
Night

2.

Setting: The fashion of the interior of this home is that of a castle. It's dark and mysterious with dim lighting.

At Rise: Alice enters Gregory's home and the two carry their conversation over to an enormous living room.

GREGORY: Alice, so lovely to see you. Please, come in.

ALICE: I love what you did with the place.

GREGORY: I decided to go the whole Dracula way.

ALICE: Yes, I imagine you would.

GREGORY: I have to live up to my reputation. Please, sit down. Is it still rosé?

ALICE: Of course.

GREGORY: I thought so. (beat) How was the drive over?

ALICE: Easy.

GREGORY: Still remember the way?

ALICE: Who could forget?

(GREGORY hands ALICE a glass of wine)

Thank you.

GREGORY: To old friends.

(THEY clink glasses)

(GREGORY sits across from ALICE)

ALICE: Happy Birthday, Gregory.

GREGORY: Thank you.

ALICE: I would have bought you something but each time I do, I get scolded.

GREGORY: Well, it's not that it isn't appreciated, but nothing is better than having you as my company.

ALICE: I see.

GREGORY: It's true. I am a man who has everything.

ALICE: At least in the material sense.

GREGORY: That's true. (beat) There are areas of my life filled with holes, I can't deny that.

ALICE: Such as?

GREGORY: Losing you...my daughter. Never making amends with my father before he died. But you already know all of this.

ALICE: I like hearing you say it.

GREGORY: Why?

ALICE: It wasn't very often I ever got to see you squirm.

GREGORY: Was I squirming?

ALICE: Absolutely.

GREGORY: It's good reason to squirm. When things affect a person so much, it has a tendency to show.

ALICE: Are you living in regret, Gregory?

GREGORY: Well, I certainly haven't played all my cards right. I like the way things are between us, currently. Could there have been more? I don't know. Maybe things are better, having turned out this way. I was a hard bastard to be around during our years of marriage. Had we stayed together, one of us may have murdered the other. It's obscure to think about, but most probably true. It was a good thing we went our separate ways. I guess. I think about Angie, what a great kid she always was and how I didn't capture her spirit when I should have...I waited too long. By the time I showed her any sort of attention, she had already changed, and I think I was responsible for that change. I could never get her back. I don't imagine I was that terrible, but maybe I was...I was, I must have been because look at the result.

ALICE: Are we going to bore our yearly birthday tradition with tired topics?

GREGORY: I'm in a different place now, Alice.

ALICE: How so?

GREGORY: Oh, I see things differently. After so much time, you begin to see through the smoke and realize how far away you always were. I was so distant. From you, from Angie...I lied to myself. Thinking all of the time spent making deals and negotiating a fortune would be my way to show love and appreciation, but it was all so selfish of me. You saw right through me and I'm glad you did.

ALICE: This is not the Gregory Hanson I know.

GREGORY: I'm dying, Alice. (beat) Found out last month. Maybe I have a year if I'm lucky. It's in my kidneys.

ALICE: Dear God, Gregory.

GREGORY: So you see, this isn't our usual number. I might not get another birthday. (beat) Did you know that you are the only person on planet earth that ever remembers my birthday?

ALICE: No.

GREGORY: I know thousands and thousands of people. No one seems to bother. That also has to be my fault. Alice, I want to make arrangements with you.

ALICE: What arrangements?

GREGORY: I've amassed a fortune over the years. I have properties that span the globe, investments in stock and businesses, I have all sorts of things I need to do in order to square everything away before I die. I want you to have everything.

ALICE: What? Me??

GREGORY: There is no one else.

ALICE: What about our daughter?

GREGORY: She's useless!

ALICE: Do not speak about Angie that way!

GREGORY: She's hated me ever since she turned sixteen and decided to hate me forever!

ALICE: Our daughter means nothing to you?

GREGORY: ...I'm trying...you know, I'm not some invincible man without feelings. Don't you think I'm hurting? I was far from being a great father, but I put a roof over her head, clothes on her back and food in her mouth. How many fathers do that?

ALICE: Many.

GREGORY: What?

ALICE: Many fathers take care of their family, Gregory.

GREGORY: (sighs) Yeah, yeah you're right. I'll never learn. I'm sorry I, I shouldn't think of her in that way...I love Angie but she has never given me a chance to make things right.

ALICE: Why should she?

GREGORY: I'm her father.

ALICE: So what?

GREGORY: Look, I'm gonna drop dead within a year, can't you side with me on this?

ALICE: You weren't the one who used to hold her tight when she cried about you never being around for important things in her life.

GREGORY: Like what?

ALICE: Anything from her first ballet recital to her graduation. You were never there.

GREGORY: But should I be crucified for the rest of my life because of it?

ALICE: Angie has reached a place where she has resigned herself to not having a father. A person can't exist if they haven't existed before?

GREGORY: But I have existed! I'm not some ghost!

ALICE: Gregory, you are a ghost.

(pause.)

GREGORY: I want you to take everything over and decide what should go to Angela.

ALICE: Why not tell her yourself?

GREGORY: I've called her fifty times and left message after message after message. I'm done leaving messages with no reply.

ALICE: She's testing you.

GREGORY: Testing me? How?

ALICE: She wants to see how far you will go to get her attention.

GREGORY: I'm dying, is that good enough?

ALICE: Yes.

GREGORY: You think?

(ALICE takes out her phone and calls
Angie on speaker)

ANGIE: Hello??

ALICE: Angela, it's Mom.

ANGIE: I know Mom, what do you want?

ALICE: I am with your father, he's dying.

ANGIE: What??

ALICE: Your father is going to die and he would like to speak with you before he does.

ANGIE: Where? Where is he?

(ALICE gesture to GREGORY to speak)

GREGORY: Ang-Angela, I'm not dying this instant as your mother has made it sound, but I'm--I've been diagnosed with cancer and I don't have long, and I wanted to---

(ANGIE hangs up)

Hello? Hello?! HELLO?! Look, you see - damn her! She hung up, right on my face.

ALICE: I'll talk to her...more wine?

(ALICE gets up and pours herself a glass of wine)

GREGORY: Isn't that alarming to you? I have just pronounced that I am going to die, that I've been diagnosed with cancer and she hung up the phone. Is that normal behavior to you?

ALICE: It's normal for Angie. She's done far worse to me.

GREGORY: What can be worse than that?

ALICE: Ha! You should only know the trouble I've found her in. Angie isn't like either of us. I can't tell you how many parties I've thrown that she has destroyed from her own personal demons. Entirely embarrassing to say the least. Oh, I don't want to talk about such things, the problem is that she has been spoilt, she has been given everything, and this is how she behaves.

GREGORY: Everything but love.

ALICE: Love?

GREGORY: She was never given love, by either of us.

ALICE: I've always been there for her as a mother.

GREGORY: Don't tell me, we both know what you lack as a mother, just what I do as a father. What that girl needed was love from her parents and instead we both ignored her and ruled her out from our own selfish needs and desires.

ALICE: Ha! Speak for yourself, Greg. You may wish to take the high road now that your days are numbered for you, but I am going to live my life the way I need to live it and if Angie wants to go on like some disconnected brat, so be it. Each of us is given a life and if we don't live it, then shame on us.

GREGORY: Shame on us.

ALICE: Shame on you. You never set the example.

GREGORY: That's what I've been trying to tell you.

ALICE: Well, good.

GREGORY: I thought you'd at least have enough sense to---aww what good is it...I knew the truth. Who am I kidding? I knew your make up as a person the day I met you, which was exactly what I wanted in a woman, but I didn't think things through, I didn't look out on the horizon and visualize Angie. I didn't create her in my imagination and what she would need. The day you told me you were pregnant was the day I already knew it was too late.

ALICE: I never wanted to have kids.

GREGORY: Neither did I, but we did because we had the money, we never did what was right, did we? It was like we created an imposter, someone to disrupt our way of living, someone to always get in the way of our path. We didn't want her! And she knows it! How can she not know it? Look at our actions. We're terrible parents, terrible people.

ALICE: I may be a rotten parent but I'm not a rotten person. I have many good and decent friends that admire me and whom I admire.

GREGORY: Is that what it's all about? Being in society, making money, having a laugh. Who gives a damn? At the end of the day who really gives damn?!

(GREGORY pours himself a glass of wine)

ALICE: I give a damn! I gave a damn as a little girl wearing clothes that were torn and shoes that had holes in the soles. I gave a damn! Me! There was no way in hell I was going to continue living my life in poverty. I had a plan and I executed that plan and nobody was ever going to stop me!

GREGORY: Not even Angela.

ALICE: Not even her!

GREGORY: What do we do when we run out of time?

ALICE: What a question.

GREGORY: We can't go back. We can't make up for lost time, can we? We can't. Time is a cruel teacher and it always gets the last laugh. Time just keeps on ticking, long after we're gone, it continues to wake us up out from our ignorance, but always when it's too late, always when we recognize the problem...how else will time have an impact on its message? There are others, like you, who don't wish to hear it. You will go on ignoring the sounds of time until your dying breath. But me, I can't, I won't go out that way, not without making things right with Angie, not without righting my wrongs. I am not going to let time win. Not while I am alive! If there is a need, there is a chance and I wish to have my chance.

ALICE: Oh, what will you do? What difference can you possibly make? Angie can't stand you, you've known it yourself, it's written all over her.

GREGORY: I must try. Where is she now?

ALICE: God knows, she travels like it's going out of style.

GREGORY: I would like for you to schedule...are you listening to me?

ALICE: Yes, yes, go on.

GREGORY: I would like for you to schedule a lunch. Don't tell her I am coming but I want to see her. Please. Do you think you can arrange it?

ALICE: I can arrange it.

GREGORY: Thank you, Alice.

ALICE: She's going to make a big scene. Are you sure you want to go in to public with her?

GREGORY: What scene? Doesn't she have humility?

ALICE: Our daughter is a fire cracker that won't ever be put out.

GREGORY: How do you think she will react?

ALICE: Most likely she'll stand up and leave.

GREGORY: Okay, okay. Let's arrange a private lunch at your home and I'll show up. How does that sound?

ALICE: Smarter. Let's do that.

GREGORY: This way if she explodes..but why, why would she react so?

ALICE: She's off the rails.

GREGORY: Are you serious?

ALICE: Off the rails. That is why she is on medication day and night.

GREGORY: What does she suffer from?

ALICE: It's exhausting Gregory. Doctor Tovar says she should be in an asylum.

GREGORY: Wait. Slow down Alice! This is absurd and all too fast for me to digest. Just because Angie is taking pills, it doesn't mean she is a lunatic.

ALICE: I know that but she just so happens to be a lunatic who takes pills, alright?

GREGORY: Give me an example.

ALICE: You just had one. Doesn't that seem crazy to you? You told your daughter that you are dying and she hung the phone up.

GREGORY: This goes deeper than I thought.

ALICE: You will see, why don't you visit next Thursday and see how things have changed?

(pause.)

GREGORY: I'm terrified.

ALICE: I'll hide the knives.

GREGORY: What?

ALICE: I'm kidding.

GREGORY: Not funny.

ALICE: You need some humor in tragedy or else things go flat.

GREGORY: This is a tragedy, isn't it?

ALICE: ...It is, it most certainly is...

END OF PLAY