

# ***Soundness of Mind***

*by*

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Cast of Characters

SHARON: 30's

MARTHA: 60's

JONATHAN: 30's

Place  
Suburbs

Time  
Evening

Setting: The play takes place in a suburb where houses are miles apart from one another and the homes are large.

At Rise: The giant kitchen of Sharon and Jonathan's home. Sharon receives Martha at the door, inviting her in. Sharon is a plain yet pretty woman dressed casual and Martha is dressed like an aristocrat with a grand demeanor about her.

SHARON: Good evening, Martha. Haven't seen you all day. How are you keeping?

MARTHA: I'm fine, you know, relaxing in the garden, enjoying the sun and cool breeze. Where's Jonathan?

SHARON: Oh, he's phoned in and said that he won't be home until a bit later.

MARTHA: How long is later?

SHARON: Only fifteen minutes or so.

MARTHA: We shouldn't start eating dinner without him.

SHARON: Oh, well, I thought it would be nice for you and I to talk some, before Jonathan comes home.

MARTHA: Talk about what?

SHARON: Oh, I'm interested in knowing how you've been keeping.

MARTHA: You asked me that and I told you I've been relaxing in the garden.

SHARON: But isn't that what you always seem to be doing? Relaxing in the garden.

MARTHA: What else will you have me do?

SHARON: It wouldn't be such an inconvenience if you wanted to stop inside the home once in a while.

MARTHA: I'm quite comfortable being in the garden, spending time in the guest house.

SHARON: Martha, forgive me for asking, but, aren't you lonely?

MARTHA: Lonely? Why would I be lonely? I've lived a multitude of lives inside just one...I like to read, I read as much as I desire..I get lost in it, so much so that I forget myself entirely and love every minute of it. Well, not that I get forgetful of myself, more like I involve myself in each of these stories really, I ponder, I connect, I experience new experiences through my imagination, just like the real thing. What I forget is the turmoil that always apparently surrounds me. You ask me why I don't often come inside the home, well dear, it is because there is always a bit of *drama* going on in here. A woman my age, not that I am old, mind you, must protect herself from intrusions. If not for my sensitive emotions, then for the soundness of mind.

SHARON: What do you mean by *drama*?

MARTHA: Oh, those kids, really dear, I don't remember raising Jonathan with such red faced ongoings. Shouting, demanding, having fits of all sorts. I have never witnessed a child throwing themselves on marble tile, kicking and screaming with such venom that they actually lost their vocal chords. After that, if you'll excuse me for saying so, I decided right then and there to steer clear from those rotten children.

SHARON: Rotten?!

MARTHA: Forgive me for being blunt. But you're the one who wanted to talk and so we are talking and what is the point of having a conversation if all things get swept under the carpet, so to speak? What's left? Pointless dribble that only moves in boring circular motions. What about? Furniture, clothing, perfume perhaps...on and on...makes one yawn. No? So, there you have it, in response to your question. I hope you are not as puzzled as you were a moment or so ago.

SHARON: Don't you want to be close to your grandchildren?

MARTHA: Close? Define close.

SHARON: Motherly. Don't you wish to build some sort of bond with your grandkids? An exchange of love, warmth, laughter?

MARTHA: ...No.

SHARON: Why not?

MARTHA: I imagine the real question is WHY? Why does one wish to back themselves into a corner because society says so. Yes, I have a son, I have a daughter-in-law, I have grandchildren and what must I do? Forget about me? I wave. When the boys go onto that dreadful school bus, I wave them onward. Try to give them some sort of encouragement. Honestly. The education system is in dire straits these days is it not? I would have placed them in private school. I Even offered a helping hand.

SHARON: We didn't wish to take your money.

MARTHA: Suit yourself. Selfish pride leads to a longer struggle. And now those two angels you call children are off to the races, learning just how to pick their noses and lead mischief amongst the other rotten avocados. In private school there is a higher level of learning. There are less apples in the basket. More attention, leads to more intelligence. Freedom, really, to have the desire to learn, fail, experiment, because of the attention placed on the child. All the drawings, writings, whatever, get observed more closely, and receive full development.

SHARON: Maybe Jonathan and I made the mistake of---

MARTHA: Too late now. I can no longer offer my hand. I'm having an entire library installed once the extension is finished being built and it's cost me quite a bit.

SHARON: I wasn't asking you---

MARTHA: One must learn to grab the opportunity by the throat when the throat pulsates, dear.

SHARON: That's putting it vulgar.

MARTHA: LIFE is vulgar, Sharon...is it not?

SHARON: ...Tonight we are having pasta bolognese, just the way you like it.

MARTHA: What's the occasion?

SHARON: There is no occasion. Just wanted to do something nice.

MARTHA: I see. How nice.

SHARON: Jonathan should be home shortly.

MARTHA: Where are the children?

SHARON: They ran upstairs. Well, went upstairs---

MARTHA: Video games I presume?

SHARON: Homework.

MARTHA: Of course.

SHARON: Would you like a drink?

MARTHA: Thought you'd never ask quite frankly.

SHARON: Yes, well, um, red or white?

MARTHA: I would like a large, tall, clean glass of heavy red, please.

SHARON pours red wine in a glass. Hands it to MARTHA.

MARTHA drinks long and hard.

MARTHA (satisfied): There you go.

SHARON (dull): I'm glad that you like it.

MARTHA: Indeed, I do.

SHARON: Jonathan, he's been trying out different wines each month.

MARTHA: He's not turning alcoholic, is he?

SHARON: No, of course not.

MARTHA: A wife must never take her eyes off the prize, darling. Men are only tame if you crack the whip from time to time.

SHARON: Our marriage isn't like that.

MARTHA: Like what?

SHARON: Like, uh, we get along just fine because we love one another deeply.

MARTHA: Ohhh, how sweet and fictionalized. Is that a fairy tale I haven't read?

SHARON: It's the truth. What do you mean?

MARTHA: Dearie, dearie me, I think not. You are so young, a few wrinkles here and there but nothing to shutter about, however, your mind isn't catching up to your face. A woman must never drop her guard. A second and I do mean a split second, if you do, Jonathan will pounce.

SHARON: Pounce? Ounce on what?

MARTHA: Ahh, one can never tell. A man can come from any direction, mind the pun but it's true dear, a man can never be trusted...fully, completely, forever.

SHARON: That's terrible. What a way to think---

MARTHA: I've had five count them, FIVE husbands, yes?

SHARON nods.

And each one of them pounced. Fred at the bar, Mitch with his secretary, Marvin with his best friend, who knew, Jack with everything that could move and Tom, well, Tom was the exception wasn't he dear...he died before he could pounce.

SHARON: We have very different views.

MARTHA: Don't we...it's true. Strikingly different views and that's fine. You are happy, don't let me manipulate you into thinking Jonathan will ever turn on you. I did raise a good chap. He's soft in the heart with poetry and the like and a cunning wolf in the streets.

MARTHA (cont'd): You found a good one, mind you, but he's still a man. Never forget that simple fact.

SHARON: I won't.

Enter JONATHAN.

JONATHAN: Hello, beautiful ladies. Nice to see you both engaged in conversation. Did I miss much?

SHARON: No---

MARTHA: We were discussing the children.

JONATHAN: Were you? Is everything okay?

MARTHA: Why wouldn't everything be okay?

JONATHAN: Oh, I don't know, the way you sounded just then.

MARTHA: I always sound dreary and depressed.

SHARON: That's true.

JONATHAN: Ha, ha. I'm going to run upstairs and change. Thought you all would have started dinner without me long ago. Thanks for waiting.

JONATHAN runs upstairs.

MARTHA: Good little lad.

SHARON: You shouldn't be so forthcoming.

MARTHA: Isn't it too late for that?

SHARON: I guess you're right. There's no changing you now. I was just hoping, well, (she sighs) I always imagined you would be close to the children, even if you and I weren't...I have no parents, that leaves you and only you as the only grandparent for the boys.

MARTHA: I can't quite possibly make up for three other dead grandparents dear.

SHARON: Of course, I know that, I wasn't saying—I was just hoping that you could have a presence, however small, in their lives. I believe that's important for family.

MARTHA: Do you really want my hostility within the confines of this home?

SHARON: Why does it have to be hostile? Can't you be norm---I mean, friendly?



MARTHA (shocked): Friendly? MEEEE?

SHARON: Can't you give some portion of yourself?

MARTHA: I am not a piece of food.

SHARON: Isn't there something you could do or share with the children as their grandmother?

MARTHA: ...No.

SHARON: You live across the garden for goodness sake.

MARTHA: Yes, I know.

SHARON: They never see you. I never see you. Sometimes I wonder if you're okay but you tell me that you are not to be disturbed.

MARTHA: I like it that way.

SHARON: Yes, I know you do.

MARTHA: I most certainly do. What would one's life be without privacy and quiet? Can't say I don't feel anything for the children. I mean, I am their grandmother, aren't I? But still, I don't like being disturbed. I don't like red faces anymore than I like cheap wine. I'd like more by the way.

MARTHA holds up her glass and SHARON  
pours.

There. Perhaps there is something I could do, for those, for them, the boys. Let me sleep on it.

SHARON (excited): Really?

MARTHA: Well, I imagine I could do more than waving them away at the school bus. I could make an effort in some way.

SHARON: Martha, that would be incredible. It really would be. I can't thank you enough. You know, the eldest one, Jonathan junior, he's been asking about you. Keeps pointing up at the guest house asking who is the woman that's always waving at him when he gets on the school bus.

MARTHA: Really?

SHARON: I promise you. I can see that he's taken an interest and wants to know more about you.

MARTHA: There really isn't much to tell, dear.

SHARON: He wants to know who is grandmother is, Martha.

MARTHA: Can't you just tell him about me?

SHARON gives MARTHA a look.

Alright. I'll do something. Not sure what, but something.

SHARON: Wonderful! Thank you.

**END OF PLAY**