

POISON

by Elliott Hayes

Poison was produced at the Humana Festival of New American Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville. It was directed by Scott Zigler and had the following cast

JACK Victor Gonzalez

KARENJanice O'Rourke

Production Manager: Christopher Stahl

Scenic Designer: Terry Gipson

Lighting Designers: Amy Kues, Craig A. Young

Property Master: Mark J. Bissonnette

Sound Designer: C. Lynn Warren, Darron L. West

Costume Designer: Kevin McLeod

Dramaturg: Liz Engelman, Jim Valone, Michele Volansky

CHARACTERS

Jack - an accountant

Karen -Jack's wife

TIME & PLACE

The present. Their home.

POISON

A bedroom. KAREN is sitting on the bed, wearing a robe. JACK stands in the doorway, watching her in silence.

JACK. Is he gone?

KAREN. Yes.

(Pause.)

JACK. Do you want a drink?

KAREN. No.

JACK. I want a drink.

KAREN. Have one.

JACK. I will.

(Pause.)

KAREN. Well?

JACK. I went to the 7-Eleven. I bought some ice cream.

I didn't know what else to do.

KAREN. You didn't have to leave the house.

JACK. What did you expect me to do?

Wait in the living room while he put on his pants?

KAREN. No.

JACK. Of course I went to the 7-Eleven, for Christ's sake!

(Pause.)

JACK. It's raspberry ripple.

KAREN. Oh.

JACK. Are you hungry?

I mean ... do you want some?

(KAREN shakes her head.)

JACK. It's past its due date.

KAREN. Why'd you buy it, then?

JACK. I had to do something.

KAREN. Why didn't you buy potato chips?

JACK. I didn't want potato chips.

KAREN. You shouldn't eat it if it's past due.

JACK. I don't plan to.

I'm having a drink.

I've wanted a drink all day.

That's why I came home.

KAREN. For a drink?

JACK. I've come home early before.

KAREN. You should have called.

JACK. I've come home early before.

KAREN. I know.

JACK. I haven't called.

KAREN. I know. It's never mattered.

JACK. Don't try to tell me that this is a first.

KAREN. It is.

JACK. Bullshit

KAREN. In our bed.

(Pause.)

JACK. Was he wearing a condom?

KAREN. Yes.

JACK. One of mine?

KAREN No.

JACK. I don't believe you.

KAREN. What difference does it make?

JACK. You don't think it makes a difference?

KAREN. He was wearing a condom.

JACK. My condom!

KAREN. Jack, don't be ridiculous.

JACK. Out of my underwear drawer.

(Pause.)

JACK. Do you know what I thought as I walked to the store?
Among other things.

KAREN. No.

JACK. I wondered how big he was.

KAREN. Don't.

JACK. Bigger than me?

KAREN. Jack.

JACK. Am I out of line?

KAREN. Yes.

JACK. I don't think any rules apply, Karen. I
don't think any rules at all work here.

We get to make our own.

KAREN. I'm sorry.

JACK. Do you know what else I thought?

KAREN. I don't want to know what you thought.

JACK. I bet you don't.

KAREN. I don't.

JACK. I thought I might kill you. *(Beat.)*

I wondered if I could. *(Beat.)*

Do you think I can?

KAREN. No.

JACK. Why not?

KAREN. Are you trying to frighten me?

JACK. Are you frightened?

KAREN. Should I be?

JACK. Yes. *(Pause.)* Why?

KAREN. I don't know.

JACK. Yes you do.

KAREN. I don't.

JACK. Do you love him?

KAREN. No.

JACK. Are you sure?

KAREN. Yes.

JACK. Do you love me?

KAREN. Yes.

JACK. Are you sure?

(Silence.)

JACK. I love you.

(Silence.)

JACK. What do we do?

KAREN. I don't know.

JACK. What are we supposed to do?

KAREN. I don't know.

JACK. Will you see him again?

KAREN. No.

JACK. Yes, you will.

KAREN. I won't.

JACK. Come on, Karen.

How can you avoid him?

KAREN. I won't see him.

I mean I won't sleep with him.

(Pause.)

JACK. When did it start?

KAREN. It didn't start.

JACK. How many times have you slept with him?

KAREN. I don't know.

JACK. One hand?

KAREN. Stop it.

JACK. More?

KAREN. No.

JACK. Do you think he remembers?

KAREN. I wasn't counting Jack, for Christ's sake!

JACK. I wonder if he was.

KAREN. Why don't you ask him?

JACK. Sure. Next time I borrow the lawn mower.

(Silence.)

KAREN. I thought you were having a drink.

JACK. I am.

KAREN. Why don't you get me one, too?

JACK. You said you didn't want one.

KAREN. I want one now.

JACK. Okay.

KAREN. I ...

JACK. You what?

KAREN. I need to have a shower.

(Pause.)

JACK. I don't wear Polo.

KAREN. What?

JACK. I don't wear Polo.

KAREN. So?

JACK. Isn't that why you're having a shower?

KAREN no.

JACK. This room stinks of Polo.

KAREN. Does it?

JACK. You can't smell it?

KAREN. No.

JACK. You probably smell like Polo, too.

KAREN. I just want to have a shower.

JACK. Were you planning to change the sheets?

KAREN. It's Friday.

JACK. I know it's Friday.

KAREN. I always change the sheets on Friday.

JACK. Is that why you let him sleep in my bed?

KAREN. I always change the sheets on Friday.

JACK. And I thought you didn't know what you were doing.

(Pause.)

JACK. (*Pointing at a tie.*) Is that his?

KAREN. ...yes.

JACK. How would you have explained that?

KAREN. It wouldn't have been there.

JACK. No. I guess it wouldn't. Would it?

And the sheets would have been clean and the room would have smelled of Lysol and you would have already put that chicken in the oven by the time I got home.

But I came home early, thinking we might rent a movie, or we might even go out and see a movie.

Even when I saw Charlie's car in our drive I figured maybe he'd come to see me. Only I wasn't home, was I? And he couldn't possibly know that I was coming home early.

And then there was the air-chilled chicken on the counter, and the vegetables all chopped up and no sign of you.

Or Charlie ... only his beer.

KAREN. Jack ...

JACK. You sat at the kitchen table, didn't you?

And talked.

KAREN. Yes.

JACK. Did you talk about me?

What a question. Of course you talked about me.

Didn't you?

KAREN. Charlie had a beer.

JACK. Sure. Charlie had a beer and then said he wanted to fuck you.

And then you realized it was Friday
and you had to change the sheets anyway.
Isn't that right?

(*KAREN does not answer.*

Beat.)

JACK. He didn't finish his beer either.

(*Pause.*)

JACK. Are we going to go to the Wilson's barbecue tomorrow?

KAREN. Why wouldn't we go?

(Silence.)

KAREN. Do you still want to go?

JACK. Do you think Charlie will be there?

KAREN. I don't know.

JACK. Did he say he would be there?

KAREN. No.

JACK. I guess you didn't talk about the Wilson's barbecue, did you?

KAREN. No.

JACK. You're supposed to bring potato salad, aren't you?

KAREN. Yes.

JACK. It wouldn't be much of a barbecue without potato salad, would it?

KAREN. No.

JACK. I guess we should go then.

KAREN. I guess we should.

If you still want to.

JACK. Is it up to me?

KAREN. Yes.

(Pause.)

JACK. I wish you were dead.

(Silence.)

JACK. What do you say to that?

KAREN. Nothing.

JACK. Nothing?

KAREN. What can I say?

JACK. I love you.

KAREN. I know you do.

JACK. No, Karen. That's what you were meant to say.

(Silence.)

JACK. Well?

KAREN. I love you.

(Silence.)

JACK. Poison.

KAREN. What?

JACK. Poison.

KAREN. What do you mean?

JACK. Once it's in ... it's in.

KAREN. Poison?

JACK. Us.

KAREN. It doesn't have to be ...

JACK. But it is.

KAREN. No ...

JACK. Remember Ice Nine?

KAREN. Ice Nine?

JACK. Kurt Vonnegut. In a book. Cat's Cradle.

KAREN. No.

JACK. One little drop. One little piece ...

And then everything, everywhere ... Frozen.

KAREN. I love you.

JACK. Like poison.

(FADE TO BLACK.)

THE END