

Sample © 2000 Anne Phelan WHITE GLOVES

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Characters:

GERT 20 years old; overweight; wears thick glasses

AMY 20 years old; GERT's best friend; exceptionally well-groomed; just had her hair done; reeks of old money

OFFSTAGE

VOICE OF

ALMA mid-40's; GERT's mother

Setting:

The livingroom of Gert's parents' pre-World War II house. A few days after this Christmas. The tree and stockings are still up, most of the presents have been cleared away. Outside, it is snowing lightly.

Synopsis:

GERT is hemming an evening skirt for her mother, when AMY drops by. GERT and AMY are going to their debutante ball this night. They talk about the past and the future, but everything seems to emphasize their differences instead of their common history. AMY has her life set: she's already making plans for her wedding, four years from now. But GERT knows far too much all of a sudden, particularly about Amy's boyfriend. AMY and GERT's friendship has shifted from GERT desperately wanting to be like AMY, to her going her own way and leaving AMY behind. AMY leaves, shaken, and GERT is ready to come out.

(At rise, GERT sits on the floor, near the Christmas tree. SHE wears jeans and an old sweatshirt, and heavy socks without shoes. SHE is trimming the hem of a long skirt with ribbon. Next to HER is a sewing kit: thread, needles, paper of pins, pincushion, etc.)

GERT:

(Struggling with the skirt)

Fucking taffeta! Slides like-

Shit!

(Stabs HER finger with the needle)

VOICE OF ALMA:

(Off)

What happened now?

GERT:

I'm bleeding.

VOICE OF ALMA:

(Off)

Don't get it in the skirt- it'll never come out.

GERT:

Thanks, Mom.

(Sucks on HER finger. The doorbell rings)

VOICE OF ALMA:

(Off)

That must be Amy.

(Pause)

Amy! You look wonderful. How are you?

AMY:

(Off)

Fine, Aunt Alma.

VOICE OF ALMA:

(Off)

I'll leave you girls. There's pop in the pantry, and cookies under the cake tin.

AMY:

(Enters, beautifully coifed)

Gertie, I thought you'd be at the Morgans' party.

GERT:

When was that, last night?

AMY:

After the rehearsal, yeah.

(Takes off HER coat and puts it over a chair)

GERT:

That rehearsal did me in. What an ass I made of myself.

AMY:

That's silly, nobody saw you fall down the stairs.

GERT:

(After a pause)

God, getting married can't be worse than this.

AMY:

Oh, come on.

GERT:

At least then you get better presents.

AMY:

(Sits in a chair near GERT, so that GERT is at HER feet)

Did you work out that stuff with your date?

GERT:

Finally. Vinnie's broke but I said I'd go halves on the tux rental.

AMY:

Where'd you meet him?

GERT:

At an archeology lecture at the Natural History Museum. He does mostly Native American ruins. Down South.

How interesting. **AMY:**

I think you'll like him, he's a nice guy. **GERT:**

So, are you two an item? **AMY:**

Not bloody likely. He's gay. **GERT:**

Oh. Really. **AMY:**

You're going with Ralph. **GERT:**
(Ignoring HER reaction)

Of course. **AMY:**

That's great. It's funny you both wound up at Dartmouth. **GERT:**

Who would've thought? We've only known each other since we were six. **AMY:**

You're taking this all very calmly. **GERT:**

What? **AMY:**

This rite of passage. What my cousin calls "The Cattle Show." **GERT:**

It's a lovely custom. Very romantic and old-timey. I'll be a little relieved when it's over. You weren't here for Thanksgiving. There were constant parties, and all last week- **AMY:**

I was busy. **GERT:**

AMY:

The whole time?

GERT:

Yeah. Working on my dress. The sacrificial garment.

AMY:

You mean having it altered.

GERT:

No, I mean I made it.

AMY:

But everybody ordered theirs from Saks, unless they went to New York.

GERT:

I didn't like them.

AMY:

Out of that whole fashion show in May, you didn't like a single one?

GERT:

Are you kidding? All those seed pearls and spaghetti straps?

AMY:

It's only what everyone's wearing.

GERT:

I can't wear strapless bras- they always wind up around my waist. I'm too fat to try to look flat-chested.

AMY:

You just had to be different.

GERT:

I look like a Seventeen magazine reject in that crap. So I sat down with my pencil and played. Mine is real simple. Long lines. Without a lot of stuff on it.

AMY:

I hope it's satin at least.

GERT:

Yeah. I don't look so hot in white. A baby hippo. But at least it looked good on paper.

AMY:

You heard we've got to go through this sober?

GERT:

You mean no champagne?

AMY:

Not even three-two beer.

GERT:

You're kidding?

AMY:

Even though it's a private party-

GERT:

For four hundred of our most intimate friends-

AMY:

They wont serve liquor to the debs or their dates.

GERT:

(Stabs HERSELF with the needle again)

Shit!

AMY:

What're you doing?

GERT:

Being a good child by putting a ruffle on this for my mother. The drycleaner shrunk it.

AMY:

Gee, I wish I could sew.

GERT:

I only do it when necessary- it doesn't blow my skirt up.

AMY:

We've been preparing for this for ten years.

GERT:

Since dancing school.

AMY:

I wonder what other kids did with their Saturday afternoons.

GERT:

Watched the Three Stooges, probably.

AMY:

Or Japanese horror movies.

GERT:

Films.

AMY:

What?

GERT:

That's the first thing I learned at N.Y.U. Movies are films and c.d.'s are discs.

AMY:

It was so exciting. Like going to a party every week. My mother would curl my hair- that took an hour- and polish my Mary Janes-

GERT:

I just remember when my hair got long and so snarled I had to go to the beauty shop to get the rats' nests cut out.

AMY:

And in the eighth grade we got to wear pumps with stockings. Just think, our pictures will be in the paper tomorrow.

GERT:

I don't even want to think about it.

AMY:

It'll be fun.

GERT:

(Points toward the tree)

Your Christmas present's over there.

AMY:

Yours is at home.

(SHE rises)

Today has been crazy. I'm sure I'll see you again before we go back to school.

GERT:

Sure.

(AMY crosses to the present and picks it up)

So what's the inside scoop? Your mom's on the committee.

AMY:

(Crosses back to HER chair. Puts the present on the floor next to HER)

The country club looks pretty good. All silver and green....

GERT:

Green?

AMY:

(As SHE sits)

Pine roping. And the bouquets are lilies of the valley and white lilies with green ribbons.

GERT:

I meant the serious stuff.

AMY:

Oh. The music is Lester Lanin.

GERT:

Of course.

AMY:

And the club's kitchen is doing the dinner. Breakfast too, I think.

GERT:

Oh, well. Dinner's before the receiving line?

AMY:

After. So have a sandwich. Photos, everyone walks down the stairs. Receiving line, first dance with the fathers. Then the dates come and we eat.

GERT:

Oh, Lord, what I go through for my mother!

AMY:

She seems excited- more than you do.

GERT:

This wasn't my idea- believe me.

AMY:

Yeah, my mother was saying-

(Stops HERSELF)

GERT:

What?

AMY:

Nothing.

GERT:

What?

AMY:

Just that everyone else's mother came out but yours. Everyone who's coming out tonight.

(Slight pause)

I didn't understand why.

GERT:

Money.

AMY:

With all those antiques? And your grandmother's house?

GERT:

That's all that's left.

AMY:

But the way your father's always teasing her about being old money.

GERT:

They were, for Cleveland Catholics.

AMY:

Right.

GERT:

The key word is "were."

AMY:

I don't get it.

GERT:

They were one of the richest families in town when my grandmother was growing up-her father built that house. Finishing school for the girls, Yale for the boys. The grand tour of Europe.

AMY:

So what happened?

GERT:

They lost it.

AMY:

All of it?

GERT:

It took awhile. The Depression sure helped. Not that in those days they were ever without a laundress, a cook, a chauffeur and a yard man. But by the time my mother was in college, forget it. There was barely enough money to get her through college.

AMY:

Well it doesn't matter.

GERT:

It matters a lot to her.

GERT:

There are more important things than money, Gertie.

GERT:

My father's family always had enough.

AMY:

But money doesn't really matter.

GERT:

If you've never had it? Maybe. If you grow up in a millionaire's house and watch it dribble away, it matters a lot.

AMY:

I just can't believe you're serious.

GERT:

Why not? What do you know about it?

AMY:

What's that supposed to mean?

GERT:

Most people don't start private school at the age of five.

AMY:

Lots do. And everybody went to boarding school in high school. All the public school kids transfer in ninth grade.

GERT:

Like me.

AMY:

It's not like you were on scholarship.

GERT:

That's begging the question.

AMY:

I didn't mean it like that.

(Pause)

GERT:

I didn't mean to jump on you. I don't want to go through this tonight. It's such a waste.

AMY:

Of money?

GERT:

And everything.

AMY:

Allison Gates said she was going to wear black stockings tonight.

GERT:

Like she's in mourning?

(Laughs)

That's great!

AMY:

Really, Gertie.

GERT:

I wish I'd thought of it. I wish I didn't have to wear white.

AMY:

It's just for one night.