

LITTLE RED HOUSE

John Yunker

www.johnyunker.com

PRODUCTION HISTORY

- Produced in 2014 and 2022 by the Studio Players of Lexington, Kentucky
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CAST LIST

ED – A sharp-elbowed, frenetic young male.

NATHAN – A middle-aged male. Tired demeanor.

CHARLOTTE – A middle-aged female.

TIME: Present. Evening.

SETTING: Courtyard outside the back door of a nondescript building.

SCENE 1

(NATHAN stands alone, shivering. The door opens just briefly enough to toss ED through. ED jumps quickly to his feet and gestures wildly at the closed door.)

ED

Same to you, pal! Yeah, sure, close that door. Coward! Think that's keeping me out? Not a chance. You ain't seen the last of me!

(Notices NATHAN)

He's lucky I don't have a temper.

NATHAN

You're lucky too.

ED

That's right. Wait. What? Me?

NATHAN

You're still in one piece, aren't you? They're not always so gentle.

ED

You call tossing me out here on my ass in the cold *gentle*?

NATHAN

I've seen worse.

ED

Something tells me this isn't your first time out here.

NATHAN

I've lost count.

ED

This is my first time. It took three of them. Twenty minutes. And boy, did I make them earn it. If only I had seen the old man waiting for me behind the door. But I'll get him back.

NATHAN

I used to put up a fight. Not anymore. I'm getting too old.

ED

How come I've never seen you around?

NATHAN

I try to keep a low profile.

ED

We all try. I'm Ed, by the way.

(ED extends hand. NATHAN shakes it.)

NATHAN

Nathan.

ED

So, Nate, what do you say you and me, side by side, march right through that door just to see the looks on their faces?

NATHAN

I'm not going back in there.

ED

C'mon. What do you mean? It's freezing out here.

NATHAN

At least out here I know my place. It's time I learned to take a hint.

ED

No. It's time they learned who's boss around here. If it weren't for us they'd be out of business. They need us.

NATHAN

That's not how they see it.

ED

Who cares what they see? They kick us out and we sneak back in when their backs are turned. It's all just a game.

NATHAN

Not for those on the losing end.

ED

You have a better idea?

NATHAN

I thought I might try to find the little red house.

ED

The what?

NATHAN

When I was young I overheard my mom talk about a place she called the little red house. I remember her saying that anyone who went inside stayed forever. It sounded so mysterious, like some sort of paradise. Imagine. A place where no one ever kicked you out. I begged her to take me there.

ED

Did she?

NATHAN

She left one morning, not long after, and never returned. I like to think she found the little red house. I like to think she's there right now.

ED

I hate to break it to you, Nate, but that red house. It don't exist.

NATHAN

How would you know?

ED

Trust me, I've heard enough fairy tales to know one. It's a fantasy. Something to dream about while we're busy running from the man.

NATHAN

What's wrong with dreaming?

ED

Dream all you want. I don't believe in anything I can't see with my own eyes. What I see is a violent world with you and me at the bottom looking up. From the moment we were born we've been outsiders, freaks, pests. You think there's some better world waiting for out there, fine. Good luck finding it. All I know for sure is that if you leave here now you will have let those people win.

NATHAN

Those people? Those people are in there, and we're out here. Sounds to me like they've already won.

ED

A skirmish or two maybe. You've got to take the long view, my friend.

NATHAN

I'm not sure I'll live long enough to take the long view. These people will never view us as equals.

ED

Screw equals. We don't need their acceptance. We just need them to get the hell out of *our* home. Now, here's my plan. We wait until they get all settled down in there, with the lights down low. And then you and me sneak back in and pounce right on their unsuspecting asses. It'll be awesome! C'mon.

NATHAN

You're on your own, Ed.

ED

Fine. Suit yourself.

(NATHAN begins to walk away. The door opens and CHARLOTTE is tossed through and she screams in pain as she hits the ground. NATHAN turns and watches as ED attends to her)

ED

You okay, sweetheart?

CHARLOTTE

Do I look okay?

ED

No. You don't.

CHARLOTTE

Thanks.

ED

Let me get you back on your feet.

CHARLOTTE

I think my leg's broken.

ED

That's the good thing about being a spider. You've always got a spare.

CHARLOTTE

I mean I think all of my legs are broken. As in all eight.

(NATHAN continues to pull her up and she screams. NATHAN takes her from ED and places her gently back down. ED begins to pace in anger.)

NATHAN

Easy, Ed. She's injured. What's your name?

CHARLOTTE

Charlotte.

ED

Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, yes. I've heard all the jokes.

NATHAN

I'm Nathan. And that's Ed.

CHARLOTTE

How long have you two been out here?

NATHAN

Long enough to start questioning our purpose in life.

CHARLOTTE

I'm glad I arrived in time to put an end to that.

ED

Those bastards. It was the old man, wasn't it? I'm going to kick his—

CHARLOTTE

It was Nora.

ED

The kid?

NATHAN

The little girl?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, the little girl. I'm embarrassed enough as it is. Her mom thought it would be an important lesson to show little Nora how to be kind to spiders. But Nora wasn't so steady with the glass. I should have just stood still. I know the routine by now, but it's hard to fight instinct.

NATHAN

Where'd they find you?

CHARLOTTE

Bathroom. I've always been a sucker for a claw foot tub. I was thirsty, but I should have waited until everyone was asleep. I see the light go on and I'm clawing like crazy to get up that porcelain wall and I look up and there's Nora staring down at me.

ED

Good thing she didn't run the water on you.

CHARLOTTE

I'm beginning to wish she had.

NATHAN

Now, don't say that. You'll be fine.

CHARLOTTE

Where'd they get you?

NATHAN

Living room wall. I was taking a shortcut between the TV and the bookcase but there were commercials on and eyes wandering.

ED

(Pacing)

I'm going to hurt someone. Seriously hurt someone. Tonight. Late. Slide in through the bedroom closet, wait until the old man's dreaming away and then I'm going to find the warmest place on his body and I'm going to...

CHARLOTTE

Brilliant idea. Make him paranoid enough to start fumigating the house and get everyone killed.

ED

So we're just supposed to suffer these fools?

CHARLOTTE

Yes. We're house spiders. That's what we do. We suffer fools. They turn on the lights. We run for the dark. They take down our webs. We build new webs. They step on us. Our children replace us. They throw us outside in some misguided gesture of goodwill and ...

(CHARLOTTE winces.)

NATHAN

What?

CHARLOTTE

We freeze to death.

NATHAN

You just need to rest. You're not freezing to death.

ED

Well, I sure as hell am. And why is that? I'm cold blooded, for crying out loud!

CHARLOTTE

You're not built for the outdoors. None of us are. That's what these people don't understand. They think all spiders are outdoor spiders and that we broke into their home or got lost on the way to the woodpile. They think by releasing us into the wild that they're doing us some sort of favor. And these people—they do mean well. You remember the previous owners?

NATHAN

The snorers.

CHARLOTTE

If they so much as saw your shadow, it was Operation Orkin Man.

ED

I lost a lot of good buddies back then.

CHARLOTTE

At least these people are making an effort. It's not easy to go against instinct. To evolve. I can't hate them.

ED

I can. We're on their damn side after all. In the past three months I've killed more than a thousand mosquitos, earwings, roaches, flies, mites—the sorts of insects that would normally be feeding on *them*. And what thanks do I get when I happen to walk across the bedroom floor one day? I get a water glass cone of silence dropped over my head, a piece of cardboard under my butt, and a one-way trip out here to Siberia.

CHARLOTTE

Siberia is progress.

NATHAN

I'd like to believe you but I just can't. Excommunicating us, politely or otherwise, merely confirms that these people dream of a world that doesn't include us.

CHARLOTTE

But every time they capture one of us they acknowledge our existence. They take a moment out of their busy day to stop, maybe even get on their hands and knees and actually look at us, up close. So what if it's through a glass?

(then)

Ouch!

(CHARLOTTE collapses.)

NATHAN

What is it? Charlotte?

(NATHAN leans in close.)

She's still breathing. Just passed out.

ED

She's not going to make it.

NATHAN

Yes, she will.

ED

How's she going to fend for herself out here?

NATHAN

We'll take care of her.

ED

We? We're not ants. It's in our DNA to work alone.

NATHAN

I've heard of spiders who share webs, share food. It's not common but it does happen. Maybe it's time you and I work against instinct. Evolve.

(CHARLOTTE groans and opens her eyes. NATHAN goes to her.)

NATHAN

Let us carry you inside.

CHARLOTTE

You're sweet. But I've been carried enough for one lifetime. It's a shame we didn't meet under better circumstances.

(CHARLOTTE clenches her abdomen. NATHAN holds her upright.)

NATHAN

Please, let me help you.

CHARLOTTE

You don't understand. Nora didn't just crush my legs. The mom. I could see it in her eyes. She wanted to put me out of my misery right then but she didn't want to upset Nora. I think next time Nora will get it right. So it wasn't a total waste.

(CHARLOTTE begins breathing heavily.)

Tell me a story.

NATHAN

Story?

(NATHAN looks up at ED, helplessly.)

Uh, when I was young, my mom talked about a place where everyone is welcome. Where no one suffers. Where no one ever leaves. She called it the little red house. That's where I was headed. I could take you too. If you'd like.

CHARLOTTE

Red house? That sounds familiar.

NATHAN

You've heard of it?

CHARLOTT

I've heard of Raid House. As in Raid House Spider Traps. They don't use them here, but the house next door does.

ED

Where everyone is welcome. And no one ever leaves.

NATHAN

I didn't know.

CHARLOTTE

It's a sweet idea. Red House. You promise to take me, right?

(CHARLOTTE closes her eyes and is dead. NATHAN stands.)

ED

Nathan.

NATHAN

I don't want to go in there.

ED

I know. I don't much either. But maybe it's time to work against instinct.

NATHAN

Go in there together?

ED

Side by side.

NATHAN

Imagine the looks on their faces.

ED

Once more, unto the kitchen!

(ED and NATHAN open the door and enter.)

END