

## The Intruder

by Christine Kallman  
(excerpt)

### CHARACTERS

CYNTHIA SWAN	Age 36; sensitive; intelligent, although others see her as a little flaky.
RON SWAN	Cynthia's husband of 12 years, age 48; easy going, a practical joker.
CLEO/THEO/ DARLENE	RON'S older sister, who poses as an older woman and as a man.
IMPS	3 - 8 dancers who perform various functions in the play. They are akin to Shakespeare's fairies in that they exist in a space where they are often not perceived by humans. Also, like Shakespeare's fairies, they represent powers that are outside the control of humans-- powers that are sometimes dangerous, sometimes benign, and occasionally appear in our dreams. They are dressed as diverse creatures (lizard, bobcat, crane, cockroach, wolf, etc., with frightening characteristics emphasized, so that they appear as whimsical monsters. They also propel the action by moving set pieces.
SETTING	2004. An Iowa bedroom, a Florida swamp, a Florida bedroom.

Live percussion was used in the initial production, including African drums and other miscellaneous percussion. Suggestions for scoring are included in the stage directions. Although you can never match the power of live musicians, recorded percussion sounds would be an acceptable alternative.

**(Act I, Scene 2:** That night. CYNTHIA'S dream: We hear drums, a steady distant beat or rumbling sound. CYNTHIA and RON sleeping in bed.)

(During the following, CYNTHIA tosses and turns in bed, while RON remains still. A low hissing sound is heard. CYNTHIA sees an IMP gesturing at the periphery of the scene. CYNTHIA puts her hands around her neck as if being strangled in her dream. She wakes up with a gasp. IMP exits. End drumming. RON wakes up.)

RON

This is no good Cynthia. Make an appointment with the doctor.

CYNTHIA

Doctor?

RON

Get some pills.

(Cut to black.)

VOICE ON LOUDSPEAKER

Cynthia Swan? The doctor will see you now.

(Spot up on CYNTHIA in a chair.)

CYNTHIA

. . . Yes. I'm afraid sometimes. Very. . . . The test? . . . My profile? . . . What does a normal profile look like? . . . Who decides what's normal? . . . These scientists--are they normal?

(Blackout. Spot up on CYNTHIA and RON in bedroom.)

I also talked to a therapist.

RON

Good. Did she wave her magic wand?

CYNTHIA

She wants to see both of us.

RON

Im not having the dreams.

CYNTHIA

But we've been arguing.

RON

We're not arguing.

CYNTHIA

Yes we are!

RON

We are not arguing! Everything's going to be okay.

(Pause)

CYNTHIA

We can't go there.

(short pause)

RON

I know this was sudden. But I'm lucky to have this job. *(beat)* I found us a nice place.

CYNTHIA

I hate it.

RON

*(Beat. Trying to control his temper.)* Babe, you haven't seen it.

(RON takes out a suitcase and starts putting things in it.)

CYNTHIA

You're already packing!

RON

It would be strange to move to Florida and leave all our clothes here.

CYNTHIA

Who says we're moving?

RON

We talked it over last night. You said okay.

CYNTHIA

You can't hold me to one single affirmative! It's not the way couples do things.

RON

How do couples do things?

CYNTHIA

You know. He throws something out. She lets it lie there. They study it. They dance circles around it, pass it back and forth. If she walks one way, she knows he'll walk the other and pretty soon they will have exited the house in opposite directions. She knows this. He knows this. But if they stay arm in arm, the weight of one balances the weight of the other, and their combined trajectories take them in a whole new direction.

RON

I signed a contract.

CYNTHIA

What?!

RON

I faxed it last night.

CYNTHIA

Break it!

RON

And get blacklisted? Babe. You said it would be a good change. My salary will support us both. You'll have time to start drawing again.

(Pause.)

(Phone rings. CYNTHIA answers.)

CYNTHIA

Hello . . .

(Again, no one on the line.)

*(to RON)* Something is very wrong there. We can't go there.

RON

Have you been taking your pills?

CYNTHIA

Of course.

RON

Time for nighty-night.

CYNTHIA

I can't go to sleep.

RON

It's enough for now.

CYNTHIA

But--

RON

Please. We need some shut-eye.

CYNTHIA

I don't look forward to shutting my eyes.

RON

*(handing CYNTHIA her pills)* Here's your magic beans.

(CYNTHIA takes the pills and moves to get her water.)

RON, cont'

Let's see what the weatherman says.

(RON turns on the T.V. Detective show music comes on. RON watches the T.V., not CYNTHIA in the following dialogue.)

CYNTHIA

Last night it was worse than ever.

(Drumming begins softly, gradually louder. IMPS appear. Only CYNTHIA sees them.)

I'm on a street lined with strange, enormous plants. The houses are huddled together in the dark.

RON

*(engrossed in the T.V.)* Miami Vice.

CYNTHIA

The air is so heavy it's choking me.

RON

I've seen this! This woman is in for the scare of her life.

CYNTHIA

I can hardly see.

RON

Fool. He's already in the house.

CYNTHIA

I stumble to the front door.

RON

*(still watching the T.V.)* Don't go in there! What are you, stupid?!

(Next two lines spoken together.)

She walks through the kitchen.

CYNTHIA

I walk through the kitchen.

RON

He's there, behind the drape. Don't be a dummy!

CYNTHIA

Something is there. The breathing makes the house-- shiver.

RON

Babe, come to bed.

CYNTHIA

I walk through the kitchen out onto the little screen porch. What do they call them in Florida? Oh yes.

(Next two lines spoken together.)

Florida Room.

RON

Florida Room.

CYNTHIA

There's a little grapefruit tree in the yard. It's overflowing with fruit.

RON

What?

CYNTHIA

We close the doors and lock them. You have to go through the bathroom to get to the bedroom.

RON

Did I tell you that?

CYNTHIA

We climb in bed. Turn out the lights.

*(Short pause.)*

CYNTHIA, cont'

Then it starts. The shaking. Like the whole house is shivering.

RON

There aren't earthquakes in Florida.

CYNTHIA

Something-- or someone-- is there!

RON

Stop it, Cynthia!

CYNTHIA

I get up. I walk into the living room.

RON

Babe, Don't.

CYNTHIA

Someone's hands on my neck-- Oh!

RON

Okay! Enough! Cynthia, stop!

(Drumming stops.)

Why would anyone want to hurt you?

(CYNTHIA cries. IMPS exit. Drumming stops. He hugs her. Pause.)

What did the therapist say?

CYNTHIA

Nothing helpful.

RON

I'm sure we paid her enough!



CYNTHIA

She said it was metaphorical.

RON

In what sense?

CYNTHIA

She said I was being strangled by my marriage.

RON

Is that how you feel?

CYNTHIA

No. I'm just confused.

RON

You need to learn to trust.

CYNTHIA

I want to trust. If I can't trust you, who can I trust?

(Pause)

I have to ask something of you. Even if it makes you mad at me.

(Beat)

RON

Fire away.

CYNTHIA

You have to promise me that no matter what I ask you, you will tell me the God's honest truth.

(Pause)

RON

Cross my heart and hope to win the sweepstakes.

CYNTHIA  
Ron!

RON  
Sorry.

(Beat)

CYNTHIA  
Are you having an affair?

(Beat)

RON  
Why are you asking me that?

CYNTHIA  
Are you having an affair?

RON  
Cynthia, no! Why do you think that?!

CYNTHIA  
I don't know. I mean . . . I guess I don't think that.

RON  
I love you. *(beat)* I've loved you from the very beginning. That first time I saw you.  
Behind the counter at the bank.

CYNTHIA  
It was the end of a very long day.

RON  
And the beginning of a very long night. You were looking for someone just like me.

CYNTHIA  
I wasn't! I had just decided to stop worrying about finding a man. Mind my own  
business. Get on with my life.

RON

You seemed very happy to help me.

CYNTHIA

I was happy because it was the end of the day.

RON

I knew you were getting off work soon, so I loitered around by the entrance.

CYNTHIA

I didn't know that!

RON

I helped you on with your coat.

CYNTHIA

You asked me for directions.

RON

You helped. You were so sweet.

CYNTHIA

Before I knew it, I was in your car.

(CYNTHIA moves next to RON on the edge of the bed. Lighting change. Traffic sounds.)

RON

Am I driving too fast?

CYNTHIA

*(laughing nervously)* No.

RON

Because I could slow down.

CYNTHIA

It's okay. I trust you.

RON

C'mon. We just met twenty minutes ago.

CYNTHIA

I trust you. There's something about you.

RON

There's something about you too.

(Pause)

CYNTHIA

This is not at all like me.

RON

You don't usually take rides from strangers?

CYNTHIA

No. I think that's pretty normal.

RON

Who wants to be normal?

(They go around a sharp curve. CYNTHIA is nervous, but happy.)

CYNTHIA

I have a pretty good sense for people.

RON

What do you sense about me?

CYNTHIA

You would never hurt anyone. Not on purpose anyway.

(Pause)

RON

Want to know what I sense about you? You are very sensitive. You're able to see things the way they really are. You probably think it's just a line.

CYNTHIA

No!

RON

Some old guy handing you a line.

CYNTHIA

You're not old!

RON

Well, I just want to say-- I mean it.

(Pause)

Do you live alone? I mean-- I don't need to know that-- it's just--

CYNTHIA

It's okay. Yes I live alone. I have for some time.

RON

I don't mind living alone. Except there's a certain time of day . . .

CYNTHIA

Right as the sun goes down.

RON

Yes!

CYNTHIA

I try to be busy at that time of day, but usually I end up staring out the window.

RON

Me too! (*beat*) Right as the sun goes down.

(Sunset.)

RON, cont'

I always felt I was the luckiest guy in the world to have you. Cynthia?

CYNTHIA

Hmm?

RON

Will you spend the next million sunsets with me?

(He kisses her and pulls her down onto the bed. Some IMPS make a sail out of the bedsheets. Other IMPS push the bed into the sunset. Fade to black. Drumming. Scene change to Florida bedroom. Drums to very low. RON enters.)

*(on phone)* We're in Miami. . . Smooth. Very smooth. . . I know her. Everything's going to be fine. Smooth sailing ahead.

(Lights up low on Florida bedroom. CYNTHIA and RON enter.)

**SCENE CONTINUES.**

**END EXCERPT.**

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