

Vice of love

By Robert Norman Knight

Characters

Delores, the remnants of a legacy.

Stan Sure, a foreseer.

Frederick, a seed of hope.

Setting

A stately mansion that is hibernating in the winter.

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An older woman of fifty, Delores sips her tea in front of a bay window. and looks out to the falling snow through the front window. The room was once used for entertainment but now is only used to sit. It is very adult like. There is a chair with a matching footstool. There is a crescent couch down front, which looks as if it was the color pearl at one time. A grand piano is upstage and is covered with plants as if it was never played. The interior walls to the house have gorgeous wood paneling. There is ticking of a clock that can't be scene, nor heard when dialogue is spoken. The clock hits on the hour and chimes. Delores finishes her tea.

DELORES

Now would you look at that. Ten o'clock and no one has arrived. Not a good sign for someone social. Of course with this storm there is that chance. It's not like this hasn't been coming. If they can plow the streets they could be on time. Your father was always on time. That was part of that man. Being on time. You were the late one. Like a calf hanging on to my utter. (pause for a moment of the ticking) But today is another day and if we have convinced them in the past we can do it again. You just have to behave. They insist on coming. As long as they come I will protect you. Your father is gone, you are then man of the house I will see to that. If we get through this today, it will be chocolate supper.

(a couple of taps on the pipe then a strong knock at the door)

Heavens he is here. He actually made it through this storm. Now you just settle down. I don't want to hear peep. It is now quiet time. Chocolate supper! From here on out, no more, it's quiet time.

(another knock)

Coming!

(another knock that is stopped by Delores opening the door)

Well what do you know you came after all?

STAN

Good Morning Stan Sure from social services.

DELORES

Well it sounds for real. Have you come to shovel the walk? You city boys were always nice to us?

STAN

No mam, not my intention. I could call Public Works if you would like? I am here to speak to you and with your son Fredrick. Is that his name?

DELORES

Yes that is his name. It's a long line of history that name does. My husband named him after his great grandfather. He to was a political man.

STAN

I would not doubt it. May I come in?

DELORES

Well excuse my manners. You must be freezing?

STAN

It is a little brisk.

DELORES

Of course, of course I would be delighted to have you in.

*Stan enters wearing winter dressing. He is carrying a briefcase.
He removes the jacket and things.*

STAN

It is warm in here.

DELORES

With a house this old you got to or the pipes will freeze.

STAN

I don't know I have a new house.

DELORES

Can I offer you a drink?

STAN

It's a bit early.

DELORES

Coffee, tea, maybe?

STAN

Tea please, that would be great.

DELORES

(walking away)

It's ten past ten. Must be some kind of storm out there?

STAN

I beg your pardon?

DELORES

Nothing. Something my husband was keen on.

STAN

Snowstorms?

DELORES

Arriving on time. Sugar or cream?

STAN

Ah. Cream thanks.

DELORES

Be right back.

Delores exits into kitchen. Stan looks about room at photos and souvenirs from around the globe.

DELORES

(from kitchen)

You just make yourself right comfortable. My late husband use to entertain the city likes here on occasion.

STAN

Your husband is deeply admired downtown.

DELORES

He truly loved this community. It is a shame what happened.

STAN

I am not right sure what your referring to mam'.

DELORES

The City Mr. Sure. I was referring to the city. My husband served this city and died with no insurance. That is a shame.

STAN

I didn't know about that but I would agree. Is Frederick around?

Glass breaking from the kitchen.

DELORES

No I guess you might not know about things as such. Kind of a convinent thing about this city. Not knowing a lot of things.

Stan begins to approach the kitchen but then resides.

STAN

Are you okay Mrs...

DELORES

Delores. You can call me Delores.

STAN

All right then Are you okay in there Delores?

DELORES

Yes. Yes I am. Well no not really.

Re-enters room with a teacup.

You see Ibby is in the Hospital and I am worried sick.

STAN

I did not know. You should have called the office we could have rescheduled.

DELORES

I did call. But that sour woman that answered the phone wouldn't take no for an answer.

STAN

Look the city just wants Frederick to be in school. Socializing. He has missed three years of school and at his age...

DELORES

I'm sorry are you telling me how to raise my child?

STAN

The City just needs to know he is getting the proper...

DELORES

You sir, can go to hell.

STAN

There are education laws for a reason Mrs....

DELORES

Delores, Mr. Sure. My name is Delores and I have home schooled that boy a lot better than he would ever be taught, down at the filthy place you call a school.

STAN

Nobody is saying you can't home school the boy, you just need to fill out some paperwork so the city knows he is at the same level as other children.

DELORES

Then fill them out and stop harassing this family.

STAN

Nobody is harassing this family. You need to realize that. There are laws in place. You wouldn't want this to become a rumor I'm sure.

DELORES

Always the same lies isn't it?

STAN

Look, how about you tell me the name of the hospital Frederick is at? That would solve the immediate.

DELORES

That is none of your damn business! Now drink your tea.

STAN

Is your son really sick?

DELORES

I made it for you.

Delores is now like a cornered, wounded animal ready to strike.

STAN

Is he here?

DELORES

Drink it!

STAN

People talk about Frederick! Do you want him to live with that? I have seen the truancy officer reports. I have a warrant to see him Delores.

(reveals a city warrant)

And that is what I have come to do.

DELORES

How dare you enter this home with those accusations. I love my son! You city people think you're above it all. But you can't touch this family.

STAN

Are you here Frederick?!

DELORES

Shut up! My husband was this city.

STAN
Frederick say something! Do something!
I am here to help you!
You don't have to live like this!
Do something! Now is the time!
There are other children who want
to play with you.

DELORES
Don't you dare Freddy!
It is Quiet time!
Lies are what he says Freddy!
Don't you chirp! I love you!
Mama loves you!
I will play with you!

Complete silence then three taps on a pipe, which turn into repeated taps. Stan looks around and uses his ear to follow the sound. Dolores sits on the sofa completely defeated.

DELORES
This is an old house. I can't let the pipes freeze.

Stan continues to follow the noise of the tapping, moving quickly and finally removing a section of the wood paneling to reveal a plumbing main. There is a dirty little boy sitting next to the pipes.

STAN
God lord.

Stan pulls him from this hole. Frederick is holding a teddy bear that has only one arm and one-eye opposite of the arm.

STAN
Frederick? Say something son!

Delores drinks Stan's tea.

FREDERICK
Chocolate.

Stan hugs the boy tightly with emotion as Dolores, exhausted, slumps over to the lights fading to black.

End of play