

# **Gates Motel**

**by Charlie Rhindress**

*Gates Motel* premiered at Live Bait Theatre in Sackville, New Brunswick on July 28, 1994 with the following cast and crew:

Director.....Charlie Rhindress  
Stage Manager.....Karen Valanne  
Set and Costume Designer.....Davey Thompson  
Lighting Designer.....Paul Del Motte  
Composer.....Masaaki Otsuka

Cast  
(in order of appearance)  
Rusty Gates.....David McClelland  
Janet.....Jennifer “South” Miller  
Tony.....Dean Burry  
Sam.....John Reid  
Lily.....Heather Fairbanks  
Body.....Stephanie Baker  
Eve.....Bonnie MacKenzie

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## ACT ONE

### Scene One

The play takes place in an old motel along a deserted strip of highway.

Stage right is an office with a scrimmed-in room above. There is a staircase leading up to this room. There is also a door to the outside. There is a window with a neon "Gates Motel" sign in it.

One of the office walls runs up and down centre stage. On the other side of this wall is a motel room. There is a bed and a scrimmed-in bathroom.

Lights go to black.

Rain begins quietly -- or is it a shower? There is a crash of thunder and a flash of lightning. With the flash a portable TV on the office counter flickers to life. That and the neon sign are the only lights on the stage. We see a man eating a chocolate sundae and staring at the TV.

The music which accompanies the shower scene in Hitchcock's "Psycho" comes in. The full twenty to twenty-five seconds of music plays.

As the post-stabbing, softer music comes in, the outside door to the office slowly opens. A young woman steps inside carrying a suitcase. She is soaking wet. The man does not see her.

JANET: Excuse me...

RUSTY: *(Irritated that someone has interrupted his movie.)* Just a sec.

JANET: *(Short pause.)* I was just wondering--

RUSTY: *(Putting up his hand to silence her and still looking at the TV.)* Wait.

He stares at the TV for another few seconds and then realizes it's useless. The spell has been broken. He stops the VCR.

RUSTY: Have to watch it again later.

He switches off the TV. "Gates Motel" flickers on and off providing the only light in the room. RUSTY approaches JANET who is still beside the door.

RUSTY: Now, what can I do you for?

JANET: *(Nervous.)* Pardon?

As he reaches toward her head she grabs the door handle.

RUSTY: Just turning on some lights.

RUSTY flicks the switch which is upstage of her head. A bare bulb hanging from the centre of the room comes on.

JANET: *(Forcing a small laugh.)* Yes, I, I knew that I...I'm just slightly...the storm...

RUSTY: Yeah, dirty night.

RUSTY heads behind the counter to get her a towel.

JANET: ...it came out of nowhere. I wasn't expecting...I'm a little shaken up.

RUSTY: *(Trying to lighten the mood.)* Least you're shaken, not stirred. *(No response.)* Bit of martini humour. Not that I'm a drinker. Never touch the stuff. Used to, but it didn't agree with me. Used to become something of a psycho, I did.

JANET: I see.

RUSTY: *(Handing her the towel.)* Here.

JANET: *(Taking the towel and wiping off.)* Thank you.

RUSTY: *(Gesturing toward the TV.)* Great movie, "Psycho." But it's none too fun to live with the real thing. Especially when you're it. *(Chuckling.)*

JANET: I'm certain.

RUSTY: Little joke.

JANET: Can you tell me--

RUSTY: *(Grabbing a squeeze bottle of chocolate sundae sauce and putting more on his ice cream.)* I hope I wasn't rude when you came in there. I was at the shower scene in the movie. Where the girl in the old motel gets stabbed to death by the psycho. My favourite scene. Watch it for hours on end. The way it's put together: a shadowy figure appears in the bathroom. Rips open the curtain. The girl screams. The camera moves in like it's going down her throat. Scream, knife, flesh, scream, the blade again, was that her breast? The knife acting like a bird's beak and a phallic symbol at the same time. *(Makes slashing gesture and accompanying*

*screech.*) Up and down. Back and forth. *(Makes slashing motion and noise again.)*  
Phallic symbol...you know what that is?

JANET: Yes, I'm a--

RUSTY: Representing the man's...you know...

JANET: Yes, I know. I'm an English professor.

RUSTY: I guess you would know then. That's what you guys do, isn't it? Tear books apart looking for symbols like that.

JANET: I guess.

RUSTY: What a scene though. *(He starts thinking about the movie again and gets momentarily lost. He is still squeezing sundae sauce onto his ice cream. There should be a sickening amount in the bowl.)*

JANET: Look, I wanted to inquire--

RUSTY: *(Snapping out of it and noticing the sauce.)* Oooh. That's just about enough, I guess. You know it's not real blood in that scene. Since the movie was shot in black and white, Hitch used chocolate sundae sauce and it looked like real blood. He liked the consistency. Blood's thicker than water but sundae sauce beats 'em all. *(He licks a bit of sauce off his finger. With his finger still in his mouth:)* Want some?

JANET: Excuse me?

RUSTY: Sundae sauce. Do you want some? A chocolate sundae?

JANET: No, I--

RUSTY: I got tons more ice cream.

JANET: No, thank you, really. *(Quickly so she can get it in.)* Look, I didn't see his car but has Tony Flanders registered yet?

RUSTY: No.

JANET: Could you check?

RUSTY: Don't need to. Just a Bill Skinner and some woman. Think they were married. Usually I can tell. First I thought it was his girlfriend...seemed more girlfriend than wife...

JANET: He should have been here early this evening.

RUSTY: Skinner?

JANET: Tony.

RUSTY: Oh, right. Well, he wasn't.

JANET: I guess not. *(Beat.)* Hmm.

RUSTY: Boyfriend?

JANET: My husband.

RUSTY: Not quite as romantic.

JANET: *(Beat.)* You're married?

RUSTY: Run a motel. Can usually tell the difference between married and not. That couple though. Bill and Mrs. Bill. First I thought girlfriend -- 'cause they were so cuddly -- but they fought like marrieds. Signed in a couple hours ago. All's fine and then don't I hear some awful screaming coming from their room. Thirteen down at the end. Musta been a big fight. Heard it clear as a whistle. Few minutes later buddy jumps in his car and drives away. Hasn't come back yet. Left his poor woman down there all by herself. I was down a bit ago, to see if she was all right, and she was in the...having a bath...I mean I think she was...having a bath...she didn't knock when I...I mean she didn't come...when I knocked and...I thought I heard the tub running. *(Changing the subject.)* Now why don't you get all signed in? Got lots of space. Thirteen rooms, twelve vacancies.

JANET: Perhaps I should call...since he's not here...but I lost service...

RUSTY: He's supposed to meet you here?

JANET: Tomorrow, actually.

RUSTY: Well, no wonder he's not here.

JANET: No, *he's* supposed to be here tonight...I'm supposed to meet him tomorrow. He should have been here by now--

There is a sudden crash of thunder. RUSTY goes to look out the window.

RUSTY: Whooh! Storm's getting worse by the minute. That old marsh has a tendency to come right up over the road on nights like this. It ain't safe.

JANET: The car was sliding all over the road. I felt as though I was water skiing.

RUSTY: Ever do that?

JANET: What?

RUSTY: Water ski? I saw them do it on the sports channel. Pretty neat.

JANET: No, I haven't.

RUSTY: Slidin' all over the place.

JANET: *(Looks out the window.)* I hope Tony hasn't...

RUSTY: I'm sure he'll be along any time.

JANET: Perhaps he decided to wait until morning.

RUSTY: Maybe. I'll put you in room one. Right next to me. You get upset in the night, you just bang *(He knocks on the office wall adjoining the bedroom.)* and I'll be there.

JANET: Maybe I could use your phone and call Fredericton to see if he's left the university. I'll use my calling card --

RUSTY: Another professor in the family?

JANET: Yes, psychology. He had a class until five and then he was supposed to come here. I was going to stay in Halifax until morning...why am I telling you all of this?

RUSTY: Just my friendly manner I suppose. Everyone's always telling me their deep darks. He works in Fredericton and you're in Halifax? That's a ways apart.

JANET: It's a temporary arrangement that's almost over. In the fall--

RUSTY: Tough I bet. Living that far away from your better half.

JANET: Other half.

RUSTY: Just an expression.

JANET: Could I use your telephone to see if he's left?

RUSTY: More than welcome...but it's dead. (*Holds up receiver as proof.*) Dead as a doorstep. 's'been out all night. Look, why don't you stop worrying, get yourself a room, have a hot shower, and get into a nice warm bed. If buddy shows up, I'll send him in. If he doesn't, I'm sure he'll be here bright and early with a good excuse.

JANET: Well, perhaps I'll drive on in search of another phone.

RUSTY: Not a chance. (*Beat.*) We're the only place for miles. Since the murder anyway.

JANET: Oh?

RUSTY: At the Dreamland just across the road. Police got the place closed down while they investigate.

JANET: It isn't a murder. She's just missing, isn't she?

RUSTY: Sounds like murder to me.

JANET: What have you heard about it?

RUSTY: It's a small community. (*Beat.*) But it ain't been on the news yet, has it?

JANET: No, it hasn't.

RUSTY: Then how do you know about it?

JANET: Pardon?

RUSTY: If it ain't been on the news yet how do you know about it?

JANET: Me? Oh...we...we called there for reservations. Before here.

RUSTY: Funny they answered. Since they're shut down.

JANET: Yes. I thought that too. Oh, well. Who knows?

RUSTY: Usually somebody. (*Beat.*) What made you wanna stay way out here?

JANET: Oh...we...neither of us was terribly excited at the thought of that five hour drive so we decided to meet in the middle.

RUSTY: Good idea.