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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **My Sin and Nothing More**

by

**REBECCA GILMAN**

**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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# MY SIN AND NOTHING MORE

A Full-length Play  
For 4 Women and 4 Men

## CHARACTERS

CLEO ..... age 36  
DAVE ..... her husband, 30s  
JENNIFER ..... her daughter, 20  
MARYANNE ..... Cleo's friend, 30s  
TONY ..... Maryanne's husband, 30s  
CLYDE ..... a movie producer, 60s  
SUGAR ..... Jennifer's adoptive mother, 60s  
AL ..... Jennifer's adoptive father, 60s

TIME: The present.

PLACE: La Jolla, California.

# MY SIN AND NOTHING MORE

## SCENE ONE

*SCENE: The living room of a large home in La Jolla, California. While it is simple, it is lush. Except for an occasional, deliberate dash of color, it is decorated almost entirely in whites and off-whites. The house is immaculate, in excellent taste, and overtly expensive. An art deco wet bar and fireplace dominate the room.*

*AT RISE: CLEO enters. She is small, meticulously put together, always dressed in a way that looks like she didn't give it a second thought, but that belies careful planning. She too is dressed only in whites or off-whites. She is carrying a plate of cookies. She stands for a moment, trying to decide where to put them. DAVE enters. He is a little older than CLEO, a bit scruffier. He is wearing jeans and a sweatshirt.*

DAVE (*crossing to her*). Watcha got?

CLEO. Cookies. I made too many.

DAVE (*taking one*). I love these.

CLEO. Hey! I just...I fixed those.

DAVE (*reaching up and rearranging them, his mouth full of cookie*). There. She'll never know. I'm gonna go change.

CLEO. Okay.

DAVE (*smoothes her hair*). We've got plenty of time.

CLEO. I know.

DAVE. She's gonna love you.

CLEO. Oh god. Who knows.

DAVE (*leaving*). She will. I'll put on a nice shirt, okay?  
She'll be impressed.

CLEO. Which one?

DAVE. I don't know. The plum one. With the thing. (*He makes a motion over his breast pocket.*)

CLEO. Really? It's kind of faggy looking.

DAVE. You think?

CLEO. It's kind of eighties.

DAVE. You gave it to me.

CLEO. I know. Maybe something brown. Something autumnny. Do you have anything like that?

DAVE. It's spring.

CLEO. I know.

DAVE. I have that kind of Indian one. With the things going down.

CLEO (*nods*). That one. That one. Perfect.

DAVE. Excellent. (*He leaves.*)

CLEO. Okay. (*He exits. She decides on a side table, puts down the cookies, starts rearranging them. From off, we hear MARYANNE.*)

MARYANNE (*calling*). Cleo?

CLEO. Hey! I'm in here.

(*MARYANNE enters, carrying a coffee carafe.*)

MARYANNE. Hey.

CLEO. Oh, thanks for bringing that.

MARYANNE (*handing her the carafe*). Who's coming?

CLEO. Oh. I didn't tell you.

MARYANNE. Uh-uh.

CLEO. Well, it's my daughter.

MARYANNE. Your daughter?

CLEO. Yeah.

MARYANNE. Your daughter?

CLEO. Yeah. (*Laughs.*) It's weird.

MARYANNE. You have a daughter?

CLEO. I've never seen her. I mean, I saw her, of course, when I had her. But I haven't seen her since.

MARYANNE. She's adopted?

CLEO. Yeah.

MARYANNE. When did you have her?

CLEO. Oh god. When I was sixteen?

MARYANNE. You never told me.

CLEO. I know. I should have. It's so weird, though, I just decided, like last month, to maybe try and find her. I didn't think it would happen so fast.

MARYANNE. You're gonna make her coffee?

CLEO. Yeah. (*Beat.*)

MARYANNE (*takes the carafe*). Let me wash this out for you.

CLEO. No.

MARYANNE. Yes. (*Heads off.*)

CLEO. You're going to town.

MARYANNE (*exiting*). Tony can wait.

*(CLEO stands. Looks around nervously. Moves a cookie. DAVE enters, wearing a bright shirt.)*

DAVE. How's this?

CLEO (*smiles*). You look nice.

DAVE. What should I do?

CLEO. I don't know. Maryanne's washing that carafe.

DAVE. Maryanne's here?

CLEO. What else should I do? I've got cookies. I've got stuff ready in the fridge. Vegetable paté.

DAVE. Wine?

CLEO. Wine. Coffee. Anything, she wants, really, we've got.

DAVE. Okay.

*(MARYANNE enters with the carafe.)*

MARYANNE. Here. *(CLEO takes it, looks for a place to put it.)* Dave! Go outside and talk to Tony. He's in the car.

DAVE. Where's Jake?

MARYANNE. He's with Pilar.

DAVE. Who's Pilar?

CLEO. The nanny.

DAVE. I thought her name was Trudy.

CLEO. That was two nannies ago.

DAVE. Really?

MARYANNE. Yes. Keep up.

DAVE. I liked that Trudy. She seemed nice.

MARYANNE. She was. She quit.

DAVE. How come they quit all the time? They get better job offers?

CLEO. Dave.

DAVE. What?

CLEO. It's hard to find somebody.

DAVE. I know, but if it's a matter of money, maybe you should take your punches and go on and pay them more.

CLEO. Dave.

DAVE. What?

CLEO. They can't help it.

DAVE. I guess I don't know anything about it.

MARYANNE. I guess you don't.

DAVE (*the two women are staring at him*). I'll go outside.

MARYANNE. It's a gorgeous day.

DAVE. Yeah. (*He exits.*)

MARYANNE. So tell me about this daughter.

CLEO. I don't know much. I talked to her on the phone a couple of times. She sounds nice.

MARYANNE. How did you find her?

CLEO. It's an agency, where you can register, you know. I put my name in, and you give them all the information you can.

MARYANNE. So the computer matched you up?

CLEO. Not like a date. But yeah.

MARYANNE. What's she like?

CLEO. She's twenty.

MARYANNE. Jesus.

CLEO. I know. And she lives in L.A. She goes to UCLA. Both her parents teach there. They're chemists. They're from Iowa, I guess. I couldn't follow it, really.

MARYANNE. Wow.

CLEO. I know, And... what else? I don't know. She seems nice.

MARYANNE. Did you tell her what you do?

CLEO. Yeah.

MARYANNE. And Dave?

CLEO. Yeah.

MARYANNE. Was she impressed?

CLEO. Of course.

MARYANNE. I'm kind of hurt that you never told me.

CLEO. I could have told you, I guess. But I didn't want to.

Not because of you, at all, you know?

MARYANNE. It was too painful.

CLEO. Yes. It was too painful. I was sixteen. It was crappy. My parents almost killed me. I was Baptist.

MARYANNE. You were?

CLEO. Yeah.

MARYANNE. I didn't know that.

CLEO. Yeah.

MARYANNE. And you were poor too, right?

CLEO. Right. (*Beat.*) I couldn't have kept her. But all the time, after that, when I saw a little girl that would be her age, I would wonder if it was her.

MARYANNE. Oh. That breaks my heart.

CLEO. Imagine if you lost Jake somehow.

MARYANNE. Don't even say it.

CLEO. I couldn't have kept her.

MARYANNE. I know.

CLEO. I lived in Alabama.

MARYANNE. I know, honey, it's okay.

CLEO. But things now are so different. I got to this point, things got to this point where they seem all right. So, I called her up, and I said, "Hello? Jennifer?"

MARYANNE. Did you name her that?

CLEO. No.

MARYANNE. Good. (*Beat.*) And Dave has always known?

CLEO. Yeah. He left it up to me, always.

MARYANNE (*switching to cheerleader mode*). That's great. This is so exciting!

CLEO. I guess.

MARYANNE. It is!

CLEO. I'm so nervous.

MARYANNE. You're gonna be great. You are! You're gonna be great! She's gonna love you. How can she not love you?

CLEO. I don't know.

MARYANNE. I love you.

CLEO. Thanks.

MARYANNE. Jake loves you. He calls you Auntie Cleo.

CLEO. No, he doesn't.

MARYANNE. All right. But he will. *(A horn honks off.)* I gotta go. *(Rises.)* Can I tell Tony?

CLEO. Of course.

MARYANNE. Should we stop back by? On our way back? Would that help or would it be weird?

CLEO. Um, I don't know.

MARYANNE. We'll call, on our way back up, and you tell us. We have a lot of shopping to do.

CLEO. Okay.

MARYANNE. Good luck. *(She kisses CLEO on the cheek.)*

CLEO. Thanks. *(MARYANNE exits. CLEO looks around again, nervously.)*

*(DAVE is entering.)*

DAVE. Tony's got a VCR/TV combo he can plug into the cigarette lighter.

CLEO. Dave. The nannies keep quitting because they hate Jake.

DAVE *(getting it)*. Oh. I should have known. *(Beat.)* God, he's such a brat.

CLEO. You just, you need to pay attention to what you say to people.

DAVE. Sorry.

CLEO. It's okay.

DAVE. I was just trying to be helpful.

CLEO. I know. It's a sensitive subject, is all.

DAVE. Well I don't know what's sensitive and what's not with them. They're hysterical.

CLEO. Are you mad?

DAVE. No.

CLEO. Don't be mad.

DAVE. I'm not mad. Don't be nervous.

CLEO. I'm not. *(Beat.)*

DAVE. Why don't I pour us some wine?

CLEO. Good idea. Excellent idea.

DAVE *(exiting)*. Stay there. I'll get it.

CLEO *(looking around again, afraid to be alone)*. I'll help.  
*(She runs after him. Blackout.)*

## SCENE TWO

*AT RISE: Later in the day. CLEO comes back in, holding a glass of wine. She is a little tipsy. JENNIFER is behind her. She is like her mother in some ways. She is energetic. CLEO is giving her a tour.*

CLEO. And then we're back where we started.

JENNIFER. This is so great!

CLEO. Thanks.

JENNIFER. No, I mean it. I never saw anything like this. I can't believe you decorated it and everything.

CLEO. I didn't really decorate it. I just bought things.

JENNIFER. How long did it take? The whole renovation, I mean?

CLEO. Almost two years. There was flocked wallpaper everywhere.

JENNIFER. Gross. You must have saved a lot of money, though. Buying an older place.

CLEO. No. It turned out to be a lot more than we thought. *(Beat.)* Do you want to sit down?

JENNIFER. Sure. *(She goes to the couch.)*

CLEO. Can I get you some more coffee? Or wine?

JENNIFER. I better not drink anything since I have to drive back.

CLEO. Okay.

JENNIFER. But, do you have any more of that paté?

CLEO. Plenty more.

JENNIFER. That was awesome.

CLEO. I'll fix you a plate. *(Exiting.)*

JENNIFER. Thanks.

*(She watches CLEO leave then gets up, starts poking around the room. She doesn't snoop so much as admire. DAVE enters, wearing a different shirt from before. JENNIFER doesn't see him. As soon as he sees her he turns around and hurries off.)*

CLEO *(calls from kitchen)*. You want some juice or something? Jennifer?

JENNIFER *(walks toward kitchen)*. Water would be fine. *(Calling.)* Where did you live, when you first got married?

CLEO *(calls back)*. In L.A.

JENNIFER. Really?

*(CLEO enters with a glass of water and her wine, which is filled to the top again.)*

CLEO. Yeah. Near Barnsdall Park. We had a little apartment.

JENNIFER. That's so weird. What if we saw each other or something, before?

CLEO. It is strange.

JENNIFER. But you didn't know I was in L.A.?

CLEO. No.

JENNIFER. Then why did you move there?

CLEO. I don't know.

JENNIFER. To be with Dave?

CLEO. I didn't know Dave.

JENNIFER. Oh. *(Beat.)* My dad... well, my adoptive father—

CLEO. You can call him your dad. I don't care.

JENNIFER. Right. He said when he got his job at UCLA, that they had to go through all this bureaucratic stuff to leave Alabama because the people thought they were running off with me. You know. To sell me into child pornography or something.

CLEO. I'm sure they didn't think that.

JENNIFER. Well, you know. *(Beat.)*

CLEO. So, you always knew you were adopted?

JENNIFER. They told me when I was fifteen. But I knew way before then.

CLEO. How?

JENNIFER. I figured it out. First of all, I don't look anything like my parents. They're giants.

CLEO. They're fat?

JENNIFER. No. They're tall. Both their families look exactly alike, like some sort of Swedish movie or something. All my cousins are like a foot taller than me.

CLEO. Goodness.

JENNIFER. And then, I noticed too, that my mom never talked about when I was born. Like, if a bunch of the neighborhood moms got together and started trading war stories about the delivery room, she never said a word.

CLEO. You noticed that?

JENNIFER. Yeah. I mean, she's weird anyway, because she's an academic and she doesn't really socialize too well. But she at least doesn't act like a Neanderthal usually.

CLEO. That's good.

JENNIFER. So I started testing her, when I was a kid, saying "Tell me about when I was born," you know? And she always said, "When you came into our lives," dot dot dot. She was very diplomatic about it. And when they sat me down to tell me, they were so nervous. I just said, "I know. It's okay," and they were floored. My dad got all teary.

CLEO. That's a sweet story.

JENNIFER. I know. But man, I never thought you'd be like this.

CLEO. Really?

JENNIFER. No way. I mean, my parents had the adoption papers and it said on there you were only sixteen when you had me and there wasn't a father listed, so I figured, what with you being in Alabama and all, that you were some sort of trailer trash. You know? I mean, in those adoption stories, half the time the moms are crazy trailer trash.