

photo of Glenn Nelson
and Coralie Cairns as
Allan and Charlotte by
Walter Tychnowicz



HARVEST

a play in two acts

For Mom and Dad...



PLAYWRIGHT'S INTRODUCTION

It's true: *Harvest* is based on a real story. My parents really did rent the farmhouse I grew up in to a man who claimed to be an airline pilot and who used my childhood home to grow marijuana. They really did nearly lose everything and narrowly escape by the skin of their teeth.

And when all of this happened, I knew immediately that I would write a play about it.

I knew this instinctively. Not just because it was clear that this was a great story which would allow me to explore the consequences of the depopulation of Canada's rural roots and the growing influence of Canada's drug gangs upon people who never suspected they'd be entwined in their nets. But because I knew in my heart that my parents are great characters, and that their relationship was one that I wanted to capture onstage.

I remember my parents fighting between themselves when I was young; voices raised in the hall decrying unpaid bills, feet clomping to the bedroom, a suitcase pulled out from the deep recesses of the closet, myself cowering under the covers. Today I am confident that their marriage was no more rocky at the time than anyone else's, but as a young boy the loud voices left me terrified that they would divorce, for I knew from television that such things happened.

Later, after my older sister married, I left home for boarding school when I was still a teen, returning home only intermittently. I realize now that my parents must have been confronted with "empty nest syndrome" at what was for them an uncomfortably early age. Over the subsequent years, I watched my parents "reboot" their relationship, and I swear to this day that during those periods when the farmhouse groaned in emptiness, they fell in love all over again. When it came time to write *Harvest*, I realized that the play I wanted to write had, at its heart, the rediscovery of their deep, abiding love for each other. The fact

that this happened in the crucible of a crisis was one of my few fictional additions to the real-life incidents.

My parents became theatre people almost by default. They were dubious when I decided to pursue theatre in university, mollified only by wise advice from my art teacher who told them “all honest work is honourable.” Once it was clear that I was committed, they were too: driving eight hours from London, Ontario to McGill University in Montreal to see the plays I performed or directed; sometimes hosting late-night cast parties in my small apartment; and never failing to bring homemade pie and maple syrup, which I proudly shared. When I stood in front of an audience of students for my final directing project and asked if we could hold the house for fifteen minutes because my parents had been delayed in a snowstorm, I suspect it was the years of goodwill pies and cookies that ensured an easy agreement amongst my peers.

But my sister told me that she has never seen my parents so enthusiastic as when I returned from university to the local Port Stanley Festival Theatre (with a very urban production of Christopher Durang’s *Laughing Wild*) because it was then that they were able to connect what I was doing with their community and their friends. Within a few years, my mother Carolyn had joined the board, eventually becoming board president and being instrumental in the purchase of the building; my father Allister became chair of the building committee at about the same time and put in countless volunteer hours with a hammer and saw; and my sister Beth Evans served a number of years as administrator. They all eventually drifted away from serving the theatre, but for years we were a theatre family.

Carolyn became quite famous for delivering vast quantities of cookies, butter tarts, and pies to the cast and crew backstage, recognizing that these young people (for everyone is “young people” to her, no matter their biological age) were working for a pittance. It’s those butter tarts that inspired the scene where Allan and Charlotte debate about delivering furniture and a casserole to Ron.

But my mother's butter tarts also epitomize what is special about small communities: friendliness towards everyone who walks in the door, neighbourliness that knows no municipal boundaries, and conscientiously building a sense of community through gestures both large and small. These values are epitomized in the later scenes of *Harvest*, when both Charlotte and Allan forgive their adversaries for their actions.

My mother is fond of saying that I captured my father perfectly in the character of Allan, but that she is “nothing like that woman onstage.”¹ As proof of this, she points to the scene in Tim Hortons, proclaiming that she would never have let Ron off the hook. When the two-act production premiered at the Blyth Festival, a mere hour-and-a-half drive from their home, more than two hundred of their friends saw the play over three weeks. On a lark, my mother distributed surveys, asking her friends if they thought the portrayal was accurate. One of the final questions on my mother's survey was “Would you have let the drug dealer go”?

It's true that this is one of the few scenes in the play that did not happen in real life. In reality, they never did see the tenant again, though my father swears he saw the man leaving a gas station in London just as he was arriving.

The genesis of that scene, like so much in this play, lies with director Ian Prinsloo. A year after the premiere of the one-act version at Calgary's Lunchbox Theatre, during a developmental workshop of the two-act version, Ian pointed to the importance of church in Charlotte's life. Up to this point, the church ladies had represented *community* to me and little more; Ian asked what would happen if Charlotte actually acted upon Christian principles of forgiveness. This is something that so many of us who espouse religion or ethics neglect to do.

1 She also claims never to have said, “Lord love a duck” in her life. But when pressed, she will confess that once, while driving a friend to a convention in Toronto a few months after seeing the play, she heard the phrase come out of her mouth ... and nearly drove into the ditch in shock.

And this is where I disagree with my parents' interpretation of themselves. I have observed Allister and Carolyn Cameron for forty years, and I have watched them grow from farmers who were born into a Depression-era world without electricity into cosmopolitan globetrotters who see theatre across the country. I have watched them grow from a young farm couple who had their share of disputes into a loving, generous, and supportive relationship. But I have *never* known them to stray from the small-town values of inclusion and forgiveness that made them the compelling people I wanted to write about.

Allister and Carolyn Cameron, this play is for you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

These thanks must be reproduced in the program of any production of the play:

This play is dedicated to the most wonderful and understanding parents in the world, Allister and Carolyn Cameron.

A one-act version of *Harvest* was commissioned by Calgary's Lunchbox Theatre for their Stage One Petro-Canada Plays series and premiered at Lunchbox in March 2007.

The play received the Enbridge playRites award in 2007 which, in conjunction with the Canada Council for the Arts and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, funded a workshop at Ship's Company in Parrsboro, Nova Scotia. The play was further developed in a workshop with the Alberta Playwrights' Network (which receives funding support from Theatre Alberta) in partnership with The Blyth Festival. The two-act version of the play premiered at The Blyth Festival in 2008.

Ken Cameron is a member of the Playwrights Guild of Canada.

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PERFORMANCES

A one-act version of *Harvest* was commissioned by Calgary's Lunchbox Theatre for their Stage One Petro-Canada Plays series and premiered at Lunchbox in March 2007.

CAST

Allan: Peter Strand Rumpel

Charlotte: Elinor Holt

PRODUCTION

Director: Ian Prinsloo

Set and Lighting Designer: Terry Gunvordahl

Costume Designer: Jen Gareau

Stage Manager: Marcie Januska

Production Manager: Caitlin Ferguson

House Technician: Jason Pouliot

The two-act version of the play premiered at The Blyth Festival in June 2008.

CAST

Allan: Larry Yachimec

Charlotte: Marion Day

PRODUCTION

Director: Ian Prinsloo

Set and Costume Designer: Shawn Kerwin

Lighting Designer: Bonnie Beecher

Sound Designer: Todd Charlton

Stage Manager: Joanna Barrotta

Assistant Stage Manager: Dini Conte

STAGING

Harvest has been written for a cast of two actors, who will play all of the parts, from the sixty-five-year-old retired farm couple to the thirty-year-old sly criminal to the forty-year-old talkative policeman. They will play these roles without regard for gender or age, and without time-consuming costume changes. The transformation from one character to another will be effected quickly and easily, through voice, mannerism, physicality, the magic of theatre ... and perhaps with the aid of the odd hat.

The characters sometimes address the audience directly using common storytelling conventions, and sometimes erect the fourth wall so they can lose themselves in the scene. Sometimes they use both these conventions at once. In these latter instances, for the sake of clarity, I have tried to use the term “aside” to indicate when they are speaking to the audience and not to another character.

The play takes place at the raspberry patch — or perhaps in the middle of a field — across the road from the farm. Here the characters tell us the story of what happened to them. Using simple props and the power of the audience’s imagination, they recreate their adventures and all of the necessary locations. It’s likely that we don’t see the farm which lies offstage, so that their descriptions of it become all the more evocative.

The set might contain a few elements that give a flavour of rural life. One might imagine a wooden apple crate, a battered stepladder, some length of rope, a mailbox, a gravel road. In any case, anything that is placed onstage ought to be used as a prop, costume, or set piece in constructing the scenes.

Like most farmers, both Allan and Charlotte are busy types. They are likely doing something with their hands all the time, even when they are telling the story, be it setting up for the next scene, changing out of some small costume element, packing away a prop or just picking raspberries. This is a useful actor’s tool that can help to de-emphasize lines that might otherwise be treated as overly important. Allan and Charlotte have been married for forty-two years, and so even the most significant moments can be played against text — that is to say, treated lightly and “thrown away.”

Lastly, it is worth remembering that *Harvest* is, at its heart, a love story. Unable to let go of the past, Allan and Charlotte get themselves into trouble; in the crucible of that experience their love is forged anew.

A NOTE ON PUNCTUATION

When an ellipsis “...” appears in the middle of a line, it usually means a slight pause or groping for thought. However, an ellipsis *before* the line usually means that the character is lying.

A NOTE ON SETTING

The text references many small towns and locations throughout southern Alberta, but I insist that any production should contextualize the play by substituting names of nearby local towns.

HARVEST

ACT ONE

Allan begins the play pacing. He is nervous and anxious, like someone waiting for news which he is certain is going to be very, very bad. He keeps glancing offstage left, into the distance. Allan stops, sighs, and looks down at the ground. He looks up and squints out at the audience.

Allan: Look out there. The fields and fields of crops, swaying in the gentle summer breeze. The row of trees hugging the crick, another line of trees here, making a natural wind-break for the house. The acre and a half of lawn, carved out of what used to be the old apple orchard. This farm is in my blood. I was born on this farm —

Charlotte shouts from stage left.

Charlotte: You were born in a hospital.

Allan: *Ignoring her.* — and I've lived my whole life on this farm.

Charlotte: We lived in the city for five years when we were first married.

Allan: *Ignoring her.* This farm has been in my family for one hundred and thirty-eight years.

Charlotte: Your father *bought* it.

Allan: From his cousin.

Charlotte: His fifty-second cousin twice removed.

Allan: Still his cousin.

Charlotte: Who he'd never even met.

Allan: Dang it, Mother, I'm trying to tell a story here.

Charlotte emerges from stage left with a heavy box.

Charlotte: Well, at least get the darn story straight.

Allan: Any sign of him?

Charlotte: Nothing.

Allan: Maybe I should go see what he's up to.

Charlotte: You're not going in there.

Allan: I've already been in there once.

Charlotte: Just ... tell the story.

Allan: *Pouting.* I don't remember where I was.

Charlotte: Sure you do.

Allan: No, I don't.

Charlotte: *To the audience.* The farm belonged to Allan's father who bought it in 1937. He sold the apple orchard to us in sixty-nine for a dollar. When Allan's father died in Seventy-one —

Allan: Seventy.

Charlotte: Seventy-one. Allan's mother stayed on the farm until last year —

Allan: She lived here until she was ninety-one.

Charlotte: Grandma had a stroke while Allan and I were away for the afternoon. Right here in the raspberry patch.

The following flashback is performed without too much fanfare or set-up. Allan crosses the raspberry patch. He stops, startled by something he sees in between the rows. He squats and checks for a pulse. Charlotte enters.

Well, she's not in the house — or in the garden — so —

Charlotte stops. Pause.

Should I call someone?

Allan: There's no one to call. It's done.

Charlotte: Oh, Allan, I'm so sorry.

Charlotte starts to cry. Allan comforts her. Lights return us to the present. Allan and Charlotte turn to the audience.

We never should have left her alone.

Allan: It was only for the afternoon.

Charlotte: No one to keep her comfortable except the dog. Barney wouldn't leave her. Curled up right next to Grandma, trying to keep her warm.

Allan: Lucky we weren't gone longer. The dog might have had to eat her to survive.

Charlotte: Allan! Don't joke. One of us should have stayed. I didn't need —

Allan: Charlotte. We were only gone for a few hours. For forty-two years you treated that woman like she was your own mother. Without us she would have gone into the old folks' home long ago.

Charlotte: If she'd been in a home, there would have been a nurse by her side in minutes.

Allan: We don't know that. *To the audience:* We didn't decide right then —

Charlotte: I did.

Allan: — but that was the start of it. If there's one thing I've learned in forty-two years of marriage it's that trying to argue when this woman gets an idea into her head is like trying to talk sense into a tornado.

Charlotte: I swore that I wasn't going to finish out my days lying flat on my back in the middle of the country where no one could find me. I made Allan promise that we'd retire, sell the farm, and move to the city.

Allan: The boy wasn't going to take over the farm, that's for darn sure. Never showed one bit of interest in farming. When he was a kid I bought him one of those little toy tractors from the John Deere dealership, with a little toy plow and a little toy cultivator.

Charlotte: He never played with them more than once.

Allan: *Bitterly.* Put his damned *Star Wars* figures in the driver's seat. Said he was "terraforming the surface of Mars."

Charlotte: So, there was nothing for it but to put up the For Sale sign.

Allan: Trouble was, we didn't exactly get a lot of offers.

Charlotte becomes Istvan, a seventy-year-old farmer. You would think that, since he emigrated from Hungary after the revolution back in 1956, Istvan would have learned not to butcher the language by now; but you'd be wrong.

Istvan: What's wrong with it?

Allan: With what?

Istvan: The farm? If you sell it, there must be something wrong with it.

Allan: There's nothing wrong with it, Istvan.

Istvan: Bad drainage? Soil erosioning? Sour gas well?

Allan: No.

Istvan: Rats! You have the rats!

Allan: There is nothing wrong with the farm. I just want to ... retire.

Istvan: Retire? Retire! Let me be telling you. I was coming to this country fifty-one years ago —

Allan: I'm your neighbour, remember?

Istvan: — after the revolution —

Allan: I know when you moved here.

Istvan: They chased me out with guns — pow, pow. Retire! A children you was.

Allan: I'm sixty-five, Istvan.

Istvan: See? A children!

Allan: The wife is tired of worrying about the weather every time she goes shopping.

Istvan: Wife! Who listens to wife?

Allan: We want to do some traveling. See the world.

Istvan: For this, we have the TV.

Allan: And the boy isn't going to take over.

Istvan: *Appalled.* No! Your son ...? not ...? A son must wear the father's feet.

Allan: He's not the farming type.

Istvan: *Appalled.* No!

Allan: He lives in the city. You know that.

Istvan: My friend. Such tragedy.

Allan: It's fine. He's got his own thing. With the ... technology ... and the ... cellphone ... He's good at it.

Istvan: He doesn't work.

Allan: He works. With the ... thing. Charlotte explains it better than I do.

Istvan: But not with his hands.

Allan: He works with his head. In an office. In the city. It's the way of the future.

Istvan: But you. Stay young.

Allan: I'm tired, Istvan. I've tried everything. Cows. Pigs. Sheep. Remember the llamas? I've mortgaged this farm and paid it off more times than Elizabeth Taylor's gotten married. I'm lucky I didn't lose it in the eighties. My father never got that close, not once, not even in the Depression.

Pause.

Istvan: I'll be buying.

Allan: What?

Istvan: Farm. I'll be buying.

Allan: You've already got your farm. And you just bought McKeller's last year. That's a lot of land for someone who's seventy-five.

Istvan: My boy, Pishta, he helps. Five hundred.

Allan: We're asking seven-fifty.¹

Istvan: Seven-fifty? With rats, you charge seven-fifty?

Allan: There's no rats.

Istvan: Six.

Allan: The house alone is worth at least two hundred.

Istvan: I have house. Just farm. Six.

Allan: What am I going to do with just the house? Seven.

Istvan: Six.

Allan: We haven't had it on the market for that long. Maybe we should wait and see.

Istvan: Don't look a horse.

Allan: *Looking around.* What horse?

Istvan: A horse's teeth. Don't look a horse.

Allan: Oh! You mean, "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth."

Istvan: How many people knocked on door? Three? Two? One?

Allan does not answer. Five-fifty.

Allan: Five-fifty? You just said six.

Istvan: Five-twenty-five.

Allan: You can't go down!

Istvan: Five-fifteen, final offer.

Allan: You're supposed to meet me halfway!

Istvan: Five-ten. Final, final.

Allan: All right, all right. Six. I'll sever the house and sell it separate.

Istvan: Four-eighty.

Allan: Six!

Istvan and Allan shake hands on the deal. Charlotte wanders upstage to the raspberry patch. Allan regards his hand. He looks up at the audience.

Allan: A hundred years of farming this same spot, and for what? *Allan pulls a few loose bills out of his pocket.* Four generations, and it comes down to something you can hold in your hand. From a piece of land that your ancestors carved out of the wilderness and built a mud hut on, to ... paper. It's like ... what d'you call it? ... like alchemy. I changed dirt into gold.

Well, fool's gold. These days money has no relationship whatsoever to the earth that it tries to describe, that it tries to put a value on. In a few years, with expenses, rise in the cost of living, bad investments — heck, just with inflation alone — the money that this farm was transformed into ... will be gone. Now *that* ... that's alchemy.

Charlotte emerges from the raspberry patch.

Charlotte: The day after Istvan bought the farm —

Allan: He bought the farm? But he was looking so healthy!

Charlotte: The day after Istvan bought the farm *from us*, we started looking at condos in the city.

*Lights: Allan becomes a **Real Estate Agent**.*

Real Estate Agent: This is our standard unit for this complex!

Living room, dining room, kitchen and on the left, TV room. Or playroom for the grandchildren. Any grandchildren?

Charlotte: No.

Real Estate Agent: Any on the way?

Charlotte: I don't think so.

Real Estate Agent: TV room, then. Two bedrooms through here. And a third guest room in the basement!

Allan: Basement? This isn't like a condo at all. More like a little house.

Charlotte: Allan was expecting a one-room roach motel.

Allan: Well that's what the boy had.

Charlotte: That's different.

Allan: That was a condo.

Charlotte: That was an apartment.

Allan: Then why did he pay condo fees?

Charlotte: Well ... it was ... an apartment-style condo. This is ... a condo-style condo.

Allan: *Muttering.* Not like a condo at all.

Charlotte: Shush, now. The nice lady's speaking.

Allan becomes the Real Estate Agent.

Real Estate Agent: There's a little sundeck off the back, with a lovely view of the park!

Charlotte: Oh, that is pretty. I can plant some nasturtiums right along the fence there.

Real Estate Agent: Ah. The landscaping is all provided for.

Charlotte: I don't mind. Not one little bit.

Real Estate Agent: The landscaping is all provided for. So that it looks nice.

Charlotte: Don't you worry. I'll put in something nice.

Real Estate Agent: I mean, so that it looks nice.

Charlotte: So you mean I can't ...?

Real Estate Agent: You can plant whatever you want on the deck!

Charlotte: Just pots and window boxes then.

Real Estate Agent: Umm ...

Charlotte: No window boxes?

Real Estate Agent: I'm afraid not. The landscaping is all provided for. It's all included in the condo fees.

Charlotte: Lord love a duck.

Charlotte becomes the Real Estate Agent.

Allan: What else is included in those condo fee things?

Real Estate Agent: Well, the basics. Utilities — gas and electricity — cable fees, high-speed internet —

Allan: I'm not gonna use the internet. Can you take that off?

Real Estate Agent: No. Landscaping, lawn maintenance, and snow removal. Also major repairs to the outside. They repainted last summer. This summer they're redoing all the downspouts!

Allan: Good to have new eavestroughs, I guess.

Real Estate Agent: Not the eaves. Just the downspouts. Your fees also include access to the clubhouse!

Allan: Clubhouse?

Real Estate Agent: In the centre of the whole complex there's a clubhouse, just like in Florida! There's a swimming pool, a gym, a billiard room, a bridge room —

Allan: Don't play bridge, can you take —?

Real Estate Agent: No. Once a week they play bingo instead of bridge.

Allan: At least I don't have to mow the grass.

Charlotte: Or shovel the walk. You shouldn't be shoveling the walk at your age.

Allan: Oh, Charlotte.

Charlotte: Ninety-five percent of people your age die of a heart attack while they're shoveling the walk.

Allan: Ninety-five percent? Is that right, Mother? If ninety-five percent of people my age die of a heart attack while they're shoveling the walk, do you mind telling me why there are *sooo* many people my age still walking around?

Charlotte: Of the people your age who die of a heart attack, ninety-five percent of them have that heart attack while they're shoveling the walk.

Allan: That's not what you said the first time.

Charlotte: That's what I meant.

Allan: But that's not what you said.

Charlotte: Listen to what I mean, not what I say.

Allan: You're always after *me* to say what I mean.

Charlotte: *To the audience.* He was like this the whole time we were buying the condo. It's a miracle we settled on anything at all. But settle we did. *To Allan.* If we're going to live in the city, we'll have to do something with that house.

Allan: Don't be so hasty there, Mother.

Charlotte: What are we going to do with a farmhouse that has no farm?

Allan: We don't need to get rid of everything all at once, do we?

Charlotte: A house that has no one living in it comes to no good. Just look at the old Bakker place, it's falling to pieces.

Allan: We can make some easy money from the rent.

Charlotte: What do you want to be a landlord for?

Allan: Charlotte, I was born on this farm.

Charlotte: You were born in a hospital.

Allan: This farm has been in my family for one hundred and thirty-eight years.

Charlotte: Your father *bought* it.

Allan: From his cousin.

Charlotte: But what kind of person will we end up with?

*Charlotte puts on aviator glasses and becomes **Ron**. He's a young, clean-cut man of about thirty, and though he has an urban sensibility, it's clear he's trying on country life like an ill-fitting coat. Still, he's the kind of man who puts you at ease and makes you want to trust him.*

Throughout this next section, both Allan and Charlotte play Ron, alternating rapidly. To make things clear, I have used "A-Ron" for when Allan plays the character and "C-Ron" for Charlotte.

A-Ron: Ron McKillop.

Charlotte: Charlotte Duncanson.

A-Ron: Mrs. Duncanson.

Charlotte: Please, call me Charlotte.

A-Ron: All right then. Charlotte.

Charlotte: *Aside*. He seemed like a nice enough fellow.

A-Ron: These might very well be the nicest flower beds in the whole county.

Charlotte: *Aside.* Uh-huh. A *real* nice fellow.

A-Ron: Don't tell the neighbours. They might get jealous.

Charlotte giggles, flattered.

C-Ron: I bet it's got good soil too. Not too much clay.
Am I right?

Allan: *Aside.* Yep, he was a *real* nice fellow.

C-Ron: Nicest farm I've seen, anyway.

Allan: *Aside.* Had a good job.

C-Ron: I'm an airline pilot. Just got transferred out here.
I've been checking out the countryside a bit.

Allan: Nice day.

C-Ron: Yep.

Allan: Yep.

C-Ron: Yep.

Allan: Yep, yep, yep.

C-Ron: Just look at the way that sun picks up the gold in
those trees.

Allan: Winter's on its way.

C-Ron: Winter? Don't rush it. We're not even into fall yet.

Allan: We had frost last week.

C-Ron: Tell me about it.

Allan: See those aspen there? When that tree turns gold, then
I know the first snow is just around the corner.

C-Ron: Is that right?

Allan: Yep. You here about the house?

C-Ron: I see from the paper that it's for rent.

Allan: Not a lot of people want to live out in the country anymore. Seems there's more space than people out here these days.

C-Ron: That's exactly what we are looking for.

Allan: I've worked this farm my whole life. Look out there. The row of trees hugging the crick, another line of trees here, making a natural windbreak for the house. The acre and a —

Ron abruptly interrupts Allan's poetic reverie.

C-Ron: You know, I missed all of that growing up in the city. You don't pay much attention to the seasons when you're in the city, except when it makes you late for work. Out here... Well, out here, the seasons, the weather, I guess it's a part of you.

A-Ron: How many rooms has it got?

Charlotte: Three bedrooms, kitchen, dining room, living room with fireplace. Downstairs there's two big rooms ...

A-Ron: That right?

Charlotte: Yep.

A-Ron: Both developed?

Charlotte: Well, the one's just a glorified storeroom, but it's got carpet and the walls are finished. That's where I keep one of them "rat races."

A-Ron: A which?

Charlotte: A rat race. One of those machines that you walk on all day, but never get anywhere. For exercise.

A-Ron: You mean a treadmill.

Charlotte: No, I mean a rat race. That's what I call it. "I'm gonna go join the rat race now."

A-Ron: I've had just about enough of the rat race. That's what I want to get away from.

Charlotte: The other room makes a nice TV room.

Allan: Mother made me renovate it a few years back. It used to have that maple veneer. And that nice orange shag carpet with the big black circles. Big as dinner plates.

C-Ron: *Laughs.* Nice. Right out of Austin Powers. "Yeah baby."

Allan is offended at the thought of someone mocking his beloved shag carpet.

Allan: It had some good years in it yet. I says to Charlotte, "Don't know why you have to go rip out perfectly good carpet when it's done all right by us for the past thirty years."

Charlotte: But I told him, "I'm not gonna watch TV down there with that d— carpet."

A-Ron: I don't see any windows down there.

Charlotte: They're around on the back side. You can't see 'em from the road.

A-Ron: That'll work.

Charlotte: Pardon?

A-Ron: I'll take it.

Charlotte: Don't you want the grand tour? See the inside?

A-Ron: I brought the rent.

Ron hands Charlotte a thick wad of cash.

Charlotte: Oh, my. That's ... cash. A cheque would have been fine, you know.

Ron: I don't have any cheques on me.

Charlotte: I don't mind saying that I'm kind of nervous having this much cash all at once.

Allan: Well, cash is still money after all.

Charlotte: There's just ... a lot of it. You sure you couldn't give us a cheque?

A-Ron: I haven't been able to open a bank account out here yet. Some sort of problem with the computers.

Charlotte: What airline do you fly for?

A-Ron: WestJet. "Six flights to Toronto every day."²

Charlotte: Six flights? Imagine that.

Allan: Wouldn't think there'd be that many people that would want to go to Toronto.

C-Ron: Maybe they go to take in a game.

A-Ron: See the Blue Jays win one.

Charlotte: I suppose. Or family.

A-Ron: Sam — that's my wife — she works for the airline too; she's a stewardess.

Charlotte: I thought they called them flight attendants these days?

A-Ron: Huh?

Charlotte: A woman on Air Canada told Allan calling her a "stewardess" was sexist. Gave Allan a real talking-to.

A-Ron: That's Air Canada for you. So uptight they'd split a seam if they bent over to pick up a quarter.

Charlotte: We're a bit of a ways from the city.

A-Ron: Sure are.

Charlotte: About an hour from the airport. It's quite the commute.

Allan: Especially in winter.

C-Ron: ... I work lots of overnight trips.

A-Ron: Gone for days at a time,

C-Ron: then three days off.

A-Ron: When I'm off,

C-Ron: I like to be *off*.

A-Ron: If you know what I mean.

Charlotte: You have to stay overnight on a flight to Toronto?

A-Ron: ... I don't do Toronto. I do the Las Vegas run.

Charlotte: And you have to stay over?

A-Ron: You can only fly so many hours at a time. Like truckers.
Only more regulated.

Charlotte: It's just that ... Las Vegas doesn't seem that far.
I don't see why the airline makes you stay over.

A-Ron: ... Doesn't make much sense to me either, Mrs.
Duncanson.

Charlotte: Charlotte.

A-Ron: Charlotte.

Allan: *Counting the cash*. This is three months' rent.

Charlotte: We only need first and last month's rent.

A-Ron: I must have misunderstood.

Charlotte: Well, here you take that —

A-Ron: Why don't you just keep the three months? Then you
won't need to come out as often.

Charlotte: We don't mind.

A-Ron: It's a long ways.

Charlotte: We're used to the drive.

A-Ron: I insist.