

THE SHADE OF MY SURPRISE Screenplay

By

JAMES SHERIDAN

IDEA BY JAMES SHERIDAN

15 min version.
MAY 2009
© JAMES SHERIDAN,

James Sheridan
705A/93 Thomas Street, Subiaco
WA 6008, Australia
Ph: (61 8) 9388 8694
" (0)416 044 696

1. EXT. FRIDAY'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD. DAY

1

Handel's largo is playing. A tall, native tree stands proudly in the perfectly manicured front garden of a large, old, but well-maintained home.

FRANCINE Friday(47) in a tailored skirt and blouse, expensive jewelery, and a falsely optimistic, robotic smile suddenly bursts from the front door. She is waving frantically, clutching a bouquet of orchids and a gold, satin ribbon.

STEPHEN Friday(49) her balding, conservative, serious-minded husband is reversing down the driveway in his BMW. He notices her and stops. Francine hands him the orchids.

FRANCINE

They're your mother's favourites,
so keep them in the shade - I don't
want them to wilt.

He takes the orchids, forcing a brief smile. The electric window rises shut and he continues on his way.

Francine walks over to the native tree and ties the gold ribbon around its trunk. There are traces of perspiration on her face. She steps back to assess her work. Beneath the satin bow are the initials RF and PF.

2. INT. FRIDAY'S LIVING ROOM. DAY

2

The living room is ablaze with party streamers, balloons and strikingly colourful orchids. FOUR CATERERS are busy preparing a banquet. Francine is adjusting orchids in one of the vases - above is a banner 'HAPPY 80th NANNA ANNIE!'

An antique clock shows 5:10(pm). Indigenous art, Australian landscapes, real estate awards and law degrees cover walls, a stereo system and speakers from which the aria emanates.

She walks over to the mantle with it's collection of family photographs and picks an ornately framed photo of a young man(21) and teenage girl(16) - her two children (RF and PF).

DIANNE, (23) a caterer in white uniform is passing with a food tray and notices Francine admiring the photograph. She offers her an appetizer but Francine declines. The aria fades.

DIANNE

Your children, Mrs Friday?

FRANCINE

Indeed they are.

DIANNE

I can see the likeness.

FRANCINE

(surprised)

You can? Oh, but this was taken
just before my son left for America
- over six years ago now.

DIANNE

Your son is very handsome and your
daughter - she's beautiful!

FRANCINE

Yes, Pauline. She's been in Sydney
about four years. Owns her own
boutique. Very successful I'm told
- despite this recession.

DIANNE

You must be proud, Mrs Friday!

FRANCINE

Oh yes, very proud. Raymond won a
scholarship to Julliard. He works
as a thespian in New York theatre.

DIANNE

I can see - he looks quite the
leading man! And your daughter -
such a sweet face!

Francine dons her reading glasses, grabs a Kleenex and
begins to wipe the dust covering the face of Paula - a
sweet, young blonde-haired girl with an innocent smile.

3. INT. PAULA'S PORN EMPORIUM. DAY

3

PAULA(22), strong Aussie accent, rough around the edges,
dressed in black, short dyed purple hair, heavily tattooed
and pierced, behind the counter of a sex shop. She is
wrapping a sex toy for a respectful-looking, nervous MALE
CUSTOMER (35). She finishes wrapping and hands it to him.

PAULA

There ya go mate and thanks for
spending your stimulus package at
Paula's Porn Emporium!

The male customer smiles nervously, taking it. Paula winks.

PAULA (CONT'D)
 Hope it brings you lots of
 stimulus! Come again soon!

4. INT. FRIDAY'S LIVING ROOM. DAY 4

Francine - still showing the photograph to the caterer -
 wipes the dust from the glass covering Raymond.

FRANCINE
 I'll never forget the night of
 Ray's graduate performance. With
 all respect to Mr Jackman - I don't
 think even he could have held a
 candle to my son on that night.

5. INT. WAPA THEATRE STAGE. NIGHT 5

A post-modernist interpretation of a run down apartment
 house, New Orleans, circa 1940's. Silver, louvered window
 shutters hang randomly on invisible fishing lines. A single
 halogen upright lamp. A metal, industrial rent-a-staircase.

STELLA (25) sits at the top in the darkness. A spotlight
 shines on Stanley Kowalski - RAY (21) who wears a
 sweat-soaked, white tee-shirt and tight, torn jeans. He
 collapses to his knees in despair at the bottom of the
 stairs. His arms claw at the sky.

RAY (AS STANLEY)
 (pleading loudly in despair)
 Stella! Stella!

He wraps his arms around his torso and curls into a ball,
 his head resting on the floor. Suddenly Stella appears at
 the bottom of the stairs - half in the spotlight.

Sensing her presence Ray (Stanley) opens up. He thrusts his
 chest forward and with both hands tears his tee-shirt apart
 revealing a hairy, muscular physique.

RAY (AS STANLEY)(CONT'D)
 (with relief)
 Stella!

Stella clutches the sides of his head with both hands and
 pulls him toward her. He hugs her thighs, burying his face
 deep in her dress. He slowly rises. They kiss passionately.

6. INT. FRANCINE'S LIVING ROOM. DAY 6

The caterer has left. Francine is jolted by the loud rumbling of a motorbike in her driveway. She hurriedly returns the photograph to its place on the mantle.

7. EXT. FRIDAY'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY. DAY 7

Francine is standing stiffly with her arms folded surveying the scene from her porch. In the driveway is a big, black Harley Davidson parked behind her Mercedes. Its rider, PIG (35) is a huge man with bushy beard, sunglasses, denim vest revealing thick, heavily tattooed arms, jeans, black boots.

PAULA (22) sits in the sidecar, similarly dressed. They both dismount, tear off their helmets, tossing them into the air they land in Francine's prized orchid bed! Francine is shocked, but disguises her real emotions with her smile.

8. INT. FRIDAY'S LIVING ROOM. DAY 8

Francine, Paula and Pig are seated. Paula and Pig are sipping from cans of beer. Pig is smoking a fat cigar. Their dirty feet are resting on Francine's expensive coffee table.

FRANCINE
(tentatively)
Surprise, Paula? You mentioned you had a surprise for me?

PAULA
Pig, you tell mum. Go on, you tell!

PIG
She's your mum - you tell her!

PAULA
Pig proposed to me last night on the Nullabor. Mum - it was so romantic - lying in our sleeping bag under the Southern Cross!

Paula stretches over and holds her hand in front of her mother proudly showing off a silver, skull ring.

FRANCINE
(hesitantly, feigning joy)
Oh, that's wonderful dear.
Congratulations to both of you. I'm sure your father will be - surprised. Yes, very surprised!

9. INT. STEPHENS SECRET LOVE NEST. DAY 9

The living room of a fancy, modern sea-side apartment. Stephen is on all fours, dressed in black leather boots, a chrome-studded dog collar and leather g-string.

A chain attached to his dog collar is held by his mistress, KATE(35) who wears a dominatrix outfit. She is whipping his exposed buttocks as he snorts and grunts.

KATE

Naughty piggy! Yes you are! You're
a very naughty piggy!

10. INT. FRIDAY'S LIVING ROOM. DAY 10

There is a dabbling of visitors being served drinks and appetizers by the caterers. Francine is greeting guests. Paula, roly hanging from her lip, is topping up champagne glasses whether the guests want it or not! Pig is sprawled on the settee - snoring loudly.

Francine looks at the clock - 6.30pm. She quickly locates Paula and pulls her away from an ELDERLY COUPLE just as Paula is about to hand them her business card.

FRANCINE

Paula dear, I'm in a bit of a
pickle. I'm supposed to pick up
your -

11. INT. INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS - PERTH AIRPORT. DAY 11

Pig is holding up a sign 'RAYMOND FRIDAY' while watching passengers pour from Customs. Suddenly he smiles, excited. A very beautiful, sexy woman dressed in pink couture and high heels is walking towards him, wheeling a small suitcase.

Francine's son - now RAYLENE (27) sees Pig holding the sign and is completely flummoxed. Pig is also surprised that this gorgeous "woman" is approaching him. He is mesmerized. Raylene extends his hand to Pig.

RAYLENE

(a slight American accent)
Good afternoon sweetie, I'm Raylene.

Pig is cautious after hearing his voice, but kisses the back of Raylene's gloved hand. Raylene grabs the sign from Pig's hands, rips it in half and tosses it over his shoulder.

RAYLENE (CONT'D)

I was expecting mother - and you are?

PIG

(confused, angry, hesitant)

Wait - you're Ray? Paula's brother?

RAYLENE

No honey, I'm Raylene, Paula's new sister. So where's your limo - ?

Raylene removes his heels and shoves them into Pig's hands.

RAYLENE (CONT'D)

- because these tootsies are fucking killing me!

12. EXT. PIG'S HARLEY DAVIDSON - HIGHWAY. DAY 12

Pig in the saddle, Raylene lying back in the sidecar with his stockinged legs crossed, feet resting on the edge, hair and long silk scarf trailing in the breeze. They pass a church with PARISHIONERS pouring out - startled to see Pig and Raylene ride past.

13. INT. FRIDAY'S LIVING ROOM. DAY 13

Paula is inebriated, modeling lingerie and showing embarrassed GUESTS products from her sex shop. Francine suddenly notices, leaves her conversation circle and pulls Paula away from the guests.

FRANCINE

Paula dear, you must be tired from your long journey. How about I run you a nice bubble bath so you can relax and freshen up a bit?

PAULA

(very loudly)

Fuck yeah, a bubble bath! Haven't had one of them since I was a kid. (addressing the entire gathering) Anyone wanna join me in a fucken bubble bath?

The guests are horrified.

14. EXT. TRUDY'S TOWNHOUSE. DAY 14

Stephen-still wearing the dog collar-holding the orchids, is repeatedly ringing the doorbell of his mother's canal-front townhouse. No response.

He dials her number from his mobile and paces back and fore waiting for an answer - still no response. He slaps shut his mobile and scratches his head, staring at a front window.

15. EXT. IMMORTAL OUTLAWS CLUBHOUSE. DAY 15

Pig and Raylene arrive at a house surrounded by a high wall with a big iron gate. Six motor bikes are parked on the verge. A sign on the gate says 'IMMORTAL OUTLAWS MC' Raylene is slightly nervous. Pig gets off his bike.

PIG

Just behind you is a gold box
wrapped with a fucken ribbon.

Raylene feels behind and pulls out the box.

RAYLENE

Oh, you mean this?

PIG

(indecisively)

Wait! Keep it here until I give you
the signal. I'll go in and check if
me fucken mate's here, first.

RAYLENE

Whatever you say hun. And be sure
to say hi to the boys for me!

Pig punches the numbers on the gate's coded lock and enters. It locks behind him. Raylene's mobile rings. He answers.

16. INT. FRANCINE'S BATHROOM. DAY 16

Francine has her mobile to her ear while she sponges Paula's back. Paula is blowing bubbles. An ELDERLY MALE GUEST enters looking for the toilet. Francine shoos him away.

FRANCINE

- Raymond - lovely to hear your
voice - You too my darling. Now,
where are you? - Still at the
airport? Well that's convenient -

17. EXT. PIG'S HARLEY - BIKEY CLUBHOUSE. DAY 17

The gate opens and the BIKEYS (9) pour out, half drunk - swilling beer, smoking, carrying on, wolf-whistling at Raylene - drowning out his mobile conversation.

18. INT. FRANCINE'S BATHROOM. DAY 18

Paula is playfully shampooing her mother's hair. Francine is trying to fend her off and talk to her son.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

- I know you must be tired and I hate to ask but if you could excuse
- Yes dear, a taxi. You remember where Heavenly Rest - That's right, Raymond. - Ok, love you dear, bye.

Francine closes her mobile looking perplexed.

19. EXT. PIG'S HARLEY - BIKEY CLUBHOUSE. DAY 19

The bikeys are circling Raylene like sharks. He takes out a cigarette and the SARGENT-AT-ARMS (SAA) quickly pulls out his lighter and lights it for him.

SAA

Fucken sexy bitch, are'nt cha?

RAYLENE

Sexy, perhaps! Bitch - never!

SAA

Fucken feisty and sexy - I like that!

(to Pig)

Pig, matey, is this your fucken missus? Or is this some fucken mole you picked up on the way?

The bikeys burst into giggles. Pig forces a chuckle.

SAA (CONT'D)

So, ya gonna fucken share her with us or what? C,mon mate I'll chuck in a little extra for ya stash!

PIG

(lacking confidence)

Nah, mate. This is me missus. Me fucken fionsay.

SAA

Ya mean that fucken porn store
bitch?

Pig is enraged and splashes the SAA with beer. A fight between the two men breaks out. Other gang members splash beer on each other and whole gang begins fighting.

Raylene suddenly realises Pig left keys in the ignition. He quickly climbs from the sidecar onto the seat, turns the key, kicks the bike into gear and roars off down the street.

It takes a few moments for Pig and the bikekeys to notice. Suddenly Pig takes off running and screaming. The bikekeys stop fighting and burst into hysterics, laughing at Pig.

20. INT. TRUDY'S TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM. DAY 20

Francine's wilted orchids flying through a broken window - followed by Stephen, snagging a trouser leg, shredding it almost completely off on the way down.

Trudy is sitting lifeless in her armchair - TV on - one hand resting on the remote. He checks her breath and pulse but there are no signs of life. Stephen's eyes well with tears. He clasps his mother's hand and collapses on his knees.

21. INT. FRANCINE'S TOILET. DAY 21

Francine is sitting on the covered toilet seat dialing her mobile when the door opens and the same elderly male guest appears. Francine kicks the door shut in his face.

FRANCINE

(beat - listening to message)
Voice mail again - what a surprise!
Listen Stephen, I've sent Raymond
to pick up mother. If you get this
message please call me!

Francine's fixed smile dissolves, her mobile slips from her hand and tears begin to well in her eyes. She rips off a piece of toilet paper and wipes her eyes, trying hard to force her smile back and summon the strength to go on.

22. EXT. SUBURBAN SIDEWALK. DAY 22

Raylene comes to a halt near THREE INDIGENOUS YOUTHS who are rapping. Seeing him, they stop and stare with amazement.

RAYLENE

(rapping spontaneously)

Yo mo fo's look as tho ya neva saw
no white ho before, ya jaws dropped
to the floor like Paris Hilton just
bust thru ya door, drunk as a whore
worse than before, runnin from the
law, but I'm no harder to ignore!

The three youths faces lighten up, completely taken by surprise. They walk over and give Raylene hi-fives.

RAYLENE (CONT'D)

Yo, homies! Wot up? This shorty's
lost. Where the Heavenly Rest at?

23. INT. HEAVENLY REST - RECEPTION. DAY 23

The HEAD RECEPTIONIST (50) and TRAINEE RECEPTIONIST (18) glare through the window as Raylene thunderously arrives.

HEAD RECEPTIONIST

My gawd. That's got to be Mrs.
Walker's granddaughter. Haven't
seen her in years. Always knew she
was off the rails. Tell you what I'm
going on break. You take care of
her. Just get her out of here asap.

She grabs her coffee mug and handbag and starts to leave.

HEAD RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Oh, and Mrs Friday called to say
her husband got held up. So
apparently her son, Raymond will be
arriving by taxi to collect Annie
Fisher. Back in twenty!

The trainee is stunned like a deer caught in the headlights. Raylene enters, sashaying to the reception like a diva.

RAYLENE

Hi sweetie! I'm here to pick up
granny! Must be seven years since I
was last here! Though I must say,
your decor makes me feel like it
was just yesterday.

24. EXT. HEAVENLY REST LIFESTYLE VILLAGE. DAY 24

MRS WALKER is seated in the Harley sidecar with a fold-out wheelchair next to her. She has a big smile on her face. Raylene is fastening the strap of her helmet.

RAYLENE (CONT'D)

Now don't you worry Nanna - I'm sure you recognise a little change in me and I also recognise a little change in you. But damn girlfriend, you lookin good!

He seats himself in the saddle, turns on the ignition and they thunder off ignoring all speed limit signs.

25. INT. AMBULANCE. DAY 25

Stephen is sitting beside the deceased body of his mother inside a moving ambulance.

26. INT. FRIDAY'S LIVING ROOM. LATE AFTERNOON 26

Francine picks up a carved, wooden mallet and bangs on a small oriental gong. The guests become silent.

FRANCINE

Unfortunately my husband has been caught in traffic. But my son Raymond should be arriving with Annie very soon.

Applause from the guests.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Thank you. I've asked my daughter to sit on the front lawn and give us a whistle when she see's them - so we can switch off any lights.

Anyway, I just want to thank everyone for being here to make this such a memorable surprise party for my mother. I do hope you all enjoy yourselves.

An even bigger round of applause from the guests.

27. EXT. ST. ST GEORGES TCE. LATE AFTERNOON 27

Raylene is riding along the Terrace when he notices the bikekeys through his rear view. He accelerates but after a few seconds slows down, running out of petrol.

He quickly gets off the bike, takes out the folding wheelchair and lifts Mrs Walker into it. She is hugging the gold box with dear life. He tries to pull it away from her but she starts kicking him.

He lets her keep it while he pushes her in the wheelchair, weaving in and out of pedestrians along the sidewalk. He spots a taxi and waves frantically, but the taxi speeds off.

28. EXT. ST. GEORGES TCE. PIG'S HARLEY. LATE AFTERNOON 28

The bikekeys stop at Pig's Harley. Pig riding pillion with the SAA jumps off and immediately looks for the parcel in his sidecar. It's missing! Pig is enraged! Suddenly a loud siren is heard and a police car pulls up behind them.

29. EXT. FRIDAY'S FRONT GARDEN. LATE AFTERNOON 29

Francine and Paula - in lingerie - are arm in arm standing under the tree with the gold ribbon. Paula is running her fingers along the carved initials. Paula gives her mother a warm hug. Both try to disguise the moisture in their eyes.

30. INT. PUBLIC BUS. LATE AFTERNOON 30

Raylene and Mrs Walker(in her wheelchair)are in the front section of the bus attracting curious looks from PASSENGERS.

31. INT. FRIDAY'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT 31

The guests are quietly waiting in the dark for Raymond and his grandmother to arrive. Suddenly there is a loud whistle.

FRANCINE

Quiet everyone. They're here!

There is a hush across the room. Francine is standing beside the front door near the light switch. Just as the door opens she switches the light on.

Raylene still dressed in French couture and high heels is pushing Mrs Walker in her wheelchair - who is still clutching the gold box. Paula dressed her sexy lingerie has an arm around her brother's shoulder.

ALL PARTY GUESTS
 Surprise, surprise!

Francine, although still maintaining her smile, appears as stunned as most of the guests.

RAYLENE
 Surprise, surprise, everyone!

Raylene gives his mother a huge hug and kisses her twice on both cheeks but notices his mother is struggling to cover up something - even with her smile in place. A caterer offers him a glass of champagne which he drinks in one gulp.

RAYLENE (CONT'D)
 It's my gender re-assignment isn't it?

FRANCINE
 No Raymond.

RAYLENE
 Raylene!

FRANCINE
 Sorry dear, Raylene.

RAYLENE
 Well if it's not my gender re-assignment then what is it?

FRANCINE
 It's Mrs Walker!

RAYLENE
 Who the fuck - excuse my French - is Mrs Walker?

Raylene turns to the woman in the wheelchair clutching the parcel. At first he's confused - then it dawns.

RAYLENE (CONT'D)
 Oh shit!

32. EXT. FRIDAY'S FRONT GARDEN. NIGHT

32

The guests have all left. Francine, Stephen, Annie, Raylene, Paula, Pig and Mrs Walker (still hugging the gift box) are sitting on lawn chairs under the tree with the gold ribbon - lit by garden lights. Raylene rises off his chair and kneels in front of his mother putting one hand on her knee.

RAYLENE

Mum, why didn't you tell us when you were first diagnosed?

Francine puts her wine glass down and clasps Raylene's hand.

FRANCINE

Same reason you didn't tell me when you were first gender re-designed!

PAULA

But, Mum a sex change -

RAYLENE

- gender re-assign -!

PAULA

(loudly cutting in)

- gender re-assignment isn't a death sentence like your multiple melanoma.

FRANCINE

Multiple myaloma, dear. Melanoma is skin cancer.

STEPHEN

Paula is right Fran. You wait until now to tell us that four years ago you were given five years to live?

FRANCINE

Well at least I told you. I didn't know Ray was a woman these past three years. I didn't know Paula owned a porn emporium and I still don't know why in God's name, you are wearing that dog collar!

There is snickering as Stephens hand slowly reaches to his neck, feeling the studded leather collar - he removes it.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Please, everyone - Stephens mother just passed away - so lets try to have some respect and forgiveness.

Stephen appears surprised by her remark. They both rise and hug each other - emotionally and compassionately.

ANNIE

Fran - I know my memory is gone but was it really my birthday today?

Francine hesitates. All eyes are on her waiting for a reply.

FRANCINE
(slightly nervously)
Of course it was, mother.

Francine breaks from Stephen and kneels in front of her mother, gently taking her mother's hands in hers.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
But the real surprise is that -
you're actually a year younger! -
Happy 79th birthday, Mum!

Francine kisses her on the cheek while the others look at one another, flummoxed. They join in wishing Annie a "Happy 79th"!

Francine suddenly snatches the box from Mrs Walker, tears off the wrapping and rips open the vacuum-sealed bag of marijuana with her teeth. She grabs a handful as the others watch - completely stunned - especially Pig.

FRANCINE
Paula please pass me your Tally Ho!

Paula hesitantly passes her mother the cigarette papers. Francine rolls herself a thick joint and sticks it in her mouth. Everyone watches, surprised by her bizarre behavior.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
(with the joint in her mouth)
Well - isn't anyone going to light
it for me?

Raylene quickly takes out his lighter and lights it for his mother. Francine takes a big puff and passes it to Stephen.

33. EXT. FRIDAY'S FRONT GARDEN. EARLY MORNING

33

Looking down - everyone is sleeping peacefully on blankets in the shade of the tree. The credits roll as the sound of Handel's largo is heard again - softly at first but gently increasing to a comfortable volume, ending with the credits.

END

END NOTE: Handel's 'Largo' - Ombra mai fu
Ombra mai fu, di vegetabile cara ed amabile, soave
pi'u.
English Translation : No tree's shade ever was
more serene, dear and lovely.

