THE GUEST OF HONOR
by Richard Strand
Directed by Vladimir Prahcharov

Karen .......................................................... Jan Harlin
Lynn ........................................................... Pip Tulou
Jason .......................................................... James McDaniel
David .......................................................... Eric McNaughton

Scenic Designer Paul Owen
Costume Designer Kevin R. McLeod
Lighting Designers Jonathan Bumpas and Suzanne Mulder
Sound Designer Sean Vail
Property Master Mark J. Bissonette
Production Stage Manager Judy Clemens
Assistant Stage Managers Megan Wanlass and Brad O. Hunner
Dramaturgs Tanya Palmer, Matthew Southworth, Michelle Spencer and Michele Volansk

KAREN. So, what's he like?
LYNN. See, that's the thing about him: he's really no different from, say, you or me.
JASON. Exactly. That's how I feel. He's like, you know, just a person. That's the only thing that matters. Just a person. No different, really, from any other person.
KAREN. How marvelous. A person. Uh, what's wrong with him?
LYNN. Nothing. That's the point. In a very real sense, there is nothing wrong with him.
JASON. Exactly. And that is very well put. There's really nothing wrong with him. That's how we should always look at it.
KAREN. How wonderful. Uh, is there some reason I might think there was something wrong with him?
LYNN. No. That's the amazing thing. There is really no reason you would ever think that there is something wrong. Because of his attitude. He's got a great attitude.
JASON. Exactly. We have these prejudices and fears, but they are all unfounded. They are meaningless. And he, maybe more than any man I know, is proof of that.
LYNN. A shining example, really. A shining example of the indomitable nature of the individual.
KAREN. Wow. That's great. Uh, forgive me for seeming a bit thick here, but what prejudice and fears should I have about him?
JASON. None. That's the point.
LYNN. Exactly. For all intents and purposes, he is a man like any other man.
JASON. And that's how he likes to be treated.
KAREN. Yes. Yes. I understand, and, of course, I'm sure you're right. But, you know, if I were to have a prejudice or fear about him, what would that prejudice or fear be?

JASON. Karen, the whole point is that you should feel no such thing.

LYNN. Yes. That's the point we're trying to make.

KAREN. Oh, I understand. And I agree with you. Absolutely. Down the line. All the way. Believe me, I'm in your corner. Only, I was sort of hoping that you might give me a clue, you know, of what sort of prejudices and fears I might, if I were less sensitive, be tempted to have so that, you know, I could sort of push those aside as soon as I felt them rearing their ugly little heads. You know.

JASON. Karen, believe me, you will be so comfortable with him that you won't be tempted, even for a second, to think of him as anything other than a person, a human being, one of us, a friend, a colleague, and a wonderful guy.

(The doorbell rings.)

LYNN. That's him. Okay, now, Karen, don't say anything embarrassing.

KAREN. Like what?

LYNN. You know. Just don't say anything that shows you're self-conscious.

JASON. Because, really, there's nothing to be self-conscious about.

LYNN. Exactly. He's just a person. That's really the only important thing. That he's a person.

KAREN. Well, of course. That is the important thing. Only, do you think you could give me an example of something embarrassing I might say so that I could have a solid hold on what I shouldn't say?

LYNN. Say anything you like, Karen. He's a man, that's all. And no different from you or me. Not in any way that matters.

KAREN. That's certainly good news. Only I'd still like one example of a truly embarrassing thing that I might say so that I could avoid saying it.

JASON. You're worrying too much. Relax.

(The doorbell rings again.)

LYNN. I better let him in.

KAREN. NO! Not yet! I'm not ready!


KAREN. (Grabbing LYNN.) You can't open the door. Not yet. Not until you give me an example of an embarrassing thing that I might say.

JASON. This is just silly.

KAREN. Tell me. I mean it. Tell me.

JASON. He's at the door. We have to let him in.

KAREN. TELL ME! TELL ME SOMETHING I MIGHT SAY THAT WOULD BE REALLY EMBARRASSING. TELL ME NOW!

LYNN. Jason, can you think of something?

JASON. Well, sure. Uh, let me think...

LYNN. Oh. I know. You know, just as an example, don't say something like, "Master, I found a letter for you at the institute this morning; it was addressed to Arbois."

JASON. Sure. That's a good example.

LYNN. You know, it might make him feel self-conscious.

JASON. Right. Just a little sensitive.

(The doorbell rings again.)

KAREN. Why would I say that?

LYNN. Well, frankly, I can't imagine that you would which is why this whole conversation is so ridiculous.

JASON. I agree. You're becoming obsessed by this. When the whole point is, he's no different from anyone else.

LYNN. Exactly. (The doorbell rings again.) I can't continue to leave him out there, Karen. You have to let go of me so I can open the door.

(KAREN lets go. LYNN answers the door and DAVID enters. As advertised, he is, in no important way, different from you or me.)

(In the following dialogue, LYNN, DAVID and JASON all speak simultaneously.)
LYNN. *(Taking a bottle of wine from DAVID.)* David! Thanks for coming and what's this? You brought wine? That's wonderful! Thank you. Thank you so much.

DAVID. *(Giving LYNN a bottle of wine.* Here. I brought this for you. It's not a real expensive... you know, just a little gift. For you. And Jason.

JASON. Take your coat? Oh, sorry. You're not wearing one. Well, thanks. Thanks a lot.

*(Continuing normally.)*

LYNN. And David, this is our very good friend, Karen. Karen, this is David.

DAVID. Hi. It's a pleasure to meet you.

(KAREN is conspicuously staring at DAVID, looking for the prob-
lem. DAVID becomes quite self-conscious. So do LYNN and JA-
SON. LYNN nudges KAREN.)

KAREN. Oh! Uh, uh, of course... *(KAREN looks to LYNN, very
afraid she will say something wrong. Her next words are very stilted.
Everyone is staring at KAREN, hanging on each word.)* It's, uh, a-
pleasure-to-meet-you-too.

*(Everyone heaves a sigh of relief. DAVID is smiling broadly.)*

LYNN. Let's sit down.

JASON. I'll get wine glasses.

*(JASON exits to get wine glasses. LYNN manipulates KAREN into
sitting next to DAVID on the sofa.)*

LYNN. So, David, Karen writes shareware.

DAVID. Really!

KAREN. Yes. Yes I do.

DAVID. That's fabulous.

KAREN. It's okay.

DAVID. What is shareware exactly?

KAREN. Well, it's nothing really. It's just software. Only it's mar-
teted differently from software that you might buy at a computer
retailer.

DAVID. How so?

KAREN. Well, instead of buying a program for tens, or some-
times hundreds, of dollars, you pay a nominal price and try it out on
your computer.

DAVID. I see.

KAREN. Then, if you like it, you send money to the programmer.
Usually something like ten or twenty dollars.

DAVID. I see.

KAREN. And, if you don't like it, well, you just delete it from
your hard drive and you don't have any further obligation.

DAVID. *(Taken aback.* I beg your pardon?

*(LYNN looks mortified. JASON comes running back into the room to
smooth things over.)*

*(JASON, LYNN and KAREN all speak the following lines simulta-
nously.)*

JASON. I don't think she really meant that you would just delete
it from your hard drive...

LYNN. What Karen means...

KAREN. Did I say something?

LYNN. Right. Or that there would really be no further obliga-
tion...

JASON. Right. Not in the sense of, you know, an obligation...

KAREN. Oh no. I didn't mean...

*(They continue normally.)*

LYNN. I think what Karen meant was...

JASON. Karen can speak for herself, dear.

LYNN. Of course. I'm sorry. Karen, why don't you just clarify
what you meant.

*(All eyes are on KAREN.)*
KAREN. I... uh... I can't really even remember what it is I said that I didn't mean.
JASON. Well, you said that you could delete it from your hard drive...
KAREN. Oh, right. And what I meant was, uh, you could, uh... erase it from your, uh, data storage device.
DAVID. (Relieved.) Oh, Oh, I see.
JASON. And, Karen, you also said that you wouldn't have any further obligation.
KAREN. Right. Right. I said that. But what I meant was that you, you know, wouldn't have any subsequent commitment.

(Everyone relaxes and feels better.)

DAVID. Oh! Oh! Of course. I see now.
JASON. Subsequent commitment.
LYNN. (Laughing.) Makes all the difference, doesn't it?
DAVID. (Laughing.) Well, sure. Subsequent commitment.
JASON. (Laughing.) She just said further obligation. She meant subsequent commitment.
KAREN. Right. And all I was really trying to point out is, that the whole thing is on the honor system.

(Everyone abruptly stops laughing. LYNN kicks KAREN's ankle. DAVID is again taken aback.)

DAVID. I beg your pardon?
KAREN. Um, um,...
JASON. Uh, again, I don't think Karen really meant to say, "honor system."
KAREN. Well, no. Of course not. Not, "honor system."
LYNN. No. She meant to say...
JASON. Dear! Let Karen say it.
KAREN. Sure I can say it. I meant, uh, not, "honor system," but, uh... integrity... scheme.

(DAVID is even more taken aback. LYNN kicks KAREN's ankle again.)

DAVID. I beg your pardon?
KAREN. And, really, I didn't even mean, "integrity scheme," as much as I meant, uh... morality... structure.

(DAVID is even more taken aback. JASON shakes his head in disbelief. LYNN kicks KAREN's ankle again.)

DAVID. I beg your pardon?
KAREN. And, actually, I didn't even mean, "morality structure," because what I really meant was, uh, uh, (She is pretty sure she's going to get it wrong again.)... scruple... strategy.

(In a pre-emptive strike, KAREN kicks LYNN's ankle. As anticipated, DAVID is even more taken aback.)

DAVID. Excuse me?!
JASON. I think what Karen means...
KAREN. I CAN SPEAK FOR MYSELF, JASON! (Everyone is silent, waiting for KAREN to do just that.) I found a letter for you at the institute this morning; it was addressed to Arbois!

(KAREN makes a grand exit. Everyone else is left shell shocked.)

DAVID. (After a reflective moment.) You know, I hate to admit this, but I had that coming.

THE END