

That Thing
A short play (excerpt)

John Shanahan

CHARACTERS:

Carl and Linda Edgerton, both in their late 60s.

AT RISE: *Two chairs at center, a small table between them. CARL and LINDA are sharing their usual quiet Sunday morning sitting on the porch. He's poring over a crossword puzzle; she's busy knitting or crocheting. After a few beats, Carl chuckles to himself, a big smile on his face.*

LINDA. What?

CARL. Oh, nothing. *(He looks at her and chuckles again.)*

LINDA. *What?*

CARL. I was just thinking about that thing we used to do.

LINDA. What thing?

CARL. You know. The *thing*.

LINDA. I have no idea what you're talking about.

CARL. Yes, you do! You know, the thing we did sometimes. The thing with the, the- *(He makes an odd, strangely complicated but meaningless gesture with his hands)* the other thing.

LINDA. Oh...*that*. *(She returns to her yarn.)*

CARL. *(with an obscene chuckle)* Yeah...*that*. Heh heh. Hadn't thought of that one in quite a while. Hoo boy! You remember now, don't you?

LINDA. Yes.

CARL. I figured you would. Oh, I figured you would!

LINDA. Yes. Never cared much for that.

CARL. What?

LINDA. *(plainly)* I never liked it.

CARL. You did, too.

LINDA. No, I really didn't.

CARL. I was *there*, Linda. I know you liked it.

LINDA. Honestly, dear, I didn't.

CARL. Never?

LINDA. (*looks up, thinking a moment*) No. Never.

CARL. But you did it! A couple of times, even!

LINDA. Well of course I did, dear. That doesn't mean I enjoyed it.

CARL. Then why did you do it?

LINDA. Because you enjoyed it.

CARL. And that's the only reason?

LINDA. (*chuckling*) I don't think there *is* another reason to do something like that, Carl.

CARL. But you did.

LINDA. (*reaching over to pat his leg*) Yes, I did, dear.

CARL. But you didn't like it.

LINDA. No.

CARL. I did.

LINDA. I know.

Pause.

CARL. I don't believe you.

LINDA. That's fine, dear.

CARL. Because it was good.

LINDA. For you.

CARL. And you.

LINDA. No.

CARL. No?

LINDA. No.

CARL. Why not?

LINDA. Why wasn't it good for me?

CARL. Yes.

LINDA. Because I didn't like it.

CARL. But why didn't you like it?

LINDA. I just didn't. A person can't like everything, now can they?

CARL. (*uncertainly*) No. No, I... I guess... Not.

Pause. Linda knits. Carl's working through the illogical conclusion he's about to come to. It's not pleasing him, and it starts to show on his face.

CARL. So what else didn't you like?

LINDA. How's that?

CARL. If a person can't like everything, then what else didn't you like?

LINDA. (*trying for humor*) I was never very big on cauliflower.

CARL. You know what I mean!

LINDA. Oh, Carl...

CARL. No, no, don't "Oh, Carl" me! Tell me! If you didn't like the (*he makes hand gesture*) thing, then what else didn't you like?

LINDA. It was all quite fine, dear.

CARL. Fi--Fine? *Fine*?

LINDA. Yes. Fine.

CARL. That's all? Just "fine"?

LINDA. What's wrong with "fine"?

CARL. What's wrong with--? I'll tell you what's wrong with fine! What's wrong with fine is that it's *fine*. It's not great, it's not good, it's not even okay, it's *fine*.

LINDA. Fine and okay are the same thing, dear.

CARL. Aha! See? There! You said it yourself. Not great, not good—

LINDA. You're making entirely too much out of this, Carl.

CARL. No, I don't think I am! Thirty-seven years of marriage and it's just now that I find out you didn't like having sex with me?

LINDA. I never said that!

CARL. You might just as well have!

LINDA. I said nothing of the sort!

CARL. You said it was "fine."

LINDA. And it was!

CARL. There you go again!

LINDA. Oh, Carl.

CARL. And again with the "Oh, Carl"!

LINDA. You're being ridiculous. You know that, don't you?

CARL. I have every right to be ridiculous!

For a complete PDF version of this script, please e-mail shanahan_the_writer@yahoo.com. Thank you!