Erotomania
By Dave Carley

January 2016

Cast

ARTHUR – 30s
CAROLINE – 30s

Location

On a sidewalk, across from an important hotel in New York City

Time

Now

Synopsis

Two strangers stand outside a New York hotel. Watching and waiting for a sign.

Arthur and Caroline both suffer from a mental illness known as De Clerambault's Syndrome, or Erotomania. It manifests itself as grandly delusional and achingly unrequited love, usually for a celebrity or someone otherwise unattainable.

Arthur and Caroline both believe they are about to receive messages from their respective loves and, almost on cue, a hotel curtain begins to move.

Erotomania
By Dave Carley

*Sounds of the city, establish. As play starts, ARTHUR and CAROLINE are standing a few feet apart, both intently watching something higher up, in the middle distance.*

*After a bit, they both spot something. CAROLINE waves discreetly. ARTHUR scribbles notes in a pad.*

*They resume watching and the same thing happens again. This time, before ARTHUR starts making his notes, he notices CAROLINE wave .*

*And a third time. CAROLINE waves. ARTHUR pauses in mid-note taking.*

ARTHUR: What are you doing?

CAROLINE: What does it look like.

ARTHUR: Why are you waving?

CAROLINE: Why does one ever wave.

ARTHUR: Who are you waving at?

CAROLINE: A friend.

ARTHUR: Every time I write something, you’re waving.

CAROLINE: What a coincidence. Every time I wave you start writing. What are you writing?

ARTHUR: Notes. On something I see. That’s why I’m curious. You seem to be seeing something too. *(Pause.)* It makes me wonder.

CAROLINE: Wonder what.

ARTHUR: Are we seeing the same thing?

CAROLINE: It depends.

ARTHUR: On -

CAROLINE: I’m looking at that large window, the corner one, five stories up. The one with the drapes pulled shut.

ARTHUR: So am I.

CAROLINE: That’s the Washington Suite.

ARTHUR: I know.

CAROLINE: Prince Charles is staying there. Prince Charles of England.

ARTHUR: I know who he is. But why do you think he’s there?

CAROLINE: Because he’s been signalling me. Look.

*(She waves.)*

 Did you see that?

ARTHUR: I didn’t see anything.

CAROLINE: You didn’t see the curtains part?

ARTHUR: No.

CAROLINE: They did.

ARTHUR: And you think it’s Prince Charles looking out?

CAROLINE: I know it’s Prince Charles.

ARTHUR: I don’t like to burst your bubble. It’s not.

CAROLINE: He’s staying at the hotel, it’s the George Washington Suite, he is moving the curtains and/

ARTHUR: But you haven’t actually seen him at the window, not completely, have you, you’ve just seen the curtains move a bit.

CAROLINE: Why are you saying this!

ARTHUR: Prince Charles is definitely staying at the hotel. But he’s not in that suite. He’s in the President suite, four stories up.

CAROLINE: You’re wrong.

ARTHUR: Whatever.

*(Pause. He sees something and writes. She waves, but with no conviction.)*

CAROLINE: You just saw something, didn’t you.

ARTHUR: Yes, and it wasn’t Prince Charles.

CAROLINE: Why wouldn’t he be in the Washington Suite!?

ARTHUR: He’s a head of state, or about to be. The President Suite is much grander.

CAROLINE: The Washington suite has six rooms, six bathrooms, a reception room, and a private elevator!

ARTHUR: The President suite takes up a whole floor facing the park. With two private elevators. And a panic room.

CAROLINE: Oh.

ARTHUR: For sure he’s there.

CAROLINE: Then who’s in the Washington Suite?

ARTHUR: Sarah Opperfelt.

CAROLINE: The computer woman?

ARTHUR: *(Amused.)* ‘Computer Woman’ is a little general. I’d call her ‘Search Engine Woman’. Though, she just sold it.

CAROLINE: I know. For about a trillion dollars.

ARTHUR: A lot anyway.

CAROLINE: You’d think she’d be in the President Suite.

ARTHUR: Royalty trumps Silicon Valley. And she’s actually renting the Washington Suite long-term, till she decides where she’s going to settle. Her marriage is falling apart, she and Erik are selling their condo, but there are complications, as you can imagine... So – that’s her, there.

CAROLINE: *(Crushed.)* I was sure Charles was sending me word. I can’t see the President suite from here. Not well. I’d have to stand back in the park.

ARTHUR: Perhaps he’ll come downstairs to visit Sarah. Though I doubt it.

CAROLINE: *(With last.)* I doubt that. The Duchess is here too. She watches him like a hawk.

ARTHUR: How do you know?

CAROLINE: He told me. Why do you write things down? *(Looks.)* It’s all squiggles.

ARTHUR: Patterns. I’m trying to figure them out. You saw the drapes. They move. I’m trying to figure out the pattern of movement. What she’s trying to tell me. It’s the hardest part, the first stage. Like learning a new language. Before, before, years ago, when I was younger, I was – interested – in the Rockettes. I went to see them perform sometimes, one of them in particular, and, one day and it was like a – I don’t like to say epiphany, that sounds religious – more like a – a

CAROLINE: A revelation?

ARTHUR: Yes. A revelation. Suddenly I knew they were trying to tell me something. I was mostly interested in the girl six from the right, Ginny, Virginia, she was six from the right in every formation, but she was scared, you could tell that, and the others were trying to tell me something, something that could help me – act – and I began going night after night after night to try and figure out what it was, the language, their legs, they were sending me messages and finally I figured it out, I began understanding the messages, the code, it was the producer, he had them all under his thumb, they were virtual slaves, and they were telling me to stay true – stay true, don’t give up hope.

CAROLINE: What happened?

ARTHUR: Same thing as always. By the time I understand, it’s too much.

CAROLINE: You had a breakdown?

 *(ARTHUR nods.)*

 That hasn’t happened to me.

ARTHUR: Good. *(Pause.)* So how long have you -

CAROLINE: Two years. I saw him on TV. Much as you describe it only, you know what it was like, he was talking on the screen but it was almost as if there were subtitles scrolling across the bottom, what he was really saying. I didn’t have to do the – work – you are doing. I knew right away what he wanted of me. It’s just the waiting that gets me.

ARTHUR: Yes.

CAROLINE: He wants to be with me, he WILL be with me, but the – impediments – there are so many considerations – the Duchess is just the least of it. If it was just her, he’d have come bounding out the gates of Highgrove to me a year ago.

ARTHUR: You’ve been to England?

CAROLINE: Six times.

ARTHUR: That’s a lot of travel. I’ve never left New York.

CAROLINE: I live in Seattle. This is far, too. I’m running low on money; I had some from when we sold our home, it’s almost all gone now. The good news is, Charles is coming to Vancouver in the fall, that’s just a two hour bus ride for me. Do you write to Sarah?

ARTHUR: Yes. Advice mostly. Investing tips. Sometimes I have to – warn her about – some of the men I see her out with.

CAROLINE: Does she write back?

ARTHUR: Oh no, never! None of them ever do. It’s like you say, the stakes are too high. If they were ever caught out. So I content myself knowing that she knows I’m nearby. It’s a comfort to me too but – this sounds odd because of course she’s who she is and I’m who I am, but she needs me even more than I need her. Look! *(He writes something down.)*

CAROLINE: I didn’t see that. Was it opening?

ARTHUR: Kind of a bunching.

CAROLINE: My husband sent me to a doctor. For testing. They wouldn’t listen to me, of course.

ARTHUR: Did they give it a name?

CAROLINE: Erotomania.

ARTHUR: Yes. Imagine reducing this – to a word. The other word for it is De Clerambault’s Syndrome.

CAROLINE: Yes. The doctor said that too – like he’d discovered it. Like he was proud to name it. De Claire-am-bow. I never went back.

ARTHUR: After my breakdown, with the Rockettes, after the other events too, well, they always want to medicate me.

CAROLINE: I know! Why do they want to medicate something away that is beautiful? And what would Charles do without me. *(Pause.)* My husband left me the last time I was in England. He took the children.

ARTHUR: When?

CAROLINE: Two months ago. I was at Highgrove, that’s Charles’ country home, there was a problem, I went too close to the house, I was taken to London, put on a plane and when I got back to Seattle the house was empty.

ARTHUR: Do you miss your kids?

CAROLINE: *(Groans ‘yes’.)*

ARTHUR: Can you see them?

CAROLINE: *(Shakes her head.)*

ARTHUR: We’re playing a long game that no one understands.

CAROLINE: It will all come right some day. When Charles and I are finally together, that will be their ‘aha’ moment. It won’t be so nice for Bill but for the children, yes, and they’ll love Highgrove. *(Pause.)* What’s your name?

ARTHUR: Arthur.

CAROLINE: Caroline.

*(Pause. They watch.)*

You wouldn’t believe the gardens at Highgrove, Arthur, it’s like a giant maze! Do you know how much the kids would love that? I’m dying to take them. But – but it’s all about discretion. The last time, I was stupid, I broke that rule, the discretion rule.

ARTHUR: It’s a lot to bear.

CAROLINE: It is.

ARTHUR: Oh – a limousine.

CAROLINE: Something’s happening.

ARTHUR: See the Escalade behind. That’s Security.

CAROLINE: Charles must be going somewhere. Should we cross the road?

ARTHUR: No. I’m not allowed. You shouldn’t either. It’s not up to us to force the issue. Stay here.

CAROLINE: You’re right. But I so want to... I think – yes – someone’s coming out – can you see?

ARTHUR: No.

CAROLINE: It must be Charles.

ARTHUR: It might be Sarah. Wouldn’t Charles have a flag on his car?

CAROLINE: No! It makes security crazy. It’s Charles! He’s opening an exhibit downtown. He’ll be going there.

ARTHUR: The windows are tinted but someone’s waving.

CAROLINE: He is?

ARTHUR: Yes, I think it’s a man - yes-

 *(They watch as the limousine moves off.)*

CAROLINE: I couldn’t see a thing.

ARTHUR: It was a man.

CAROLINE: I have to go, where is – how do – the subway is that way, right?

ARTHUR: Take a cab.

CAROLINE: I can’t afford it. You live here, you must know which line/

ARTHUR: *(Pulls out money.)* Take a cab, you can get there in time to see him get out. *(Presses money into her hand, probably a lot.)*

CAROLINE: Arthur - was anyone with him?

ARTHUR: I don’t think so.

CAROLINE: You really saw him wave?

ARTHUR: Definitely.

CAROLINE: *(Moving off, then stops and turns.)* Thank you, Arthur, Thank you!

 (*CAROLINE runs off calling “Taxi!”.)*

*(ARTHUR remains on the curb, watching her leave. He waves at her. And then he stands there and pulls his notebook out again. He looks up and watches window. As lights fade he smiles, and writes something down.)*

The End.