

Warren Adler

Dead in the Water



Stonehouse Productions
New York, NY

Also by Warren Adler

PLAYS

Libido

The War of the Roses

Windmills

The Sunset Gang (*Musical*)

SCREENPLAYS

The War of the Roses

Random Hearts

Private Lies

Target Churchill

American Quartet

American Sextet

Funny Boys

High Noon in Hollywood

Housewife Blues

Madeline's Miracles

Regrets Only

Treadmills

Silvergate

TELEVISION

The Sunset Gang

Adapted for PBS' American Theatre Series Trilogy

Starring Uta Hagen, Harould Gould, Jerry Stiller and Doris Roberts who was nominated for an Emmy Award for 'Best Supporting Actress in a Mini Series'

SELECT FICTION

The War of the Roses

The War of the Roses - The Children

Target Churchill

Washington Masquerade

Random Hearts

Trans-Siberian Express

American Quartet

American Sextet

Mourning Glory

For more information on Warren Adler's complete catalogue visit www.warrenadler.com

About the Playwright: Acclaimed author and playwright Warren Adler is best known for *The War of the Roses*, his masterpiece fictionalization of a macabre divorce. *The War of the Roses* was adapted first, into the Golden Globe and BAFTA nominated blockbuster hit film starring Danny DeVito, Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner, and Adler subsequently developed the staged version based on the original novel.



Shortly following the success of *The War of the Roses*, Adler fueled an unprecedented bidding war in a Hollywood commission for his then unpublished novel *Private Lies*. He went on to option or sell a dozen of his works to film and television including *Random Hearts* (starring Harrison Ford and Kristin Scott Thomas), *Trans-Siberian Express*, *Funny Boys*, *Madeline's Miracles* and *The Sunset Gang*, which was adapted into a trilogy for PBS' American Playhouse Series. The trilogy based on his short stories starred Uta Hagen, Harold Gould, Jerry Stiller and earned Doris Roberts and Emmy nomination in the "Best Supporting Actress in a Mini Series" category.

The Sunset Gang musical received an off-Broadway premiere with music composed by L. Russell Brown ("Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree", "C'mon Marianne" - *Jersey Boys*) with lyrics by Adler himself. The *New York Times* called it, "A bittersweet musical about aging and desire...a deeper examination of love and loyalty among people over 60." His other stage works include *Knight of the Ocean Sea*, and *Libido*.

Copyright © 2013 by Warren Adler
Published by Stonehouse Productions
300 East 56th St. New York, NY 10022

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *Dead in the Water* is subject to a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries under the Copyright Union. All rights including professional, amateur, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, and translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

Amateur live stage performance rights to *Dead in the Water* are controlled by Stonehouse Productions. Royalty arrangements and licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation at www.warrenadler.com or emailing gargi@warrenadler.com. All licensing payments due prior to rehearsal, payable no less than one week before the performance opening to Stonehouse Productions, 300 East 56th Street. Suite 20K, New York, NY 10022.

For any questions or queries regarding foreign language and first class production rights contact: Gargi Shindé at gargi@warrenadler.com or Stonehouse Productions, 300 East 56th St. Suite 20K. New York, NY 10022

Copying this book is strictly prohibited by law. Right of performance is non-transferable. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, by any means including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping or otherwise without prior permission from publisher.

No one shall make changes in the play for the purpose of production.

No one shall authorize any act or omissions by which the copyright of this play may be impaired.

Due author credit and author website must be given on all programs, printing, electronic display and media placements.

Dead in the Water

By
Warren Adler

Cast

(In order of appearance)

Stanley Langston: 42

Carol Langston: Late 30's

Betty: Late 20's, The Langston's Housekeeper, Attractive

Rock: Late 20's, Surfer, Handsome, Blond, Tanned

Chuck Farley: Mid 30's, Police Officer, Irish-American

Bob Hawkins: Late 30's, Police Officer, African-American

ACT ONE

Scene One

It is twilight, late spring. The great room of a luxurious beach house on the California coast. Through a large window the audience can see the beach, the surf, the setting sun. The great room is high, with a winding staircase that leads to a type of eagle's nest used as a viewing platform to the ocean. It is fitted with two high-backed upholstered chairs. There is a bar behind, with a door leading to a wine cabinet and storage area for liquor. The wall behind the bar holds mirrored shelves and liquor bottles. There are shelves of books going up one wall, denoting an intellectual as well as an affluent lifestyle. Comfortable, expensive furniture and artwork adorn the room.

STANLEY Langston sits stage left at a table playing solitaire. His gaze drifts outside toward the setting sun. His wife CAROL sits on a chair in the eagle's nest. The chair faces away from the audience.

--

It is twilight, late spring. The great room of a luxurious beach house on the California coast. Set stage right in the back wall is a large window that looks out on the beach, the surf, the setting sun. The great room is high, with a winding staircase that leads to a type of eagle's nest/viewing platform fitted with two swiveling high-backed upholstered chairs.

STANLEY *(Addressing CAROL)* The thing about sunsets. They're so predictably beautiful. Too much beautiful is too much of a good thing. *(He looks at the cards on the table, moves one of the cards, then slaps his own hand.)* Cheating again Stanley. Bad boy.

(CAROL swivels her chair to face the audience. She is holding a bottle of Stoli Vodka.)

CAROL Now there's a man with insight into his own character. *(Continuing, as she holds up the bottle)* Another dead Russian Soldier. *(She rises, and with drunken caution proceeds down the winding staircase. STANLEY watches her. Midway she pauses and looks at STANLEY.)* I can see the hope in your eyes Stanley.

STANLEY Am I that transparent?

(She moves carefully, stops again.)

CAROL How easy it would be. She was drunk...she fell. Kaput.

STANLEY You're being morbid again, darling.

CAROL I'm reading your mind Stanley.

STANLEY I'm glad you can still read.

(CAROL navigates the staircase, then goes to the bar, where she begins to open another bottle of vodka. She starts to open it clumsily.)

CAROL Used to be, we would sit up there holding hands, watching the sunset together. That's when love was in bloom.

STANLEY Ah love. Magical emotion. It arrives, then poof, it disappears, never to appear again.

CAROL *(Lifting the bottle of vodka high)* To love. May she rest in oblivion.

STANLEY Why "she"?

CAROL Men don't know about love. They measure that emotion in erection time. If memory serves.

STANLEY Hard to compete with your Russian Soldiers.

(She hugs the bottle.)

CAROL I love my Russian Soldiers. They protect me from certain evil predators.

STANLEY They affect you like a gangbang, Carol, leaving you wasted and disgusting, unfit for sexual consumption.

(She pours herself a large drink.)

CAROL Pot calls the kettle. You sit there solo, all day long, playing with your Jacks. *(Considering)* There's a pun there somewhere.

STANLEY While you're violated by your Russian Soldiers.

(She takes a deep swallow and stretches out her arms.)

CAROL Come take me my darlings. Who shall be my first?

STANLEY You're long past that I'm afraid.

(He shakes his head, having lost his game of solitaire. He starts to deal again, laying out the cards.)

CAROL Lost again, did we?

STANLEY We lost the day we were married, my dear.

CAROL You didn't. From a starving writer you became a pampered gentleman. It was all a façade, wasn't it Stanley? The knowing, wise, romantic writer artist.

STANLEY You loved it. I gave you cache.

CAROL And I gave you money.

STANLEY A fair trade, don't you think? *(Beat.)* And you, the failed actress. Wasn't I once your safety net, available to catch you after every unsuccessful audition? I'm ready to give up my role. Just say the word.

CAROL The word is "never." The kitty is empty. Go quietly my son. Take what you came with. Pack up all your zeros.

STANLEY *(Mocking)* I gave you the best years of my life. Surely, that deserves compensation.

CAROL Not from me.

STANLEY So I will play my solo games and you fuck your Russian soldiers.

CAROL It does relieve the boredom of waiting. Doesn't it Stanley?

STANLEY Yes it does. And who will say "Uncle" first?

CAROL At least I accomplish something in the meantime.

STANLEY Yes you do. You get drunk...a slutty drunk.

CAROL A slut? I wish. A slut screws. Ergo, I am not a slut.

STANLEY Was it *Portnoy's Complaint* where a man screws a piece of liver? Excellent idea. A lot better than copulating with a drunk.

CAROL Chopped, broiled, or fried.

STANLEY What are you babbling about Carol?

CAROL The liver. Was it chopped, broiled, or fried?

STANLEY It was raw.

CAROL That's what I do Stanley. I get raw. I take my clothes off and I get raw.

STANLEY I'll never understand that compulsion.

CAROL You don't understand? You? The king of psychobabble.... It's my tight-ass WASP upbringing. My mother never let my father see her nude. If I didn't sit correctly and showed my panties, my mother would make me write, "Don't show your panties," a hundred times.

STANLEY So this is how you compensate for your repressed upbringing. Show the world your ass. Why not write it one hundred times? "I will not show my ass."

CAROL It's my way of expressing my opinion about the current state of my world. My personal perspective. You retreat into solo pleasures. I moon.

STANLEY When you're drunk. Which lately is most of the time.

CAROL My scientific theory is that drinking is psychologically beneficial. It is the ultimate truth serum. It brings out the real person. The real me.

STANLEY I seem to recall an episode or two of this compulsion to exhibit the real you. You took your clothes off and went for a midnight swim dead drunk.

CAROL It was delicious. And you were such a gallant lifeguard.

STANLEY Lucky for you I was still awake and there was a full moon. That other time nearly finished you off. We had to call 911. You wouldn't come in.

CAROL I was having a ball. And those two great cops undressed and rushed in to save me. It was glorious. All of us thrashing around with no clothes on.

STANLEY It was an embarrassment.

CAROL Not to me. Or to those two men. Bookends they were, one white, one black, and me in between...the naked White Goddess.

STANLEY It was a disgusting show of exhibitionism.

CAROL It was a highlight. They'll be telling that story for years. It is the most memorable moment of their small town lives.

STANLEY Especially because it got on TV.

CAROL It was our fifteen minutes of fame. *(She grows pensive and is silent for a long moment.)* I am your cross to bear, aren't I Stanley?

We hope you have enjoyed this free preview of *Dead in the Water*. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the entire script, please email Gargi Shindé at gargi@warrenadler.com.