

# ASHES

## By Carolyn West

Copyright © 1999 by Carolyn West, All rights reserved.

ISBN 1-931000-00-X

**CAUTION:** Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

**RIGHTS RESERVED:** All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

**PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS:** All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

**AUTHOR CREDIT:** All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this play must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this play. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the play. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

**PUBLISHER CREDIT:** Whenever this play is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice:

***Produced by special arrangement with Brooklyn Publishers, LLC***

**COPYING:** Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.

## **ASHES**

by  
Carolyn West

**CAST: one male or female**

**AT RISE:**        ***CHRIS stands on stage alone, tired and dejected.***

CHRIS

I went to the house today, or what used to be the house. There's no point in calling it a house. It certainly isn't that anymore. It's not a building or a structure. It barely counts as a ruin. It's a pile. That's what it is. A pile of charred building materials.

So I went to the pile today. Because the firefighter said we could. "It'll be cooled enough after three days." But it wasn't very cool. I didn't get burned or anything, but there was still heat coming from the ashes. And there was smoke. Not that you could see it, but you could smell it. I could taste it in my mouth and no matter how much I cough, I can't get it out of my lungs. It's in my hair and my clothes.

***(Holds shirt collar up to nose and inhales.)***

This is the smell of my house on fire.

I went because I thought something had to have survived, you know, like a sock or piece of a plate. And there were plenty of things like that. A soggy shirt, scorched silverware. I didn't want any of it. I wanted a memory of my life before my house burned down.

There was a porcelain vase, kind of small. I gave it to my mom for a Christmas present when I was 10. It was in what used to be our living room. Not a mark on it. Timbers had crashed around it and there wasn't a scratch. It wasn't even stained from the smoke. It was like someone had walked up five minutes before and placed it in the rubble, the way you place Easter eggs in the grass for kids to find.

I smashed it against the sidewalk. The bigger pieces I ground into the cement with my shoe. I was so mad at that vase. Furious! How dare it be perfect when everything else was ruined? It was like it was bragging to the world. "Look at me. I can survive anything." I had to prove it wrong.

It was stupid of me to break it, I know. But if I'd kept it, it would have been a reminder of when the house caught fire and we escaped with only our lives. I don't need that kind of memory. No one does. So I broke it. And then I went back to searching for whatever it was I was searching for.

***(Attitude changes.)***

I never really thought of my house as a member of my family. You don't abandon family members because your parents want to live closer to work, or taxes are too high in this area. It is sad when you move out of a house, but you can kind of comfort yourself with the idea someone else will soon move in. They'll hang their pictures on the walls and lay their rugs on the floor. They'll discover all the neat things about the house that you discovered years ago. You're sharing something special with a stranger.

I can't share my house with anyone anymore. No one else will know that if you stick to the right side of the stairs and skip every other step you can make it all the way down to the first floor without anyone hearing you. And no other person will ever discover that if you need a good hiding place, the second shelf from the bottom in the linen closet is big enough and sturdy enough to hold an 8-year-old quite comfortably. And if you put some towels in front of you, no one will ever find you. Of course, there are no stairs or linen closets left, so what's the point?

***Thank you for reading this free excerpt from ASHES by Carolyn West. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please contact us at:***

**Brooklyn Publishers, LLC  
P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406  
Toll Free: 1-888-473-8521 • Fax (319) 368-8011  
[www.brookpub.com](http://www.brookpub.com)**

Do Not Copy