

# An Anthology of Plays

by The VISIONS Playwrights

Manhattan, New York

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T&W was pleased to partner with VISIONS at Selis Manor to present Storytelling: Playwriting, a workshop series in which adults explored classic and contemporary plays and wrote their own plays in response.

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## Introduction

Visions: Playwrights is an anthology of original plays from workshops held in the spring of 2017 at VISIONS/Services for the Visually Impaired, a nonprofit rehabilitation and social service organization in New York. The participants listened to and read classic and contemporary plays from a variety of writers. We wrote original plays inspired by the readings. The workshop was led by Artist-in-Residence Dave Johnson with Samantha Thomson LoCoco and Jessica Paddock.

The playwrights would like to thank Peter Spagnuolo for recording all our sessions and our CD. We would also like to send a special thanks to the entire staff at VISIONS, especially Ms. Lee, Ms. Lewy, Ms. DeShazo, and Mr. Thompson (for printing all our plays every week in Braille). And we are especially grateful to Aroha Philanthropies for making this program possible.

We enjoyed every minute! We hope you will enjoy our plays—read on!

Dave Johnson



**“My Grandma and Me”**  
**by Carmen Becker**

NARRATOR

My grandmother was a quiet, stately woman who never raised her voice, except when she was angry with me. She raised thirteen children and more than ten grandchildren. My grandmother was the matriarch of the family. However, she was never allowed to go out alone. Either one of her children was with her or myself because I was the oldest grandchild. Her main purpose in life was to please her husband, cook meals from scratch (which were always delicious) and, most importantly, make sure that everyone had on clean clothes, just in case you were in an accident.

I loved my grandmother very much but was always disobeying her. However, she protected me and was always on my side, sometimes even when I was wrong.

My friends and I were crazy for Frank Sinatra. So, one day in 1944 we decided to go see him at the Paramount Theatre. We went to school so that everyone would see us. But when the bell rang to go to class we left the building.

Recalling those days, Frankie was before Hollywood and before the Beatles, and the older people could not understand why we were acting like crazy bobby soxers (as we were called in those days).

When Frankie came out on that stage the noise and sounds of endearment to him were so loud, it took a while before he could start singing. But when he did our hearts melted because you felt like he

NARRATOR (*cont'd*)

was personally singing to you. Oh, Frankie! Whenever he sang the song:  
*[sings] Embrace me, my sweet embraceable you. Embrace me, you irreplaceable  
you*

my heart melted again and again.

*[singing] Just one look at you my heart goes tipsy in me.*

*You and you alone bring out the gypsy in me.*

*I love all the many charms about you.*

*Above all I want these arms about you.*

*Don't be a naughty baby, come to papa, come to papa do—  
my sweet embraceable you.*

We had a fantastic time at the Paramount and we were giddy with  
laughter on the way home.

On the Third Avenue “EL,” I lost my right shoe while running between  
trains. You could say that Frankie not only knocked my socks off, but  
knocked my shoe off as well.

CARMEN

Oh crap! What am I going to tell my grandmother?

NARRATOR

When I reached my building, I ran up the stairs, hoping my grandma  
was in the front room so that I could retrieve my other pair of shoes. As I  
opened the back door, there stood my grandmother. I almost jumped out  
of my skin.

GRANDMA

Good afternoon, Carmelita.

CARMEN

*[Trying to hide her right shoeless foot behind the left.]*

Good afternoon, Grandma.

GRANDMA

How was school today?

CARMEN

School was fine.

GRANDMA

Do you have any homework?

CARMEN

We didn't get any today.

GRANDMA

That's very strange. You always have homework for the next day.

CARMEN

Well, Grandma, we didn't get any.

GRANDMA

Are you sure?

CARMEN

Yes, Grandma. I'm sure.

*[Grandma starts looking at her feet.]*

GRANDMA

What's the matter with your leg?

CARMEN

Oh, nothing. I hit it running up the stairs.

GRANDMA

Let me take a look.

CARMEN

That's okay Grandma. It's nothing.

GRANDMA

Sit down and let me take a look.

*[Grandma takes Carmen by the hand and leads her to a chair in the dining room.]*

Where is your shoe? Did it drop off when you were running up the  
stairs?

*[She opens the door and begins to walk down the stairs looking for the shoe and  
of course finds nothing.]*

CARMEN

*[thinking]*

It's all over for me now. I've got to tell her something!

GRANDMA

Carmelita, what is going on with you? Where is your shoe? Don't you know your father pays a lot of money for those coward shoes? I'm going down to the drugstore and calling him right now.

CARMEN

Please, Grandma, please don't tell my father.

GRANDMA

Tell me. Where is your shoe?

CARMEN

I lost my shoe on the train.

GRANDMA

Train—what train? You were supposed to be in school, not on a train!  
What were you doing on a train?

CARMEN

I went with some of my friends to the Paramount Theatre to see Frank Sinatra, and on the way home I lost my shoe on the train.

GRANDMA

*[screaming at the top of her lungs]*

Well, young lady, I'll have you know the truant officer was here because you were not in any of your classes and I was worried to death that something happened to you. This is the last time you are going to disobey me! I'm going to call your father right now.

*[She starts for the door and Carmen grabs her hand, begging her.]*

CARMEN

Please, Grandma. I promise not to disobey you again. Please don't tell my father. I promise, I swear, I promise!

*[Real tears start coming from Carmen's eyes. If Grandma told Carmen's father, Carmen wouldn't be his little princess anymore.]*

GRANDMA

*[holding Carmen]*

Don't cry, Carmelita. You have to understand, when you are not where you are supposed to be, I worry about you. After all, you are a girl and I am responsible for you.

NARRATOR

I got a log of hugs and kisses from Grandma that day. My grandma never told my dad and I got away with disobeying her. My tears helped me get out of trouble. Of course, I disobeyed my grandma again and again.

**“Big Sister Lydia”**  
**by Elizabeth Hernandez**

NARRATOR

I lived on the ground floor of a six-room railroad apartment in East Harlem with my parents, four brothers, and three sisters. My big sister, Lydia, was almost three years older than I, 4’11”, thin, with brown hair and brown eyes, and we looked so much alike that we always dressed as twins. Because she wanted to be tall, you couldn’t get her off her high heels.

She was born on June 24<sup>th</sup>, under the sign of Cancer. I suppose that accounts for her being nurturing—so, among many things she tried to teach us, she was insistent that we sit up straight and that she had to inspect our clothes to make sure they were clean. She also taught us English and how to read and write. Before I began third grade:

LYDIA

You have to learn how to write in handwriting—no more printing.

NARRATOR

Lydia then gathered paper and pencil, and we sat at the kitchen table as she proceeded to teach me how to write in script.

LIZZY

Oh, man! I can’t do this.

LYDIA

Yes, you can. Just try harder. I did it; I learned it—so can you.

NARRATOR

Thank god I had Lydia to teach me, and I finally succeeded. She was firm in her guidance and determination to teach all of us. She could be shy when it concerned personal matters. One momentous occurrence happened when I was around ten or eleven. My sister woke me in the middle of the night.

LYDIA

*[whispering]*

Lizzy! Get up and go with me to the bathroom.

LIZZY

*[moaning]*

Okayyy...

NARRATOR

We walked through a little hallway in the dark, holding hands, through the living room and our brother's room, before reaching the bathroom.

While I waited for her, standing outside the door, I heard her gasp.

LYDIA

Oh my god, Lizzy!

LIZZY

What? What? What happened?

LYDIA

Oh my god, Lizzy! *[pause]* I got my period.

LIZZY

What is that?

LYDIA

Never mind. You'll find out later.

LIZZY

Why can't you tell me now?

LYDIA

No. I'm embarrassed. I'll tell you later.

NARRATOR

I didn't find out more from her later, but because I was so curious, I asked my best friend, Luz, in the schoolyard during recess later in the day, and she explained it to me.

LUZ

You bleed from down there, and it prepares you to be a señorita.

LIZZY

What do you mean? I don't understand.

LUZ

I think it means you can have babies when you grow up and get married.

LIZZY

*[looking satisfied]*

Come on! Let's go and play.

NARRATOR

My next growing pain event happened when I was thirteen. When she wanted my attention, my sister would say my full first name like a drill sergeant.

LYDIA

Elizabeth! It's time you got a bra.

LIZZY

*[putting hands to her chest]*

Who me? Why? I'm not that big.

LYDIA

Yes—you are beginning to show, especially when you wear t-shirts and you jump rope and play hopscotch with your friends.

NARRATOR

My sister got some money from my parents and took me to the store and bought me my first bra. Thank god it was a saleslady, and she was very helpful, which was a relief since this was all strange to me.

SALESLADY

How can I help you girls?

LYDIA

My sister needs a training bra.

LIZZY

*[Embarrassed, looks around, thinking Lydia spoke too loudly.]*

SALESLADY

*[turning to Lizzy]*

What size are you, niña?

LIZZY

*[whispering]*

I don't know.

SALESLADY

Okay, girls, come this way.

NARRATOR

The saleslady showed us many bras of different colors.

LYDIA

Just a training bra in white. Thank you.

NARRATOR

Well, when I left the store, I felt like a grown woman. At the same time, I felt sad, because I was leaving my childhood behind. I miss my big sister, Lydia. I lost her on December 4, 2013. She will always be my big sister.



**“A Shocking Proposal”**  
*or*  
**“Can Forgiveness Be Had?”**  
**by Debbie Zanca**

This is the story of the Mulroneys family, a wealthy family living in a small town in a big house. ALBERT Mulroneys, age 45, tall and muscular. He owns a business—manufacturing and shipping farm equipment. His wife, CHARLOTTE, is 43, a little shorter, and still has a really good figure, despite some middle-age spread. JOANNA is nineteen, and almost as tall as her father. Slimy and wiry, she works out a great deal.

The scene is a sunny morning in June in the Mulroneys’ dining room. Mr. Mulroneys walks in first, followed by the others, and he pours coffee for everyone before everybody sits down.

ALBERT

Good morning, my dear Charlotte. How are you?

CHARLOTTE

I’m fine, thank you, dear. How are you?

ALBERT

I’m well. Joanna, you look sleepy.

JOANNA

Oh, no, Father. I feel great today.

ALBERT

I saw you with that Michael Daugherty last Wednesday, that boy who works in my shipping department.

JOANNA

Yes, we went out for coffee.

ALBERT

Well, I don't want you to see him anymore.

JOANNA

Why not, Father?

ALBERT

*[practically shouts]*

Because a Mulroney does not date blue collar.

CHARLOTTE

*[looks at him, puzzled]*

Darling, you weren't so rich when we fell in love. Do you remember?

ALBERT

Those were different days. This is today. And, you know, Joanna, that I was hoping you would marry my friend, Robert McLane.

JOANNA

Father, you told me about Uncle Bob when I was nine years old. You said I would marry him someday. I thought you were kidding!

ALBERT

*[looking stern]*

No, Joanna, I meant every word. That man has gotten me out of more scrapes in school than I can count.

CHARLOTTE

Do you honestly think our daughter should marry someone who is twice her age and then some?

ALBERT

Don't cross me, either of you. I owe that man my life.

JOANNA

*[Slams down her coffee cup and jumps to her feet.]*

*[indignantly]*

I am not marrying Uncle Bob!

*[She turns on her heels, and walks out of the room.]*

CHARLOTTE

Joanna, dear, please come have something to eat.

*[Joanna barely hears her.]*

*Two weeks later, we see Joanna and Charlotte in the back of a black limousine. They're dressed in white cocktail dresses carrying small bouquets of flowers. They're on their way to Town Hall. In the front, in a beige suit, sits Michael, also slim and handsome, age 22. Next to him sits the chauffer, Mitch. He's a guy in his 30s, kind of heavysset.*

*When they approach Town Hall, they get out of the car, and who should be coming down the steps but Bob McLane himself, with a beautiful, young woman on his arm.*

BOB

*[jovially]*

Hi, everybody! This is my new wife, Gabriella Venero.

*Gabriella is short and beautifully dressed, long black hair, and green eyes.*

GABRIELLA

*[with a slight Italian accent]*

Hello, it's a pleasure to meet all of you.

*They all introduce each other in kind and everybody heads back home.*

*A week later, Albert is in his home office. It's about 5 AM, and he's looking at an email he has received from Bob McLane.*

*[This is to be read in Bob's voice.]*

Dear Al, I guess this is best time for me to tell you, so here goes. I can't marry your daughter for a very good reason: because she's *my* daughter. A couple of years after you got married, you were away, and Charlotte was by herself. We got together for one night, and one night only. I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me. I really didn't want this to have to come out, but I guess now is as good a time as any.

*Poor Albert! Stunned, he looks at the document on the screen. Four scenarios go through his mind: Charlotte was sleeping in the bedroom; he could go in and*

*strangle her, then shoot himself with the revolver in his dresser drawer; or, he could find Bob and Gabriella, shoot them and shoot himself; or, he could find Joanna and Michael, shoot them, then shoot himself. The fourth scenario: go speak to Charlotte in a reasonable manner, things will work out.*

ALBERT

*[Prints out the email and goes into the bedroom.]*

Charlotte, darling, wake up, I need to talk to you.

CHARLOTTE

Do you realize it's 5 AM?

ALBERT

I know, but this is important.

*[Switches on the lamp and hands her the paper.]*

CHARLOTTE

*[after a moment, she cries out]*

Oh, Albert! I never wanted you to find this out. Joanna looked so much like you growing up that I didn't think there would be a problem. Can you ever forgive me?

ALBERT

Yes, my darling. We all make mistakes.

*[The urgency in her voice and the love in her eyes made him bend down and kiss her tenderly.]*

ALBERT (*cont'd*)

Go back to sleep, my love. We'll talk about this later.

*Albert goes back into his office, and dashes out emails to Joanna and Michael and Robert and Gabriella, saying that he recognizes the truth and that all is forgiven.*

**“When I Was Seven”  
by Kitty Gormley**

When I was 7, I’ll never forget this, my father said to me, “You know, Kitty, today’s your birthday, you’re seven. You’re gonna take piano lessons.”

And I said, “But I don’t wanna.”

And he said, “I didn’t ask.”

So, I took my lessons and learned Chopin’s Polonaise. I played it at recital, and I felt proud that I accomplished something even though I still didn’t care for it.

When people asked if I liked piano, I’d say, “Not really, but I can play.”



**“When I Was Fourteen”**  
**by Kitty Gormley**

When I was 14, we wore bobby socks, I was a Frank Sinatra fan. I pestered my brothers to take me to the Paramount. We heard Frankie sing and I swooned, “Frankie!” And I told my brothers I wanted to meet him, and they said, “Stop it, you’re embarrassing me.”

I wanted to get closer, and I said, “But they can see, I can’t see!” I never used my blindness but that time I did. And when most of the people left, someone came out, and he must have motioned to my brother, and we went over, and I felt a hand on my shoulder, then Frankie sang to me:

“I love all the many charms about you.”

I almost fainted.

I dropped Frankie, though, when I became a baseball fan.



**“My Good, American Mom”**  
**by Kitty Gormley**

My mom was a beautiful lady. She had brown hair and beautiful brown eyes. She was very soft spoken. She never raised her voice. If anyone in the family were arguing, she would go around and close all the windows. My mom would try to help anyone she could when they needed it. She had a job cleaning houses and all the people she worked for really loved her. My mom was born in Greece, and she was very happy when she became an American citizen. My brother and I went with her.

She said to me, after she received them: “Kitty, I’m America now.”

I said, “Yes, Mom, you are.”



**“When I Was Seven”**  
**by Donna Madnick**

NARRATOR

My parents, with three little girls, moved into a large white house in Punta Brava, a small town outside of Havana, Cuba. The front of the house had four large pillars, making it look majestic. Behind the front, there were open hallways allowing for the tropical air to move freely.

The bedrooms, kitchen, dining, and living-room areas were enclosed with walls. The windows were open with designed white iron gates. In the big backyard, there were chickens in a penned-off area and a built-in, stone-walled swimming pool full of hundreds of squirming tadpoles. With time, I got used to the many frogs, usually green or gray in color.

As the oldest child, I had my own bedroom at the back of the house. The room was gigantic. I had to sleep with mosquito netting to keep all the flying insects from biting me. My mother would come in, kiss me goodnight, and take my eyeglasses away and place them on some safe place far from my little reach. I would imagine seeing all sorts of monsters on the walls. Was that a spider crawling up and down the wall? Is that a flying bird or bat flapping their wings toward the moonlight? If I had to pee before falling asleep, I had to plot my journey, making it back to bed alive. Should I run like a demon or go VERY VERY slow, sneaking out without any notice? I chose the latter, thinking any noise from me would make matters worse.

NARRATOR (*cont'd*)

As I crept across the room, I thought I heard a noise on one of the white window gates. With curiosity, forgetting my plan of escape, I headed for the noise. Everything was so fuzzy without my glasses, so I put my face up high and very close to the gate. I shrieked when a white albino frog with beady red eyes hopped on my nightgown.

DONNA

Ahhhhh!!

NARRATOR

As I turned to make a mad dash out the door out of fright, I heard a friendly voice.

SEÑOR BLANCO

Wait, please don't go. I didn't mean to scare you, but your eyes on your face got too close, so I had to hope off my perch.

DONNA

Are you talking to me?

*[She stooped down to take a look, noting that the albino frog was indeed talking to her, because he nodded his head.]*

You're not like the other frogs around here. You blend in with the gate but your beady red eyes kept moving.

*[Donna steps closer to get a better look.]*

## SEÑOR BLANCO

Let's start over. My name is Fernando Blanco, and I want to welcome you and your family to this house. I have lived here as part of this room for many years. I was thrilled when you moved in. I catch many bugs to eat, catching them by surprise. I am bored here when there is no one to talk to. The other frogs stay away from me because I'm not like them. Will you stay?

## DONNA

*[Donna blinks her eyes and pinches her arm to see if this is really happening.]*

Well, my name is Donna G and I am certainly new here. This is the first time having my own room all by myself. I don't know whether the creatures I see when I go to bed are real or not, or if they will eat ME for a snack! Sometimes I hide under my covers but soon I get too hot. I so want to stay here, but what am I going to do?

## SEÑOR BLANCO

Don't worry. I am the watch keeper of this room, earning the respect of all creatures who come and go. If you agree to stay, I will keep you safe.

## NARRATOR

Señor Blanco told me all about the visitors who have their own eating habits. Many of them were colorful and in different sizes and shapes. In time, I got used to the busy-ness of most nights before falling asleep. I too looked forward to talking with Señor Blanco, from whom I learned that there are good surprises when one stays long enough to see them.



**“By the Light of the Moon”**  
**by Janet Seth**

Setting: The one-room school perched high on the hill above the reservoir. Two little boys race out of the school.

*[Carl and Buddy had gulped down their thick bread slices of lunch and run from swinging to ball throwing. It was hard to sit still for afternoon lessons. Finally, they could leave. They ran to unhitch their reddish old horse and lead him to the mounting stump. First, Carl climbed onto the old dead stump and scrambled onto Copper's back. Then it was Buddy's turn to climb up.]*

CARL

I'm glad you can come with me to get the cows, Buddy. It makes the time go faster when someone else is with me.

BUDDY

I don't like to be out in those trees by the creek when it's getting dark. The bugs are always biting, and you can't see if there's a snake or raccoon in the shadows.

CARL

Yes, as it gets darker there seem to be scary monsters lurking behind every tree.

BUDDY

When the moon is up there is more light, and we can find the cows more easily, but it seems spookier. The hair on the nape of my neck stands at attention.

CARL

It is still quite light. Maybe we can hurry and get back home before dark.

BUDDY

Let's hurry.

*[They guide Copper around and start down the dirt road to Carl's house at a brisk pace. After twenty minutes they spot Carl's dog, Duke, waiting for them by the road. He dances and yaps in happy greeting.]*

CARL

Hello, Duke. Come on with us to get the cows.

*[They pass the lane leading to the house and stay on the road.]*

BUDDY

We're coming to old man Dawe's place. He died two weeks ago. He was really mean. I'm glad we don't have to go near his house. It's so dark and gloomy, it's probably haunted.

CARL

Yeah, it sure could be.

*[The boys have passed a curve in the road. We see a grassy meadow with a creek flowing through the middle. Trees and brush are on both sides of the water. Low hills surround the meadow, blocking the late afternoon light.]*

CARL

Duke, get those cows moving.

BUDDY

Carl, let's get behind them.

CARL

Duke's doing a good job; he starts with one and his barking makes the others pay attention and start to move.

*[Carl whistles loudly and Buddy shouts. They are so focused on getting the cows moving down the road that they haven't noticed that it is dark. Suddenly, they hear rustling in the brush. They are petrified with fear. They sneak a look over their shoulders. Nothing. They still hear that quiet rustling near the creek. When they reach the safety of the road they risk a real look and see a deer drinking. They giggle with relief; no monster.]*

BUDDY

I wasn't scared of that old deer.

CARL

I wish I'd had my gun. We would enjoy eating that deer meat.

BUDDY

Our dads wouldn't let us take our guns alone.

CARL

Maybe not, but that meat would be good. That makes me think; tomorrow is Saturday, and there is no school. I will go to the barn and catch pigeons. My mother will make a pie with them.

*[The moon is coming up. There will be light on the road when they pass the Dawe's place. They will have the cows at their barn ready to milk.]*

**“The Big Fight”**  
**by Yvonne Whitehurst**

NARRATOR

I was born a very sick child in and out of the hospital and many clinic appointments. My mother and grandmother took good care of me. They became overprotective of me. As far back as I can remember my mother would take me to a big building, and when I saw people in white, I became frightened. My mom would always speak and answer for me when the doctor asked me how I was feeling. In my mind I wanted to say: *I'm fine and why do I have to come here?* But that would not stop them from poking and sticking me with needles. By my mother talking for me and no one listening to me, my fear of people started. I also was afraid of my sister because she was very smart and outgoing and seemed to be Mommy's favorite. Whenever Mommy and I would get home from the doctor's she would say:

COOKIE

So, what's wrong with you now?

NARRATOR

In my mind I said, *nothing, just wait till you go.* Around age eight, my teacher would walk around the classroom while the students were doing their lessons, checking to see how you were doing. When she got to me and saw my paper, if it was good I got a star and she would write a note to my mother. I was happy for that star because Mommy would tell everybody about it. One day, I did not care about doing any classroom work. I started doodling on my paper and the teacher saw this and took my paper. I began doing the same thing

NARRATOR (*cont'd*)

again, and then she asked me if I wanted a crayon and I said, *yes*. That day I got a star for the drawing and took it home. My mother was so proud of the picture she put it on the wall and asked me if I could draw a cat, so I did. Well, my sister saw the picture and got me drawing things for her book reports. I really got tired of drawing pictures for my sister, Cookie, because she never would help me with my homework. Instead, she'd laugh at me when Mommy would make me do extra reading or spelling words.

Well, let me tell you about the day my sister and I had a big fight. We were in the bedroom. Cookie was doing her homework and I was playing with my doll when I heard:

COOKIE

Yvonne, shut up and be quiet. Can't you see I'm doing my lesson?

YVONNE

I'm not making any noise.

COOKIE

Yes, you are! Stop swinging your legs. It gets on my nerves.

YVONNE

You're crazy.

COOKIE

If you don't stop, I'll tell Mommy.

YVONNE

So, tell then.

NARRATOR

After about 10 minutes, Cookie started yelling and screaming and throwing things at me.

COOKIE

You, dumb crackbrain shut up!

YVONNE

You, ugly-face stinky!

NARRATOR

Then she hit me with the pillow and called me more names. I tried to hit her back but I fell down, and we rolled on the floor kicking and punching each other. Then I heard my mommy yell.

MOMMY

Stop! Stop! Why are you all fighting?

YVONNE

Cookie hit me first, and I didn't do anything.

COOKIE

Cry baby! I told her to be quiet so that I could do my lesson.

MOMMY

Yvonne, you know how Cookie gets when she studies.

YVONNE

But Mommy, it's not fair! She mad at me because I won't draw any more pictures for her reports and she never helps me.

MOMMY

Cookie, you are wrong for not helping your sister. And Yvonne, when Cookie is studying, go in the kitchen or my room. I do not want you girls fighting. The next time you both will be punished.

**“A New York Job”**  
**by Antoinette Harvey**

*[The first scene takes place in Ann’s home. A friend, Susan, phoned to ask about Ann’s employment history.]*

ANN

*[short, plump, black, and old]*

The first job was the result of a very generous offer my brother-in-law presented to me. He invited me to come to New York to live, because the employment opportunities were more diverse and plentiful for the blind.

He and my sister offered me room and board until I was established. I hesitated about living with newlyweds, even for a few weeks. Despite my uneasiness, I accepted their offer. It was suggested to me to apply for services at an agency my brother-in-law was familiar with; I did! Within a few months, I was employed. The job was with a man who was visually impaired and owned his own film company. The firm was the fruit of his creativity in his hour of need.

SUSAN

*[Tall, slim, long brown hair. Her complexion is creamy. Her face is heart-shaped.]*

Hold it! Explain. You know, details details!

ANN

Oh, he wasn’t able to get help from the agencies for the blind. He had to swim or sink! He contacted his late father’s business associates and clients. He diligently networked. He was successful. He wasn’t doing

ANN (*cont'd*)

it to splurge. He needed machines. He stripped down two sewing machines and made adaptations until he'd created machines he could use in his new business. My job counselor accompanied me to the film company for the interview. Luis was thorough and a bit rough.

LUIS

*[Tall, slim, handsome Hispanic male, completing his comments, ushers her to a seating area.]*

We will both sit for this interview. Your chair is directly to your right. Have you ever worked with film? If so, where?

ANN

Yes. I worked in a hospital where I developed X-ray films. The job lasted approximately one month.

LUIS

What happened?

ANN

It was a political situation. Another blind person worked the position before I came. He exposed several drawers of new film by exposing it to light. He had no light perception. They accused him of touching the female workers inappropriately, because he ran his fingers lightly along their knees in order to determine where there was an empty seat; he didn't wish to sit on any of them.

LUIS

How did you locate an empty seat?

ANN

Oh, I had no difficulty finding an empty seat because I had some sight left at that time.

LUIS

What kind of problems did you encounter?

ANN

My major difficulty was rooted in the fact that the workers in the X-ray department did not want blacks in their department. Marvin, my placement counselor, was given this information. Despite this fact, he still demanded me to take the position. I told him I found this situation inappropriate. His response was that he considered me lazy and had no desire to support myself.

LUIS

Do you speak Spanish?

ANN

No, Sir.

*[to Susan]*

Sue, after this part of the interview, I was taken to the darkroom, where I was given a demonstration of my job tasks. Then, I had to show him I could perform the tasks. I was mortified! The sequence required intense and accurate coordination. He evaluated my finished products and stated that I had the ability to successfully execute the tasks. He gave me a starting date, which was a week later. The hours were 8 to 5 pm.

ANN (*cont'd*)

*[the darkroom, a week later]*

Sue, he acted with expertise, courtesy, and humanity. After showing me where everything was located, and reviewing all necessary procedures, he sat down and observed me while he talked. Part of the time he shared information I needed to know in order to function on the job. And sometimes, he answered the questions I posed.

LUIS

This position became available after I attempted to contact the woman who had the job for several years. She left without telling me she had no plans to return. Her work was outstanding, despite her childishness.

I have to warn you that this job won't be easy. You may be very unhappy because of the conditions here. I will do all that I can to smooth things over so that you will have a running chance. I will discuss the negatives and the things that may be a plus for you. Many of these conditions can be handled successfully. (*pause*) If you have developed solid coping techniques. I focus on hiring females who have come to our country legally. What you may find impossible to adjust to is the fact that none of these workers speak English. I will help you with this problem as much as I can without endangering my workplace or my relationship with my primary employees.

WORKER

Ellas piden un refresco. Y, yo pido huevos fritos.

*[He suddenly stands up and moves towards the other room where the counting, stamping, packing, stapling, and wrapping is going on.]*

SUSAN

So, tell me more about the adjustment to the language problem,

ANN

Actually, it was not an adjustment process; it turned out to be a broadening adventure. I started with a normal morning greeting, "Buenos días," which is "good morning." (*pause to give into hearty laughter*) When I first came to the film work, all I knew were some sentences I'd learned from a record: "El Presidente es muy inteligente. El presidente es estúpido..." [*They both giggle.*]

I gradually added, "Cómo está usted?" "How are you? "Te veo", which means, "I see you." I learned the color of the tapes and what films they required. I learned how to order food and drinks. "Yo quiero cafe au lait y huevos frito."

SUSAN

I am sincerely proud of you for making butter out of cream. Did Luis ever become friendly with you?

ANN

Well, I would say that. It was the result of his dedication of spending an hour each day speaking English to me. We really got to know each other.

We discussed ideas, societal concepts of disability, families, cultures, education, politics, personality disorders, blindness, economics, and the requirements of the job.

SUSAN

What were they?

ANN

He was a bit pedantic with his information that day. He said that he was a businessman first; he was concerned about profits. In order to achieve his goal, the film rollers—those who worked in the darkroom—had to produce between 850 and 1200 daily. He explained that it takes months to develop such skills. He assured me that I needn't concern myself with these numbers for several months. He said, and truthfully, he is an expert in this field, that if I produced five per day the first week that would be a miracle. *[They laugh.]* There was a P.S. to this speech. He constantly evaluated my work during these sessions. When it wasn't up to par, he made me do it over. I sincerely grew to respect and like the man. I found him to be kind, brilliant, an excellent businessman, a good employer, and a great person!

SUSAN

Did you learn to carry your weight?

ANN

I did. I was able to produce 1200 rolls a day. Sometimes a few more. The woman that left returned for a short time. Luis claimed it was to help me and herself. She claimed to be married; he said she was saving for her wedding. She produced 2,000 rolls each day.

SUSAN

Phew! How long did you stay with the job?

ANN

Three years. I left then to go to a federal position. He and I kept in touch for twenty years. We stopped communicating after his wife died and he had a stroke.

SUSAN

You don't have to tell me about your degrees and your professional work. We met just after you earned your doctorate. I presume we are still going to have supper together tomorrow night?

ANN

Only if you promise not to speak Spanish!

*[They both enjoy the joke immensely!]*



**“My Big Sister, Jo-Ane”  
by Elsie Mae Smith**

*[knock on door]*

ELSIE  
Jo-Ane?

JO-ANE  
Yes, baby?

ELSIE  
Somebody’s at the door.

JO-ANE  
Okay, I’m comin’.

ELSIE  
Who is it?

JAPO  
It’s Japo, Elsie.

ELSIE  
Japo!

JO-ANE

Okay.

*[Jo-Ane opens the door.]*

Hey, Japo.

JAPO

Hey, Jo. Hey, Elsie, what you doin' home from school?

ELSIE

I missed my Access-a-Ride and there ain't nobody here to take me downstairs.

JAPO

Jo-Ane coulda take you.

ELSIE

Jo doesn't want to leave the children upstairs by themselves. And I don't know how to work the elevator from the 15th floor.

JAPO

Well, George and Leroy be here tomorrow.

ELSIE

I won't be able to go tomorrow 'cause I have an eye appointment.

JAPO

Okay, but they'll be here tomorrow.

ELSIE

But I'm going Wednesday.

JO-ANE

Don't get on her nerves. She got enough to deal with. Leave her alone. I wish all y'all stop botherin' her and getting on her nerves. Y'all don't want to pluck my nerves.

ELSIE

But Jo-Ane, I'm going in the room.

JO-ANE

No, baby, you don't have to go nowhere. This is your living room as well as anybody else's. You don't let nobody run you from nowhere.

ELSIE

But I am having a problem.

JO-ANE

Where? At the school.

ELSIE

Yes.

JO-ANE

With whom?

ELSIE

This girl in my drumming class. And Blah-blah-blah, this guy, messing with me.

JO-ANE

What you mean he messing with you? You tell Penny?

ELSIE

I tell Penny, but she didn't say nothing to them yet.

JO-ANE

Okay. Okay. Don't worry. I'm gonna handle this.

ELSIE

But that's not the bad thing though, Jo-Ane.

JO-ANE

What's the problem?

ELSIE

His sister, Blah-blah.

JO-ANE

And what she doing?

ELSIE

She called Penny and told Penny that I'm trying to lure her brother in his room, but he was the one trying to lure me in the room. She come up to me and told me I better not tell Penny what he said to me.

JO-ANE

Okay. What's Blah-blah's number?

ELSIE

718-blah blah blah-blah blah blah blah.

JO-ANE

Okay. Thank you. I'm gonna handle this this afternoon. They say anything else to you?

ELSIE

They just giving me a hard time in the class.

JO-ANE

I'm about to get on somebody's nerves. They gonna be sorry they mess with me. Okay. Did you eat already?

ELSIE

Yeah, but I'm not hungry, Jo-Ane.

JAPO

Elsie, what you want to do? You want me and George to come—

JO-ANE

Japo, Japo, let me handle this. I don't need you goin' up there, actin' a fool. Elsie don't need this. Between me and Penny, we'll handle this.

*[to Elsie]*

If anything else goes wrong, you let me know, okay?

ELSIE

Okay.

JO-ANE

You go on and get yourself together, okay?

ELSIE

Okay.

JO-ANE

You have a ride coming?

ELSIE

Yes.

JO-ANE

Okay, put that down. Get ready, we goin' downstairs. C'mon, Elsie, I'll take you downstairs.

ELSIE

Thank you Jo-Ane.

JO-ANE

You're welcome, baby. Don't let anybody get on your nerves.

**“Time Span Dreaming”**  
**by Lyda Schoenfeld**

Characters:

Lyda: a totally blind senior citizen.

Rosina Garver: a totally blind teenager in spirit form.

Regina: an antique music box.

The scene takes place in a small, plainly furnished room, whose prominent piece of furniture is a decorative wooden cabinet displaying an antique music box.

Lyda bends from a sitting position in front of the cabinet to open the door to where the music box records are kept. Pulling out a record, she opens the music box lid, places the record in position and fastens the arm down to keep the record in place, winds the music box moves the lever to the right and listens intently as the music plays. She hums softly to the music while rain begins to fall. Suddenly, a storm surges out of nowhere, with pelting rain and loud claps of thunder.

LYDA

*[speaking loudly, pretending not to be startled]*

Another summer storm, I guess. Well, I'll try and relax. The music will chase it away for me.

*[She resumes humming, more loudly this time, gradually noticing the undertone of an accompanying hum in a voice similar to hers. She rises nervously.]*

LYDA (*cont'd*)

What is that other humming sound? I know there's nobody else here.  
This storm is really spooking me. I better get a grip on myself.

*[She concentrates on the music again and hums louder, but so does the accompanying undertone voice. The storm grows still louder and more insistent, almost drowning out the music.]*

Oh, drat! Might as well turn it off. I can't hear it right with all this racket, anyhow. So much for chasing away the storm. And what's with this humming I'm hearing that isn't coming from me?

*[She turns to pull the lever back to the off position but stays her hand as the air surrounding the music box seems charged with unusual energy from the lightning. The lightning flashes around the music box and silhouettes the figure of a teenage girl who strangely resembles Lyda in her younger years. Lyda whirls around in fright after an unusually loud thunderclap.]*

I feel a peculiar presence here!

*[She reaches again to pull the music box lever so the record will stop turning.]*

ROSINA

*[In a voice, similar to Lyda's, but younger-sounding.]*

I beg you not to stop this beautiful music. Let the music slow down and run its course.

LYDA

*[Falling back into an almost horizontal position, shoulders slumped on the back of her chair.]*

Were you doing that eerie humming with me?

ROSINA

Yes, but I never meant it for to be eerie. I was merely humming along with you and enjoying the music.

LYDA

*[sitting up in a straighter position]*

I thought I was losing my mind! Who are you?

ROSINA

You know who I am. You don't realize it, but I am inside you. I am the part of you that would have been alive, as you, if you had lived during the nineteenth century.

*[The music box slowly winds down and stops. The storm gradually fades, leaving a steady rain falling. The heightened electrical energy is still very present.]*

You see, I materialized through the energy created by the storm, so I could show you something of the century you love so much.

LYDA

*[Sitting bolt upright]*

This is downright bizarre! It's true, the nineteenth is my favorite century, but this is—I mean, the year is 2017.

ROSINA

*[softly contradicting]*

The year is 1897.

*[more firmly]*

Far be it from me to tell you a tall tale.

LYDA

*[protesting in her disbelief]*

I did the math, and that's a hundred and twenty years ago! My grandmother was a girl then.

ROSINA

Time and music are fluid bridges we are allowed to cross every once in a while.

*[turning toward the music box]*

This exquisite music box has survived for all those long years. I'm also unable to see, but I know it is a Regina from the Regina Music Box Company. And what a wonderful selection you chose to play!

LYDA

*[in a calmer tone]*

It's "Intermezzo" from the opera CAVALERIA RUSTICANA by Mascagne.

ROSINA

I know. This Regina music box and all the records were mine.

*[The record resumes playing at normal speed automatically by itself.]*

LYDA

*[throwing up her hands in surrender to the moment]*

This whole episode is getting weirder by the minute! How is she playing, when I didn't even wind her up again?

ROSINA

The overabundance of energy in this room caused that to happen. We have moved a hundred and twenty years across the centuries. I materialized to draw you back to my time.

LYDA

*[her tone incredulous]*

You really lived back in 1897?

ROSINA

My name is Rosina Garver. I was born in 1881. I was blinded as a child by a terrible lightning strike. I went to the Belton School for the Blind near Mount Vernon.

LYDA

I never heard of that school.

ROSINA

That is because it was absorbed by a larger school a few years after I graduated.

LYDA

What did you do after that?

ROSINA

I sang at people's parties and in church choirs, and I worked as a switchboard operator.

LYDA

*[with a cynical tone]*

I hate being the bearer of bad tidings, but switchboard operators have been phased out by robo calls from computers. There goes the human touch, right out the window.

*[Pause. She becomes pensive.]*

How long was your life?

ROSINA  
I died in 1950.

LYDA  
*[with a slight shiver]*  
I was born in 1950.

ROSINA  
That's when I came inside you and prepared you for your affinity with  
my century.

*[Rosina moves closer to Regina and closes her lid.]*

LYDA  
*[hearing the sound]*  
Regina's lid shut, and I didn't close it. Did you close it, Rosina?

ROSINA  
Yes, dear, I did.  
*[She touches Lyda's cheek and strokes her hair.]*  
And you just felt me touch you. I wanted to prove to you that I am really  
inside you as a spirit and materialized so I could manifest myself to you  
and help you share our century.

LYDA  
I always had a strong feeling there was somebody inside me waiting and  
wanting to come out, and here you are! And I'm now where we both  
think I should be. But am I really in your century? I mean, this room still  
feels like my room.

ROSINA  
It is your room. Or rather, your room is an exact replica of my room as a  
sixteen-year-old girl. This really is the year 1897, and we are in my room.  
We are all here—you and I, and Regina.

LYDA

I have a strong feeling we are in New York City—most likely Manhattan.

ROSINA

Your feeling is not mistaken.

LYDA

Just where are we in Manhattan of 1897?

ROSINA

Oh, we are only a few blocks north of Washington Square.

LYDA

*[her voice bright with recognition]*

This city always draws me to itself. It's just brimming with atmosphere here—what with the crowds of people gathering and enjoying themselves in various ways, accompanied by the eclectic sounds of live music in the park, especially on Sunday afternoons.

ROSINA

*[eagerly warming to the subject]*

The Square is full of literary and artistic influences. Did you know that it was named after Washington Irving?

LYDA

No, but I'm not surprised. Was Mr. Irving named after George Washington?

ROSINA

So, the story goes.

LYDA

Rip Van Winkle is one of my favorite characters.

ROSINA

*[mischievously]*

Do we dare to surmise Rip Van Winkle slept here?

*[They both laugh.]*

LYDA

Obviously, your sense of humor has lost nothing in translation to Eternity.

ROSINA

*[with gentle conviction]*

Laughter is truly forever. More seriously, though, Henry James wrote a short novel with the Square's name for its title, where it describes it as quiet and countrified. It must have undergone quite a transformation over the centuries. I can only imagine its characteristics from the perspective of 2017.

LYDA

2017 says it's got great vibes —

*[correcting herself]*

In other words, The Square is vibrant with a uniquely terrific energy.

ROSINA

*[with an ironic tone]*

It seems nothing changes but the date and the language.

*[thoughtful silence]*

This city has gone through several lifetimes of changes and is destined to destroy and renew and enlarge itself so long as the world keeps turning.

LYDA

*[with admiration]*

Such a wise prophet you are!

LYDA (*cont'd*)

*[Her voice expansive with insight.]*

I realize that the Square, like the city, has an identity and a life all its own. I remember reading that novel. I like the way Mr. James thinks of Washington Square as having a kind of personality and cherishes it as an important part of his early life. And that is exactly the way I regard Regina.

ROSINA

*[leaning toward Regina]*

And that is as it should be.

LYDA

*[coming to stand beside Rosina]*

Earlier you told me Regina was yours.

ROSINA

*[sighing]*

Well, my heart made her mine. She was given to the Belton School by a benefactor. *[a quiver in her voice]* Oh, how I hated so to part from her when I left there!

LYDA

*[extending her hand in spontaneous affection]*

Now she's yours and mine together. All three of us will share in our century.

*[wiping her hand over her face]*

Could the window be open? Is it raining in here? *[pause]* Or are you crying real tears, Rosina?

ROSINA

Our guess was right on the third try.

*[winding Regina for her next playing]*

How did Regina become yours, Lyda?

LYDA

My father knew someone who gave her to me when I was a child.  
*[laughing]* At first, I had to stand on a chair to put the records on — that's  
how small I was then.

*[sitting, becoming thoughtful]*

It seems like such a lifetime ago now, except now I've come back to  
where Regina first came to be.

ROSINA

*[smiling]*

And what a lovely gift she is for us both!

*[turning toward Lyda]*

Was she the spark that kindled your love for this century?

LYDA

Yes. And later, I was in a play about Helen Keller. I played a student at  
the Perkins School for the Blind, where Annie Sullivan attended before  
she left to be Helen's teacher. And that's when I really fell in love with  
the nineteenth century because I wore high-top shoes with buttons.

ROSINA

*[excitedly]*

And so, you learned to use a buttonhook!

LYDA

*[laughing]*

Absolutely. But just as I got really good at button hooking my shoes, I  
outgrew them because the costumers made the size too small, and my  
feet were growing too fast for me to wear them much longer. I was so  
disappointed to have to wear ordinary laces again. Using that  
buttonhook really bonded me with my character in the play.

LYDA (*cont'd*)

*[with a note of anger and regret]*

It's a shame I wasn't allowed to keep that souvenir of my participation  
and connection with this period in history.

*[drawing closer to Rosina]*

When you were a student, did you wear the long dress and the cap  
pinned to your hair?

ROSINA

I am wearing them now.

LYDA

May I touch the clothes?

ROSINA

*[reaching out to guide Lyda's hand]*

Certainly, you may.

LYDA

*[delicately fingering the dress and cap]*

They are just as I remembered wearing them.

*[She steps back a few paces.]*

Are you wearing shoes?

ROSINA

*[quietly]*

No. I defy gravity now. I'm lighter than air.

*[Lyda hears a sound outside and turns toward it.]*

LYDA

That sounds like a horse and carriage passing.

ROSINA  
Indeed, it is.

LYDA  
And there's a newsboy selling newspapers, and a fruit vendor.

ROSINA  
*[patting Lyda's shoulder]*  
You are exactly right.

LYDA  
*[growing wistful]*  
I wish I could stay right here with you in 1897. I feel as though the world is spinning right off its axis in 2017. Everything moves so fast and out of control, and it's all so anonymous and pointless there. And the more so-called connection and communication we achieve, the less truly connected we find ourselves.

*[Rosina moves solely to the center of the room. The energy crackles with increased static charge from powerful lightning flashes.]*

ROSINA  
*[with deep regret]*  
I'm sorry, dear. You must return to your own time and your own room, and I must take my leave now. But I promise to come to you again soon. And remember, I am always deep inside your heart and mind. Farewell for now.

*[Crashing thunder, fierce lighting, then silence. Lyda finds herself sitting once again in front of Regina's cabinet.]*

LYDA

*[struggling to readjust herself to returning to modern time]*

I still can't believe what just happened! It couldn't have been a dream. It  
was way too real!

*[As she stretches her legs, she feels something against her foot. Bending to the floor she finds a buttonhook next to Regina's cabinet. She picks it up, holds it lovingly for a moment, then secures it under her chair cushion for safekeeping.]*

LYDA (cont'd)

*[ecstatically]*

Now I have my buttonhook for keeps! And I'm sure Rosina will keep her promise to return for me again. I'll so look forward to revisiting the century I truly love, with its slower pace and simpler lifestyles *[gritting her teeth]*—and much less multitasking!

*[She stands resolutely.]*

Whether I experience this or dream it or both, nothing else matters, as long as I remain part of it!

*[placing her hand on Regina's lid]*

Regina, from now on you will be known to me as Regina-Rosina, to honor our nineteenth-century journey home.

*[She opens the lid, verifies Regina to be in working order, inserts another record, and moves the lever to the right. Regina begins to play as the curtain falls.]*

THE END



**“A Modern Day Whodunit”  
by Megan Rafferty**

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

MARTINA Fernandez, DETECTIVE.

SERINA Russo-Ferrari, DETECTIVE

JOSLIN Carter, DETECTIVE.

JENNA Lansbury, the waitress at the La Trattoria Restaurant.

CHARACTER'S SPEAKING OFF STAGE:

Keshia Winfrey: landlord's secretary, Joslin's informant.

Larry Olsen: the delivery boy.

This psychological thriller takes place in a quiet, upscale senior complex, tucked away in the suburbs of Stanford, Connecticut. Untouched by crime, this close-knit community of residents of The Stanford housing complex begins to experience a sudden rash of robberies. Three women retired from law enforcement, unite to form their own detective agency, to solve these crimes.

*[Martina enters the restaurant through a discreet entrance leading to a secluded dining area set aside on Friday evenings for herself, Serina, and Joslin.*

*“Take Me Back to Sorrento” plays softly in the background as Martina enters the room, and seats herself next to Serina.]*

SERINA

Jenna, please bring us each a glass of port.

MARTINA

*[answering her phone]*

Hi, Jos. What's up?

JOS

I'm running a little late.

MARTINA

No problem. When you arrive, park in the two-car garage across the way. Come in through the restaurant's side entrance to the private dining area at the top of the stairs. Serina and I will be waiting for you.

*[Martina hangs up. Jenna returns.]*

JENNA

Here's your port, ladies.

*[Jenna then moves out of view. One song follows another, as Serina and Martina become lost in their thoughts, while waiting for Jos to arrive.]*

*[Jos rushes in.]*

JOS

I'm sorry I couldn't get here sooner, I had to take care of some business regarding my suspect.

SERINA

That's OK, Jos, I understand. I'm just glad nothing happened to you on the way here, since you were 45 minutes late in joining us.

*[Serina introduces Jos to their private waitress, Jenna; they exchange a warm greeting before speaking.]*

JENNA

Hi, Jos, welcome. It's a pleasure to meet you.

JOS

Hi Jenna, The pleasure's all mine, I'm sure.

SERINA

Jos is a personal friend of ours, whom you'll be seeing often.

JENNA

Jos, what will you have?

JOS

I'd like a healthy portion of your traditional meatballs and spaghetti, please.

JENNA

Anything to drink with your meal?

JOS

Yes, I'll have a glass of port with my meal, and one now as well.

JENNA

And what would you like, Serina?

SERINA

I'll have filet mignon, and please, serve it with your finest wine.

JENNA

Ok, Martina, what are you having this evening?

MARTINA

Chicken Parmesan with whole-wheat spaghetti, smothered in mozzarella and your finest sauce. Oh, and please bring an extra jar of parmesan cheese, with a glass of port.

JENNA

You got it.

*[Jenna leaves.]*

JOS

I think I'll step out for a smoke.

*[She exits.]*

MARTINA

*[noticing a thoughtful look on Serina's face]*

What's wrong, love? Why do you look so sad? Listen, Martina, to what's playing in the background — "Spanish Eyes" by Al Martino. I remember that very special night, when you held me in your arms as we swayed to Al Martino's rendition of "Spanish Eyes."

MARTINA (*cont'd*)

You hypnotized me with your eyes, and your love penetrated the secrets of my soul. I thought back to our commitment ceremony that took place thirty years ago, right here in this very room. I can't help but think, now that we're old and gray, how many more years we have left to enjoy and express our love to one another.

*[Serina takes her hand.]*

MARTINA

Don't think of that now, love. Let's sing what's left of the song till it fades.

*[As they sing, the song fades. Jenna returns with their orders.]*

JENNA

Martina, here's your Chicken Parmesan with whole-wheat spaghetti, smothered in mozzarella and our finest sauce. Oh, yes, and here's two extra jars of Parmesan cheese, and your port.

MARTINA

Thanks, Jenna. We need a healthy meal tonight. We have a lot of work to do.

SERINA

That's for sure.

*[Martina turns toward Jos as she lifts her fork with gusto.]*

MARTINA

How are things going with you and Keshia?

JOS

We're having some problems.

SERINA

You want to talk about it?

JOS

It's hard for me to talk about it. I feel like such a failure in my relationship with Keshia. She thinks I'm married to my work.

SERINA

So, is she right?

JOS

Well, now that you've asked, I realize that I do make her feel like she plays second fiddle to my work.

MARTINA

Prove to her that's not so. It's to her credit that she'll be using her skills and connections as the landlord's secretary to help us solve the senior complex robberies.

SERINA

I have faith that you and Keshia will be able to work out your personal problems.

*[Jenna clears the table of dinner dishes and prepares to take orders for dessert. Jos takes out the portfolios and gets down to business, while Martina rifles through her shoulder bag for her reading glasses and puts them on.]*

JENNA

Would you like to order dessert?

MARTINA

We'll have it later, Jenna. Now we really need to get down to our business at hand.

JENNA

Good luck.

*[She leaves.]*

JOS

Let's start discussing our victims.

Irma Greenburg: widowed, never a hair out of place. Physically compromised, trouble walking due to a serious fall in the hospital. Her hospital lawsuit reveals her ass-kicking nature.

Erin Duffy: Has a marvelous sense of humor. Sharp as a tack. Heiress to the WE TAKE THE CAKE BAKERY. Physical challenges may make her look vulnerable at a glance, but we all know how looks can deceive.

Duffy can tangle with a gorilla and still win.

Mrs. Rose Morano: Suffers from a mild form of dementia, easily intimidated.

Oshana Whitedove: Totally blind, is a strong and determined feminist.

JOS (*cont'd*)

Mrs. Lee Woo: Daughter of a prominent banking tycoon, speaks very little English, timid, shy.

SERINA

Now that our victims are all out on the table, let's begin discussing our suspects. Martina will lead this portion of the investigation regarding our suspects.

MARTINA

My former co-worker, still employed by the Stanford Police Department's robbery division, was kind enough to supply me with not only the name of the stenographer, who was directly involved with the investigator who interrogated the suspects, but with her notes as well. My co-worker, still on active duty, was also instrumental in acquiring composite sketches of the suspects who had rap sheets with the Department.

JOS

Good work! You're a real trailblazer.

SERINA

Let's review what we have on the suspects thus far:  
Mr. Richard Cacciarelli, the gardener.

MARTINA

What a lady's man. I never knew anyone so eager to get into a woman's pants.

SERINA

*[sarcastically]*

Oh really, Martina? I never would have guessed.

MARTINA

Cacciarelli wants what's inside a woman's pants, not their pocketbooks. I removed Cacciarelli from my list of suspects.

SERINA

Under suspicion: Larry Olson, the delivery boy. Larry never refused an invitation from Mrs. Duffy to have a piece of pie with a glass of milk before leaving for his next run. While Mrs. Duffy was in the kitchen preparing their mid-afternoon dessert, she was oblivious to the temptation Larry was experiencing in the living room. Larry, once a small-time thief, observed all the nice things Mrs. Duffy had lying about. I often wondered why Larry never took any of those things in Mrs. Duffy's living room. My curiosity got the better of me, so I took it upon myself to get in touch with Larry to question him about it.

JOS

I received a deposition from Larry today addressed to you, Serina, that might answer your question.

LARRY'S VOICE

In answer to your question, Serina, I thought about what I could do with all these nice things she had, but then I recalled Mr. Forester, who owns the delivery business I work for, and the way he took me under his wing and gave me a chance at an honest existence. I like

LARRY'S VOICE (*cont'd*)

Erin Duffy. She was very good to me and so, I resisted the impulse to take anything from her.

MARTINA

Larry realized he needed her companionship as much as she needed his.

JOS

If all our suspects were like Larry, we wouldn't be sitting here now working our butts off. [*looking off into the distance*] What great telepathy! Thanks, Larry.

SERINA

I found Larry to be harmless, and thanks to Mr. Forester, Larry had no prior record. I removed him from the suspect list.

MARTINA

Walter Conley, the nosy neighbor. Look at this! A maintenance worker who doubles at night as a peeping Tom.

SERINA

What a sleaze ball.

MARTINA

And he's sixty at that!

JOS

From what I understand, Mr. Jeffrey Clark, the super, also on our suspect list, paid Walter Conley to conceal small surveillance cameras near the apartment entrances of Irma Greenberg, Erin Duffy, and Rose Morano, to see their comings and goings to enter these apartments in their absence.

MARTINA

What's more, Walter Conley took it upon himself to place his personal cameras in the bedrooms and bathrooms of Irma Greenberg, Erin Duffy, and Rose Morano, to engage in his favorite pastime, watching them undress while he masturbates.

SERINA

He's twice as disgusting as we thought.

JOS

Jeffery Clark, the super. I listed him as a suspect because he had a motive. He had a major drug problem. In the past, Jeffery was suspected of inside robberies at the complex, but was never caught. Due to the surveillance cameras he had placed in the homes of the victims, he was able to gain access to the victims' apartments, making it possible to obtain the safe's combination, to retrieve the deeds to properties Mrs. Greenberg owned in the Bahamas and elsewhere.

SERINA

It has also been brought to my attention that he eventually divorced his wife and flew to the Bahamas to start a new life with his mistress,

SERINA (*cont'd*)

Anna Coby, the housekeeper in the home Mrs. Greenberg once owned.

JOS

Wasn't Anna Coby the housekeeper who worked for all three victims,  
Erin, Irma, and Rose?

SERINA

Yes!

MARTINA

There were rumors running around about the super's drug addiction, as  
well as his affair with Anna Colby.

JOS

This could be somebody's next novel.

SERINA

The plot thickens: Anna Coby, the housekeeper. Anna was uneducated,  
but did appear to be honest. However, she did have a motive, being  
involved with the super. She was in love with Jeffrey Clark. Apparently,  
she and Jeffrey were having an affair without his wife's knowledge.  
Jeffrey needed money. He spent a lot of time with Anna and used Rose  
Morano's home for their rendezvous when she was away for the  
weekend visiting a friend.

MARTINA

Anna threw parties at Rose's expense, while helping herself to traveler's checks, nearly depleting Rose of her life's savings.

JOS

Talk about slick and fast and loose!

SERINA

This could also be someone's next novel. Rene Dubois, the analyst, had a motive, but in speaking with her, I discovered she was a woman of integrity. Therefore, I personally removed her from the suspect list.

SERINA

Diana Burns, the visiting nurse. Diana claimed she only saw the victims once every three months. She also stated the only information she had on them was purely medical. She didn't spend enough time with the victims, nor was she able to acquire the personal knowledge necessary to pull off the robberies. I removed her from my list of suspects.

MARTINA

Alpuche Cortes, the volunteer from Ecuador. I know it has been said that he was always helping someone. He always had time for you. He was trusted and well-liked by all who knew him. I, on the other hand, had a bad feeling about this guy. The minute I heard his name, the hairs in back of my neck stood up. Cortes could get in and out of the complex easily with no questions asked, which makes me very suspicious. Most people would never suspect Alpuche, but I knew

MARTINA (*cont'd*)

better. He was drawn to the housing complex because of its location in a quiet, middle-class, residential community. He voluntarily filled out an application for a background check with the volunteer coordinator, to work at the complex.

JOS

When the background check was completed, the volunteer coordinator conveniently overlooked information regarding Cortes' criminal behavior, because she was an immigrant herself and wanted to give him a second chance in this country. At the same time, I had a co-worker put his name through the system, and I discovered that Alpuche was fired from another senior facility for gaslighting his victims, all in their sixties, who lived alone and were unaware of what was going on around them. He practically drove them out of their minds, while robbing them of their life's savings. I had my way, and was able to have him stripped of his diplomatic immunity.

SERINA

I'm glad we were instrumental in getting the order to extradite Cortes and get Anna and Jeffrey back to the United States. We've nailed our suspects, we can go home.

JOS

I'll turn this portfolio over to Keshia first thing Monday morning.

*[Packing up to leave the restaurant for home, Joslin's mind drifts briefly to an imaginary love scene between herself and Keshia.]*

SERINA

*[calling Joslin back to reality]*

Earth to Jos!

JOS

I'm sorry, Serina. My mind was elsewhere.

SERINA

I can tell. I hope your thoughts were on someone worth thinking about.

JOS

Yes, they were. Serina, would you mind driving me home?

SERINA

No problem, Jos.

*[Once in the car, Martina seats herself next to Serina, then places her elbow on the back of the front seat and shifts her body, slightly arching her back up against the passenger door, enabling her to hold a conversation with both Serina in the driver's seat and Jos in the back.]*

JOS

I love night drives. They're so relaxing, especially when someone else is at the wheel.

*[A deafening silence falls upon them, as all are in deep thought. Joslin's cell phone rings, breaking the silence.]*

JOS

Hi, Keshia. Your name came up over dinner tonight.

KESHIA

I hope someone had something nice to say.

JOS

Yeah, Keshia. We all had something to say.

KESHIA

I shouldn't ask you this after that last remark. Oh, but I'll ask anyway. Would you like to come over this evening, since it's Friday night, and we don't have to go to work till Monday?

JOS

Why? What's on your mind?

KESHIA

Maybe I should ask you that.

JOS

Hold on a minute, Kesh. Serina, would you mind dropping me off at Keshia's instead of home?

SERINA

Sure. Tell Keshia we send our love, and that we're looking forward to seeing her next Friday under more pleasurable circumstances.

JOS

Honey, did you hear that?

KESHIA

I sure did. Tell them my love is returned threefold.

JOS

*[closing her clamshell phone]*

I'll be there in a bit, Hon.

SERINA

Ok, Jos, we've arrived at Keshia's.

JOS

Thanks, guys. See you Monday.

SERINA

I want to hear the details on Monday.

*[Martina and Serina finally arrive home, breathing a sigh of relief.]*

MARTINA AND SERINA

Home at last!



**“Three Friends”**  
**by Mary Conner**

These three girls born in Brooklyn became neighborhood friends. They are very beautiful. One worked in Zapps Candy Store, the other two worked as secretaries in a downtown Brooklyn office. They thought they were the best-lookin' gals in town. You'd think they were triplets because of their names. Nah, just friends: Dolley, Holli, and Pollee.

DOLLEY

*[wakes up one Friday morning to the telephone ringing]*

Hello.

HOLLI

Hey girl!

DOLLEY

Yo girl! What's up?

HOLLI

I want you to go shoppin' with me one afternoon this weekend.

DOLLEY

Oh, what's the occasion?

HOLLI

Gotta git fly! Gotta hot one this Wednesday!

DOLLEY

Hot one! Who? Where? What he look like?

HOLLI

Can't tell you now. Phone's too tappy—you know people can do any damn thing with them these days. They can hear you before you hear them.

DOLLEY

Yeah, guess you're right.

HOLLI

Well, better git goin'. Gotta hop my A-sop-fairytail to work.

DOLLEY

Okay. But you still didn't say who, where, what, and when you'd go shoppin' yet.

HOLLI

Well, I'll catch up with you later and let you know.

DOLLEY

You could at least say what he looks like.

HOLLI

Oh! Fine as hell! Tall, big brown eyes, and everythang in place! He is to die for!

Look, I better git goin' before I'm late to work.

DOLLEY

Later.

*[Later: Pollee and Dolley at work, Pollee calls Dolley. Telephone rings]*

DOLLEY

Hello.

POLLEE

Hey girl.

DOLLEY

What's up?

POLLEE

Let's meet for lunch at 'bout one.

DOLLEY

Okay. What about Jayree's Pizza?

POLLEE

Sounds good to me. We'll meet in the lobby.

DOLLEY

Bet. Got some hot shee to tell ya anyway.

*[Girls meet—start walkin' to Jayree's.]*

POLLEE

So what'cha gotta tell me?

DOLLEY

Honey! Holli called me this mornin' talkin' 'bout she wanted me to go shoppin' wit' her. And that she had a hot one. So, I said, Hot one! Who?

Where? What he look like? She didn't say, but she said she 'd tell us when she caught up with us. And she had to go before she was late for work.

POLLEE

What? A hot one! Wow! I wonder who?

DOLLEY

Chiil! I asked the same question and some, mmm mmm!

POLLEE

I'll tell you what! Let's go to Club Hot Dance on Wednesday. We may run into them there. That's a good way to find out. How 'bout that!

*[Girls meet after work on Wednesday at about seven. They get to the club and to their surprise, they run into Holli and Buddi-Joe.*

*Holli looks around and sees them.]*

HOLLI

Hey you!

POLLEE AND DOLLEY

Hey, what it look like?

HOLLI

Oh, I'm okay. Surprised to see you two here.

POLLEE AND DOLLEY

Oh, we just wanted to hang for a bit.

HOLLI

Well! Let me introduce you to this fine thang I was talkin' 'bout!

POLLEE AND DOLLEY

Where he at?

HOLLI

Over there. Let's go. [*To Buddi-Joe*] Buddi-Joe—these are my two homies -  
—Dolley and Pollee.

BUDDI-JOE

What up y'all?

POLLEE AND DOLLEY

We saw you somewhere before. We kind'a thought it was you, but wasn't sure. You dat same dude who tries to talk to every gal in town—ain't'cha? You even tried talkin' to us. Now my friend. What kind'a guy is you?

POLLEE

He must be Mr. Swang-thang of the hood.

DOLLEY

Right! You sho right 'bout dat.

BUDDI-JOE

I want you to know—she started talkin' to me first. Aw, the hell wit'chall! You'all b-oches probably ain't nothin' anyway.

DOLLEY

Yeah! Dude—you knew you tried talkin' to us before. Now her? What up wit dat? And Holli—you just as low-life as he is. You knew he was a swang-thang chaser. You went behind our back and stabbed us to try and git'im!

BUDDI-JOE

Ain't dis a blip! Y'all try to be Ms. fly chicks! You ain't worth my time.

POLLEE AND DOLLEY

You ain't worth ours either. So you take yo chick, and Holli take yo thang and git-ta steppin' ! You ain't even a friend. See-ya! Holli, you just a damn liar.

You knew you wasn't goin' shoppin' in the first place. LIAR!

*[Girls walk quickly out of club and never look back. They say to each other: This goes to show you how true your friends are.]*

*They leave Holli and Buddi-Joe standing with their eyes wide and their mouths  
hung open.]*

POLLEE AND DOLLEY

We are better than that. We can have someone better in life.



**“When I Was Seven”  
by Millie Braddox**

When I was seven years old, my dog died. My dog was named Skippy. He was a mutt—no particular breed or anything. And I cried like a person had passed away. I was inconsolable. My mother had to call my aunt and my grandma. It took me a long time to get over it. So then, I started taking home strays. But, of course, they said, “You can’t keep that dog.” But anything that would follow me, I’d bring home. Then a man down the street – he had a backyard where I could remove part of the fence -- I went over there and stole one of his dogs. But they made me bring it back. It was a long time until I had another pet.



**“Fourteen Was a Very Good Year”**  
**by Millie Braddox**

When I was fourteen years old I was graduating from William J. Morris Junior High School '73.

*(Sings)*

*M-O-double R-I-S-O-N spells Morrison. Finest junior high school in the city. The boys are handsome and the girls are pretty.*

Yes, senior year—any high school, that was a good year for seniors. Senior trips, senior activities, field day, prom, puppy love. Yes. But what I remember most about junior high school was the way I came in and the way that I left. I came in with little white shoes, white anklet socks, lace trim, dress with a big bow in the back, flat chested, and Shirley Temple curls. Couldn't tell me nothin'. When I left I had spool heels, stockings, and now the lace trim was on the garter belt. My dress had spaghetti straps, but of course you had to cover up. I had breasts, and of course, now I had a Veronica Lake hairdo. Part on the side, falling over one eye. But I also discovered, thanks to my music teacher, Mr. Berkowitz and glee club—Cole Porter.

*(Sings)*

*Summertime, and the living is easy.*

*Fish are jumpin'*

*And the cotton is high.*

Yes, fourteen was a very good year.



**“Visit Aunt Mary in Washington DC”**  
**by Valarie Buckner**

Every third Sunday in August, my family and I would take trips to Washington DC to visit our aunt because she wanted us to have a great vacation. And we used to leave every third Sunday in August and return that next following Saturday. The trip from Virginia, it took at least two hours. We would leave around 7:30 PM and we would arrive in Washington DC around maybe 9 or 9:30 in the evening. As we were approaching the city, we could see the lights and we knew we were getting closer. We would turn and stare at each other, but we wouldn't say anything, we would just grin.

And once we got there, our aunt, her name is Mary, she used to greet us at the door, give everybody hugs and kisses. Then, when we got inside, she used to say, “Let's sit down for maybe five minutes or so.” And she used to ask, “Does anyone want anything to eat?” And we would say no. And she would say, “Well, what about some toast with some grape jelly?” So, we would eat the toast, and have the grape jelly. And once we got through eating, we would go upstairs for bed. I remember her having these steps, like these spiral steps, we would go around and around and around until we got to the top. And then we would look back down and see where the first step was.

The next morning, when we got up, we used to have breakfast. I remember having either Cheerios, bananas, and milk or Corn Flakes, bananas, and milk. And right today, I still eat that same type of cereal. Then after we got through, we would do our chores around the house; we would wash the dishes, and then we would go outside and sit on this porch that she had with an awning over the porch to keep the sun from coming in the afternoon. And we would sit in this little glider seat. And

then all of a sudden, my sister and I would hear somebody out of the clear blue sky, singing:

A sailor went to sea, sea, sea,  
to see what he could see, see, see,  
and all that he could see, see, see,  
was the bottom of the deep blue sea, sea, sea.

And when we heard that, we all jumped up off the porch and we ran down, and the neighbor kids, they all gave us hugs because they knew that we were back for our summer visit. We would play all these little childhood games, and one of them was "Sail Away to Sea." The next one was called, "The Animal Fair":

I went to the animal fair (clap, clap)  
The animals all were there (clap, clap)  
The elephant sneezed and sat on his knees  
And that was the end of the monkey, monkey, monkey,  
monkey, monkey.

And the next one was:

3, 6, 9  
The ghost drank wine  
The monkey chewed tobacco on the street car line  
The line broke  
The monkey got choked  
And they all went to heaven in a little row boat  
Clap, clap.

And then the next one was, "Thumbelina":

Thumbelina  
Pizza, pizza, patio  
Had a party  
Pizza, pizza, patio  
At the party  
Pizza, pizza, patio  
They were jerkin' it  
Pizza, pizza, patio  
They were wobblin' it  
Pizza, pizza, patio  
They were sliding it  
Pizza, pizza, patio

And then, the last one was called, "Zoodio":

Here comes Zoodio, Zoodio, Zoodio  
Here we go, Zoodio, all night long  
Oh, walk Miss Valarie, Valarie, Valarie  
Walk Miss Valarie all night long.

And those are some the games that we played during the whole week. And as time was approaching near the end, Thursday, Friday, we knew that we were gonna leave Saturday. It was so sad. But they knew that next year, we were going to be back.

We went every summer from the time that I was four years old to the time I was about thirteen. And our Aunt Mary is still with us. In 1960, she was only 43 years old. And, today, she is 100 years old. And she still lives in the same house, in the same district, in the same town.