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TEN **by** **TEN**
Short Plays Top Playwrights

**For Workshop, Scene Study
& Performance**

**Edited by
REBECCA RYLAND**

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THE THRONE

by Verna Safran

1 Man / 1 Woman

CHARACTERS:

MAN; *the husband*

WOMAN; *his wife*

Plus "A VOICE" heard off

SETTING: *Their back yard*

AT RISE: *The MAN is in a lounge chair reading a newspaper. The WOMAN is watering the flowers in the garden. A throne slowly descends from on high. It lands between them.*

MAN. What is that?

WOMAN. It looks like a seat.

(THEY approach the throne.)

MAN. A seat?

WOMAN. For sitting on.

MAN. Doesn't look very comfortable for sitting on.

WOMAN. You'd have to sit up pretty straight.

MAN. I think it's more than a seat. It looks like a throne.

WOMAN. A throne? You mean, like for kings and queens?

MAN. We don't have kings and queens in America. But it's for persons of authority.

WOMAN. In the Kabbala it says that angels sat on thrones.

MAN. You've read the Kabbala?

WOMAN. No, but I heard about it. I took a course once...

MAN. My parents told me if you ever read the Kabbala you'd go crazy.

WOMAN. They ought to know.

MAN. Excuse me? What did you mean by that?

WOMAN. Never mind. So, you think it's a throne?

MAN. Look – it's got all those precious stones on it.

WOMAN. Mmmm. So it does. Do you think they're real?

MAN. Don't know. But they're certainly impressive.

WOMAN. I guess that's the point of a throne. To be impressive.

MAN. I'm going to try it out.

WOMAN. What do you mean?

MAN. I want to sit on it. (*HE does.*) Just to see how it feels.

WOMAN. So? How does it feel?

MAN. It makes me feel... very...

WOMAN. Yes?

MAN. Important.

WOMAN. Important?

MAN. Yes. And powerful. Go get me some cold water. With ice cubes.

WOMAN. Are you talking to me?

MAN. Yes. It's hot out here. Go get some cold water.

WOMAN. Go get it yourself.

MAN. I can't. I'm sitting on the throne.

WOMAN. Big deal. You were my husband before the throne, and you're my husband now. You never bossed me around before.

MAN. I just wanted to see what it felt like. To be powerful.

WOMAN. Why don't you give me a turn?

MAN. A turn?

WOMAN. To sit on the throne.

MAN. Maybe later. Not now.

WOMAN. Why not now?

MAN. Because I'm sitting on the throne now.

WOMAN. Just for a minute or two.

MAN. You are becoming a terrible nuisance.

WOMAN. All right. I won't bother you anymore.

MAN. Bring me my newspaper.

WOMAN. What?

MAN. My newspaper. Bring me my newspaper. It's over there.

WOMAN. All right. *(SHE does.)* Here's your newspaper. I'm going inside.

(The WOMAN exits for a brief moment.)

MAN. I think I'll issue a decree. *(As if to a crowd.)* I hereby decree – Hmmm. Can't think of anything I particularly want to decree at the moment. I'm going to have to get myself some advisors.

(The WOMAN returns.)

WOMAN. There's a phone call for you.

MAN. There is? I didn't hear the phone.

WOMAN. You didn't? Well, maybe you were too busy thinking up a decree.

MAN. Couldn't you take a message?

WOMAN. They said it was very important.

MAN. (*Rises and heads towards the house.*) Oh, very well.

(*The WOMAN makes a dash for the throne and sits on it.*)

WOMAN. Aha! Nobody said that you were the one to sit on the throne. Maybe it was meant for me!

MAN. (*Turning back.*) Why, you treacherous little— You tricked me!

WOMAN. It was the only way to get you off your—

MAN. I sat on the throne before you. I got there first.

WOMAN. Well, it's my turn now.

MAN. (*Taking hold of the chair and tipping it over causing the WOMAN to fall out.*) Not if I can help it.

WOMAN. That's not fair! You used brute force!

MAN. Who you calling a brute?

WOMAN. Help me up.

MAN. I will not. I don't trust you anymore. (*HE sits on the throne.*) I think I'll have my supper out here. Maybe my breakfast as well.

WOMAN. (*Gets up, dusting herself off.*) Oh, really? You expect me to bring everything all the way out here?

MAN. This is where the seat of power is located. Of course, we'll have to bring the thing inside eventually. If the neighbors see it, they're going to want one just like it. Like they did when I got the new car.

WOMAN. Darling?

MAN. Yes, dear.

WOMAN. Do you think God sits on a throne?

MAN. How should I know? I never took Philosophy in college. I suppose He does.

WOMAN. It's such a hard seat. Do you suppose God has hemorrhoids?

MAN. I don't have time to think about such things. Now why don't you be quiet and let me go over our finances. Need to balance the checkbook.

WOMAN. And what do you want me to do, while you go over our finances?

MAN. You can go putter in the garden.

WOMAN. Putter?

MAN. Yes, or whatever it is you women do.

WOMAN. I don't think I like your tone.

MAN. My tone? My tone? Are you forgetting who puts the roof over your head?

WOMAN. Are you forgetting who cooks your meals, who raised the children? And who put you through college – don't forget that! I was pretty good at finances back then, wasn't I? Now that you're sitting pretty, I work like a demon around here – and this is the thanks I get? You won't even let me sit for a minute on that stupid chair.

MAN. It's not a chair. It's a throne. And you can add one more chore to your list of responsibilities. I want you to polish the throne every day so it shines.

WOMAN. Polish it? With what?

MAN. I'm not sure. Whatever you polish gold with.

WOMAN. (*Pause.*) Didn't I hear you say you wanted a drink of water?

MAN. Ah, you remembered.

WOMAN. Of course. I remember everything you say to me.

MAN. I think I'll have lemonade. Or soda.

WOMAN. What kind of soda?

MAN. Do we have root beer?

WOMAN. Yes, I think so.

MAN. Root beer, then. It reminds me of my childhood.

WOMAN. If I bring you some root beer, will you let me have another turn, sitting on the throne?

MAN. No, I will not. I'm really beginning to like it here. What I think I need is a scepter and an orb. Whatever the hell an orb is.

WOMAN. Why don't you go look it up?

MAN. Look it up?

WOMAN. Yes. In the dictionary. Or on the Internet.

MAN. What, so you can grab hold of the throne while I'm gone?

WOMAN. You wanted to know what an orb is.

MAN. I don't really care that much what an orb is. If someone gave one to me, I would take it, but I'm not going to go out looking for one.

WOMAN. That's what I hate about you. You have no intellectual curiosity.

MAN. Oh, now you hate me, do you?

WOMAN. When we first married, we would have discussions. Now we never discuss anything any more.

MAN. You want to talk about orbs, is that it?

WOMAN. No, that's not it!

MAN. You don't make any sense at all.

WOMAN. All right. I'll get you your soda.

(The WOMAN exits once again to the house.)

MAN. Hmm. She's probably thinking up some trick so she can take my throne away from me. But I'll be ready for her when she comes back. *(HE gets a shovel from the garden.)* A shovel ought to do it. Ought to scare her, I mean. What she needs is a good scare.

(The WOMAN returns with two cans of soda on a tray.)

WOMAN. Here you are. So cold the cans are crying.

MAN. That's the way you serve me soda?

WOMAN. What's wrong?

MAN. You don't pour it into a glass?

WOMAN. You always like to drink it out of a can.

MAN. Out of the can? That is so low class! I am sitting on the throne now. I think I deserve a little better treatment.

WOMAN. Okay, okay! I'll bring it and pour it into glasses. Will the everyday glasses do, or shall I bring out the crystal stemware?

MAN. Don't get sarcastic with me.

WOMAN. Why not? I have nobody else to be sarcastic with. *(Collects the cans on the tray and goes off mumbling.)* Can't take a joke.

MAN. Thinks she's pretty funny. Protesters need to be watched. I wonder how I can access her E-mail. I have a feeling she has a lover.

(The WOMAN returns with two glasses of soda on the tray.)

WOMAN. Here you are, my lord.

MAN. Don't you think you ought to curtsy?

WOMAN. Curtsy?

MAN. Yes, you know, the way they did in the old days.

WOMAN. I don't know how to curtsy. Why don't you get up and show me how.

MAN. Very clever. You'll do anything to get my throne away from me, won't you?

WOMAN. *Your* throne?

MAN. You really ought to learn to curtsy. Maybe you could take one of your goddamn courses.

WOMAN. Let's not argue. Let's drink our sodas. There's a cool breeze coming through the trees. Feel it? The fall will soon be here.

MAN. *(Raising his glass.)* Cheers.

WOMAN. *(And to him.)* Cheers.

(The MAN drinks the soda and starts to choke.)

MAN. It's— It's – you've poisoned me!

WOMAN. Only a little bit.

MAN. I need some water.

WOMAN. There's some in the fridge.

(The MAN gets up and heads towards the house. The WOMAN goes for the throne.)

MAN. (*Returning.*) Oh, no you don't! Get away from there!

(*THEY fight. Each sitting on the throne, throwing the other off and over again.*)

WOMAN. Selfish, self-centered—

MAN. Ungrateful, demanding—

(*HE grabs the shovel and hits her over the head. SHE falls down dead. HE clutches his stomach.*)

MAN. Only a little bit? She never had any sense of proportion. (*HE dies.*)

(*For a moment the backyard remains quiet. Then the throne slowly ascends from whence it came.*)

A VOICE. (*Off.*) This was a test. And you both failed.

(BLACKOUT.)

FALL OUT

by Sean David Bennett

2 Men

CHARACTERS:

CURLEY; *a 79 year-old cancer patient*

GRIFFITHS; *a clean-cut priest, about 31*

SETTING: *A New England hospital; the oncology ward, 1999. Stage right is a window that looks out on the hospital parking lot. The curtain has been partially drawn but we can still see that it is a cold, dark, wintry morning.*

AT RISE: *A room in the oncology ward of the hospital. Both beds are empty. A wheel chair faces upstage concealing CURLEY, its occupant. Into the doorway steps GRIFFITHS in clerical garb. HE knocks on the open door.*

GRIFFITHS. *(Calling.)* Mr. Curley? Father Griffiths...

(CURLEY turns his chair partially around. HE holds a plastic urinal in his hands.)

CURLEY. Be with you in a minute – almost finished.

GRIFFITHS. Oh – you're busy. I can come back later.

CURLEY. No, no. Come on in— There, I'm done. (*HE places the urinal on his nightstand.*)

GRIFFITHS. Sorry to barge in on you...one of the nurses said you were asking to see a clergyman yesterday.

CURLEY. Was I? When was this?

GRIFFITHS. Yesterday... Said you asked to have Confession...

CURLEY. Did I? ...Why would I do that, I wonder? Amazing...

GRIFFITHS. She must have confused you with someone else.

CURLEY. Perhaps... Or maybe I'm just having a little fun at your expense.

GRIFFITHS. Would you prefer that I leave?

CURLEY. Not at all. Miserable day like this, I could use some company. What are you— RC?

GRIFFITHS. Anglican... (*No response.*)
Episcopalian... (*Still no response.*) You know— Catholic light?

CURLEY. Doesn't matter— All the same to me.

GRIFFITHS. Is there something I can get for you?

CURLEY. Like what?

GRIFFITHS. (*Grinning.*) Anything— What would you like?

CURLEY. Got a cure for cancer?... I thought not. Come in and sit down. Tell me about yourself.

GRIFFITHS. (*Entering and sitting on the edge of the downstage bed.*) What would you like to know? I'm the Anglican chaplain. I've been here three months...

CURLEY. I haven't met you before – have I?

GRIFFITHS. I don't think so.

CURLEY. But isn't that your job? Going around, comforting the sick and dying?

GRIFFITHS. Yes, of course. But your chart said that you wanted no visitors. That's why yesterday's request came as such a surprise...

CURLEY. Are you sure the nurse said it was me?

GRIFFITHS. Yes, but she could have made a mistake. (*Gets the joke.*) C'mon, Mr. Curley – we've just been through that.

CURLEY. You're a bit young to be a priest.

GRIFFITHS. Thirty-one... Look— I can go away and come back later. Maybe you'd be better off trying to nap.

CURLEY. And maybe not— Maybe I really do want to talk to you.

GRIFFITHS. You're playing word games with me... Is there a particular reason?

CURLEY. You need to be putting your glasses on, son, if you can't see I'm too old for games.

GRIFFITHS. Then is there something you're trying to avoid talking about – with me, I mean?

CURLEY. What would I hold back from a priest, of all people?

GRIFFITHS. I think it is obvious you would like some company and that you'd like to talk – only – for whatever reason – not with a member of the clergy. At least, not with someone who looks to you like he should be wearing a diaper instead of a clerical collar.

CURLEY. You're very astute... A little tougher than I'd sized you up to be.

GRIFFITHS. ...For someone so young?

CURLEY. I wasn't going to say that...

GRIFFITHS. (*Grinning.*) Yes you were. Admit it.

CURLEY. So?

GRIFFITHS. Look. If it helps put your mind at ease, I'm not here to squeeze a confession or a prayer out of you. Whether we sit here, lifting our eyes to the Lord – to coin a phrase – or just stare at one another – that's your call.

CURLEY. Next, I suppose you'll be telling me you're *against* prayer.

GRIFFITHS. Mr. Curley, I'm just saying I think you're at an age where you can make your own decision about such matters. There are many ways of being with God besides prayer.

CURLEY. Glad to hear it— A bit late in the day for that nonsense.

GRIFFITHS. Why? Because you're...

CURLEY. Dying? No. At my age, a man's a fool if he thinks there's something ahead of him besides death. How old did you say you were?

GRIFFITHS. Thirty-one—

CURLEY. That's young to be in the business of saving souls... when I was young, I was taking them. You believe in hell, Father?

GRIFFITHS. I don't understand.

CURLEY. Of course you don't. (*Turning away and staring out the window.*) The men who could understand are rotting away in a nursing home somewhere— Or like me – in a hospital having their stomachs cut open.

GRIFFITHS. Has something upset you today, Mr. Curley?

CURLEY. (*Turns and looks back at him.*) Besides my illness, you mean?

GRIFFITHS. That – or something else? Whatever’s on your mind, either you can talk, and I listen— Or – and I already know it’s not an alternative – I can say a prayer and you listen.

CURLEY. (*Turns away.*) You’re in the prayer business, not me. Say all the prayers you want... (*After neither have spoken for a moment.*) You haven’t left yet.

GRIFFITHS. Would you like me to?

CURLEY. I’m not going to pray with you. I gave all that up years ago. Too late to start now—

GRIFFITHS. It was only a suggestion.

CURLEY. What do you want to spend your time with an old fool like me? Must be somebody around this place needs you.

GRIFFITHS. That’s true. I think I may have found him. Do you have a family, Mr. Curley?

CURLEY. My wife died in childbirth...

GRIFFITHS. When was that?

CURLEY. Around the time your father was probably born. About the time I stopped praying.

GRIFFITHS. I’m sorry.

CURLEY. No. He would have been our first. Just after the war... Some kind of karma, I guess...

GRIFFITHS. Karma?

CURLEY. Yes.

GRIFFITHS. You believe God took your wife and child?

CURLEY. Could be...

GRIFFITHS. If that's the kind of God you believe in, you were right to stop praying. Were you married long?

CURLEY. Married my wife just before I went overseas. We only had a couple of years together, what with the war and all. They died in '46. I can't say now that I ever really knew her.

GRIFFITHS. You were still a young man... You never remarried?

CURLEY. I just wasn't good at making friends when I came back— Didn't want to meet new people. (*HE wheels himself over to the window and draws back the curtain.*) Another gray day— Reminds me of England. I was stationed at Croyden Air Force Base during the war. Just outside London.

GRIFFITHS. You're talking about World War II?

CURLEY. (*Huffily.*) I wasn't old enough for the First World War, sonny.

GRIFFITHS. I meant, I didn't think you were old enough to be in the Second World War, either.

CURLEY. Seventy-nine years old. I think yesterday was my birthday.

GRIFFITHS. Happy birthday. Is that why you wanted company yesterday?

CURLEY. (*Ignoring the comment.*) This weather takes me right back. We'd spend our mornings playing with the English school children – teaching them baseball, how to fly kites and such... I remember one Thanksgiving dinner we shared with those children. They had never eaten turkey before.

Can you imagine? Then the call would come and we would climb into our planes, take off across the Channel, and drop our bombs— In weather like this.

GRIFFITHS. Doesn't sound like the war was much of a contest, the way you tell it.

CURLEY. By '43, Goering's Luftwaffe was just a joke. No resistance at all. We were free to go the length and breadth of Germany— Wasn't like being at war at all – flying just low enough to spot exactly which factory or bridge we were supposed to hit. Sometimes, in order to make sure of our targets, we'd fly so low we could see the fear in the eyes of anyone unfortunate enough to be caught out in the streets during a raid.

GRIFFITHS. And were many people unable to find shelter?

CURLEY. Yes and no. Usually, the Germans could set their watches by us, we were so punctual. But towards the end, when their warning systems were destroyed, we strafed quite a few. As I say, it was hard to think of it as war by then – more like a plain old ordinary job – fly over, drop bombs, fly back, play with the kids, go dancing with the girls from town – a person got used to the sheer routine of it. I did – for a while – even when we destroyed a particularly beautiful castle or church, it all seemed like it was part of a job.

GRIFFITHS. I don't imagine it was that simple...

CURLEY. (*A bit cynically.*) Back then...or now? I was a very good airman, son. Did what I was told

– just like everyone else. For a long time, nothing bothered me.

GRIFFITHS. But that time came to an end...?

CURLEY. (*Turning to avoid looking directly at GRIFFITHS.*) Yes— One day it stopped being a job for me. (*Beat.*) We were flying low – over some farmland. There was a group of children playing in the fields. They were so used to the sounds of war they didn't even look up when we flew over them— Just went on with their games. That made our Commander sore. “Little fools – don't they know they could get hurt?” he yelled. “Let's teach them a lesson.” He circled back and began chasing with his plane...criss-crossing over them, shooting bursts of bullets every once in a while to scare them. It became a game to us – and to the kids. They'd hide behind a shed, or under some rubble – we'd aim our fire just close enough to give them a good scare – then they'd jump up out of their hiding places, waving their hands like they were trying to say, “Missed me – try again.”

GRIFFITHS. But you were grown men – you were using live ammunition.

CURLEY. Why the hell do you think I'm telling this? If it was only judgment I wanted, I'd keep it to myself. That's what I've done for 55 years. When it was over and I came home, I couldn't even tell my wife. We'd hit a little girl, you see.

GRIFFITHS. We? Who?

CURLEY. She must have been about six or seven. She fell over on her back, just fell over and lay on

her back, staring at us with her two dead little eyes.
After that, I hated the war...

GRIFFITHS. So the karma you spoke about...

CURLEY. Yes...

GRIFFITHS. I don't believe in a vengeful God, Mr. Curley. If God is not loving, and forgiving, and is without mercy – what do we need him for?

CURLEY. God wasn't in the war, Father— Only men. (*Beat.*) When we got back, I put in for a transfer, but it was four months before my transfer came through, so I had to stay with the job I had. They sent me to work in Washington, just before the end of the war – in the Pentagon. One day, I was in my office and I heard a loud commotion out in the hallway. All of a sudden, one of my co-workers burst in. “Jim, Jim,” he was shouting. “You'll never believe what's happened – but I swear it's the truth. We've just wiped out a whole Japanese city – with just one bomb.

GRIFFITHS. Hiroshima...

CURLEY. (*Continues to stare out the window.*) He kept pulling at me, shaking me and he couldn't stop crying. He was shouting in my face, “Thousands of people have been killed – with just one bomb.” All I could see was that little girl...the one we'd shot down...those wide-open eyes that would never see anything because of what we...what I...

GRIFFITHS. But...it wasn't your fault...none of it. It was a terrible war. We know that. But we must never forget what we were fighting for.

CURLEY. I know what we were fighting for, Father. I know we did the right thing. (*Breaking down.*) But – dear God – did we have to kill so many? That girl – she – was so young. She should have been allowed to live. (*Beat.*) The cancer can't finish me quick enough.

GRIFFITHS. She did live, Mr. Curley— Inside you...

CURLEY. Don't you think I know that? I'm not some old fool who pretends he doesn't know what he did with his life.

GRIFFITHS. (*Almost over him.*) You've fed the two of you on nothing but guilt and shame...

CURLEY. I know that, too...

GRIFFITHS. (*Kneeling down beside the wheel chair.*) You've punished yourself in a way God never would have. It's time for you to let go of that little girl. Give me your hand. (*Taking the older man's hand in his, GRIFFITHS spreads the index and middle fingers out before him.*) Do you hear me? (*Looking into Curley's face and gripping his arm tightly.*) When I first came into your room, you asked me if I had a cure for cancer. I can't give you that, Mr. Curley – I can only bring you a cure for sorrow. It's time to bring yourself and that child peace. Reach out, Mr. Curley, all the way. Close them. (*Stretching Curley's arm full out.*) Reach out and close that child's eyes.

(BLACKOUT.)

CRISIS HOTLINE

by Dan Borengasser

2 Women

CHARACTERS:

TRISH; *a late twenty-something contemplating suicide*

SARAH; *a thirty-something who volunteers for the Crisis Hotline*

SETTING: *The stage is split into two areas; Stage Right – The office of the Crisis Hotline, and Stage Left – A small apartment.*

AT RISE: *SARAH sits at her desk in the Crisis Hotline office doodling on a sheet of paper. The PHONE RINGS. SARAH hits the speaker button and the LIGHTS RISE on TRISH in her apartment with phone in hand. SHE is obviously distraught, on the brink of tears.*

SARAH. Crisis hotline.

TRISH. Hell...hello.

SARAH. My name's "Sarah". What's going on?

TRISH. I...I have to talk to someone.

SARAH. Shoot.

(An awkward silence as TRISH lifts a pistol from her lap and looks at it indecisively.)

TRISH. Did you say "shoot"?

SARAH. Sorry. Old Hotline joke. Go ahead.

TRISH. I... I... (*Sniffs.*) I don't know whether—

SARAH. You're not going to keep sniveling, are you?

TRISH. What?

SARAH. You sniveled.

TRISH. I...I didn't snivel.

SARAH. Listen, I've heard every possible snivel, and, believe me, you sniveled.

TRISH. Oh, God, I shouldn't have called.

SARAH. Too late. What's the problem?

TRISH. It's...it's just that I'm feeling...you know...depressed and... Am I on speakerphone?

SARAH. Yeah.

TRISH. Ah... Do you mind picking up? This is kind of private.

SARAH. How private can it be? You're talking about it with a perfect stranger. Well, not exactly perfect.

TRISH. (*Becoming increasingly rattled.*) Have I got the right number? You did say this is the... ah... "Crisis Hotline"?

SARAH. Yeah, yeah. Calm down.

(*SARAH puts on a headset and disengages the speakerphone.*) There. You're off speaker. Okay? (*TRISH doesn't respond.*) Okay. Let's try this again. You called the Crisis Hotline. Most people call the Crisis Hotline because they're having a crisis. Take it from there.

TRISH. My...my husband and I are having problems.

SARAH. All couples have problems.

TRISH. And...and I think he's having an affair.

SARAH. Every woman thinks that at one time or another. What's he say?

TRISH. I haven't brought it up.

SARAH. Why not?

TRISH. I'm...I'm scared.

SARAH. Yeah, well, who isn't?

TRISH. I...ah...I don't mean to be critical, but shouldn't you be... like... more... you know... more...

SARAH. Understanding?

TRISH. I suppose.

SARAH. Concerned?

TRISH. Yeah.

SARAH. Empathetic?

TRISH. Yes!

SARAH. Yeah, maybe. But you ever think maybe you're not the only one having a bad day? Just asking.

TRISH. This is more than a bad day.

SARAH. I'm sure. What else?

TRISH. I can't eat or sleep. It's driving me crazy. One moment I'm furious. The next, I think it's all my fault. I mean, if I could have been more supportive or sexier or a better lover, maybe he wouldn't have felt like he had to run around.

SARAH. Oh, please. (*Beat.*) What's your name?

TRISH. I don't wanna say.

SARAH. I need to call you something. How about "Basket Case"? Or "Wuss Wife"? Or...

TRISH. Becky. Call me Becky.

SARAH. That's better. (*Reading from a Hotline instructional sheet.*) So, Becky, what was the precipitating event?

TRISH. The precipitating event?

SARAH. Yeah, you know, the reason you called. As opposed to yesterday. Or the day before that.

TRISH. He didn't come home last night.

SARAH. Okay. What is your state of mind, Becky?

TRISH. Not too good. I'm depressed most of the time. I feel helpless. Lonely. Are you reading these questions?

SARAH. Yeah. So what?

TRISH. I don't know. Seems a little impersonal.

SARAH. Impersonal? Not much point in my developing a relationship with someone planning to off themselves, is there?

TRISH. Off myself?

SARAH. Yeah, you know. Suicide. A date with the grim reaper.

TRISH. I...I didn't say anything about suicide.

SARAH. You didn't have to. You've got all the signs. (*Reading.*) What is your plan of action?

TRISH. Have you had any training for this job?

SARAH. (*Becoming agitated.*) First of all, it's not a job. I'm a volunteer. I listen to all this depressing crap for free. You don't even want to get me started on that. And second, yeah, I've been trained. Extensively. Hours and hours and hours. Okay? Satisfied? So what is your plan of action?

TRISH. You don't have to get so upset.

SARAH. Upset? Don't talk to me about upset, Becky, or whatever your name really is. Who's the freaking counselor here anyway, huh? You or me?

TRISH. Ah...You.

SARAH. Damn straight! Now, I'm going to ask you one more time. What the hell is your plan of action?

TRISH. Ah...No plan really. Probably have a glass of wine, watch a movie and go to bed.

SARAH. Don't give me that garbage! You were suicidal. You're still suicidal.

TRISH. No, no, I feel better now.

SARAH. Liar. What about your husband, the adulterous no-show?

TRISH. Jeez, what's your problem?

SARAH. Hey, I don't have a problem. You're the one with the problem. Remember?

TRISH. Well, something must have happened to make you so hostile.

SARAH. Am I confused here? Aren't you the one who called the Crisis Hotline?

TRISH. What was it?

SARAH. What was what?

TRISH. You know. The...ah...precipitating event?

SARAH. Don't try that crap on me.

TRISH. If you're too embarrassed to say, that's all right.

SARAH. (*Laughing derisively.*) Oldest trick in the book.

TRISH. What?

SARAH. Misdirection. Changing the subject. Acting like *I'm* the one with the problem.

TRISH. But, I'm not—

SARAH. Think you're dealing with a rookie here? Huh?

TRISH. I'm actually a good listener.

SARAH. Bully for you. Then, listen to this— Your situation isn't even that bad. Compared to some of the pathetic losers I've had to deal with, you're like a little ray of sunshine.

TRISH. Is that supposed to be comforting?

SARAH. In fact, for seriousness and potential for self-inflicted harm, I'm giving your case a low rating. Feel better?

TRISH. You rate us?

SARAH. What do you expect? Have to evaluate you somehow. You're getting a four out of ten.

TRISH. A four! My situation was at least a seven!

SARAH. Hah! Did you hear what you said? "Was". You're already using the past tense. Now tell me I don't know what I'm doing.

(TRISH considers the situation for a moment.)

TRISH. Okay, if mine is a four, what's yours? How do you rate your condition? *(Goading her on.)* Bet mine is worse than yours. You're probably a two.

(Silence.)

SARAH. *(Finally.)* Okay, hot shot. I lost my job today.

TRISH. Like that's the end of the world. You can always get another job.

SARAH. You don't know the hell what you're talking about.

TRISH. So, tell me. What's...ah...your state of mind? *(The question is met with sullen silence.)* Isn't that the point of the Crisis Hotline? To listen to someone's crisis? *(Still no response.)* What difference does it make if it's your crisis or mine? Nothing. Besides you already heard mine. It's your turn.

SARAH. Cute. Very cute. *(Beat.)* Okay. I was an executive assistant at an advertising agency. I worked sixty hours a week. My life was my job.

TRISH. That doesn't sound so bad. Maybe a three.

SARAH. I was also having an affair with the owner of the agency who said he was leaving his wife for me. Like a dumb ass, I fell for it. His wife finds out and here I am. Thirty-two years old; no job, no friends, no future.

TRISH. Wow. Sorry. A seven at least. *(Beat.)* Maybe an eight.

SARAH. Now I don't even have a hamster to talk to. And the few times I get out of my apartment, what do I do? Come down here and listen to some nut case whine about her supposed problems. *(Beat.)* Present company excluded.

TRISH. Is...is there anything I can do?

SARAH. Oh, please. Give me a break. What the hell could you do?

TRISH. I don't know. Buy you a hamster?
(No response until SARAH snorts with amusement.)

SARAH. That's pretty good...uh, say, what is your real name anyway?

TRISH. Trish. Trish Foster.

SARAH. Hi, Trish. I'm Sarah Collinsworth. *(There is an awkward pause.)* Well, this has all been very interesting, but my shift's winding down and I've got a lot of paperwork to do first. You still suicidal?

TRISH. No. You?

SARAH. No. Not that I ever was, of course. But I do feel a little better, so I guess I owe you that. *(Beat.)* Well, don't do anything I wouldn't do. See you.

(SARAH starts to hang up.)

TRISH. Wait!

SARAH. What?

TRISH. You're about to get off?

SARAH. Yeah.

TRISH. You...ah...You want to meet? Like for a drink?

SARAH. Sorry. Against the rules.

TRISH. Oh, sure. I should have thought of that. Well, thanks. I'll try not to bother you again.

SARAH. Hey, no problem. Call anytime. As long as you're having a crisis of course.

TRISH. Okay. Well, goodbye.

SARAH. See ya.

(As THEY hang up, Trish's side of the stage goes black. SARAH stares at the phone for an uncomfortable amount of time. SHE seems to come to a decision and picks up the receiver again. SHE

hits a button. The PHONE RINGS in Trish's apartment and the lights come back up.)

TRISH. *(Answering the phone.)* Hello?

SARAH. We've got caller I.D. *(Beat.)* Listen, I'm pretty screwed up right now. I wouldn't be much fun.

TRISH. Me either. Maybe it's not such a good idea. We don't know each other. I don't know what we'd have to talk about.

SARAH. Well, we *could* meet for an in-depth analysis of our destabilizing circumstances.

TRISH. Oh. Is there also a special Hotline term for that?

SARAH. Yeah. A bitch session.

TRISH. *(Laughing.)* Count me in.

(BLACKOUT.)

BOTTLES

by Donald Dewey

1 Man / 1 Women

CHARACTERS:

FRANK; *unemployed, about 40*

HAZEL; *an office worker, about 35*

SETTING: *An urban living room in the early evening; a couch and coffee table center, old newspapers everywhere, a pizza box with calcified crusts on the table. The entrance door is downstage left; on the floor nearby a wastebasket and a sealed carton with UPS markings prominently displayed. A window overlooking other apartments is located upstage.*

AT RISE: *FRANK seated near the upstage window peering outside through binoculars and taking regular swigs from a bottle of scotch. HE is unshaven and looks as if HE has been holed up in his apartment for quite some time. HE sings to himself as HE peeps into one window after another.*

FRANK. *(Singing.)*

“I got the world on a string
Sittin’ on a rainbow
Got the string ‘round my finger
Lucky me, I’m in love...”

(Focusing on one window in particular.) Cereal for supper??!! What the hell is that??!! *(Checking out another window.)* How long you going to read that one page? You could've read the whole paper by now!...Wait a minute, wait a minute! *(Intensifies focus.)* Gotcha, Kruger! Fast asleep! But how do you hold the paper so still like that? *(HE drains the bottle of scotch then looks at his watch.)* And the damn liquor store's closed! *(FRANK stands up and carries the empty bottle to the wastebasket. HE holds the bottle over the basket ceremoniously.)* And no crap from you about the garbage can in the kitchen. I'm up to here with all your specialization. *(FRANK drops the bottle into the wastebasket. HE crosses to the UPS carton and checks it out with some curiosity, turning it around for some sign of its contents. HE is interrupted by the RING OF THE DOORBELL. HE calls out towards the door.)* I'm praying right now.

HAZEL. *(O.S.)* It's Hazel next door!

FRANK. Oh.

(FRANK crosses to the door and opens it. HAZEL is dressed in a business suit. SHE holds a bottle of scotch in her hand.)

HAZEL. Sorry to bother you, Frank. I didn't know you prayed at this hour...

FRANK. No, no. I thought you were somebody else.

HAZEL. UPS left a note saying you took my package.

FRANK. Come in, come in.

HAZEL. *(Stepping inside.)* How's it going?

FRANK. I'm good, good. They left it about four.
(HE lifts the carton.) Jesus, this weighs a ton!

HAZEL. I'm only going a few steps.

FRANK. They might be your last ones. Hold on a second.

(FRANK crosses unsteadily through the living room and exits stage left. HAZEL closes the apartment door then inspects the wastebasket. SHE takes in the empty scotch bottle. FRANK returns pulling a kiddie wagon.)

FRANK. *(Continuing.)* What we used last time.

HAZEL. It's really handy.

FRANK. I'm getting more use out of it than Billy ever did.

HAZEL. *(Holding out the new bottle of scotch.)*
This is for you.

FRANK. No way.

HAZEL. Please take it. If you weren't here for my packages, I'd lose all Saturday morning at UPS or the Post Office.

FRANK. It's what neighbors do, Hazel.

HAZEL. Maybe they do and maybe they don't. I only know you do and I want to say thank you.

FRANK. Well, maybe today's not the day to protest too much.

HAZEL. Another bad one?

FRANK. Couldn't even find the right tie. Then I look out the window and a monsoon's going to hit. So I go tearing up the closets, and guess what? Jennifer not only took Billy and my CD's she danced out of here with our only umbrella.

HAZEL. I'm sorry, Frank.

FRANK. All these months I never checked if it was still there.

HAZEL. So, you didn't get out at all today?

FRANK. I'm not sure it makes that much of a difference.

HAZEL. Oh, c'mon. Don't get down like that.

FRANK. I'm serious, Hazel. It's been months now. I'll take anything.

HAZEL. If not today or next week, next month.

FRANK. You never let anything get you down, do you?

HAZEL. I asked about a job for you at my office.

FRANK. You're kidding!

HAZEL. I told you I would.

FRANK. And I appreciate it. But I can't imagine how I'd fit in with an office supply company.

HAZEL. It would be something, right?

FRANK. Absolutely. What did they say?

HAZEL. They couldn't see how you'd fit in.

FRANK. Oh.

HAZEL. But my boss did make one suggestion. He said you sounded like the perfect person to set up a 12-step program for people out of work.

FRANK. There's no such thing, Hazel.

HAZEL. I know. I checked the Yellow Pages. But doesn't that make it an even better idea? You'd be the first.

FRANK. People out of work don't need a 12-step program, Hazel, they need a job.

HAZEL. Of course, they do. But while you're looking for one, you could collect something from these other poor unfortunates.

FRANK. Thank your boss. I'll think about it.

HAZEL. Keep positive, that's the main thing.

FRANK. Absolutely. Would you like a drink?

HAZEL. I hate scotch. Tastes like medicine.

FRANK. I think there's some soda...

HAZEL. I'm bushed. I think I'll just take a shower, get some supper, and go to bed early.

FRANK. You always say that. You don't get out enough.

HAZEL. Maybe one of these days I'll borrow some of your energy.

FRANK. They wear you down that much at work?

HAZEL. They can only make you as tired as you feel.

FRANK. Right.

HAZEL. But you go ahead. A little swig to get those muscles going for my package.

FRANK. You don't mind?

HAZEL. That's why I brought it. (*FRANK opens the scotch and takes a swig. HAZEL all but swoons watching him. HE laughs.*) What's so funny?

FRANK. I was thinking how Jennifer always went nuts when you gave us something for taking a delivery.

HAZEL. Jennifer never seemed like the easiest person to please—I'm sorry, but the walls are so thin.

FRANK. Both ways.

HAZEL. Yes... Well, maybe if you're finished, we could...

FRANK. You're a very handsome woman, Hazel.

HAZEL. "Handsome?"

FRANK. It means beautiful without making it sound like I'm coming on to you.

HAZEL. Help me get this box into the wagon before I start blushing.

FRANK. Seriously. One of the few things Jennifer and I agreed on was you were too shy for your own good. Always giving us little gifts for accepting your packages. Like you're afraid you'll be in debt.

HAZEL. I just want to be polite.

FRANK. Well, polite is no longer allowed. You owe me a soda. No, no! Not a word!

(FRANK hurries off stage right again. HAZEL notices the binoculars. SHE picks them up and crosses to the window with them and looks out. FRANK returns cracking open a can of soda.)

FRANK. *(As HE enters.)* Take a look at old Kruger. He's sound asleep holding that paper!

HAZEL. Who?

FRANK. Kruger. The butcher. Here, look.

(FRANK adjusts the binoculars.)

HAZEL. *(Looking through the binoculars.)* He's so close!

FRANK. Better than TV.

HAZEL. *(Looking around the apartment.)* You got rid of your set?

FRANK. Someone offered me a few bucks. I never watched it anyway.

HAZEL. Oh, Frank!

FRANK. It's no great crisis. I want to watch something special, I can always see it on the Rodriguez set over there.

HAZEL. Maybe I could...

FRANK. Sshh, now. Here, look up there. That's the Sikh family. You know, the ones with the turbans? You'd be surprised what they eat. *(Beat.)* What do you see?

HAZEL. Somebody behind a refrigerator door.

FRANK. Isn't that great?

HAZEL. But you can see the gizmos on the fridge door, right?

HAZEL. There's some sort of calendar and a couple of notes.

FRANK. A shopping list, I think.

HAZEL. I don't know. I can't see that clearly...

FRANK. What else would you put on a fridge door? It's kind of nice knowing Sikhs do the same thing as other people. Gives you an insight into their lives, you know. *(SHE hands him the binoculars.)* Well, here's to greater insights into our neighbors!

(FRANK and HAZEL each take a swig from their respective drinks. HE then clears a spot for her on the couch. HAZEL sits.)

HAZEL. Didn't you have a chair in here?

FRANK. Nobody ever sat on it. I was better off making a buck on it while the springs were still in good shape.

HAZEL. You're certainly cutting down.

FRANK. I wish all of it was my idea.

HAZEL. You must really miss your son.

FRANK. Billy? He's probably better off with his mother.

HAZEL. Do you know where that is yet?

FRANK. The only thing that damn detective tells me is she's not listed in any big city phone directory.

HAZEL. They might have changed their names.

FRANK. Or not be living in a big city.

HAZEL. Or even be dead.

FRANK. I don't like thinking that.

HAZEL. Of course. You want to stay positive.

FRANK. Absolutely. (*Beat.*) Mind me asking what's in all these mysterious boxes you're always getting? It's like they've deliberately erased...

HAZEL. Who the sender is? Yes, I made sure of that. The last thing I need is a lot of gossip in the building.

FRANK. What is it, some kind of contraband?

HAZEL. Oh, Frank.

FRANK. I know! It's stuff from that Hollywood place with all the sexy lingerie!

HAZEL. No. Not at all...

FRANK. I bet it is! (*HAZEL begins to cry.*) Hey, hey! I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything.

HAZEL. It's okay. It's nothing.

FRANK. It's not okay. I've offended you.

HAZEL. You didn't, you really didn't. It's just that after all these years we seem to know so little about one another.

(FRANK hands her a handkerchief. SHE takes one look at it and puts it aside in favor of a tissue of her own.)

FRANK. City living.

HAZEL. It's been only a few days since I've been in here and your TV and chair are gone! If I hadn't

dropped in tonight, I would've never known! And you know so little about me you can think I'd wear flimsy underwear!

FRANK. It was a joke. I didn't mean to upset you.

HAZEL. Well, at least you've kept your sense of humor. That's positive.

FRANK. Like the ballplayers say, take it one day at a time.

HAZEL. What a lovely thought!

(FRANK starts to make a move on her. HAZEL abruptly rises.)

HAZEL. I've imposed enough. You have to get back to your binoculars.

FRANK. Uh-uh. I want to know one thing about you I don't know. That's the only way you leave.

HAZEL. Don't be silly.

FRANK. You just said we know so little about each other. But now you know about my chair and TV. So it's your turn.

HAZEL. One fact?

FRANK. Anything at all. Give.

HAZEL. Well...

FRANK. What?

HAZEL. My husband was always trying to kill me.

FRANK. Excuse me?

HAZEL. You probably didn't even know I was once married.

FRANK. No...

HAZEL. Well, now you do. So we're even.

FRANK. What do you mean he was always trying to kill you?

HAZEL. That would be a second fact. Even third because you didn't know I was married. You've only given me one.

FRANK. Okay, okay...I've had pizza for supper all week!

HAZEL. I can see that. That doesn't count.

FRANK. How about...Fleming – that school crossing guard on the third floor across the way?

HAZEL. Yes?

FRANK. I bet you didn't know she kneels down next to her bed to say prayers every night.

HAZEL. That's not about you.

FRANK. All right, then. When she blesses herself at the end, I do it with her. Every night.

HAZEL. That's beautiful, Frank.

FRANK. Your turn. Your husband tried to kill you?

HAZEL. I guess fair's fair.

FRANK. Right.

HAZEL. It was nothing I could really prove to the police.

FRANK. Maybe you were imagining it.

HAZEL. No. But it was all so indirect. Like he'd wait until I was behind the car to start backing up. Or he'd insist we go parachute jumping when he knew I was terrified of heights.

FRANK. And you'd give in?

HAZEL. He always had a good argument. Like he'd say parachute jumping had nothing to do with heights, it was so above what I thought of as heights, it was like solid ground. I wasn't terrified

of bottoms, was I? Well, that was where we'd be landing.

FRANK. Smooth talker.

HAZEL. Eddie? Oh, they invented the word smooth for him. One time he wanted me to go duck hunting with him in a swamp I knew had no ducks. That's exactly why we had to go there, he said, because ducks knew hunters assumed they wouldn't be there, so that was exactly where they always gathered.

FRANK. Where's this guy now?

HAZEL. He took off with his secretary years ago. I've never had your interest to hire a private detective to look for him...

FRANK. The lives some people lead, huh?

HAZEL. Believe me, you're better off out of it up here. I know money's tight, but there are compensations.

FRANK. I could tell you something else.

HAZEL. What?

FRANK. One for one?

HAZEL. Well...

FRANK. You're the one who started this game.

HAZEL. I did?

FRANK. Absolutely.

HAZEL. Okay. One for one.

(FRANK crosses to the window with his bottle and the binoculars.)

FRANK. I've stopped looking for Billy and Jennifer. I can't afford the private eye any more.

HAZEL. Doesn't sound like he was going to find them anyway.

FRANK. That's not the point, is it? At least I was trying. (*Peers outside through the binoculars.*) I was showing some curiosity in their whereabouts.

HAZEL. I suppose.

FRANK. You don't have curiosity about your wife and son, what can you have curiosity about?

HAZEL. I never heard it put that way before.

FRANK. Morrison should take off a few pounds.

HAZEL. I think being out of a job is starting to get to you, Frank. You're beating yourself up for no good reason. If you don't have the money for this detective, you don't have the money.

FRANK. I've been thinking about borrowing it.

HAZEL. I don't think that would be such a good idea!

(*FRANK takes in her alarm and then returns to the binoculars.*)

FRANK. Ever see that Winans kid without a headset on? He's going to be deaf before he's 15.

HAZEL. Face it: You're likely to be out of work for years. You'll need to keep your lenders for important things.

FRANK. I thought you wanted me to be positive.

HAZEL. Without being practical, that can lead to trouble.

FRANK. Good point. Okay. Your turn.

HAZEL. My turn?

FRANK. One for one, remember?

HAZEL. Yes, I did promise that... Okay! Eddie didn't run away with his secretary. I just say that when his mother or these policemen she's always

sending around ask. You'd think after all this time she'd get the message.

FRANK. So where is Eddie?

HAZEL. In his duck swamp. He was right about that. Hunters never seem to go there.

(A TELEPHONE RINGS offstage.)

HAZEL. That sounds like my apartment.

FRANK. Thin walls. Go ahead. I'll bring your package along.

HAZEL. Thanks.

(HAZEL hurries out through the door, leaving it ajar. FRANK collapses in his chair at the window with the binoculars. The telephone ringing stops. Hazel's voice can be heard dimly through the wall. FRANK takes another heavy slug of whiskey. HE looks at the carton in the kiddie wagon and trains his binoculars on it. FRANK suddenly puts the binoculars aside, gets up, and goes to the box. HE looks for a way to open it without tearing it but can't find any. HE takes out a pocketknife and slits open the box. Inside HE finds 12 bottles of the same kind of scotch Hazel has given him. Hazel's offstage voice stops. FRANK quickly reseals the carton as best he can. HE then runs back to the window with the binoculars. HAZEL enters.)

HAZEL. First they call the wrong number. Then they ask a million questions and get annoyed when you don't answer them.

FRANK. *(Looking out the window through the binoculars.)* Know what you mean.

HAZEL. Who you looking at?

FRANK. Oh, the Sikh family. The thing they took out of the refrigerator was some kind of salad.

HAZEL. Did I make a mistake with you, Frank?

FRANK. Mistake?

HAZEL. Telling you about Eddie and all?

FRANK. Why would you say that? You had something on your mind, you wanted to get it off.

HAZEL. I wouldn't have mentioned it at all except it seemed important to you.

FRANK. No. Thank you. Really. I value your confidence.

HAZEL. Please do.

FRANK. Absolutely.

HAZEL. The last thing I want is for you to feel awkward about it.

FRANK. No way.

HAZEL. Maybe I should've invented something. Even some nonsense about that lingerie place.

FRANK. Relax, Hazel. It's okay. Really.

HAZEL. I don't want to lose my favorite neighbor.

FRANK. Won't happen. Promise.

HAZEL. Good. (*FRANK goes back to looking out the window.*) I should get this box out of your way.

FRANK. Oh, right...

HAZEL. No, no. You go on doing what you're doing. I can handle it.

FRANK. You sure?

HAZEL. Go ahead. (*SHE begins pulling the wagon towards the door.*) And don't get so down on yourself. There's something out there for you. I just know it.

FRANK. Thanks.

(HAZEL exits with the wagon. FRANK watches her go for a moment then crosses to the door and locks it. HE then looks at the bottle in his hand and returns to the window. FRANK takes a deep slug and looks out once again through his binoculars.)

FRANK. A gym membership would do you a world of good, Morrison!

(LIGHTS FADE OUT.)

HIGH, THIN CIRRUS

by Michael Downend

1 Man / 1 Woman

CHARACTERS:

GENEVIEVE; *an elderly woman, stoic, sentimental*

DREW; *an elderly man. Proud but defeat shows in the seams*

SETTING: *A place for old people. It is not a nursing home or is it a hospital. It is not, essentially, a place that is real. In fact, the play takes place in the mind, in the memory, of Genevieve. The barest of scenic elements are all that need be provided: chairs, preferably wooden (Adirondack chairs will do nicely), an occasional light and some indication of the grounds outside the home should be provided. Think of a long lawn running down to a beach and the ocean. The presence of the ocean nearby must be clear: the sound of gulls, waves, a foghorn, the bell from a buoy.*

AT RISE: *Ocean sounds are heard. An old Victrola plays Glen Gray and the Casa Loma Orchestra's version of "Just a Fair Weather Friend" or something similar. GENEVIEVE sits on*

a wooden chair looking out to the sea. We hear her speak as the music goes under and out.

GENEVIEVE. We are, all of us here, old, most people would say. We no longer lead useful lives as the expression goes. What they mean, I think, is that society has determined our lives no longer suit its needs. Or, more likely, society doesn't really know what to do with us. But, we still live and we must be...someplace...and this is where we find ourselves. This is where...we are. A state in which we find ourselves. Some of us, many of us, don't really believe we're old, we don't feel we're old. We look in the mirror and still see that girl we were. So young, so hopeful. It's true. No gray hair; no wrinkles. So much promise. Choices were made...have been made...for us though – for reasons not always clear...to us...we could not make these choices for ourselves. Our opinions, our needs, our real needs, are rarely considered. We come to places like this resentful – yet resigned. What we were... then... what we are. The resentment mostly passes with time. The resignation becomes acceptance. We measure time by the distance between visits from these strangers we once called our children. Or, between episodes of All My Children.

(Beat. The sound of a small airplane is heard rising then falling as it passes overhead and out of sight.)

GENEVIEVE. *(Continued.)* Oh, yes. I nearly forgot. There was someone who came to see me. No. To be precise, he did not come to see me... *(GENEVIEVE is now standing on the "grounds")*

looking out to the sea. Two of the wooden chairs are nearby. DREW appears and stands watching her. SHE is startled by his presence.) Oh.

DREW. I'm sorry.

GENEVIEVE. No, please. I just didn't...see you coming.

DREW. *(Looks to the sky.)* Cooling off some.

GENEVIEVE. Oh, yes. Yes it is, isn't it.

DREW. Taking the air?

GENEVIEVE. Yes. *(Gesturing.)* The flowers. Aren't they lovely? I'm especially fond of the marigolds.

DREW. Those over there?

GENEVIEVE. *(Laughing.)* Oh my no. Those are zinnias. Scarlet zinnias.

DREW. I never did well with flowers.

GENEVIEVE. I had a lovely garden once. Goatsbeard, so good-looking... even gone to seed... and globethistle and heliopsis and... sweetwilliams and columbines. And always, along the edge, sweet alyssum and lines and lines of marigolds.

DREW. Would you like to sit?

GENEVIEVE. Oh, I don't think so. I really should be getting in. The breeze seems to be stirring. I don't take the cold so easily these days.

DREW. Well, here now. Let's do something about that. *(HE removes his cardigan and offers it.)*

GENEVIEVE. Really. I don't—

DREW. I insist. Let me help you.

GENEVIEVE. Well, aren't you the gentleman. *(SHE puts on the cardigan.)*

DREW. There. (*Indicates the chairs.*) Now. Which side would you like?

GENEVIEVE. Well, which side would you like?

DREW. I'll take this one. Otherwise you'll be on my bad ear.

GENEVIEVE. My mother used to say stay out of the wind with your ear – whenever I had a bad ear, that is.

DREW. I'm deaf in that ear.

GENEVIEVE. Oh, dear. I am sorry.

DREW. Look at that sky. It'll rain tomorrow.

GENEVIEVE. My. I never would have guessed. It's such a love—

DREW. (*Overlapping.*) Mares' tails. You see them up there? High, thin cirrus. And the breeze picking up? Mackerel skies and mares' tails make tall ships carry low sails.

GENEVIEVE. Oh.

(*SHE looks at the sky for an answer.*)

DREW. Those clouds. Look like horses' tails. Cirrus clouds. Now that wouldn't mean a thing but some nice weather coming along...that's what you were thinking...except for the breeze. Notice how it's turned around? This morning from the west. This afternoon – where's it coming from now?

GENEVIEVE. Why, I just don't know. I was never very good with directions.

DREW. East. Turned around out of the east. Those mares' tails aren't such a good thing after all, pretty as you think they are. It will rain tomorrow by this time. I promise you.

GENEVIEVE. Oh, my.

DREW. You just can't say high thin cirrus – good weather. You always have to watch which way the wind's blowing. Put the two together. Then you know. West wind – good. East wind – not so good. (*Beat. HE looks to the sky.*) Where are you from?

GENEVIEVE. Albany...New York. (*Beat. SHE stares at him.*) Have you forgotten me?

DREW. I'm far from home. Where home was. (*Pause. HE looks at her as though recalling – what?*) A long time ago...

GENEVIEVE. And where was home for you?

DREW. Everywhere. Just about everywhere you might say. Army Air Corps. (*DREW riffs on an old WWII tune.*) Nothing can stop the Army Air Corps. (*Beat.*) In the old days. Air Force now.

GENEVIEVE. I've never been in an airplane. I somehow couldn't bring myself to do it. I could never understand what kept them up.

DREW. Not much to it really. It's the wind, the air. Just like water really. You just can't see what holds you up. That's all. Keep up your airspeed, we used to say and you'll come out of just about any kind of trouble at all.

GENEVIEVE. My husband. He was an insurance man. My father, too. "No one has endurance like the man who sells insurance!" That's what my father used to say. My husband, he's gone now. He flew. And my daughter. Quite a bit, you know. They did try to get me to go. They would always say I missed so much because I wouldn't fly. (*Beat. SHE looks to the sky.*) I suppose I wondered if it would keep me up. Oh, I do remember; I know a

weather sign. My father taught me. Would you like to know? Can you guess? Please? Now, just look. You'll see it.

DREW. (*Looking hard.*) Well, let's see. No. I think you got me.

GENEVIEVE. The leaves! Look at the leaves. See? What they're doing?

DREW. No.

GENEVIEVE. Look there. They're blowing backwards. You can see their bottoms. See how much lighter they are. How white.

DREW. I do. Now. Yes, I do.

GENEVIEVE. My father said when they went bottoms up like that it was a sign of rain.

DREW. I'll be damned. Sorry. That's one I never heard of before. (*HE has really. Beat.*) Here. Let me show you another one. (*DREW stands with his arms extended sideways shoulder-high.*) I learned this one from an old Indian in New Mexico. He told me his people would put their backs to the wind and wherever their left arm pointed, that's where the storm would come from. So, when they camped they'd protect themselves from that direction.

GENEVIEVE. My word. (*Beat.*) What were you doing with an old Indian in New Mexico?

DREW. That's a long story. You don't want to hear it. (*Pause.*) I like that name. Genevieve.

GENEVIEVE. But I would. I truly would – and, oh my, I'm going on so asking you about your life history and I don't even know your name.

DREW. Drew. Drew Tippit.

GENEVIEVE. Well now. I must say that's a perfect name for an Army Air Force man.

DREW. Corps. Army Air Corps.

GENEVIEVE. Well, yes. Yes, of course it is.
(*Pause.*)

DREW. I went out there after the war. I took to all that...open...land. Some people think it's all desert and sand and snakes, you know. Not so. There are mountains. It's cool there...rising high...Sangre de Cristo up north. San Andres down south. And sky. Especially the sky. The air's so clear you can see a hundred miles. God, you could see the clouds, huge white cumulus, everywhere. Fair weather cu we called them when I was a flyer. (*Beat.*) It's not like that here. (*Beat.*) I bought an old place. Sort of a combination hotel, gas station, grocery store, saloon. Put everything I had into it. Turned it into a pretty decent place. Then I met the Indian. Came by looking for work one day. I took him on. He'd cut wood and truck it up to Albuquerque and he'd help out around the place. He was a lot like me. Liked the wildness out there. (*Beat.*) I called it Tippit's Guest Ranch.

GENEVIEVE. Oh, Drew. It sounds just lovely.

DREW. I didn't know what else to call it. (*Beat.*) My wife hated it. She didn't like the people, she didn't like the mountains, she didn't like the sky – always said the clouds would bring rain – she didn't like the Indian. She called him my wooden Indian because he wooden speak to her. She thought that was funny. She didn't like anything. So, she left. She just walked out one day. After that, it just didn't

work out for me. I suppose the business was never really that good anyway. I packed it in. Sold out to the Indian and moved east. I thought maybe if I came back where she was we'd get together again. She was all I had left. Don't get me wrong. She wasn't as bad as I made her sound, I guess. She just wasn't right for that part of the country. Sometimes she said it was just like another army post. (*Beat.*) She was really all I had in the end.

GENEVIEVE. And did you? Get together again?

DREW. No. Oh, I found her alright. She'd married a man with a motel up on Cape Cod. I asked her why and she said it was the difference between east and west. I left. I haven't seen her since.

GENEVIEVE. I'm sorry.

DREW. No need to be (*Pause.*) I suppose I'll go in now.

GENEVIEVE. Oh, please. I love having company. I really feel alone – here— I like your company, Drew. (*DREW stays.*) When I rode the train with my father, I knew what kept them up. Yes. When I was young – won't you come sit by me – my father would take me with him – did I tell you this? – my dear father would take me with him on his business trips occasionally. We'd get on the Troy, Ballston and Saratoga Railway and ride all the way down from Albany to Hartford. What a glorious time it was. You'd have loved those mountains, Drew. The Berkshires. So lovely in the fall. And sometimes we'd get off at Northampton and my father would take me to a wonderful inn there. Oh my, I wish I could recall the name...and we would dine and visit

our cousins...don't you think families are so important? Then we'd board the next train and go down into Hartford. That's the insurance capitol of the world, you know. He was in the insurance business. *(Beat.)* I would never want those trips to end. I remember that.

DREW. We did that, too, you know.

GENEVIEVE. Now isn't that something of a coincidence.

DREW. Oh, no. Not the train to Hartford. My father would take me to the lake when I was a boy. And...there were loons that flew low across the water at sunset and they'd make that crazy wail that loons make. *(DREW does a bad imitation of the call of the loon. GENEVIEVE laughs and applauds.)* I liked to watch them fly. When the sun went down we'd stand under the stars at the edge of the lake and he'd point out all the constellations. Perseus, Orion, that's the bull, you know, and Gemini. I still remember. Isn't that something after all these years? I don't think he really knew which was which. But, he knew all the names. And then, later, when it was dark, we'd lie on our backs on the warm sand, not making a sound, I can remember his breathing, and we'd watch the shooting stars. He called them the Perseus meteor showers, I think. And sometimes we'd see the Aurora Borealis, that's the Northern Lights, you know. *(Beat.)* I hated to go home, too.

GENEVIEVE. *(She sings.)* "I will gather stars out of the blue, for you, for you."

DREW. *(DREW looks at her, then up at the sky. HE wets his forefinger with his tongue and holds it*

up to the breeze.) The wind's picking up. High, thin cirrus. East wind. Storm coming. We'd better go in before you catch cold. (*GENEVIEVE rises. THEY start to leave. DREW sings, badly.*) Oh Genevieve, sweet Genevieve, the days may come, the days may go...

(GENEVIEVE joins him in singing for a moment. The lights begin to fade.)

GENEVIEVE. How my father loved that song. Did I tell you that's how I got my name?

(The SOUND of a small airplane is heard rising then falling as it passes overhead and out of sight. DREW and GENEVIEVE look skyward as it passes.)

(LIGHTS FADE OUT.)

HOT AND COLD

by Rebecca Ryland

2 Women / 1 Man

CHARACTERS:

JOLENE; *a woman from Cleveland*

JONATHAN; *her husband*

MEILING; *a pole dancer*

SETTING: *An upscale hotel room; Thanksgiving*

AT RISE: *JONATHAN and JOLENE enter their hotel suite. Both have been drinking. JOLENE enters first, with JONATHAN, her husband, close behind.*

JOLENE. I did not ask you to invite her to our room.

JONATHAN. You wanted her clothes.

JOLENE. I did not want *her* clothes. I wanted the pretty blue gown.

JONATHAN. The girl in the blue gown was gone.

JOLENE. So you just happened to pick, what's her name? Meiling? I'm not surprised. I didn't even like what she was wearing.

JONATHAN. Everyone else had left.

JOLENE. She's Asian.

JONATHAN. So?

JOLENE. You have this *thing* about Asian women.

JONATHAN. So you tell me.

JOLENE. So *you* tell me!

JONATHAN. I never said I preferred Asian women.

JOLENE. I did not say you said you *preferred* Asian women. I said you have a *thing* for them. And now Meiling is coming here.

JONATHAN. It was your idea.

JOLENE. It most certainly was not my idea. (*JONATHAN crosses into the bathroom as JOLENE flops onto the bed.*) You don't think she expects a three-some do you?

JONATHAN. I don't know what she expects.

JOLENE. What did you tell her?

JONATHAN. I told her I wanted to buy her clothes.

JOLENE. Yes? Then what?

JONATHAN. Then nothing. She asked the name of the hotel.

JOLENE. And you gave it to her!

JONATHAN. You wanted the outfit.

JOLENE. Not the person wearing it!

JONATHAN. I did exactly what you told me to do. I went backstage and tried to find the girl in the blue gown. She was gone.

JOLENE. If you hadn't waited so long.

JONATHAN. I thought you were kidding!

JOLENE. I was kidding! Well, sort of kidding. It was a game. It was a good time. I thought I would look sexy in the blue gown.

JONATHAN. She was gone.

JOLENE. So you said. So you just randomly chose another girl. Pardon me. Another *Asian* girl. And now some hooker from a strip club is on her way to our hotel and I think I am going to be sick.

JONATHAN. Get up. She'll be here any minute.

JOLENE. The room is spinning.

JONATHAN. I don't know how you get me into these things.

JOLENE. How much?

JONATHAN. How much what?

JOLENE. How much for that thing she had on?

JONATHAN. 200.

JOLENE. Dollars? Are you kidding? What was she wearing? Designer latex? No wonder she thought you wanted her body. You wanted her body.

JONATHAN. I was trying to please you.

JOLENE. Yeah, right.

(Knock on door.)

JONATHAN. That's her.

JOLENE. I'm going to be sick.

(JONATHAN tries to raise JOLENE from the bed.)

JONATHAN. Pull yourself together.

JOLENE. You brushed your teeth.

JONATHAN. You're drunk.

JOLENE. Thanks for telling me. Your teeth are still brushed.

JONATHAN. You might try it yourself.

(JOLENE falls back on the bed.) Forget it.

(Again, a knock on the door.)

JOLENE. Let me in. Let me in. Not by the hair on my chinny, chin, chin.

JONATHAN. You're sick.

JOLENE. I know. But don't let that disrupt your date.

JONATHAN. I did this for you.

(JONATHAN crosses to the door as JOLENE curls into a ball. JOLENE is not nearly as intoxicated as SHE puts on. JONATHAN opens the door.)

MEILING. You are ready for me?

JONATHAN. Sure. Come on in. Jolene, my wife. She's lying down.

MEILING. You want me lie down with her?

JONATHAN. No, no. A little too much to drink. She drank too much and she's lying down because she drank. Too much. Here, let me take your coat.

MEILING. You want me to take my clothes off now?

JONATHAN. Yes. Your coat. And then your skirt. If you have another. You brought more clothes?

MEILING. You want me take off skirt?

JONATHAN. Yes. I told you I want your clothes.

MEILING. For you?

JONATHAN. Yes. No. For Jolene. My wife.

MEILING. You look silly in skirt. I take off now?

JONATHAN. If that's all right with you.

MEILING. You ask Meiling she do what you want.

JONATHAN. I'm not sure you understood me at the Club. I offered you money for these. This

bathing suit, or whatever it is. And the skirt. I saw you dancing and—

MEILING. You want me dance for you?

JONATHAN. That would be nice.

JOLENE. (*Crying out from bed area.*) Oh!

JONATHAN. Maybe now isn't a good time.

MEILING. I give you good time.

JONATHAN. I'm sure you can. I didn't mean I wasn't having a good time. Let me hang up your coat. Is it still snowing?

MEILING. Very cold.

JONATHAN. I didn't expect it to be so cold here.

MEILING. You on vacation?

JONATHAN. Yes, I'm here on vacation. You know, a few days off from the grind. But then, I guess no one works on Thanksgiving. Well, almost no one.

JOLENE. (*Calling out.*) Jonathan.

JONATHAN. What do you want?

JOLENE. Would you bring me a cold rag for my head?

JONATHAN. A cold rag. Sure. I'm sorry, Meiling. I'll be back in a moment. (*JONATHAN crosses to the bed.*) Look, why don't you just get up and come in here with us.

JOLENE. *You* are on vacation?

JONATHAN. (*Wetting a washrag.*) She knows what I mean. I told her I was with my wife.

JOLENE. Like she believes that? A man asks a whore to his room?

JONATHAN. She's a dancer. Here's your rag. Go back to sleep.

JOLENE. Thanks.

JONATHAN. (*Crossing back to MEILING who has stripped to her panties and bra.*) Where are your clothes?

MEILING. (*Pointing to the floor.*) There, in corner. (*Begins to dance.*) I dance very good.

JONATHAN. Yes, I noticed. Sexy. Perhaps you should put your clothes back on.

MEILING. I'm sorry. You want to watch me take clothes off?

JONATHAN. I saw you take clothes off. I saw you take your clothes off at the club. You don't have to take them off now. Here.

MEILING. Then why you bring me here?

JONATHAN. I want to buy your clothes.

MEILING. There they are. You want? If you want clothes on or off makes no difference to me.

JONATHAN. My preference is off. But I'm not sure that's what my wife intended. I'm not even sure if it's what I intended. You are a very pretty girl, Meiling.

MEILING. Thank you. (*Dancing once more.*) You like?

JONATHAN. I like a lot. Can I get you a drink? Ice water? Coke? Bourbon?

MEILING. You buy me drink?

JONATHAN. The wet bar is open.

MEILING. Thank you, Jon.

JONATHAN. (*Crossing to get glass for MEILING.*) You remember my name? Jonathan from Cleveland.

MEILING. Jon-a-thon from Cle-ve-lon.

JONATHAN. That's right. I was trying to put you at ease. I'm sure lots of men approach you at the Club.

MEILING. Sometimes.

JONATHAN. (*Mixing drink.*) Are you a Mainland girl or from Taiwan?

MEILING. Vietnam.

JONATHAN. Really? You're Vietnamese?

MEILING. My family live in Da Nang. I come to U.S. make lots of money. Bring family to America. America good place to live. Mama San work very hard. Raise 13 children. Father die in war. I bring Mama San to America as soon as I have money. (*Crossing to JONATHAN.*) You like my touch you?

JONATHAN. I think I need a drink.

MEILING. You take drink and sit down. I make you hot.

JONATHAN. Meiling. My wife... My wife wants you to— to—. I want you to dance for me. For us. Then I'll pay you for your clothes and call you a cab. All right?

MEILING. Meiling do what Jon want. You ask and Meiling do for you.

JONATHAN. Fair enough.

(*MEILING dances. JONATHAN watches as JOLENE, pretending to sleep, observes.*)

MEILING. You want I take off my panties?

JONATHAN. No. Not now.

MEILING. You take off shirt, Jon.

JONATHAN. I don't think that's a good idea.

MEILING. You hot, Jon?

JONATHAN. Yes.

MEILING. I help you take off shirt.

JONATHAN. It's very hot in here.

MEILING. Jon have pretty chest.

JONATHAN. Yeah, same to you.

MEILING. You show Meiling.

JONATHAN. Show Meiling what?

MEILING. Show Meiling *big* man.

JONATHAN. Maybe you should take the money and go.

MEILING. Jon big. Jon nice. (*Pause.*) What is that?

JONATHAN. What?

MEILING. That. You have a disease?

JONATHAN. No, I don't have a disease. I don't know what that is. I must have hurt myself.

MEILING. Meiling clean girl. I go now. You pay money.

JONATHAN. I must have bumped it on something.

MEILING. I don't need any details. Call a cab. I'm out of here.

JONATHAN. Really, Meiling, I'm sure it's nothing. (*Groans in pain.*) Maybe it's something. (*MEILING grabs her coat and heads towards the door.*) Hey, where are you going?

MEILING. (*Opens door with hand outstretched.*) I'll wait in the lobby.

JONATHAN. Just a minute. I'll get my credit card.

MEILING. I don't take credit.

JONATHAN. There's an ATM by the front desk. I'll go with you. (*Moans again.*)

MEILING. I would prefer you didn't.

JONATHAN. What happened to your accent?

MEILING. What happened to your dick?

JONATHAN. There is nothing wrong with my... my... tool.

MEILING. Your *tool*? Never mind. I don't want to know. Pay me what you owe me. My mother isn't getting any younger.

JOLENE. (*Entering.*) And neither are you.

JONATHAN. (*Moaning.*) Go back to sleep, will you. (*Moans again, then to MEILING.*) I think you should go.

MEILING. What do you think I've been trying to do?

JOLENE. Seduce my husband. (*JONATHAN moans.*) What's the matter with you?

MEILING. There's blood on his penis.

JOLENE. What did you do to him?

MEILING. Whatever the defect, it was there before I came along.

JONATHAN. I think we should call the hotel doctor.

JOLENE. To put you out of your misery?

MEILING. Come on, I haven't all night.

JONATHAN. Jolene. I don't have any cash. Can you pay the girl so she can leave?

JOLENE. You want me to pay her? You want me to pay the girl you almost had sex with right in the room next to me?

JONATHAN. I wasn't having sex.

JOLENE. She just guessed your *tool* had blood on it?

JONATHAN. She asked me to show it to her.

JOLENE. And poor little boy had to do what he was told.

MEILING. I find most men like to be told what to do. It's a myth they want to be in control.

JOLENE. I'm sure if anyone would know that it would be you!

MEILING. Hey, look. Don't blame me. I didn't force him to take off his pants.

JOLENE. You didn't stop him.

MEILING. Why would I stop him?

JOLENE. Because we're, we're... sisters.

MEILING. Don't play that insipid game with me. We're not sisters. We're not even from the same planet.

JOLENE. I wouldn't sleep with your husband.

MEILING. My husband wouldn't sleep with you.

JOLENE. But my husband would sleep with you, I suppose?

MEILING. Yes. He would.

JONATHAN. Please, ladies? I'm hurting here.

JOLENE. Not as much as you will be.

MEILING. Oh, leave him alone. If you were giving him what he needs he wouldn't be looking for it elsewhere.

JOLENE. This has nothing to do with me and you know it. Men are weak imbeciles. Plain and simple.

MEILING. Yeah, so what?

JOLENE. So what? Does that give you the right to take advantage of him?

MEILING. Hey, I have the right to make a decent living. I support my mother and six brothers and sisters back in Vietnam.

JOLENE. Bravo for you.

JONATHAN. Ladies, ladies, I'm dying here. I think I'm passing a kidney stone.

MEILING & JOLENE. Fuck you.

JONATHAN. What did I do?

JOLENE. You slept with a whore, that's what.

MEILING. Yeah, and you're going to pay for it in more ways than one.

JOLENE. What's that supposed to mean?

MEILING. Look, you come off with this Miss Innocent act. The "we're sisters" and "I wouldn't sleep with your husband" shit. You came to my place of business. You came to a strip club. What did you think you'd find there? The Ladies Aid Society? (*JOLENE starts to respond.*) Don't even go there. You leave your nice little conservative home in Cleveland and set sail on some fantasy trip that turns upside down and you want to play dead in the water. You started the game and you were afraid to finish it.

JONATHAN. That's exactly what I said.

MEILING AND JOLENE. Shut up!

JOLENE. What do you know about it?

MEILING. I see women like you everyday. You want to take a risk. But you're afraid. You get right on the precipice then cry for help as if you're going to fall and never get back up. It's just a game. I don't care if you play. It doesn't mean a thing to me. I'll sleep with you or your old man.

It's all the same to me. But, if you don't mind, my mom and little brother's coming by in eight hours expecting a home-cooked dinner. And I haven't even thawed the turkey.

JOLENE. You celebrate Thanksgiving?

MEILING. What, you think I'm some sort of alien or something?

JOLENE. You're a hooker.

MEILING. I'm a woman. I'm a human being. I have a place on this planet. I fulfill a purpose. I have a life, a family and a home. I didn't make the law. I only break it.

JONATHAN. Give me a break. You played me for a sucker. Your poor mother and six, or was that thirteen brothers and sisters. What an act. I bet you've never even been to Vietnam.

MEILING. Twice actually. But born and raised in D.C. I put on an act because it's part of your fantasy. If I didn't, do you think you'd pay me \$200.00 for fake leopard-skin? I give you what you want and I get what I want. And no one is hurt.

JONATHAN. I'm hurt and I'm out \$200.00.

MEILING. You're wife is out the \$200.00 unless you're planning on crawling down to the ATM in your underwear.

JOLENE. No. I'll pay you. It was my idea to buy the clothes. (*To JONATHAN.*) Even though you bought the wrong ones.

MEILING. Missy, in the blue gown. You'd never have gotten her up here. She's strictly dance and be done with it.

JOLENE. (*Giving her the money.*) How did you know about the blue gown?

MEILING. Missy sent him my way. She figured he was good for more.

JOLENE. (*To JONATHAN.*) You lied to me. You did want more. You wanted more.

JONATHAN. I thought you might get into it. It's not important. I don't care one way or another. I thought maybe the three of us would... Oh, hell.

MEILING. Like you said. Weak bastards.

JOLENE. (*Handing MEILING the cash.*)
Imbeciles.

MEILING. Whatever.

JOLENE. I need a cup of coffee. With Bailey's and cream.

MEILING. There's an after-hours club around the corner. You might find something you like there.

JOLENE. On Thanksgiving?

MEILING. What else have you to be thankful for?
(*JOLENE considers this for a moment, then gets her coat.*)

JONATHAN. (*Moaning.*) Jolene, don't leave me. I'm in terrible pain. I need you.

JOLENE. Here's the phone. Call someone who cares. (*To MEILING as THEY begin to exit.*) Do you think you have a need to dominate the men who killed your father in Vietnam?

MEILING. Look, we can talk, but leave the penny analysis behind. My father lives in Sacramento. He's American.

JOLENE. I'm not surprised. Is it still snowing?

MEILING. Don't worry. I'll keep you warm.

JONATHAN. (*As JOLENE and MEILING exit.*)
Come on, baby. Don't leave me. (*Door slams.*)
Oh, God, I wonder if they'll do it. (*Writhing in
pain as HE dials number.*) Desk, desk. Do you
have a hotel physician on call? I know it's 4 AM
and it's Thanksgiving...But I'm passing a kidney
stone and it fucking hurts... Emergency? Yes, it's
an emergency. And please, I'd be so thankful if
you'd try and stop my wife.

(BLACKOUT.)

A LOVELY MOON

by Evan Guilford-Blake

2 Women / 1 Man

CHARACTERS:

JULIA; *31, usually conservative. There is, however, an earnestness and a desire-cum-naiveté about her, born of a buried wish for simplicity. She is a professional, having for the first time in her life, an experience that falls – completely – beyond the province of the professional world.*

LYNN; *about the same age, Julia's best friend of long-standing. Also professional but more worldly and acerbic than Julia. Think Eve Arden crossed with Nick Carraway.*

WARREN; *unseen.*

SETTING: *A wooded area just beyond Julia's ex-urban home just before 11:00 PM on a midsummer night.*

AT RISE: *There are night sounds; birds, crickets, soft dog-like howls. The light of the moon, fragmented through the trees, reveals the trees, fallen branches and leaves. The SOUNDS are heard periodically throughout the scene. In a few moments, the light from a flashlight is seen as JULIA and LYNN approach.*

LYNN. (*Off.*) ...don't know why we had to come out *now*. My God, Jules, it's almost eleven.

JULIA. (*Off.*) And that's why we *had* to come *now*.

LYNN. (*Appearing.*) You've got a dozen people there trying to give you a housewarming. I don't see why you couldn't've asked Matt or Greg to come along. I know—

JULIA. They're such—

LYNN. (*Continuing without a break.*) —they're creeps, but they're big and strong and male and I'm little and cute and out of shape – and female – and I don't see why you—

JULIA. Because *you're* my best friend and this is something very private and – *here*. Stop!

LYNN. *Okay!* (*SHE stops and, in silence, looks about.*) Here?

JULIA. Uh-huh.

LYNN. Okay, I'll bite. Why?

JULIA. This is (*Hushed.*) the place. Here— I marked the tree. See?

LYNN. (*Hushed.*) The place.

JULIA. (*Hushed.*) Uh-huh.

LYNN. (*Hushed.*) What place?

JULIA. Where— ...Lynn? We *are* best friends?

LYNN. Yes, Julia, we are best friends. We have been best friends since we were fifteen years old.

JULIA. And, if I were to tell you – something a little, well, peculiar, you'd believe me?

LYNN. Jules, over sixteen years you have told me a lot of little peculiars. And I have always believed you. Well, almost always.

JULIA. Okay. (*SOUND: A soft howl is heard.*)
...Isn't it pretty here? All the trees and the sounds.
So different from the city, like another world. It
feels so lush.

LYNN. Yeah; *anyplace* I have to look through
branches to see the sky feels different, like another
planet. I have a concrete soul.

JULIA. Look at the moon. It looks so much more
full out here.

LYNN. Julia, what is this! You've lived out here a
month and suddenly you're Jane Audubon? Come
on, let's go back in. *This* is – creepy. You can—

JULIA. But I—

LYNN. —tell me whatever you want to tell me on
the way. (*SHE starts off.*)

JULIA. Well, actually... (*LYNN stops.*) Actually,
it's not that I wanted to – tell you anything.

LYNN. Then why in hell did you drag us out—

JULIA. I wanted you to – meet someone.

LYNN. *Oh?*

JULIA. Uh-huh.

(*Long beat.*)

LYNN. It's the air, isn't it? The lack of pollution
is getting to you, Honey, you need a glass of wine!

JULIA. *Lynn...*

LYNN. (*With a sigh.*) All right, I'll bite. Who do
you want me to meet at – (*Checks her watch.*) –
10:58 at night in the middle of what looks like
Sherwood Forest even if it *is* only fifteen miles
from the Interstate? And, if you say “a man” I'm
outa here like the last taxi in a thunderstorm.

JULIA. No, it's not a man.

LYNN. Well, thank God for that. A man you could've invited to— *A woman!?*

JULIA. No...

LYNN. (*With a clap.*) I got it! It's twenty questions. Okay: Animal, vegetable or mineral?

JULIA. It's – a wolf.

LYNN. A wolf?

JULIA. – A werewolf. (*Long beat.*) Really.

LYNN. ...Really. (*JULIA nods.*) Julia, you are thirty-one years old. You have spent your entire post-collegiate life as a reasonable, rational, *realistic* adult. For God's sake you are a successful loan officer at a bank. No one on earth is as reasonable as a banker.

JULIA. Maybe that's the point.

LYNN. I don't get it.

JULIA. I *have* spent my whole life *reasonably*. I work in a reasonable job, I get reasonable exercise, I lived in a reasonable apartment till I bought this reasonable house. I save a reasonable amount out of my paycheck so I can have a reasonable and secure old age, and I travel to reasonable places and do reasonable things when I'm at them because peril is not a reasonable state. Maybe I'm *tired* of being reasonable. Maybe meeting a werewolf is my first step to leading a much less reasonable and much more exciting life. Lynn, do you know what—

LYNN. Julia, Julia – there are no werewolves. I know you have—

JULIA. I know, but—

LYNN. —*I know*, you’ve seen movies about werewolves, and television shows about werewolves and read books about werewolves. But they’re imaginary. They’re made-up monsters created to frighten obnoxious children at bedtime.

JULIA. *I know*, Linnie, that’s what *I* always thought. Until, until the first night I spent out here... Lynn – that night was so – glorious. It was the middle of June and after the truck’d delivered everything and I’d put away as much as I could stand for one day, I went walking. The only *other* times I’d even *seen* this (*Indicating the woods.*) was when I looked at the house, and that was from the back yard in the middle of the day. But it was barely dark, the sun had just set and the full moon – it was the first night of the full moon, and it was still rising; and everything was so – alive. The trees and the birds and, and – everything. And I walked right to here – just far enough from the house that all the lights’d vanished and there were only the stars and the moon pouring these – thatches of light onto the forest floor. And I sat down, and I watched, and I listened; (*Long beat. SOUNDS up.*) and then I heard this soft wail. I thought it was a dog someone had let loose and it sounded – not the least bit dangerous, but – *thrilled*, like it was baying at the moon for some new-found love. And I stood up and looked all around and then this voice-in-the-dark said – very gently – “Hello.” I thought I was hearing things, but then it said “Hello” again, and after I got over being petrified I – very reasonably – figured: Oh, well, if someone’s going to do

something, trying to run away isn't going to work, so *I* said: I've got Mace. Don't come near me. And *he* said: "I won't; please don't worry."

LYNN. "Please don't worry." The werewolf said this?

JULIA. Uh-huh.

LYNN. Come on, Jules, it's way past time to—

JULIA. No, wait!... Wait. I know it *sounds* strange but it really happened. We started talking and, I don't know, I stood here for an hour and we talked, about everything under the moon, *about* the moon and what happens to him when it's full, and all the things he does and dreams of doing as a wolf, being free and running wherever he wants to go, eating when he's hungry, sleeping when he's tired. He said that becoming a werewolf was the best thing that had ever happened to him. Except for the killing. But he sticks to sheep and deer and things like that.

LYNN. Well, that's comforting. Did you ask him his name?

JULIA. I didn't have to ask. He told me.

LYNN. Lawrence Talbot?

JULIA. Warren.

LYNN. *Warren?* You discussed the state of the world with a werewolf named Warren?!

JULIA. Uh-huh. And Lynn – he's really nice. Kind of shy; he doesn't like people to look at him because – well, you know.

LYNN. Oh, I *know*.

JULIA. But other than that – it sounds strange, I know – he's a lot like me. I really like him; we

talked the next night, too, and the one after that. The whole night! That's when he finally let me see him, just for a minute. He stuck his paw around that tree and he let me hold it in my hand. The fur is so soft; not at all what you'd expect. But by then the moon had begun to wane and he had to leave. Just before he did— He came out from behind the tree and he stood there, broad and furry, his teeth gleaming in his mouth and his eyes gray and shining. He was magnificent; and he put his paws on my arms very slowly and gently; and he hugged me.

LYNN. (*To herself.*) Oh, brother.

JULIA. And then he left.

LYNN. To...?

JULIA. Go back to his – other life, I guess.

LYNN. Which is...?

JULIA. We didn't talk about it. (*Quickly.*) But he said he'd tell me. When he came back.

LYNN. At the next full moon, of course.

JULIA. Uh-huh. Which is... (*SHE points to it.*)

LYNN. I see...

JULIA. I really want you to meet him.

LYNN. Julia – I – you're *sure* this isn't your imagination? I mean, moving, there's a lot of stress, you could—

JULIA. He was really here, Linnie. And he said he'd be back tonight. At eleven.

LYNN. Mm. (*Checks her watch.*) Well, *my* watch says three minutes after.

JULIA. He'll be here.

LYNN. Mm. ...Warren.

JULIA. Uh-huh. (*LYNN paces.*) He will come, Lynn. He's just – late.

LYNN. Jules. If there's one thing I can't stand, it's an unpunctual werewolf.

JULIA. You'll like him. He's very smart. And sleek.

(*Pause. JULIA listens; SOUNDS up; there is a loud HOWL.*)

LYNN. (*Sotto voice.*) Oh shit.

JULIA. Maybe, maybe he went to a different tree.

LYNN. Maybe he went to a different hospital.

JULIA. I don't understand. The other nights he was here at exactly eleven. – (*Calling.*) Warren? Warren, are you out there?

LYNN. Julia, come on. It's late, it's getting cool and there are – things out there that are going bump. “Warren” is a – nice thought, but...

JULIA. You – go ahead. I'm going to wait a few more minutes. Here's the flashlight. I know my way back.

LYNN. Jules, there *are* things out here – *real* things – that you *don't* want to be alone with in the middle of the night.

JULIA. I do have Mace. And this. (*A cell phone.*)

LYNN. Mm. That and a buck and a half'll get you on the subway. Come on, or I'll – go get Matt. *And* Greg.

JULIA. *I'll be fine.* I've come out here a lot; there's nothing dangerous this close to the house.

LYNN. I mean it, Jules – if you don't come with me, I'll go back to the house, grab them by their

perfectly coiffed hair and drag them back here with me. And I'll tell them why...

JULIA. Go ahead.

LYNN. *Julia!*...—

JULIA. I thought *you'd* understand, but...

LYNN. Jules... Shit. All right. Give *me* that. (*The cell phone.*)

JULIA. Wha— Why?

LYNN. (*In a whisper.*) I am going to sit – right over there and—

JULIA. (*Whispering.*) Why are you whispering?

LYNN. (*In a whisper.*) Because I don't want anyone (*SHE indicates a "werewolf".*) to hear me. Just in case? Okay? (*JULIA nods.*) Okay. I am going to take this and sit right over there, and if – anything... happens, I am going to dial the troops so fast it'll make your head spin. And I'll tell 'em to bring silver bullets.

JULIA. I'll be all right, Lynn.

LYNN. You better be. But...

(*LYNN hugs JULIA.*)

JULIA. Okay.

LYNN. Okay. You're my best friend. You're an idiot, but you're my best friend. I love you.

JULIA. Thanks. Just – don't make any noise. He's—

JULIA and LYNN. (*Together.*) —kind of shy.

LYNN. I know. – Right, over, there.

(*JULIA nods; LYNN moves away. As SHE does, there is a HOWL. SHE looks back at JULIA who smiles. LYNN shakes her head and moves behind a tree.*)

JULIA. Warren? War-ren... (*SHE sighs, leans against the tree and hugs herself. SOUNDS up, softly. Long pause.*) Maybe I said something I shouldn't've. Maybe I—
(*A paw appears from behind the tree. It touches her arm.*)

WARREN. (*Unseen.*) Hello. I'm sorry I'm late.

JULIA. (*SHE touches the paw.*) Warren, hello.

WARREN. (*Unseen.*) Yes.

(*JULIA sighs.*)

LYNN. Julia...?

JULIA. See? Warren, this is Lynn. My best friend.

(*Still unseen, WARREN extends his paw.*)

WARREN. How do you do?

LYNN. (*SHE moves to JULIA.*) Uh, how do you do, Warren?

(*LYNN slowly takes the paw, "shakes" and then releases it. JULIA, beaming, touches it, and the paw wraps around her gently, as:*)

JULIA. I've missed you, Warren... It's a lovely moon, isn't it?

WARREN. Yes. Lovely.

(*SLOW FADE TO BLACK.*)

SOME JUST HAVE IT

by George A. Freek

2 Women / 1 Man

CHARACTERS:

VERONICA; *a professional woman about 28*

MS. GRUNDY; *her boss, about 50*

MR. ARCHER; *a client in his 30's*

SETTING: *A pleasant, tastefully decorated waiting room at Veronica's place of business. Doors lead in various directions.*

AT RISE: *MS. GRUNDY, in a stylish blouse and skirt, sitting on a luxurious sofa, toting up a large pile of bank notes on the table in front of her. After a moment, VERONICA enters, apparently dressing. SHE is just buttoning up a blouse, which is very similar to the one MS. GRUNDY is wearing.*

VERONICA. Hello, Ms. Grundy... I wasn't expecting to see you.

MS. GRUNDY. *(Smiles.)* I'm doing the accounts this evening. Elaine is busy making the final arrangements for her wedding.

VERONICA. I heard she was leaving next month.

MS. GRUNDY. She's marrying Mr. Giles, that nice police sergeant. You might remember him.

VERONICA. Sure I do. And he was always extremely nice to me.

MS. GRUNDY. I'm sure Elaine would appreciate knowing that.

VERONICA. Actually, this is fortunate, Ms. Grundy. The truth is I've been hoping to talk to you... um, has Elaine's job been filled yet?

MS. GRUNDY. No, it hasn't. Were you interested?

VERONICA. Well, if you don't mind, I'd at least like to discuss it with you.

MS. GRUNDY. Of course I don't mind! But I hope that doesn't mean you're unhappy in your current position?

VERONICA. Oh, no... I wouldn't exactly say 'unhappy.'

MS. GRUNDY. What would you say?

VERONICA. I'm not complaining, Ms. Grundy, believe me. It's just that... I've been doing the same darn thing, night in and night out for over five years now—

MS. GRUNDY. That's right. You came to us straight out of college, didn't you? Was it Vassar?

VERONICA. Smith, but I'm beginning to feel like I'm really in a rut! Oops, sorry... Anyway, what I'm trying to say is it's getting harder and harder to work up any enthusiasm, if you know what I mean?

MS. GRUNDY. Of course, I do, dear. You know I started at the bottom, too! And it took me some time to work myself into a top position.

VERONICA. It's just that I feel I've gone as far as I can go in my current position.

MS. GRUNDY. I understand, my dear. I admire your ambition. And I'll be honest with you. I was already considering you as a possible replacement for Elaine.

VERONICA. (*Flattered.*) You were!

MS. GRUNDY. Why not? Naturally, you're beautiful. All my girls are that, but you're also intelligent, you're personable, and you're very well spoken. In fact, Veronica, my only reservation is that I don't yet know how you could handle a real crisis.

VERONICA. I've never had to deal with one.

MS. GRUNDY. And that speaks well for you. Of course we don't often experience a crisis. We pride ourselves on a sophisticated and higher-class clientele, but they do sometimes occur, and as you know, my dear, dealing with those occasional difficulties is one of the more important aspects of Elaine's job.

VERONICA. I'm sure you have more important things to deal with.

MS. GRUNDY. Oh, goodness, if you only knew! There are times when I truly envy the girl whose only worry is making a client happy!

(*MR. ARCHER enters, tightening his tie. HE affects a supercilious manner.*)

VERONICA. Oh, hi, Mr. Archer. I'm sure you know Ms. Grundy.

MR. ARCHER. (*Brusque.*) Yes, I do. Well, good evening. (*HE is about to rush off.*)

VERONICA. Just a minute, Mr. Archer... I believe you forgot something. (*SHE smiles pleasantly.*)

MR. ARCHER. No, I don't think I did. Goodbye—

VERONICA. (*Polite but firm.*) Then perhaps it was *my* oversight. However, I don't believe I collected for... services rendered.

MR. ARCHER. (*Pause. HE attempts to look angry.*) No. You didn't. And I am not going to pay!

VERONICA. (*Pause, amazed.*) I'm sorry?

MR. ARCHER. You heard me. I am not going to pay. I was... not satisfied.

VERONICA. (*Smiling, but slightly embarrassed.*) I'm sorry about that, Mr. Archer, but frankly, I find it a little hard to believe.

MR. ARCHER. I'm not interested in what *you* believe. And so good night! (*HE starts out again.*)

MS. GRUNDY. (*Commandingly.*) One moment!

MR. ARCHER. (*Slightly unnerved.*) Yes?

MS. GRUNDY. You have the right to fill out a dissatisfied customer's report, Mr.—

MR. ARCHER. That won't be necessary.

MS. GRUNDY. I was saying you have the right to fill out a dissatisfied customer's report, sir, but before you leave you will pay the amount agreed to in your consumer's contract.

MR. ARCHER. Oh, I will, will I! And if I don't, what do you intend to do? Call the police! (*HE snorts derisively.*)

MS. GRUNDY. Absolutely!

MR. ARCHER. What! You're bluffing!

MS. GRUNDY. (*Coolly.*) Veronica, please ring the station and ask for Sergeant Giles.

VERONICA. (*Shrugs, to MR. ARCHER, reaching for the phone.*) I'm sorry.

MR. ARCHER. (*Begins to crumble.*) Now wait a minute. Look... I'm sure we can settle this among ourselves.

MS. GRUNDY. That will be very simple, Mr. Archer. You simply pay what you owe.

MR. ARCHER. (*Defeated.*) Look... Ms. Gumby...

MS. GRUNDY. (*Annoyed.*) Grundy!

MR. ARCHER. Grundy, of course, sorry! And look... I'm really sorry about the way I just acted—

MS. GRUNDY. Your apology is accepted, and this can all be forgotten as soon as you settle your account. And as I said, if you were not satisfied with the service, we have dissatisfied customer forms available at the—

MR. ARCHER. No, no! The service was *very* satisfactory. (*To VERONICA.*) I'm sorry I said that. The problem is... Well, it's a little embarrassing, but I might as well just come out and admit it. I spent a lot of money on other things tonight. (*HE smiles weakly.*) You know how it is, and I realized a bit too late that I didn't have enough cash on me.

MS. GRUNDY. Heavens, Mr. Archer, that's no problem.

MR. ARCHER. (*Relieved beyond words.*) It's not! So... You mean I can pay up next time? Well, that's really nice of you! I truly appreciate—

MS. GRUNDY. What I mean, Mr. Archer, is that we accept all major credit cards.

MR. ARCHER. (*Crushed again.*) Oh.

MS. GRUNDY. Naturally you have one of those.

MR. ARCHER. Sure I do. (*HE takes out his wallet, removes a card.*) Um... Will this do?

MS. GRUNDY. That's fine.

MR. ARCHER. (*Relieved again and in a hurry to exit.*) Great! Well thanks. I really did have a great time. I'm sorry for any misunderstanding. Sometimes I guess I can be a bit obnoxious, but it's only when I get really nervous. (*HE smiles and is about to exit.*)

MS. GRUNDY. If you'll just wait another minute, Mr. Archer, we have an instant verification system. Veronica, would you mind running this up to—

MR. ARCHER. (*Shakes his head in dismay.*) Oh, God! (*HE shakes his head.*) There's no need for that.

MS. GRUNDY. It only takes a minute. Just bear with us—

MR. ARCHER. It's been cancelled! (*HE suddenly pulls a few other cards from his wallet and throws them on the floor.*) Here, take them all! None of them are worth the plastic they're printed on!

MS. GRUNDY. (*Aghast.*) What! We're not used to this sort of thing from our clients, Mr. Archer!

VERONICA. (*Elated.*) Oh, wow! My first crisis!

MR. ARCHER. (*Whimpering, shaking his head.*) Look, I know you don't want to hear this, but I've lost my job! My wife left me. She's taking me for everything I have, and I won't even mention the two

teenagers! I have no way to pay you! I guess I could give you a pound of flesh, if you'd accept that!

MS. GRUNDY. (*Pause*) I'm afraid you leave us no choice.

MR. ARCHER. (*Bug-eyed.*) You *want* a pound of flesh!

MS. GRUNDY. Please don't be a moron, as well as a deadbeat. (*SHE picks up the telephone receiver and hands it to VERONICA.*) Veronica, Sergeant Giles, if you please...

MR. ARCHER. Please! Can you wait just a minute? Look, I've been a good customer for a couple of years now! I mean couldn't you give me a break just this one time?

MS. GRUNDY. Whom do you think you are dealing with, Mr. Archer, the Salvation Army? We are not a charity, you know!

MR. ARCHER. (*Beginning to break down.*) I know, I know that—

MS. GRUNDY. How do you think your doctor would respond to your appeal for mercy? Or, more to the point, your *lawyer*! I can only tell you that in our humble way we are just as professional as your doctor or your lawyer!

MR. ARCHER. (*Softly, nearly sobbing.*) Then all I can say is... all professionals are avaricious pigs!

MS. GRUNDY. (*Stung.*) What did you say?

MR. ARCHER. (*Weeping, but now desperately defiant.*) You heard me! I said... avaricious pigs!

MS. GRUNDY. That does it! Veronica!

MR. ARCHER. That's right, go ahead and shame me, humiliate me! I don't care any longer! But whatever I do, it will be on your head! (*HE suddenly takes a pen from his pocket and makes a half-hearted attempt to stab himself in the chest with it.*)

MS. GRUNDY. (*Irate.*) I accept that challenge! (*Holding out the phone to her.*) **VERONICA!**

VERONICA. (*In control.*) Now Ms. Grundy, wait a minute. Mr. Archer, stop that foolishness! (*HE ceases his feeble gestures with the pen, and VERONICA takes it from him.*)

MS. GRUNDY. I won't be insulted!

VERONICA. Ms. Grundy, I'm sure Mr. Archer didn't mean to insult you. (*Sternly, to MR. ARCHER.*) Did you!

MR. ARCHER. (*Intimidated.*) I guess not. It's just that I... I'm about at the end of my—

VERONICA. (*Peremptory.*) Say you're sorry!

MR. ARCHER. Huh! Oh, all right. I... I'm sorry.

VERONICA. (*Wiping his eyes with a tissue.*) There! That's much better! Now for heaven's sake, we're not talking about a fortune here. I'm sure we can work this out. I know Ms. Grundy is always willing to be reasonable. (*Cajoling, to MS. GRUNDY.*) Aren't you, Ms. Grundy?

MS. GRUNDY. (*Grudgingly.*) Well... normally I am. What do you have in mind?

VERONICA. I'm sure Mr. Archer could raise the money if we gave him say... two weeks?

MR. ARCHER. Two weeks? (*A faint glimmer of hope.*) Yes, I think I could do that.

MS. GRUNDY. Now wait a minute! You don't expect me simply to take his word!

VERONICA. (*Quickly.*) And in the meantime, he gives us some collateral. Mr. Archer, you normally drive here, don't you?

MR. ARCHER. You mean leave my van!

MS. GRUNDY. All right, VERONICA! (*The phone again.*)

MR. ARCHER. But... how would I get home?

VERONICA. I can drive you. (*To MS. GRUNDY.*) And bring the car back myself.

MR. ARCHER. (*Against a rock and a hard place.*) Well...

MS. GRUNDY. I also want the title in our safe!

MR. ARCHER. What!

MS. GRUNDY. Otherwise, he might claim we stole the car.

MR. ARCHER. But I'd never—

VERONICA. (*Jumps in once again.*) Of course you wouldn't, Mr. Archer, but you're a businessman, aren't you? This is only common business practice. You'll get a proper receipt. It's really for everyone's protection.

MR. ARCHER. (*No escape.*) I guess so.

VERONICA. (*Very pleased with herself.*) So then, we are agreed!

MS. GRUNDY. (*Grudgingly.*) Well, I suppose that will be all right.

VERONICA. Mr. Archer?

MR. ARCHER. (*Annihilated.*) Yes, all right...
And now... can I go home?

VERONICA. Of course you can! I'll just take your keys. (*HE reaches in his pocket, hands her the keys. HE looks at them both, opens his mouth, but nothing comes out, and HE exits.*) I'll be right back, Ms. Grundy.

MS. GRUNDY. (*As VERONICA is about to exit.*) Oh, Veronica... (*VERONICA looks at her.*) Please stop in first thing tomorrow morning to discuss that promotion, will you, my dear? (*VERONICA smiles, nods, and exits.*)

(BLACKOUT.)

PLAY NICE
by Julie Cullings

3 Woman

CHARACTERS:

SARAH; *late 20's, stay-at-home mother of one 18-month old daughter, and the leader of a play group*

JACKIE; *also late 20's, a working mother of one two-year-old boy*

RECEPTIONIST; *a woman in her fifties*

SETTING: *The waiting room at an OBGYN office in a typical small town in America*

AT RISE: *A pleasant, inviting waiting room. The check-in desk center; a door stage right leads to the examination rooms. Four chairs, divided in half by a small table containing various baby, parenting and women's magazines, make-up the waiting area left. SARAH, dressed smartly, is signing in with the RECEPTIONIST at the check-in desk.*

RECEPTIONIST. May I see your insurance card, please?

SARAH. Of course. I know I have it in here somewhere.

(SARAH reaches in her purse, pulls out her wallet, and searches for the insurance card while

purposely revealing a ridiculously long string of wallet photos of her toddler daughter.)

RECEPTIONIST. That's a lot of photos you've got there.

SARAH. I'm a proud mommy. Can you tell? (*Showing her photos.*) This is my Addy – one-and-a-half going on 25!

RECEPTIONIST. I have a granddaughter about her age.

SARAH. Have you started potty training yet?

RECEPTIONIST. Megan just started walking a few months ago.

SARAH. Oh, see, Addy was walking at 10 months. Even now, she already knows her ABC's and 123's. Colors— She's got those down pat, and we're already working on potty training. She went pee-pee in the potty for me all last week! Not one accident!

RECEPTIONIST. Do you have your insurance card?

SARAH. Oh, right! (*SARAH finds the insurance card and hands it to the RECEPTIONIST.*) Here it is. You'll have to excuse me, when my Addy comes up in conversation I—

RECEPTIONIST. Looks like this one is different from the card we have on file. I'll just make a quick copy.

(*RECEPTIONIST crosses away to make the copy. JACKIE, dressed in a sweat shirt and jeans, enters the waiting room and approaches the check-in desk.*)

JACKIE. Sarah! How are you?

SARAH. Hi, Jackie. What a coincidence.

JACKIE. Small world, right? You here to see Dr. Matthews?

SARAH. Actually I am. Jeff and I have been talking about having another little one. Addy's so good with the other kids, I think she's ready for a little brother or sister.

JACKIE. Oh, how funny! Dave and I have been trying to get pregnant again for the past couple months.

SARAH. Really? You never said anything at play group. Are you having problems?

JACKIE. No, no problems. Just taking a little longer than we expected. I guess we were spoiled after conceiving Christopher on the first try.

SARAH. Have you looked at Dave's sperm?

JACKIE. Excuse me?

SARAH. It'd be natural to assume that you're the problem when really, it could be your husband. Honestly, Dave is a little on the elderly side.

JACKIE. He's 42

SARAH. A lot of issues can lead to secondary infertility. It's a growing problem I hear.

JACKIE. Well, there's no official diagnosis yet. Hopefully this is our month.

SARAH. I have to hand it to you— Taking on another baby with little Christopher running around? You'll certainly have your hands full!

(RECEPTIONIST returns to the desk.)

RECEPTIONIST. *(Returning the insurance card to SARAH.)* Here you go, ma'am. Please take a

seat and I'll be right with you. (*To JACKIE.*) Can I help you?

JACKIE. Yes, I have an appointment with Dr. Matthews at 1:00. I'm Jackie Thomas.

SARAH. (*To JACKIE.*) Did you say 1:00? (*To RECEPTIONIST.*) I thought my appointment was at 1:00.

JACKIE. Well, it could have been my mistake. My mind has been all over the place lately. I've been so busy with work and Christopher—

SARAH. Is it the terrible twos? I noticed he's been having some behavioral issues at play group.

JACKIE. Oh, really? What sort of issues?

RECEPTIONIST. (*Reviewing the schedule.*) I don't know how this is possible, but it looks like we have Dr. Matthews double-booked at 1:00.

JACKIE. You know, I can just reschedule my appointment if that would be easier.

RECEPTIONIST. Do you mind? I'm so sorry about this.

JACKIE. Just let her have the appointment. I should get going.

SARAH. Thanks so much, Jackie. To reschedule this appointment would be a nightmare for me. I mean, I'd have to get another babysitter on another date, when I've already wasted a half-hour here today. That's valuable time with my Addy that I can't get back. You know, those early years are so precious—

RECEPTIONIST. (*To JACKIE.*) How about next Wednesday at 10:00.

JACKIE. Perfect.

SARAH. But Jackie, Wednesday at 10 is play group.

JACKIE. No it's not. Play group is the third Saturday of each month.

SARAH. Oh, we changed that.

JACKIE. Huh?

SARAH. Silly me, I must have forgotten to tell you. Play group is now on Wednesdays at 10.

RECEPTIONIST. So the appointment time won't work?

JACKIE. Wednesdays...at 10?

SARAH. The group decided that Saturdays should really be all about the family. Plus we're all available during the week, so it just works out better this way.

JACKIE. You know I work Monday through Friday. Christopher is in daycare all week. There's no way we'll—

SARAH. —be able to make it? That's okay. I totally understand.

RECEPTIONIST. (*To JACKIE.*) Wednesday at 10 is good then?

JACKIE. (*To SARAH.*) Is this because my kid eats paste?

SARAH. Excuse me?

JACKIE. You heard me. Is this because Christopher eats paste?

SARAH. I don't know what on earth you're talking about.

JACKIE. Oh, I think you do. That play group right before Halloween? You know, the kids were

making those googly-eye bat puppets. You saw him, didn't you?

SARAH. Saw what? I didn't see anything.

JACKIE. I'm not oblivious, I know my kid eats paste. So what? It was a small sampling, which is totally normal by the way, but you made that stupid face.

SARAH. What face?

JACKIE. (*Making a face, mimicking SARAH.*)
That face!

SARAH. I did nothing of the sort.

JACKIE. Oh, please! You don't like my kid, and you sure as hell don't like me. That's why you changed the play group date.

SARAH. No, I told you why we changed it.

JACKIE. Oh, right, Saturday is for families. What year is this— 1952?

RECEPTIONIST. Wednesday at 10. Yes, no, maybe?

JACKIE. I'm not taking Wednesday at 10. I'm taking today at 1:00.

SARAH. You gave that appointment to me.

JACKIE. I want it back. You can have Wednesday at 10.

SARAH. I have play group Wednesday at 10.

JACKIE. Well, I guess you should have kept it on Saturdays then, huh?

RECEPTIONIST. Sarah's appointment was scheduled first. According to policy, she should get today's appointment.

SARAH. Terrific!

JACKIE. I've had this appointment scheduled for weeks! I took off work...

RECEPTIONIST. I'm sorry, Mrs. Thomas, my hands are tied. If you wait just a minute, I can see if the doctor can fit you in at the end of the day.
(RECEPTIONIST exits presumably to speak with the doctor.)

JACKIE. Of course you would try to get pregnant at the same time as me. Heaven forbid another play group member accomplish anything before you or Addy.

SARAH. Not everything is a competition.

JACKIE. Oh really? Is that why you made Addy practice using safety scissors after Christopher figured out how to use them?

SARAH. I'm not sure that chasing kids around with scissors really qualifies as "using them".

JACKIE. Well, as much as I love hearing your daughter count to ten in Spanish, maybe she should concentrate on learning how to share first.

SARAH. Addy shares just fine.

JACKIE. Are you kidding me? You saw her at last month's play group! Poor little Janie is trying to order an imaginary pizza on her Mickey Mouse cell phone when here comes Addy. It was like a hit and run! She just grabbed the phone from the girl's ear and kept on going, taking a chunk of Janie's golden locks to boot.

(RECEPTIONIST returns, continuing to work behind the check-in desk, listening to the ongoing conversation.)

SARAH. Well, with all the paste Christopher is eating, it's a wonder his insides aren't stuck together. I'm half afraid to even get the stuff out for craft time. I even thought about glue sticks, but he'd probably eat that like a lollipop. Of course, it's not the kid's fault he eats paste. He's only a product of the backwards environment in which he was brought up. Face the facts— If your kid eats paste, it's because YOU are an idiot.

(RECEPTIONIST looks up from her work, noticeably disturbed by the statement.)

JACKIE. Oh, I'm an idiot?

SARAH. Who but an idiot would let their child eat paste *and* allow their forty-two year old husband to party with the local college softball team.

JACKIE. He doesn't party – he's the pitching coach.

SARAH. Is that what they call it now?

JACKIE. Dave is a mentor to those young women. They have a lot of issues with their follow through and hip rotation.

SARAH. I'm sure they do.

JACKIE. The idea that Dave would be interested in any of his players is appalling.

SARAH. Yeah, who needs young, athletic girls in short shorts? I'm sure your mom jeans and circa 1997 Gap sweatshirt are totally blowing his mind. *(To RECEPTIONIST.)* Is the doctor ready yet?

RECEPTIONIST. I'm afraid not.

SARAH. Well, how much longer is it going to be?

RECEPTIONIST. Till next week.

SARAH. Is this some kind of joke?

RECEPTIONIST. Dr. Matthews was just called to the hospital for an emergency C-section. I'll need to reschedule both of your appointments.

SARAH. Are you kidding me?

RECEPTIONIST. Why would I make that up?

JACKIE. I'll just take the Wednesday at 10.

RECEPTIONIST. (*To JACKIE.*) One moment, ma'am. (*To SARAH.*) How about next Friday at 1:00?

SARAH. I suppose that's fine. Addy's going to be upset with me. That's when we have our weekly lunch and learn picnics.

JACKIE. Hooked on Phonics and organic celery sticks – sounds magical.

SARAH. At least I don't let my child eat paste.

JACKIE. It smells good. You know how kids are, it's the smell that makes them curious.

SARAH. Thank heavens Christopher didn't get a whiff of some Play-Doh. I would have had to call Poison Control.

JACKIE. Every kid eats paste.

SARAH. Addy doesn't.

JACKIE. I guess she prefers boogers to paste – a lot of kids do.

SARAH. (*Visibly frustrated and starting to exit.*) Good luck getting pregnant, especially since you're working against Dave's aging sperm.

(*SARAH exits. RECEPTIONIST, holding a file, crosses to the examination room doorway.*)

JACKIE. I'm really sorry about that. I don't normally behave that badly.

RECEPTIONIST. Some people bring out the worst in you.

JACKIE. So, Wednesday at 10?

RECEPTIONIST. No need. Dr. Matthews is ready for you now.

JACKIE. What?

RECEPTIONIST. Follow me, please.

JACKIE. But you said that Dr. Matthews—

RECEPTIONIST. —is ready to see you. Right this way.

JACKIE. Okay.

RECEPTIONIST. My granddaughter eats paste, too.

(RECEPTIONIST winks at JACKIE as THEY exit through the examination room doorway.)

(BLACKOUT.)

ELVIS LIVES

by Paul Tumilty

3 Men / 2 Woman

CHARACTERS:

TOM SPANNER; *the father*

ANN SPANNER; *the mother*

IAN SHELLEY; *engaged to their daughter*

ELSE SPANNER; *Ian's fiancée*

ELVIS PRESLEY; *himself*

SETTING: *A kitchen in a house in Newcastle, somewhere in the 1990's.*

AT RISE: *TOM SPANNER, seated at the kitchen table, his head buried in the newspaper HE is reading. There is a knock at the door. ANN SPANNER enters and crosses to the door, opening it. It is IAN SHELLEY who has come to see his fiancée.*

ANN. *It's OK pet. You wait here in the kitchen for her there. She'll be down in a minute. (SHE exits.)*

(IAN enters, remaining by the door. HE holds a bouquet of flowers and a box of chocolates. TOM does not acknowledge him and remains focused on his newspaper.)

IAN. *Hello!*

(TOM responds without looking up from his paper.)

TOM. Wai-aye.

(IAN nervously moves from the door to the other side of the kitchen. There is silence.)

IAN. Been a nice day...er...today.

TOM. Aye. *(Still reading his paper.)*

(There is silence again. TOM turns a page and continues reading. Off stage we hear ANN calling to ELSE.)

ANN. *(O.S.)* Your young man is here and waiting for you in the kitchen pet. He's having a long conversation with your Da, so there's no rush.

(TOM lowers his paper and looks at IAN who stares back at him. TOM shakes his paper and returns to reading it. The microwave oven on the worktop near Ian, PINGS. The kitchen door opens and in comes ELVIS PRESLEY, a late middle-aged man dressed in typical Elvis style; white suit, chains and rhinestones, and wearing dark glasses. HE enters and strikes an Elvis pose.)

ELVIS. Thank you very much. *(HE moves to the microwave, opens it and removes a plate. Then HE opens a kitchen drawer and removes a knife and fork. ELVIS walks to the kitchen door and opens it but before exiting HE turns and addresses whomever.)* Elvis has left the building. *(So saying HE exits.)*

(There is silence once again in the kitchen. IAN is gob smacked! HE puts the flowers and chocolates down on the worktop and looks around the kitchen, not believing what HE has just seen. IAN stares at TOM, willing him to put his paper down. TOM

lowers the paper to turn a page and sees IAN staring at him. HE starts to raise his paper to continue reading but is drawn by Ian's stare. HE lowers the paper completely and looks at Ian.)

TOM. What?

IAN. Did you not see him?

TOM. See who lad?

IAN. Him!

(IAN points to the kitchen door. TOM turns around and looks at the closed door. HE turns back to Ian.)

TOM. I canna see anyone there lad!

IAN. No. Not now he's gone, but he was there.

TOM. Who was there lad?

IAN. Him. *(HE strikes an Elvis pose.)*

TOM. Oh! Him. *(HE relaxes and prepares to pick up his paper again.)* Ah! That's just Elvis. *(HE picks up his paper and starts to read again. IAN is speechless. HE stares at TOM behind the paper. The door opens. ELSE SPANNER enters. SHE is a bright young girl.)*

ELSE. Hi Ian. Sorry to keep you waiting so long. I had to look my best and it took longer than I thought. Has Dad been keeping you amused?

IAN. What? Oh yes! I suppose so. *(HE is still confused at what HE has just seen.)* Err...El have you got any other family members apart from your Mum, Dad and sister? Living here I mean.

ELSE. *(Looking strangely at him.)* No. There's only Mum, Dad, Jenny and I here. Why?

IAN. You sure? Sure you haven't got any mad uncles or weird lodgers or something?

ELSE. Ah! (*The penny has dropped!*) You've seen Elvis haven't you?

IAN. Yes. Frightened me to death! Who is he?

ELSE. Elvis.

IAN. Yes. Elvis who?

ELSE. Elvis Presley.

IAN. Yes I know he looked like Elvis Presley, but who is he?

ELSE. Elvis Presley.

IAN. Elvis Presley? That would no doubt be, Elvis Presley, world famous Rock 'n Roll star. The one who died in 1977?

ELSE. Yes.

(*IAN looks at ELSE, as one would hearing this.*)

IAN. Okay! I'll go for it. Why not? Relative is he?

ELSE. Don't be silly. How could Elvis Presley be a relative?

IAN. Don't be silly! Me! I'm still struggling with the fact that he's... not dead... and living in a council house in Newcastle! Pardon me for being a tad incredulous!

ELSE. You're right! I'm sorry. I suppose it must be a bit of a shock. We're just so used to him that it's no longer a point of conversation.

IAN. Point of conversation! Are you mad? Point of conversation? You've got arguably the greatest living Rock and Roll star ever to exist, living in your house. Someone who is also supposed to have died thirty years ago and you say he's no longer a point of conversation!

TOM. (*Putting down his paper.*) Steady lad. I understand it's a wee bit to get hold of but don't shout at my daughter. She may be your fiancée, and you can shout at her when you're wed, but she's only tellin' you the truth.

IAN. The truth! With all due respect, how can it be the truth?

TOM. Can you prove it's not?

IAN. Prove it's... of course I can. He died in 1977.

TOM. Oh aye lad! There were you?

IAN. There? No. Course not.

TOM. So how do you know?

IAN. It's one of the most documented facts in modern history. He's buried on the grounds of his home, Graceland, in Memphis, Tennessee.

TOM. No he's not!

IAN. Yes he is!

TOM. Nah! He's upstairs having his tea.

(*TOM resumes reading his newspaper. IAN stares at him.*)

ELSE. I know it's difficult to understand Ian, but, believe me, it's true. August 17th 1977, Elvis turned up on our doorstep and asked if we had a room to rent. He's been here ever since.

IAN. (*HE is silent for a minute staring at Else.*)
Elvis Aaron Presley.

ELSE. Yes.

IAN. Of Memphis, Tennessee.

ELSE. Yes.

(*IAN pauses.*)

IAN. Jailhouse Rock Elvis?

ELSE. Yes.

IAN. Love me Tender Elvis?

ELSE. Yes.

IAN. Wooden Heart Elvis? In both English and German?

ELSE. YES!

IAN. *(HE is silent again for a minute staring at Else.)* Cobblers!

TOM. *(Standing.)* Now then canny lad, ladies. Ladies.

IAN. I'm sorry! But... Elvis Presley lives in your attic!

(The door opens and ELVIS enters carrying his plate. As HE enters HE stops and strikes a pose. NOBODY moves. ELVIS goes over to the worktop/sink and puts his plate down. HE returns to the door and strikes a second pose.)

ELVIS. Thank you very much.

(ELVIS exits. There is silence following his departure.)

TOM. Allus polite is Elvis. *(HE resumes his reading.)*

IAN. You're all mad! You're stark staring bonkers! I've entered the twilight zone. *(HE sits at the table and puts his head in his hands.)*

ELSE. Oh come on Ian. Don't make judgments on what you think you know. If you knew the real story, you'd understand.

IAN. *(IAN looks up at Else.)* The real story?

ELSE. Yes. The real story. Elvis arrived here August 17th 1977, the day after he was supposed to have died. He desperately craved anonymity. He asked if he could rent a room here with us. We had

to swear not to tell anyone, of course, but over the years he has looked after the local community in hundreds of different ways. Now everybody knows who he is and no one would ever tell anybody outside the city.

IAN. *The City!* You mean everyone in Newcastle knows!

ELSE. Yes. It's the best-kept secret in the world. Naturally, in the beginning, one or two people told others outside the city, but like you, no one believed them, so the secret was safe.

(IAN is amazed. HE says nothing whilst trying to come to terms with what he has just been told. HE starts to answer then stops himself, shakes his head and returns to thinking. HE does this a couple of times. ELSE just stands watching him with her arms folded. Eventually SHE speaks.)

ELSE. Well? What's it to be then pet?

IAN. What? What do you mean?

ELSE. What I mean, is how are you going to handle it? This extraordinary snippet of news that Elvis Presley is alive and well and living in Newcastle?

IAN. Well. I don't really know. I mean, it's almost unbelievable. What will people think? What will they say? How will they react?

ELSE. That's not what I asked you.

(There is a pause while IAN struggles with his conscience. TOM and ELSE stay quiet and watch Ian.)

IAN. Well. I suppose if it's good enough for the entire city of Newcastle to keep the secret then who am I to upset the apple cart?

ELSE. (*Rushing into Ian's arms.*) That's my Ian. (*SHE kisses him.*)

TOM. That's the right attitude young man. Good for you.

IAN. (*Smiling.*) Elvis Presley. Who'd have thought it possible? Still. Could have been worse. Could have been Jimmy Hoffa!

(*TOM and ELSE stop laughing instantly leaving IAN laughing on his own.*)

TOM. Ah! Ian. Now. You've not met our postman yet have you?

(*IAN stops laughing.*)

IAN. You don't mean....?

(*TOM and ELSE nod their heads.*)

IAN. (*Awe struck.*) No!

(**BLACKOUT.**)

A WORD ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHTS

VERNA SAFRAN, (*THE THRONE*), of Sarasota, Florida is the author of three successfully produced musical shows for children; *The Legend of Paul Bunyan*, *Hiawatha* and *The Prince and the Pauper*, which was recently optioned by Music Theatre International for distribution worldwide. Ms. Safran's *A Wedding at the Brothers and Sisters Coffeeshouse* won the 2007 Best Play of the Year award at Players Theatre of Sarasota. In addition, Ms. Safran, who holds an MFA degree in Dramatic Literature from Columbia University and is a member of the Dramatists Guild, has had two one-acts published; *Musical Chairs* in Mayorga's Best One-Act Plays of the Year and *The Rogue's Gallery* produced at Southampton Cultural Center and published by Aaron Press. Ms. Safran's exceptionally funny full-length comedy *WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?* turns the generation gap on its head when Ethel and Henry, both in their sixties, try to hide the fact that they're living together out of wedlock when Ethel's conservative daughter and her husband make a rather unexpected visit. *WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?* is available exclusively through Heartland Plays, Inc.

SEAN DAVID BENNETT, (*FALL OUT*), is an Edward F. Albee Playwriting Fellow. In 2009, he was awarded a scholarship to the Charles University Writers Program in Prague, Czech

Republic. He has previously been a member of the Montana Artists Refuge and three Kennedy Center Playwriting Intensives. Mr. Bennett studied playwriting with Pulitzer Prize-winner Marsha Norman, Lee Blessing, Arthur Kopit, and Ken Ludwig, among others. His plays have been staged in the U.S., Europe and Australia. Some of Mr. Bennett's full-length plays include *Too Old to Cry* and *Bring 'Em On! A critique of the Iraq War*, which had a successful engagement at the Arena Theatre in New York. Others include *George W. Bush – The Musical* and *An American Fall*. His short play, *Thirst*, won a Claire Donaldson award in Boston where Mr. Bennett currently resides. His outstanding full-length play, *A HOUSE DIVIDED*, which takes a scathing look at clergy sex abuse and the Catholic Church hierarchy, is family drama at its best, examining commitment, love, faith, truth and honor. *A HOUSE DIVIDED* is available exclusively through Heartland Plays, Inc.

DAN BORENGASSER, (*CRISIS HOTLINE*), a former syndicated humor columnist, has written award winning stage plays, screenplays, science fiction and children's fiction. He blushes to admit that one of his stories was nominated for a Hugo. Borengasser, who speaks of himself in the third person, lives in Springdale, Arkansas with his wife Sally. Other members of the household include Kitty Hodge who has an impressive collection of dead moles and Kitty Cobweb who can magically teleport her cat fur onto your clothes from a distance of 15 to 20 feet. Rounding out the family

is Barnes, a gentleman rat, who thinks that Borengasser is quite the guy. And who's to say he's not? Borengasser's playful full-length comedy, *A.R@UNI.GOV*, poses the question, "What if Adolf Hitler had married Emily Post?" among other strange match-ups under examination at the Bureau of Alternate Realities. *A.R@UNI.GOV* is available exclusively through Heartland Plays, Inc.

DONALD DEWEY, (*BOTTLES*), a resident of Jamaica, New York, has had some 30 plays staged in the United States and Europe. He has been a member of New York's Actors Studio and the Edward Albee Theatre Group among other organizations. Mr. Dewey has also published 27 books of fiction, drama, and nonfiction, including widely translated biographies of actors James Stewart and Marcella Mastroianni. His literary awards include those named after Nelson Algren and Tennessee Williams. Mr. Dewey's full-length play, *THE WINDOW*, is a mystery set in the self-important upscale world of art, which colors this dark, almost noir story of love, betrayal, guilt and fear. Not just a "whodunit" but a "whatwasdun", *THE WINDOW* is available exclusively through Heartland Plays, Inc.

MICHAEL DOWNEND, (*HIGH, THIN CIRRUS*), is a photojournalist (Member: ASMP, NPPA, EP), scriptwriter (Member: Writers Guild of America, Dramatists Guild, PEN) and licensed pilot. Mr. Downend, a Former U.S. Marine, lives in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico and Pennsylvania's Endless

Mountains. He is the writer/narrator of the award-winning PBS documentary, *A Journey to the Endless Mountains*, among other programs. *MIN*, his play for radio, recently broadcast on NPR, is the first in a series about women – ordinary and heroic – commissioned by public radio. *High, Thin Cirrus* premiered at the Actors Circle in Scranton, PA and is being expanded for the stage and film. Mr. Downend's full-length play, *AN AMERICAN WIFE*, written in collaboration with his wife, novelist and playwright Karen Blowmain, premiered with an Equity production to sold-out performances at The Electric Theatre Company. An amazingly heartfelt story of a strong-willed Irish Catholic family struggling to accept the challenges of their post WWII life, *AN AMERICAN WIFE* is available exclusively through Heartland Plays, Inc.

REBECCA RYLAND, (*HOT AND COLD*), has had her published plays produced in theatres throughout the U.S. for the past decade. Ms. Ryland, who holds an MFA in Acting/Directing, began writing as a child, completing her first novel at age nine. She has been mentored in her work by the legendary Zoe Caldwell and the late Horton Foote who once likened her work to Strindberg. Ms. Ryland moved from New York City to rural Kentucky where she founded a non-profit arts organization that specializes in theatre arts training for youth. Also the founder of Heartland Plays, Inc., Ms. Ryland is pleased to discover that many outstanding playwrights have chosen to live and work in smaller communities everywhere across

America and beyond where their contributions to the arts truly make a difference in quality of life. As Editor and Literary Manager, she works with many of these great playwrights helping to make their work more readily available to theatres for production. Ms. Ryland travels between her home in Danville, Kentucky and her home with husband Mark on their 440-acre ranch in Montana where the view from her office is stunning. Her full-length comedies *CHARLOTTE* and *A MAN WITHOUT MEANS* are available exclusively through Heartland Plays, Inc. along with her dramas, *A FIELD OF DAISIES* and *IMPROVISATION*.

EVAN GUILFORD-BLAKE, (*A LOVELY MOON*), is the author of over 35 produced plays which have received more than 120 productions across the U.S., Canada, Australia, the UK and Israel. He is Resident Playwright emeritus at Chicago Dramatists and a member of the Dramatists Guild. He and his wife (and inspiration), free-lance writer and jewelry designer Roxanna Guilford-Blake, live in the Atlanta area. Mr. Guilford-Blake has won 31 playwriting competitions; among them, the Aurand Harris/New England Theatre Conference and the Jack White Memorial awards for *Telling William Tell* [TYA Scripts] and the Texas Nonprofit Theatres and Saints and Sinners competitions for *Nighthawks* [neoNuma Arts]. He is the only two-time winner of the Tennessee Williams one-act competition – for *The Night Café* in 1992, and *Tio's Blues* in 2009. Some of his other published plays include *The Firebird*, *True Magic*,

and *Tales from Beatrix Potter* and notably *CEREMONIES OF PRAYER*. This full-length winner of the prestigious Utah Playfest competition revolves around the conflict between a volatile artist caught between the emotional extremes of a sophisticated view of the world mixed with a childish detachment from the realities of everyday life, and Christina his lover, an equally volatile ex-prostitute now pregnant with his child. Suggested by incidents in the life of Vincent Van Gogh, *CEREMONIES OF PRAYER* is available exclusively through Heartland Plays, Inc.

GEORGE A. FREEK, (*SOME JUST HAVE IT*), – and yes, that truly is his name – has had his plays produced at Theatre Unleashed and the West Coast Ensemble in LA, the Revolution Theater Company in Chicago, the Sandy Springs (Maryland) Theatre Group, the Pittsburgh New Works Festival, the 13th Street Theatre in New York, The Questionable Theatre Players in Sacramento and the Vortex Theater in Austin, Texas. He has also had productions in the UK, Canada, Malta, and Australia and at numerous high schools and colleges. Mr. Freek, of Belvedere, Illinois, has spent playwriting residencies at the New American Theater in Rockford, IL; at Southern Methodist University; and at Southern Illinois University and has received grants in support of his work from the Illinois Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. His play *Antarctica* was published by Smith & Kraus in 2008 Best Ten Minute Plays for 3 Actors and *She Is and*

She Isn't in 2008 One-Act Plays of Note by Desert Road Publications. Others include *Waiting for Julia*, *Who's Hamlet*, *Puck*, *Mondo Pizzicato*, *Fleas Can Bite*, *Chemistry Lessons* and *He Deserves It*. Mr. Freek's quirky serio-comedy, *GOAT DANCE*, which leans on the Theatre of the Absurd, is available exclusively through Heartland Plays, Inc.

JULIE CULLINGS, (*PLAY NICE*), has been in the business of writing plays for five years. Her first full-length comedy, *SHARED ASSETS*, won the 2008 York Little Theatre Original Playwright Contest in Pennsylvania where it premiered in June, 2010. Ms. Cullings' ten-minute play, *Advert Here*, has just begun making its rounds with a table reading at Eastern Illinois University with *PLAY NICE* written by special request for inclusion in TEN Short Plays by TEN Top Playwrights. Julie, who graduated from Albright College, currently resides in Carlisle Pennsylvania with her husband, three-year-old son, and cat. Heartland Plays, Inc. is proud to include Cullings' *SHARED ASSETS* in its list of quality full-length plays. This hilarious play revolves around five women at a diner, all with ties to the infamous "Martin Industries" from Ann, the owner of the diner, who got canned for throwing a meat and cheese tray at her cheating husband during a company costume ball, to Helen who was fired for her obsession with unicorns. *SHARED ASSETS* is by all means a comedy that will keep audiences laughing throughout and is available exclusively through Heartland Plays, Inc.

PAUL TUMILTY, (*ELVIS LIVES!*), was born in Leek in Staffordshire, England in 1950. Serving his apprenticeship as a navigation officer on the Queen Elizabeth 2 in the early seventies, he was a frequent visitor to the Caribbean. Little did he envisage that one day he would be living on one of the islands he fell in love with back then. Having settled in Roatan with his wife, Barbara, Paul fills his time by not only writing novels but also play scripts for theatre and radio. They have a rental apartment located below their home in the West Bay Area on Roatan, which keeps Paul busy between scripts. Paul's full-length comedy, *IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE BANK TODAY...* with co-writer Peter Nunan, is one of the funniest plays to hit the stage in years. This hilarious English farce comes complete with multiple doors, pratfalls and plenty of fast pace comings and goings between bank personnel and their female confidantes, bank robbers and the police. *IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE BANK TODAY...* is available exclusively through Heartland Plays, Inc.

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