

Ten-Minute Plays from the Guthrie Theater: 2001 Edition (1st ed. - 08.20.03)

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## Foreword

The writing of these ten-minute plays began with an unusual assignment—unusual, that is, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but not for playwrights of the distant past. Which is exactly why the Guthrie Theater—traditionally a classical company—pursued the idea to begin with.

We wanted to provide contemporary playwrights an opportunity to write for a company of specific actors. Shakespeare did it. Molière did it. And look at the results! That tradition, however, faded away for a number of reasons: economic, social, aesthetic. But what was lost in the fade out? How might playwrights be empowered by advance knowledge of their actor/interpreters? Hmmmm. These seemed like worthy artistic issues to investigate, not just for the Guthrie's summer conservatory program—A Guthrie Experience for Actors in Training—and these seven talented Twin Cities playwrights, but for the American theater at large. When you distance the actor-playwright relationship, what do you lose? When you rejoin it, what do you gain?

So, prior to the plays being written, we put the seven playwrights and fourteen actors together in a room for the better part of a week. They got to know one another through their writing, performing, and socializing—it was basically a crash course in professional intimacy. And it worked. The playwrights found inspiration in certain actors and went away to write roles specifically for them. The actors then had the opportunity to explore each nuance of their roles, and thereby help the playwrights refine their voices and visions throughout the rehearsal process.

Every production needs inspiration and collaboration. With these seven plays, both those elements were born in the relationship between actor and playwright. Now the need for collaboration moves on to a new set of actors, directors, and designers who can find inspiration in the unique poetry, logic, and detail of scripts that originated at the Guthrie Theater in 2001. Hey, this process worked for Shakespeare and Molière and for all of us who continue to find

inspiration in their plays. And the process worked as well for Brown, Halvorson, Kling, Lee, Marnich, Myatt and Wilson.

In the creation of new work, the actor-playwright relationship can offer so much more than merely rehearsing and performing a script. So why deprive ourselves—and the contemporary theater at large—of such a fertile, informative process when the results on page and in production are so compelling and the unique collaboration is such an inspirational way to get there? At the Guthrie, we felt this was definitely a project worth doing, and I think you'll find the plays published here worth doing, as well.

Michael Bigelow Dixon  
Artistic Associate/Literary Director  
Guthrie Theater

*Minneapolis, Minnesota*  
2003

**DIVE**  
**by Melanie Marnich**

## **Cast of Characters**

SAMMIE

SARA

DOLLY

DONNIE

All are in their early to mid-twenties.

All are slumming.

All are prodigal in their waste of body, mind, time and life.

## **Place**

Sammie's small, dank apartment in a city.

We see one ratty sofa. Maybe a chair.

## **Time**

Now.

# DIVE

by Melanie Marnich

## I.

*(Darkness.*

*Then, slowly, a light up on SAMMIE.*

*He stands with his arms at his side and his eyes straight ahead. Then something from high above catches his eye and his head tilts back.*

*His eyes widen in fear, horror. Then his look transforms to one of awe.*

*He raises his arms upward as if to catch something.)*

*(Blackout.)*

## II.

*(DONNIE, DOLLY and SARA sit on the sofa.*

*They sit.*

*They sigh.*

*They pick at scabs and at crumbs and threads on the sofa.*

*Sigh.)*

**DONNIE.** Got it. Got it. Finally. Got it.

**SARA.** What?

**DONNIE.** Who I'd be if I could be anyone.

**DOLLY.** Oh.

**SARA.** We quit playing that game an hour ago.

**DONNIE.** *You did.*

**SARA.** *(Under her breath:)* Christ.

**DONNIE.** Genet.

**DOLLY.** Who?

**DONNIE.** Genet.

**SARA.** Manet?

**DONNIE.** Genet. Jean Genet.

**DOLLY.** He is sooo dead.

**DONNIE.** Can't tell me he wasn't cool.

**SARA.** Are you retarded?

**DONNIE.** I just want to be Genet. We were playing a game. Who we wanted to be if we could be anybody. I want to be Genet. I'd be the thief. The fag. The bottom. The top. The cause. The cut. The pen. The blade. The bit lipstick. The cock. The hand in the pocket lifting the wallet. The prisoner. The heart. The heartless. And I'd have my own teeth till the day I died.

*(He loosens an already loose tooth in his own mouth, pulls it out, looks at it.)*

Dead to the root.

*(He tosses it on the floor. Some blood comes out of his mouth. He wipes it on his sleeve.)*

**DOLLY.** *(As if to compare with the tooth:)* Reminds me. My cactus died.

**SARA.** Really?

**DOLLY.** Yeah.

**SARA.** God, that's so sad.

**DOLLY.** I know.

**SARA.** Really sad. I liked that cactus.

**DOLLY.** Me too. Sucks.

*(Blood is still coming from DONNIE's mouth.)*

**DONNIE.** Hey. I'm really bleeding.

**SARA.** How'd it die?

**DOLLY.** I guess I killed it.

**SARA.** How?

**DOLLY.** Watered it.

SARA. Ooo.

DOLLY. I know, I know.

DONNIE. *(Still bleeding:)* Can I have a towel or something?

DOLLY. Tough it out, Genet.

SARA. Okay. This is just getting stupid. Where the fuck is Sammie? I ask him to get some popcorn and he disappears for an hour. Where'd he go? Fucking Jersey? Fucking—fucking—*Wisconsin?*

DOLLY. If he's not back in twenty minutes, I'll go get some for you.

SARA. You will?

DOLLY. 'Course.

SARA. You'd do that for me?

*(DOLLY kisses her.)*

SARA. Thanks.

DOLLY. Thing is, there are uses for a dead cactus.

SARA. Really?

DOLLY. Yeah. I stick bills and notes on the needles.

SARA. That's kind of brilliant.

DOLLY. At least it's original.

DONNIE. I think the bleeding's stopped.

SARA. You could patent it.

DOLLY. You think?

DONNIE. Thought I was fucking bleeding to death. Thanks for your fucking help, you fucking assholes. *(Patting his pockets:)* Cigarette. Cigarette. Anyone got a cigarette?

*(They all pat their pockets and check in the sofa cushions.)*

SARA. Found one.

*(She hands it to DONNIE. He starts patting his pockets—looking for a light. Can't find one.)*

**DONNIE.** Anyone got a light?

*(Everyone pats their pockets and checks under the sofa and around the cushions.)*

**DOLLY.** Sorry.

**SARA.** Nothing.

**DONNIE.** Goddammit.

*(He crunches up the cigarette and tosses it on the floor.)*

*(DOLLY notices something on the floor next to the crumpled cigarette and picks it up.)*

**DOLLY.** Matches.

**DONNIE.** Shit.

*(DOLLY tosses the matchbook on the floor.)*

**SARA.** I am so hungry. I wish Sammie would quit fucking around. I need that popcorn. It's all I can keep down now. Everything else comes right up. Popcorn's all I can eat. He knows that. Why's he doing this to me?

*(She starts to cry.)*

**DOLLY.** Sweetie? Sara? Look. Look at me. He'll be here in a few minutes. You'll be fine. You are fine.

**SARA.** I feel like shit.

*(DOLLY and SARA hug.)*

*(DONNIE notices something on DOLLY's back.)*

**DONNIE.** Dolly?

**DOLLY.** What?

**DONNIE.** Um, your back is bleeding.

**DOLLY.** Dammit.

*(She whips off her shirt and sure enough—a few bloody spots dot the back.)*

---

*(SARA sees DOLLY's bare back and her eyes almost pop out of her head.)*

**SARA.** Oh my God.

**DONNIE.** Fuck.

**DOLLY.** I told you guys about this.

**SARA.** No.

**DONNIE.** I'd've remembered this one.

**SARA.** Your back. Your beautiful back.

**DOLLY.** They're just scabs.

**DONNIE.** And—and slashes and cuts and gashes and—

**DOLLY.** Shut up.

**SARA.** *(Touching DOLLY's back:)* It used to be so perfect.

*(DOLLY puts her shirt back on. Everyone's silent for a moment.)*

**DOLLY.** Somebody say something.

*(Silence.)*

Somebody?

*(Silence.)*

Something?

**DONNIE.** What did you do to yourself?

**DOLLY.** Nothing.

**DONNIE.** But—

**DOLLY.** I let other people do it to me.

**SARA.** For money?

**DOLLY.** No. But they pay.

**DONNIE.** Fuuuuck.

**DOLLY.** Each little cut's the best pill ever. And these idiots who do it to me? Pay through the fucking nose. You know how much virgin skin goes for in this city?

**DONNIE.** I don't wanna know.

**DOLLY.** Sure you do.

**DONNIE.** No I don't.

**SARA.** But your skin...

**DOLLY.** So?

**SARA.** Your beautiful skin...

**DOLLY.** Is just skin. Like hair is just hair. It grows back.

**DONNIE.** Fuuuuuck.

**DOLLY.** Drop it.

**DONNIE.** You need help.

**DOLLY.** What do you know?

**DONNIE.** I may be a homo without a future and Sara may be a pathetic anorexic, but you are really sick.

*(All three start overlapping and adlibbing from here.)*

**SARA.** I am not anorexic.

**DOLLY.** I'm not sick.

**DONNIE.** You are too anorexic. You haven't eaten since ninth grade.

**SARA.** That's a lie. You're a lying homo.

**DONNIE.** Oh shut up.

**DOLLY.** Don't you tell her to shut up!

**DONNIE.** Like I'm gonna take orders from some freak who lets guys slice up her back.

**DOLLY.** Who said it was guys? I never said "guys."

**SARA.** *(Rubbing her temples:)* Headache. Headache. Headache.

**DONNIE.** Headache. Stomachache. Who cares?!

**DOLLY.** I have some Demerol in my bag over there. Help yourself.

**DONNIE.** You never offer *me* Demerol!

**DOLLY.** You don't *need* Demerol.

**DONNIE.** And she does?!

**SARA.** I do now!

*(Just then, SAMMIE appears. They all freeze. No one moves—including him. He's holding a bag of popped popcorn.)*

**SARA.** Sammie? You okay? We were worried.

**SAMMIE.** No you weren't. Here's your popcorn.

*(He tosses it to her. There's something weird, though. There's a tension in the air, an odd frequency that he's brought in with him.)*

**DOLLY.** You were gone a really long time.

**SARA.** Where were you?

**SAMMIE.** Didn't you hear the sirens?

*(Silence.)*

Right outside?

*(They all shake their heads "no." He offers no more information. Finally—)*

**DONNIE.** Were the sirens for...you?

**SARA.** *(Holding up popcorn.)* Sammie? It's not the right kind.

**SAMMIE.** Eat it.

**SARA.** But I like the microwave—

**SAMMIE.** Eat it!

*(She does what she's told.)*

*(They all look at each other. This is not the same SAMMIE that left the apartment just over an hour ago.)*

**DONNIE.** You okay, Sam?

**SAMMIE.** Yeah. Why?

**SARA.** You just seem a little...

**SAMMIE.** I'm fine.

**SARA.** You sure?

**SAMMIE.** What've you been doing?

**SARA.** Just...waiting.

**DOLLY.** And doing things.

**DONNIE.** And stuff.

*(SAMMIE kicks at the matches on the floor. He's definitely on a different frequency.)*

**SARA.** Sammie?

**SAMMIE.** It was just—just when I went out the door. Seconds after I walked out. I heard someone across the street scream. Did you hear that? Did you hear all the screaming?

*(They didn't. They're silent.)*

People were screaming and pointing up. A jumper, right? A suicide. From a couple floors above us. Brown hair, blue dress, bare feet. Head first. And everybody all around screaming and looking up.

**SARA.** Oh my God.

**DOLLY.** *(Covering her ears:)* Stop.

**SARA.** Oh my God.

**SAMMIE.** Head first. You know what that means?

**DONNIE.** Cut it out, man.

**SAMMIE.** That she didn't step out her window like some kind of coward.

**DONNIE.** Jesus.

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**EL SANTO AMERICANO**  
by Edward Bok Lee

**Cast of Characters**

CLAY, a man

EVALANA, a woman

**Time**

Present

**Place**

The desert at night

# EL SANTO AMERICANO

by Edward Bok Lee

**CLAY.** *(driving at night, 80 mph:)* that's because in Mexico it's normal to wear a mask. almost everybody does. silk and satin and form-fitting lycra. it makes the whole body more aerodynamic. you oughta see them flying around, doing triple flips in mid-air. they got these long flowing capes like colorful wings sprouting from their shoulders. they don't talk much, though. not the great ones. the silence is mysterious. it adds a kind of weight to them when they climb into the ring. get a guy with that much gold and glitter on him here and you know he'd have to talk shit. in Mexico they just wrestle. the masks come from thousands and thousands of years ago. fiestas. ancient rituals. slip one over your head and you could become a tiger or donkey, a bat or giant lizard. a corn spirit dancing under the clouds for rain. those were your gods if you lived back then. you'll like it there in Mexico. don't you think you'll like it there? Jesse?

*(EVALANA, brooding, eventually looks in the backseat then faces front again.)*

**CLAY.** he asleep back there?  
a growing boy needs his sleep.  
yes he does.  
you hungry?

**EVALANA.** don't talk to me.

**CLAY.** hard to fall asleep on an empty stomach.

**EVALANA.** i can't sleep.

**CLAY.** you ain't tried to.

**EVALANA.** i told you.  
i have to go to the bathroom.

**CLAY.** if i stop, you'll try to run again.

**EVALANA.** where the hell am i gonna run in the middle of the desert at night? into a goddamn cactus!?

*(she checks her outburst, then looks in the backseat again, perhaps adjusting their son's blanket, then faces front. they drive on for a time.)*

**CLAY.** *(looking in rearview mirror:)*

hey there Jesse.

you have a nice nap?

we'll be there come morning, so you just sit back.

how you like that comic book i got you?

Jesse?

what's the matter, boy? you not feeling well?

Jesse?

**EVALANA.** sometimes he sleeps with his eyes open.

**CLAY.** like you.

**EVALANA.** i do not sleep with my eyes open.

**CLAY.** how do you know?

**EVALANA.** i know.

**CLAY.** how?

**EVALANA.** 'cause someone would have said something. including you.

**CLAY.** people do all kinds of things they're not aware of.

my daddy used to wander through the house all night, buck naked, up and down the stairs. opening and closing windows.

carrying only his briefcase chockfull of all the vending machine products he sold.

combs. candy. chicken bouillon.

my momma warned if we woke him up he'd have a heart attack.

so we just let him sleepwalk.

he didn't know.

**EVALANA.** maybe somebody should have told him.

**CLAY.** he didn't want to know.

*(they drive on.)*

**EVALANA.** you talk in your sleep.

you snore.

you drool.  
and you fart. all night.

*(they drive on awhile.)*

**CLAY.** i love you, Ev.

**EVALANA.** jesus, Clay. listen to yourself.  
your whole life you been faking it.  
fake husband. fake father.  
fake man. that's what they ought to call you:  
Fake Man.

*(CLAY drives on for a little while longer through the night, then pulls the car to a stop on the side of the road and gets out. he walks a good ways away from the car, holding a flashlight in one hand and a gun in the other—not aimed at her, but clearly present, under the starlight. EVALANA hesitates, then gets out, the flashlight's beam now on her.)*

**CLAY.** *(directs flashlight beam to place in the brush:)*  
there's a bush over there.

*(EVALANA, hesitant at first, then grabs her purse and crosses past CLAY.)*

**EVALANA.** *(off:)*  
i won't run!  
i promise!

*(CLAY thinks, then lowers flashlight beam and switches it off. dim moonlight. sounds of desert at night.)*

**CLAY.** you should have seen me last week, Ev!  
Darton, he cut me a break! he didn't have to, but he did 'cause i been loyal to him all these years! you remember when we used to work at the turkey plant together! the smell on my hands when i'd come home and try to kiss you...

the match was against the eleventh-ranked contender! brand new guy, from Montreal! Kid Canuck they call him! long blonde hair, tan, all bulked up in white trunks with a red maple leaf you know where! some rich producer's nephew or something! he was scheduled to wrestle the Sheik in the opening match, but the old guy had

a hernia while they was warming up, so Darton, he give me a break and put me on the bill against Kid Canuck at the last minute!

we didn't have time to choreograph much action! i think he was kind of nervous! two minutes in he starts grabbing my hair! hard! for real! trying to get the audience more into it! he wasn't telegraphing his head butts neither! soon enough my nose was a cherry caught under a dumptruck! the blood all over sure got the crowd into it boy! up till then they was pretty quiet, waiting for the main headliners to come out!

raking my eyes, slapping my face. i told him to ease up, it don't work like that here, but he wasn't listening. dancing around. cursing at me in French. winding his right arm up, then smacking me hard with the left until both my ears are firebells going off.

now i can take just about anything. you know me. i've been pile-driven, figure-foured, and suplexed into losses by the best of them. but on this particular night, something happened. and one pop i took in the mouth shot my adrenaline way up, my blood running all over hell now like carbohic acid, and him twisting my arm for real, not giving a flying fuck about my bad elbow, my bad back, or my five-year-old son, who don't even like to watch wrestling no more 'cause he's ashamed, 'cause his friends call his daddy a loser, and he don't know what to say or believe in, and the next thing i knew i had that pretty boy son of a bitch Kid Canuck down hard on the mat in a scorpion leg lock!!

they had to haul him off on a stretcher!

i was a little dazed yet, and the crowd, they didn't know what to think!

then the referee threw my arm up under the hot lights and before i knew it all the noise in the arena was more like cheering! it was a chemical thing! at first some people in the upper bleachers stood up! and then all of them did! everywhere! stomping, and starting to chant my name! and not 'cause they hated the other guy! they didn't! they was cheering 'cause i beat the guy fair and square! he gave up out of pain, right there in the middle of the ring! i had him wrenched in that scorpion leg lock a good two minutes screaming like a baby, like a cut pig, like a man in real pain! and they knew it!

you can't fake that! they'd seen so much phony bullshit through the years, and they could tell this match was different! and they appreciated that! they appreciated being shown the truth, just once in their sorry-ass lives!

Darton threw a wet towel at my face in the locker room.

i went out on a limb for you! he says. six months of planning and promotion! tens of thousands of dollars! t-shirts! coffee mugs! now who the hell's gonna believe Kid Canuck is a contender for the federation championship when he lost his debut match to you!!

i told him i was sorry, and after a while he put his hand on my shoulder. asked me what i'd been thinking there in the ring. tell me the truth, he says. so i can go home and feel at least a little bad about firing your dumb ass.

and i wanted to say that i did it for you.

for my wife, Evalana, who i never gave nothing to believe in.

and i did it for my boy, Jesse. who only ever got to see his daddy get beat time and again. i wanted to tell him i did it 'cause my wife and child was out there in the audience. not living in some other town. i wanted to say you was both out there watching over me. 'cause where else would you be?

Ev? Evalana!

*(CLAY switches on flashlight and directs its beam onto the "bush" in the desert. EVALANA has run off. he directs the flashlight all around, searching in vain.)*

shit.

*(CLAY turns off the flashlight and sits down on a stone. in the moonlight, he pulls out from his pocket a colorful Mexican wrestler's mask and slips it over his head. he sits there in the darkness alone for a moment. he then, as a little boy might, twirls the gun on his finger, and pretends what it'd be like to shoot himself in the head. he tries it from a couple different angles, in strange fun. eventually he places the gun in his mouth, holds it there for a second or two with his hand, then lets go. it remains stuck there in his mouth from here on out. eventually, out of the darkness of the desert, EVALANA reappears.)*

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**THE HUMAN VOICE**  
by Carlyle Brown

## **Cast of Characters**

THE HUMAN VOICE

A MAN

HIS WIFE

AN AUTOMATED TELEPHONE OPERATOR

## **Settings**

Bedroom of The Human Voice

Garden terrace of a New York apartment

## **Time**

Now

# THE HUMAN VOICE

by Carlyle Brown

Based on, inspired by, and contemporized from the  
one-act play *The Human Voice* by Jean Cocteau

*(Lights up.)*

*(THE HUMAN VOICE is camped out in her bed. A bed of chaos, filled with lots of fluffy pillows, a carton of cigarettes, an over-filled ashtray, empty food wrappers, Chinese take out containers, and a stack of popular magazines. An end table near the head of the bed holds a lamp, a clock, three bottles of champagne [two empty, one full], three or four bottles of pills, and a telephone receiver with the portable hand set missing.)*

*(THE HUMAN VOICE lies in her bed inert and waiting.)*

*(The telephone rings.)*

**HUMAN VOICE.** Finally...Where is it? Where is it? Where's the fucking telephone? Oh God, don't let him hang up...I'm coming...Please, don't hang up...I'm coming...Please baby, don't hang up.

*(Finally she finds the telephone nestled among her pillows. She turns it on.)*

Hello...Hello...Shit! Shit! Shit! Why didn't I leave the phone on the receiver? I'm so fucking stupid. I should have left the phone on the goddamn receiver.

*(She turns off the phone and pushes the button on the receiver's answering machine.)*

**THE HUMAN VOICE'S VOICE.** "I'm sorry, I can't get to the phone right now, but if you will leave a brief message, I'll get back to you as soon as I can."

*(There is a beep and then silence.)*

*(She turns the phone on again, dials \*69, and listens.)*

**AUTOMATED OPERATOR.** “The number calling cannot be reached at this time. Please hang up now.”

*(THE HUMAN VOICE turns off the phone, turns it on again, dials a number and she listens.)*

**AUTOMATED OPERATOR.** “Your call cannot be completed as dialed. Check the number and try again.”

*(THE HUMAN VOICE turns off the phone and sits in her bed in a distracted despair.)*

*(Suddenly the telephone rings.)*

*(THE HUMAN VOICE turns on the telephone.)*

**HUMAN VOICE.** Hello? Hello...Is it you? I can't hear you...I said I can't hear you very well. It's difficult to hear you. You sound so far away...Hello...Oh, this is awful...It sounds if there're other voices...Other voices...What?...Yes, try again...I said, hang up and try again. I'll be here. Call me right back, okay?

*(She turns the phone off and puts it in her lap. She watches the phone and she waits.)*

*(The telephone rings.)*

*(THE HUMAN VOICE turns the telephone on.)*

**HUMAN VOICE.** Oh, at last it's you. Are you on your cell phone?...But it sounds like you're on your cell phone...What?...I'm fine. No problems here. And how are you? Are you okay?...Are you sure?...You didn't call me earlier, did you?...There's no need to apologize, I know it's not the usual time, but it's never too late for you to call me...I say it's never too late. Any time, day or night, I always long to hear the sound of your voice...Yes, your voice...What?...Please, don't say that. Don't spoil things. How can it be a night like any other night when I'm never going to see you again?...No, I just came in...only a few minutes ago...I went out to dinner...Where? I went to La Palma. Where else would I go? You weren't here and I missed you so much. I wanted to be in a place where we had been together...Yes, I'm a romantic, but you already know that...No, I haven't gotten undressed yet...What am I wearing? I'm wearing that white linen dress with the zipper up the back

that you like so much, because you say it shows off my hips, and slips off so easy...Yes, of course I'm going to take it off, I'm going to bed...No, darling, not tonight, please. I just want to talk. To hear the sound of your voice...Well all right, if you insist...No I want to, really I do. It's so sexy when you talk to me that way. Undressing me with your voice...I'm unzipping it now. It's just falling to the floor. Bra, gone, panties, gone, I'm naked, bare, thinking of you, touching myself, getting lost in the sound of your voice...Yes, I know this is hard for you too...But I do try to be understanding. Don't I?...Oh no, don't say it...You're so sweet. Of course I love you...I love you more than you'll ever know...I said, more than you'll ever know.

*(Cross fade.)*

*(A garden terrace of a New York apartment.)*

*(The MAN is on a cell phone.)*

**MAN.** I know. I know you do. And you know I love you too, don't you?...Good. Good. I don't know what I'd do if you thought I didn't...No, no, I'm all right. I'm fine. Really...It's just the same as usual. Working myself to death...What?...Cell phone?...No, I'm not on the cell phone. I'm at the office...You can hardly hear me because this phone system is a fucking mess. You can't even get a human voice anymore, just a lot of automated crap. Use a cell phone you get cancer in your ear. It's all fucked up...No, I won't work too late...What can I do? I have to work. I'm almost finished just now, getting ready to go...go to the house...

*(Cross fade.)*

**HUMAN VOICE.** Just go ahead and say it. Home. You're going home...But it is your home, and I don't like you saying it isn't...You're just punishing yourself, and when you get guilty like that you start to lie to me, and you don't tell me the truth...No, no, not in that way...I don't mean lying in that way...What way? I don't mean in a mean way. You only lie to protect me, to spare my feelings...But don't you see, what you say is so important to me now, because all I have left is the sound of your voice. First we don't see each other anymore and then one day you'll hang up the

telephone, and I'll be left with nothing but the silence, no voice in my ear to hold me, touch me...

*(Cross fade.)*

**MAN.** You know, sometimes when you talk like this you make me feel as if I were losing my mind. Like a great silence was growing inside of me. I can't speak, I don't know what to say, my brain is a blank. I feel like I'm going to pass out at any minute...No, I'm not blaming you. It's me. My fault. I just don't know how to do this...This! I don't know how to do this!...I'm sorry. I didn't mean to yell at you...No, I'm not angry...Really...Yes really...I promise...I swear...Please don't cry. Please don't... I can't hear you...Calm down...Calm down, I'm right here. Can you hear my voice? You can't hear it if you're crying. Aren't there tissues by your bed?...Well, take a tissue and wipe your eyes...Please, do that for me...Good girl...All done?...Now blow your nose...I'm not being condescending. I just want you to stop crying, to stop being sad, to be all right...

*(Cross fade.)*

**HUMAN VOICE.** I know. I know that's what you want...You know me, just being dramatic, morbid...I knew exactly what I was doing. I shouldn't feel guilty and you shouldn't take the blame. Our love was up against so many things, and we had to fight against them all the time. But you took care to soothe me and open my eyes. I knew what I was doing, and I don't regret any of it. Not one single minute in all those years. They were priceless. Now, I'm determined to be brave, and I will. I've stopped crying, I hear your voice, and I'm all right...Who's making it up?...Who is?...Am I making it up?...How could I?...I haven't got it in me. You know what I'm like...But, you could tell by my voice. It isn't the voice of someone trying to hide something. I didn't think I could be so strong, but I am you know...Well, don't admire me too quickly. Maybe I won't be so brave tomorrow when I'll never see you, the way I see you now in my mind, as if I had eyes in the place of ears... ..Yes, I can see you now. You're wearing those smart Italian shoes, a very sporty, loose-fitting suit, blue, with the sleeves rolled up, and one of your big, oversized fluffy shirts, that make you look so sexy, open at the neck, with your tie hanging down untied.

You're at your desk with your receiver in your left hand and with your right you're sketching on a legal pad, faces, stars, doodles...

*(Lights up on the MAN.)*

**MAN.** ...Doodles?

**HUMAN VOICE.** ...Am I right?

**MAN.** ...Yes, you're exactly right.

**HUMAN VOICE.** ...I thought so.

**MAN.** ...I'm imagining you too, you know?

**HUMAN VOICE.** ...No please, whatever you do, don't imagine me. I don't even look at myself in the mirror anymore. When I do I find myself looking at just a plain woman with ordinary hair and sad eyes...

**MAN.** ...But I love your hair. You've got beautiful eyes, a remarkable face.

**HUMAN VOICE.** ...There's nothing remarkable about it. What could be worse? Remarkable faces are for actors. I'd rather hear you say, "My little monkey face. Where is my little monkey face?"

**MAN.** ...Don't talk about yourself that way.

**HUMAN VOICE.** ...I was just joking...

**MAN.** ...I don't like it.

**HUMAN VOICE.** ...A joke.

**MAN.** ...I thought you told me you were going to be brave.

**HUMAN VOICE.** ...You know sometimes baby you're not very clever, but still you love me. If you were just being clever and didn't love me this phone would be a weapon beating me to death with its sound.

*(The WIFE enters.)*

*(The MAN quickly turns off his cell phone and puts it in his pocket.)*

**HUMAN VOICE.** Hello...

*(The MAN and WIFE embrace and kiss.)*

Hello...

*(The MAN and WIFE stand holding each other.)*

Hello...

*(Lights out on the garden terrace.)*

Are you there? Can you hear me?

*(THE HUMAN VOICE shuts off the phone, and puts it between her legs in the bed. She watches it, like waiting for water to boil. She picks it up, turns it on again and dials a number...)*

*(We hear an official ringing.)*

**AUTOMATED OPERATOR.** “You have reached the offices of the Cocteau Corporation. Our office hours are between 9 and 5, Monday through Friday. If you know the extension of the person you are calling, you may enter it at any time during this message...”

*(THE HUMAN VOICE enters an extension number.)*

**THE MAN’S VOICE.** “I’m either on another line, or away from my desk. Leave a message and I’ll get back to you as soon as I can.”

**AUTOMATED OPERATOR.** “At the sound of the tone, please leave a message, or dial zero for more options...”

*(THE HUMAN VOICE shuts off the phone. She dials another number.)*

*(We hear a hollow ringing.)*

**AUTOMATED OPERATOR.** “The party you are calling has either turned off their cell phone, or is out of reach of the calling area. Please leave a message or try again later...”

*(There is a beep.)*

**HUMAN VOICE.** We were cut off. What happened? Please, call me back as soon as you can. I’ll be waiting.

*(She shuts off the phone.)*

*(Cross fade.)*

*(Garden terrace.)*

*(The cell phone beeps.)*

**THE WIFE.** You have a voice mail. Aren't you going to answer it?

**MAN.** I don't want to talk to anyone tonight.

**THE WIFE.** But it might be the baby sitter. Answer.

*(The MAN takes out his cell phone and listens to the voice mail.)*

**THE WIFE.** What is it?

**MAN.** It's my secretary. I have to talk to this guy about this business deal tonight. Right now in fact. Would you excuse me for a minute?

**THE WIFE.** No. You said you didn't want to talk to anyone. I only wanted to answer the phone, because I thought it was the baby sitter. Talk to whoever it is later. Why don't you talk to me for once?

*(Lights up.)*

*(THE HUMAN VOICE is on the phone.)*

*(The cell phone rings.)*

*(THE WIFE takes the cell phone from the MAN and answers it.)*

**THE WIFE.** Hello...

*(THE HUMAN VOICE shuts off her phone...)*

*(Lights out on the HUMAN VOICE.)*

**THE WIFE.** That was her, wasn't it?...You haven't told her?...Why haven't you told her?...If you did she doesn't seem to know it...I'm fighting for my life here, my home, my family...You call her now and you tell her, or don't come home...And you be kind to her...God knows that could be me.

*(THE WIFE exits.)*

*(The MAN dials his cell phone.)*

*(The phone rings.)*

*(Lights up on THE HUMAN VOICE.)*

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**NOW WE'RE REALLY  
GETTING SOMEWHERE**  
by Kristina Halvorson

## **Cast of Characters**

JEN: Mid-20s, cynical, unhappy.

BETHANY: Mid-20s, unhappy, trying hard not to be.

ELAINE: Late 20s. Jen and Bethany's supervisor, trying hard in general.

JACK: Late 20s. Sales guy. Nice enough.

## **Time**

The present.

## **Place**

At work.

# NOW WE'RE REALLY GETTING SOMEWHERE

by Kristina Halvorson

*(Lights up on a conference table. JEN is waiting for someone. BETHANY walks in and proceeds to pile tons of office crap on the table—files, legal pads, water bottle, Diet Coke, coffee—is she here for a three-day summit? They barely look at each other. They are waiting. Waiting.)*

**JEN.** This sucks.

**BETHANY.** You always say that.

**JEN.** This always sucks.

**BETHANY.** You just need to adjust your expectations.

**JEN.** I don't think it's unreasonable to expect that the person who schedules these meetings would actually show up on time.

**BETHANY.** But she never does.

**JEN.** And, it sucks.

**BETHANY.** It could be worse.

**JEN.** That's how I should adjust my expectations? By thinking it could be worse?

**BETHANY.** Why not? Look. Elaine is late. And while she's late, I'm sitting here, happily chatting with my friend Jen and getting paid to do it. You, on the other hand, are all worked up over something that happens every single time we have our weekly meeting. Who's better off? Me. Why? Very low expectations.

**JEN.** Amazing.

**BETHANY.** You just need an attitude adjustment.

**JEN.** I need to have my attitude surgically removed.

*(ELAINE enters the room with her pile of meeting files.)*

**ELAINE.** Good morning! Sorry I'm late.

**BETHANY.** No problem!

**JEN.** No problem.

**ELAINE.** So, how were your weekends?

**BETHANY.** SO great.

**ELAINE.** Great! Jen, how was yours?

**JEN.** Exhausting, short, awful.

**ELAINE.** *(Not listening:)* Great.

**BETHANY.** Did you do anything fun?

**ELAINE.** *(Pause while she considers the question.)* Nope! So! Let's go ahead and get started.

**BETHANY.** *(Peeling an orange:)* Anybody want an orange? I have like twelve of them in my bag.

**ELAINE.** You know, before we begin, I should let you both know that I've asked Jack to join us for a few quick moments this morning.

*(Pause.)*

**JEN.** Jack?

**BETHANY.** Sales Jack?

**ELAINE.** Well, of course sales Jack.

**JEN.** Sales Jack is coming here? Now?

**BETHANY.** But, this is our Monday morning meeting. OUR Monday morning meeting. I mean, this is supposed to be our SAFE PLACE.

**ELAINE.** Well, you two brought up what I consider to be some very important issues last week, and I thought it would be beneficial for the four of us to begin a mutual dialogue.

**BETHANY.** But Elaine, we hate him.

**ELAINE.** Oh, you do not.

**BETHANY.** Oh, yes. We do.

**JEN.** You just need to adjust your expectations.

**BETHANY.** I did. I can't adjust any lower with him.

**ELAINE.** So, while we're waiting for Jack, let's look at what's on everybody's plate this week.

**JEN.** Wait, what are we supposed to say to Jack?

**ELAINE.** Whatever you think will help.

**JEN.** Help what?

**ELAINE.** The situation.

**JEN.** Elaine, I'm sorry, but the situation is that he's totally incompetent, he makes our jobs impossible, and he should be fired.

**ELAINE.** I don't think that's going to move us forward.

**BETHANY.** I don't care if he's incompetent. I just hate him.

**ELAINE.** But what's behind that?

**BETHANY.** Yesterday, I had this really important question? So I e-mailed him, and I left him about twelve voice mails, and he never called me back. Just totally ignored me. He always does that.

**JEN.** He does.

**BETHANY.** I mean, he's sales, and we're customer support, right, but he never tells us anything that's going on until suddenly somebody calls with this out-of-control problem, and they're like, "Oh, Jack said I should just call you." Hello, I don't know what's going on, I've never even heard of them before, and obviously, I look like a total idiot. Oh, and the way he always calls us his "girls"—I mean, I'm not a feminist or anything, but that totally bugs. "Just call my girls, they'll take care of you." God! He makes me want to, I don't know, throw things, or, or shoot somebody.

**JEN.** Awesome.

*(Pause.)*

Sorry.

**ELAINE.** Well. It seems that perhaps the core issue here is actually a simple personality conflict.

**JEN.** Um. I like him okay.

**ELAINE.** Great!

**JEN.** He doesn't mean to be insensitive. I think he has a good heart.

**ELAINE.** Yes, I think he does.

**JEN.** I just think he's utterly incompetent and should be fired.

**BETHANY.** Or shot. (*Oops—puts her hands over her mouth.*)

**ELAINE.** Okay. Let's talk facts. Jack is the sales specialist for our region, agreed. We are his sales support specialists, agreed. Clearly we need to be able to work as a team, together. Agreed? Now I'm not asking you to *like* Jack... I'm just asking you to treat him with the respect he deserves, as a person who is doing his best. Right? You said it yourself, he has a good heart. He's doing the best that he can.

(*BETHANY and JEN consider this. She's probably right.*)

We are all doing the best that we can.

**BETHANY.** (*Committed:*) I will do my best to be nice to Jack.

**JEN.** But we still need to talk about the stuff you were saying. Elaine, you're the team leader...just, please be sure to bring up these issues, okay?

**ELAINE.** Absolutely.

(*JACK enters.*)

**JACK.** Good morning, ladies!

**ELAINE.** Jack! Good morning. Thanks for stopping by.

**BETHANY and JEN.** Hey.

**JACK.** No problem. So, what I miss?

**ELAINE.** Oh, nothing, really, we've just been chatting about our weekends.

**JACK.** And how were they?

**BETHANY.** SO great.

**ELAINE.** Thanks for asking.

**JACK.** Jen, how was yours?

**JEN.** Fabulous. Thanks.

**JACK.** Great.

*(Pause.)*

**ELAINE.** So. Jack. We thought it would be helpful for the four of us to talk this morning about a few different issues that have come up.

**JACK.** You have some issues.

**ELAINE.** Well, not ISSUES, issues.

**JACK.** Great.

**ELAINE.** Great.

*(Pause.)*

So, Jack. I've asked you here today because the three of us would like to chat about what it is we can do to help make your job easier. That is to say, what could we do to help make you as effective as possible at what you do?

**JACK.** That's awfully nice.

**ELAINE.** We're all on the same team. Your team.

**JACK.** Right.

*(Uncomfortable pause.)*

**BETHANY.** I think what we kind of want to know is, is there anything we could be doing to *partner* with you, with the customers. It just seems like maybe, I don't know, maybe we should be working more closely together.

**JACK.** I'm not sure I'm following.

*(BETHANY looks to ELAINE for help. ELAINE smiles blankly.)*

**BETHANY.** Um, well. Like when a customer has a problem, do you think that, I don't know, maybe you could tell us what's going on, you know, before they call us?

**JACK.** Sure!

**BETHANY.** Oh. Great.

**JACK.** Anything else?

**JEN.** *(Giving it a try:)* Jack. I guess maybe we're feeling like we should be more closely involved with the sales process from the start. That you might bring us into it a little earlier. And that way we can be more familiar with the customers and the specific issues they're facing...

**JACK.** *(Interrupts JEN after "customers":)* You know, no offense meant here, but after nearly ten years in professional sales, I think I can handle my customers. I just don't think your department really understands what all is involved in pre-sales, which is fine. That's why I'm in sales and you're in support, right? Sales is a multi-layered process that can't always be predicted or precisely measured. I really don't see where it is you feel you need to be "brought in."

**BETHANY.** But when you're working with the customers and they have a problem and you give them our number...

**JACK.** Exactly. It's great to know I can count on your team no matter what. Really, if I need anything, I'll let you know.

**ELAINE.** Perfect. Great.

**JEN.** I don't, um, I don't really feel like this exactly resolves what Bethany is getting at.

**ELAINE.** What else do you need to hear, Jen?

**JEN.** Well, Jack *(She's going to go for it)* ...do you like your job?

**JACK.** Sure. Sure, I like my job.

**JEN.** Because, well, we try really hard to help your customers, and well, I guess I don't see you trying very hard. At anything. Ever.

**ELAINE.** Now, Jen, let's not...

**JEN.** What I want to say here, Jack, is that we don't, what I don't really see in you is passion. For what you do.

**JACK.** I don't think passion was in my job description.

**JEN.** Well, obviously, but...

**JACK.** I sell telecommunications equipment to companies with 250 employees or less. There's only so much to get excited about there.

**ELAINE.** Jack, Jen is certainly not questioning your commitment...

**JEN.** Let's take Bethany, here. Bethany is a customer support specialist for a telecommunications company. When people ask her what she does, and she tells them, they say, "That's great!" But they might be thinking, it would be within their rights to think, "Well, this person isn't exactly changing the world with that, now is she?" But the thing is, I think in Bethany's mind, she *is* changing something, doing some good for somebody.

Let's say there's this one guy who's in, I don't know, Kenosha or something...this one guy is out there, trying his best daily to accomplish some stupid set of menial tasks, and every day he is absolutely counting on being able to pick up the phone that you sold him and knowing he can make a call. And one day, his phone, our phone, fails him. And that day maybe Bethany talks to him, answers his questions, and fixes the problem. Now the phone works, and she's made one of the ten million problems this guy has just because he's a human being go away. And knowing Bethany? She'll be grateful that she was given the opportunity to help.

That kind of thinking. That's passion. That's what makes Bethany a great woman to work with. Commitment. Cooperation. Common courtesy. That's what we want from our team members.

*(No one knows what to say. In the silence, BETHANY chugs the rest of her Diet Coke and crushes the can with one hand.)*

**ELAINE.** Jack, we're on your team.

**JACK.** Right.

**ELAINE.** Aren't we, girls?

**JEN.** "Girls"?

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**SMALL WORLD**  
**by Tracey Wilson**

## **Cast of Characters**

MAN 1

MAN 2

MAN 3

WOMAN 1

WOMAN 2

WOMAN 3

# SMALL WORLD

by Tracey Wilson

*(Lights up on six couples meeting at separate benches. They have never met before. It is a first, blind date for all. Unless specified, MAN 1 speaks only to WOMAN 1, MAN 2 only speaks to WOMAN 2, and MAN 3 only speaks to WOMAN 3. When it reads MAN 1,2 etc. the specified characters are speaking simultaneously. Also, [...] indicates the characters are finishing the previous sentence.)*

**MAN 1.** Stacy?

**WOMAN 1.** Bob?

**MAN 2.** Lucy?

**WOMAN 2.** Bill?

**MAN 3.** Alice?

**WOMAN 3.** Tim?

**ALL.** Hi!

**MAN 1.** I've never been on one of these blind...

**MAN 2.** ...Computer...

**MAN 3.** Newspaper ad...

**MAN 1,2,3.** Dates Before.

**WOMAN 1,2,3.** Neither have I.

*(They sit.)*

**MAN 1,2.** It's a beautiful day here in the park.

**MAN 3.** Maybe we should have gone to the park.

**WOMAN 1,2.** Yes.

**WOMAN 3.** No.

**MAN 3.** Oh.

**WOMAN 3.** I have allergies. *(Pause.)* But still you...

**WOMAN 1,2,3.** Couldn't ask for a more...

**WOMAN 1.** Beautiful...

**WOMAN 2.** Wonderful...

**WOMAN 3.** Pretty...

**WOMAN 1,2,3.** Day today.

**MAN 1,2.** Would you like to go for a walk around the...

**MAN 1.** Lake.

**MAN 2.** Flower garden.

**MAN 3.** Wanna go to a movie?

**WOMAN 1.** Maybe in a minute.

**WOMAN 2.** I'd like to sit here for a few minutes.

**WOMAN 3.** Can we talk first?

**MAN 1,2,3.** OK.

**ALL.** So...

**WOMAN 1,2.** I understand you work in...

**WOMAN 1.** ...the health care...

**WOMAN 2.** ...the music...

**WOMAN 1,2.** Industry.

**WOMAN 3.** I am so lonely.

**MAN 1.** Yes, I am a home health aid for the elderly.

**MAN 2.** Yes, I'm writing a book on jazz.

**MAN 3.** I...uh...

**WOMAN 1,2.** That's...

**WOMAN 1.** Wonderful.

**WOMAN 2.** Exciting.

**WOMAN 3.** Please help me.

**MAN 1,2.** So...

**MAN 3.** Uh...

**MAN 1,2.** What do you do?

**MAN 3.** How can I help you?

**WOMAN 1.** Oh, I'm just an office manager for a small office.

**WOMAN 2.** I'm a computer consultant.

**WOMAN 3.** Just be real with me.

**WOMAN 1,2.** But I really want to...

**WOMAN 3.** Be really, really, really, really, really real with me.

**WOMAN 1.** ...work in TV.

**WOMAN 2.** ...own a farm someday.

**WOMAN 3.** Un-orchestrate your emotion to my song.

**MAN 1.** Interesting.

**MAN 2.** Great.

**MAN 3.** Wait a minute.

**MAN 1.** I have a friend...

**MAN 2.** I know someone...

**MAN 3.** Have you read that book...

**MAN 1.** ...who works in TV.

**MAN 2.** ...who owns a farm.

**MAN 3.** *(Recalling the name of a book:)* Think it...

**WOMAN 3.** Say It...

**MAN 3.** Speak It...

**MAN 3 / WOMAN 3.** Now!!! The Interactive Guide to Kicking Your Inner Child's Ass.

**MAN 1.** She says TV is...

MAN 2. He says farming is...

MAN 3. I love that book.

MAN 1,2. A lot of work.

MAN 3. It changed my life.

MAN 1. ...but rewarding.

WOMAN 1. Yeah.

WOMAN 2. Yup.

WOMAN 3. It changed my life too. *(Pause.)* Before I read that book I was so polite all the time. I was into...

MAN 3 / WOMAN 3. Pseudo-Ultra-Judo-Fake-Bonding.

WOMAN 3. Like it says in the book! Before I read that book, I would have come here today and just had a...

WOMAN 1,2. So...

WOMAN 3. ...shallow conversation.

WOMAN 1,2. It must be really rewarding to...

WOMAN 3. ...about nothing.

WOMAN 1. ...help the elderly.

WOMAN 2. ...write about jazz.

WOMAN 3. But because of that book I feel strong enough to say to you: HELP ME!!!!

MAN 1,2. It's so rewarding.

MAN 1. I couldn't begin to tell you.

MAN 2. Jazz is my life.

MAN 3. I will help you. What's wrong.

WOMAN 3. You see, I'm not really over my...

*(Lights up on MAN 1.)*

...last boyfriend.

**MAN 1.** Some people get depressed when they look at the elderly.

**WOMAN 3.** He told me he was a home health aid for the elderly.

**MAN 1.** But I don't. I feel hopeful.

**WOMAN 3.** But he only had one patient.

**MAN 1.** ...to have lived so long and experienced so much.

**WOMAN 3.** ...his mother.

**MAN 1.** It's a beautiful thing.

**WOMAN 1.** Wow.

**MAN 3.** Ewwwww.

**WOMAN 3.** Every time I would go over his house he would excuse himself every few minutes, and go into another room. I just thought he had a bladder problem, but then one day I heard someone talking. I asked him. *(To MAN 1:)* Who was that?

**MAN 1.** *(To WOMAN 3:)* No one. You're hearing things. I live alone.

**WOMAN 3.** *(To MAN 3:)* But one day, I tiptoed behind him and peeked in the room. There was an old woman in a chair. He was calling her...

**MAN 1.** Momma.

**WOMAN 1.** *(To MAN 3:)* I was very understanding. *(To MAN 1:)* Oh, honey, is this your mother? You take care of her? That's nothing to be ashamed of. It's sweet. Your mother and all those others too. *(To MAN 3:)* Then this woman, who is like so wrinkled a prune would stare in awe says...

**WOMAN 2.** *(As mother:)* Who are you? Who are you? I'm his one and only patient. His one and only. Get out! I'm the only one who gets their feet shaved around here. You're stepping on my toenail clippings. GET OUT! GET OUT!

**WOMAN 3.** Two days later he was like...

**MAN 1.** *(To WOMAN 3:)* I tried to be a home health worker, but Momma takes up all of my time. I love Momma. I love Momma. I

love Momma. I do. Before that she and Grandma took up all of my time. I love Grandma. I love Grandma. I love Grandma. I do. But Grandma is dead now, and soon, Momma will be dead too. Then you can move into my house, and we'll have kids. Two boys and two girls. We'll teach them to be good little home health workers too 'cause, like Momma says, by the time we grow old our Social Security check won't buy us a cup of milk.

**WOMAN 1.** You are so noble.

**MAN 3.** Ewwwww.

**WOMAN 3.** But I still think of him.

**MAN 3.** I know what you mean, I'm still hung up on my girlfriend too.

*(Lights up on WOMAN 2.)*

She said she wanted to be a farmer.

**WOMAN 2.** I know it's a lot of work, but to be out in the fresh country air...

**MAN 3.** ...a chicken farmer.

**WOMAN 2.** ...communing with nature every day, feeding the land, feeding the chickens.

**MAN 3.** But that's not all she wanted to do with those chickens.

*(MAN 3 squirms in his chair.)*

**WOMAN 2.** *(To MAN 3:)* What's wrong with you?

**MAN 3.** *(To WOMAN 2:)* I've got hay in my butt. God, that is the last time we go to a farm.

**WOMAN 2.** *(To MAN 3:)* What? No!

**MAN 3.** *(To WOMAN 2:)* Yes, it is.

**WOMAN 2.** *(To MAN 3:)* But farming is my life.

**MAN 3.** *(To WOMAN 2:)* But you don't own a farm. I don't understand why we have to sneak in other people's barns to make love all the time. At first, it was exciting, but now it's just weird.

**WOMAN 2.** *(To MAN 3:)* You're so conventional.

**MAN 3.** *(To WOMAN 2:)* I am not...I...

*(There is the sound of a chicken.)*

*(To WOMAN 2:)* What was that?

*(Sound of a chicken.)*

**WOMAN 2.** *(To MAN 3:)* Nothing.

**MAN 3.** It sounded like. *(To WOMAN 3:)* I opened the closet door and there were all these chickens. Chickens everywhere. *(To WOMAN 2:)* What the...

**WOMAN 2.** *(To MAN 3:)* Don't touch them. I love them. See how soft and gentle.

**MAN 3.** You can't...We can't keep chickens in the apartment.

**WOMAN 2.** *(To MAN 3:)* Quiet! Don't yell in front of them. *(Pause.)* See they are so sweet and gentle. Like kittens with feathers. But sexy. Very sexy. That clucking drives me wild. Please just touch the chickens baby! Touch the chickens!

**MAN 2.** I love nature too.

**WOMAN 3.** Yuuucchhh.

**MAN 3.** What's wrong with us?

**WOMAN 3.** For me it has been a pattern. A pattern of unhealthy relationships. The other guy I dated...

*(Lights up on MAN 2.)*

A die-hard jazz lover.

**MAN 2.** Jazz is truly the only great American art form.

**WOMAN 3.** So I thought.

**MAN 2.** In its rhythms we hear America. In its tunes we see ourselves.

**WOMAN 3.** I studied everything I could about jazz so I could get close to him. I bought thousands of recordings. One day I bought

him this Miles Davis recording. It took me six months to find it. I was going to surprise him and slip it into his record collection. I must have hit some secret door because *(To MAN 2:)* Honey...

**MAN 2.** *(To WOMAN 3:)* Yeah, baby.

**WOMAN 3.** Uh...I wanted to give you this.

*(Hands him CD.)*

**MAN 2.** *(To WOMAN 3:)* Oh, wow. Miles Davis session number 73. Oh, wow, baby, thank you, thank you.

**WOMAN 3.** *(To MAN 2:)* Uh-huh. Um... I was going to put it with your other records, and surprise you.

**MAN 2.** *(To WOMAN 3:)* Uh-huh. This is perfect baby thank you so much...

**WOMAN 1.** *(To MAN 2:)* And I found this.

*(Woman shows him CD.)*

**MAN 2.** *(To WOMAN 3:)* Oh...uh...Yeah. You know, I was holding that for my mother...my mother.

**WOMAN 3.** *(To MAN 3:)* A Yanni CD. *(To MAN 2:)* No you weren't.

*(She dumps a whole bunch of CDs at his feet.)*

*(To MAN 2:)* Yanni, John Tesh, Enya, Celine Dion, Phil Collins. What is this about? I thought you were cool.

**MAN 2.** *(To WOMAN 3:)* Hey, be careful! You're going to scratch them. *(Pause.)* One night I couldn't sleep alright. So, I turned on the radio. They were playing Desert Siren by Yanni.

*(He hums tune.)*

It was so relaxing.

*(He hums.)*

So calming.

*(He hums.)*

Yanni is beautiful.

*(He hums tune.)*

Someday, he'll be appreciated.

*(He hums tune.)*

Someday.

*(He hums.)*

Someday.

**WOMAN 2.** *(To MAN 2:)* I want you to teach me everything you know about music.

**MAN 3.** John Tesh. Ewwwww.

**WOMAN 3.** So, you see it must be me.

**MAN 3.** No, no, no. Don't assume that. I dated this woman.

**WOMAN 1.** I know TV is supposed to be this vast wasteland.

**MAN 3.** Who wanted to work in TV.

**WOMAN 1.** But I think it's a powerful and effective medium...

**MAN 3.** So, she watched a lot of TV.

**WOMAN 1.** ...to communicate and express ideas.

**MAN 3.** But then I noticed she began to only watch one program.

*(Theme from The Jeffersons plays.)*

*(To WOMAN 1:)* Honey, do we have to watch...

**WOMAN 1.** *(To MAN 3:)* Shhhhh.

**MAN 3.** *(To WOMAN 1:)* But you've seen this episode a hundred times already.

**WOMAN 1.** *(To MAN 3:)* Shhhhhh.

**MAN 3.** *(To WOMAN 3:)* All day and night, The Jeffersons. She would tape the show and watch it in fast forward and reverse.

**WOMAN 1.** *(To MAN 3; pointing to TV:)* See! Right there! Right there!

**MAN 3.** *(To WOMAN 1:)* What?

**WOMAN 1.** *(To MAN 3:)* Lionel just said...Pop Taht Tuoba Erus Ton Mi.

**MAN 1.** *(To WOMAN 1:)* What?

**WOMAN 1.** *(To MAN 3:)* He said...Pop Taht Tuoba Erus Ton Mi.

**MAN 3.** *(To WOMAN 1:)* What are you saying?

**WOMAN 1.** *(To MAN 3:)* Oh, I have a little language for Lionel. You see, I believe he's giving me a message. So, I speak his line backwards so I can understand.

**MAN 3.** *(To WOMAN 3:)* Giving you a message?

**WOMAN 1.** *(To MAN 3:)* Yes. Us. Us a message. To the world.

**MAN 3.** *(To WOMAN 1:)* Uh...

**WOMAN 1.** *(To MAN 3:)* Did you know Lionel created the show Good Times.

**MAN 3.** *(To WOMAN 1:)* Uh...honey...

**WOMAN 1.** *(To MAN 3:)* And the man that replaced him on the show was his brother. His very own brother.

**MAN 3.** *(To WOMAN 1:)* Honey, I...

**WOMAN 1.** *(To MAN 1:)* But he's gone now. No word of him since 1979. I can't find him. But I will. I know I will. Pop Taht Tuoba Erus Ton Mi. Pop Taht Tuoba Erus Ton Mi. Pop Taht Tuoba Erus Ton Mi.

**MAN 1.** I've never thought of TV that way before.

**WOMAN 3.** I'll never watch The Jeffersons again. *(Pause.)* In honor of you.

**MAN 3.** Listen, I have to tell you...

**MAN 1,2,3.** I really like you.

**MAN 1.** You're wonderful.

**MAN 2.** ...terrific...

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**THIEF OF MAN**  
**by Kevin Kling**

## **Cast of Characters**

KNIGHT: A Viking warrior

MAK: His servant

TEMPLAR: A Knight of the Holy Order

NUN: A Nun of the Christian (Greek) Orthodox

INNKEEPER: A Turk

DOAN: His daughter

DEATH: Death

## **Time**

1204 A.D.

## **Place**

Constantinople, during the fourth Holy Crusade

# THIEF OF MAN

by Kevin Kling

**KNIGHT.** Help me Mak. I'm gored.

**MAK.** I have you my lord.

**KNIGHT.** My legs under me fold as lapped in a tempest.

**MAK.** Help. Sir something to drink, your best.

**INNKEEPER.** Right away.

**KNIGHT.** My wound be fatal fair Mak.

**MAK.** No. A nick is all.

**KNIGHT.** How came we under attack?

**MAK.** I know not, we were fell upon by Crusaders.

**KNIGHT.** Where is The White Bear?

**MAK.** Gone. Escaped I fear.

**KNIGHT.** No.

**MAK.** Sh Sh We will find him soon enough.

**KNIGHT.** Not I. My candle's snuft.

**TEMPLAR.** Be you Christian? Do you seek last rites?

**MAK.** Norsemen.

**TEMPLAR.** A Viking?

**MAK.** Aye, This best of warriors' soul takes flight  
From this putrid land Hot as hell  
and food so spiced one cannot tell  
flesh from root  
Oh, God  
for a cod  
and a fur-lined boot

**TEMPLAR.** Why did they attack him thus?

**MAK.** We had a White Bear with us from our homeland. To be presented as a gift to his lordship of Constantinople. This much my Master told the Crusaders yet they fell upon him saying “it is now property of the Pope.”

“Are they not both Christians born all of the same Virgin?” Quoth my Master.

“In the name of God, Stand aside.” Quoth they.

My Master drew his sword but there were too many.

I cut the Bear loose to cover our escape. Oh Master forgive me.

**KNIGHT.** You are good fair Mak.

**INNKEEPER.** Here you are sir. May Allah show mercy to your friend. And you sire Templar.

**MAK.** Ahhhh, A Templar. Sir a Crusader.

Puke. Bile. Wretch. Phlegm. Scum. Slime. Scab. Flatus. Turd. Puss. Piss. ...Shoat.

**TEMPLAR.** Shoat?

**MAK.** Aye, Shoat. Shoat of shoats, image, extract and essence of shoat, Shoat of shoat hall. Lord, master and sire of all that is shoat.

**TEMPLAR.** Please good sir. I have no ill will toward you. I am not in league with this new Crusade.

**KNIGHT.** Ahhh.

**TEMPLAR.** He swims in dreams now and treads for his life.

**MAK.** My dear Master.

Let you go, Welcome the Valkyries that will gently swoop down for your brave soul and whisk you to Valhalla.

Sweet pipes will beguile your cares, And as is your Viking right, will you now make love with the blessed angel of death.

Let go brave one, 'Tis your birthright to rest now in the buxomness of your ancestors.

**DAUGHTER.** Papa, someone was outside asking for this place.

**MAK.** The thief of man.

**INNKEEPER.** Where? I see no one.

**DAUGHTER.** I said we lived elsewhere.

**INNKEEPER.** Good child.

**MAK.** Only a child can lie to death and get away with it.

**TEMPLAR.** Or a drunk.

**MAK.** True or a drunk. Innkeeper another.

**TEMPLAR.** Innkeeper here too.

**MAK.** I fear death has come for my Master.

**NUN.** No, it is for me.

**TEMPLAR.** You Sister? Are you wounded?

**NUN.** My wound goes deeper to the immortal soul.

Two months past Crusaders overran my abbey in Zara, another Christian city. Although under strict orders from the Pope to leave all life and not pillage the sacred temples they attacked like mad dogs killing the monks and plundering the sanctuaries. Our Holy Relics now rest in Venetian ships.

**MAK.** What of you Sister.

**NUN.** I, like my Sisters was also violated.

**TEMPLAR.** This cannot be. Men of God? What said the Holy Father to this?

**NUN.** The word from Pope Innocent is that the Crusaders are absolved from sin because those killed are labeled infidel and the sooner dispatched from earth the sooner purified in hell's fire. As for their attack on the Sisters, the Pope has declared the Crusaders absolved from sin for they were spreading holy seed and offer hope to the future.

**MAK.** This Pope lives for the word not by the word.

**TEMPLAR.** Now lechery is love and murder manhood.

**NUN.** When I felt life grow inside of me I came to Constantinople for a powder that will help restore me to the Holy Order. This powder have I taken and its effects are most severe. I fear two souls

may be washed from the earth. I am the one death seeks in order to meet my true husband if he will have me.

**TEMPLAR.** Sister I am sorry yet I am the one death seeks. I am returned from the Holy Land where I fought bravely beside Richard in his campaign against Saladin. I wear the red cross of the Templars. Our sect has become strong and powerful.

I love my brothers. But the love we share goes beyond the brotherly love defined by the church. This the Pope knows and will one day use it to destroy us. One day we will be declared heretic.

**MAK.** 'Tis true to calm the masses. People need a little devil inside the gates as well as outside.

**TEMPLAR.** This is our most sacred object. As long as this is in our possession the Pope dare not touch us.

In this bag is the Head of Christ.

**MAK.** It is a head. And it's old.

**TEMPLAR.** I am returning to France but the years in the Holy Land have left me frail. I have been scorched raw, starved and bloodied. A leaf that grows too far from the tree grows weak. I fear now I die of a sickness and I have no power against it.

**INNKEEPER.** It is not you Templar, or you Sister, it is me. I have lost a wife and two sons to the recent siege. At times a great pain takes my chest. This is not the first time my daughter has talked death from this gate.

It is Allah's will and my joy I join my loved ones.

**NUN.** No it is me.

**TEMPLAR.** I'm sure I am the one.

**MAK.** My Master.

**INNKEEPER.** Maybe it is all of us.

**MAK.** Perhaps it is none.

**KNIGHT.** Maybe 'twas not death at all.

**EVERYONE.** Aye.

*(DEATH enters.)*

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**ZEALOT**  
**by Julie Marie Myatt**

## **Cast of Characters**

MARK

DAVID

PAUL

RUTH

# ZEALOT

by Julie Marie Myatt

*(The roof of a tall building. Night.)*

*(Lights up on PAUL, MARK, DAVID, and RUTH as they stand side by side, in a row, staring down to a distant sidewalk. Silently, all eyes down, they watch the activity below. Captivated.)*

**MARK.** What an idiot.

*(Silence.)*

**DAVID.** My hero.

**MARK.** You're an idiot.

*(Silence.)*

**PAUL.** What if two seconds later, he changed his mind? Decided to just have a good cry and go to bed?

**MARK.** Fucking drama queen.

**DAVID.** Millions upon millions of people cry themselves to sleep every night. Frightened and miserable. Too afraid to take action for what they want. What they believe in. That guy took a stand.

**PAUL.** No, I heard he flew out. He didn't stand—

**DAVID.** He resisted the path of least resistance.

**MARK.** And now his fucking brains are splattered on those innocent people's shoes as they try and walk home tonight—

**PAUL.** I hope no kids were down there.

**MARK.** Some guy's gonna get in his kitchen, and look down, and think "what is that? Is that a piece of newspaper?...a dog turd?" ...and then he'll bend down and look closer and "no, no that's not newspaper...that's not dog—that's a fucking eyebrow!" What the hell is he supposed to do with that?

**PAUL.** I'd throw it in the trash.

**MARK.** I mean really, what the hell—

**PAUL.** No, no. I'd flush it down the toilet. I'd definitely flush it—

**DAVID.** But don't you see...it's not the eyebrow of just some average Joe, your run-of-the-mill suicide; that guy had plans! There were thoughts going on in that brow, big thoughts.

**MARK.** Please—

**DAVID.** When it tensed, it was planning revolutions, anarchy, uniting the glory and the strength and the power of the human spirit. When it was raised, arched and sincere, a slight band of sweat rising to the surface above, it was a brow speaking for the rights of truth, justice, freedom. When—

**MARK.** The guy never left his house.

**DAVID.** So?

**MARK.** And now some father of four, who's just worked a fucking long hard day at the office (and still can't pay his bills), comes in, surrounded by his kids, none over the age of ten, who are crying and carrying on, pulling on his pant leg, asking for toys and surprises and change from his empty pockets, has got to bend down and peel that shit's sorry eyebrow off his worn-out loafer—

**DAVID.** Yes! And he will be required to THINK! Break out of his conventions!

**MARK.** His conventions keep him sane! His conventions are all he has to hang his fucking hat on!

**DAVID.** And it's just that kind of apathy that shall drown this country in Tommy Wear, Happy Meals and worn-out loafers.

**PAUL.** I hope no kids saw it...their sidewalk will never be the same. Never.

**DAVID.** It's a piece of concrete.

**PAUL.** Still. People have to walk there. Be reminded.

**DAVID.** That's called Awareness. That's called "Wake Up People!"—

**MARK.** That's called "I'm lonely, feel sorry for me, watch me jump out my fucking window!"

**DAVID.** Did you know him?

**RUTH.** Some people think your pillows record your dreams at night—

**MARK.** I didn't have to know him—

**RUTH.** Maybe the sidewalk is recording him right now, all of him...his face...his chest...his past...his dreams...his voice...his sweet voice. Only it's not screaming now, it's whispering...softly...like, like a child whispers in its mother's ear...or a lover to his love before the sun comes up, content...and maybe...maybe when his blood is washed down into the gutters, it will spread quietly to people all over the city...whispering...“remember me”...maybe his soul is spreading into the grass by that tree right now...content...breathing...“have strength”...and the birds can take pieces of him into the air, out to the country, beyond this place...building new bold nests.

*(The MEN have stopped to stare at RUTH. Then resume their conversation.)*

**MARK.** Two words. Shut In.

**DAVID.** The guy was a genius.

**MARK.** Why? Because he never showered?

**PAUL.** He did smell.

**DAVID.** He was conserving water.

**PAUL.** He could have used mine. And I have lots of soap.

**RUTH.** And maybe he's finally free.

**DAVID.** The man had principles. Beliefs. Values. Ideals—

**MARK.** Lice—

**DAVID.** Something you don't.

**RUTH.** I hope so.

*(RUTH backs away from the edge.)*

**MARK.** Fuck you. I have principles.

**DAVID.** Name one.

**RUTH.** Maybe he didn't feel it. No impact. Just odd silence. No crushing. Just End—

**MARK.** Please. I have plenty. Right Ruth?

**RUTH.** No Body. Just Sky.

**MARK.** Ruth?

**RUTH.** What?

**MARK.** I have principles.

*(RUTH looks at him.)*

Don't I?

**RUTH.** You're punctual.

**PAUL.** He is. Always on time.

**MARK.** Thanks.

**PAUL.** On the dot.

**DAVID.** Would you jump for it?

**MARK.** For what?

**DAVID.** Punctuality.

**MARK.** No.

**DAVID.** See.

**MARK.** I don't care if other people are on time or not.

**RUTH.** You hate it when I'm late.

**MARK.** Because you're always late.

**RUTH.** I'm not.

**MARK.** You are. It's selfish.

*(RUTH backs up farther from the edge.)*

**PAUL.** He gets pissed at me for that too.

**RUTH.** I'm not always late—

**DAVID.** There's nothing you believe in.

**MARK.** I believe in a lot of things.

**RUTH.** I know that for a fact.

**DAVID.** What?

**MARK.** I'm not going to name them.

**DAVID.** Which one of them would you jump for?

**MARK.** Fuck you—

**DAVID.** Which one of those things, that you say you believe in, would you sacrifice yourself for? Smash your body for?...Jump.

**MARK.** None.

**DAVID.** Why not?

**MARK.** I'd rather live.

**DAVID.** So when push comes to shove, you don't believe in anything enough to give your life for it.

**MARK.** No.

**DAVID.** See?

**MARK.** Nothing.

**DAVID.** You are a coward. Might as well pull up a chair and have dinner with the eyebrow guy and talk insurance policies. Open up a beer and turn on the Super Bowl... That guy down there had courage. More than you'll ever know.

**MARK.** Considering I'm living, and he's dead. I disagree.

**PAUL.** I'd jump for children. I would. I believe in kids. They break my heart—

**RUTH.** I'd jump for—

*(RUTH begins to walking an imaginary line behind them, as if walking a tight rope.)*

**MARK.** I don't see you jumping.

**DAVID.** Oh, I'd jump for plenty, my friend.

**PAUL.** I'd jump for equal rights.

**RUTH.** I'd jump for—

**PAUL.** Equal pay.

**RUTH.** I'd jump for—

**PAUL.** Bald Eagles.

**DAVID.** I'd jump for the right to jump. The right to lay your body on the ground and let the world see you. Inside and out.

**MARK.** Then do it.

**DAVID.** The right to say, "Enough."

**PAUL.** Old people.

**RUTH.** I'd jump for—

**DAVID.** The right to make myself the token. Symbol of a cause. Dropped into the world that says, "I am."

**MARK.** Do it.

**DAVID.** "I am the suffering of the world! See me fall! Into your faces! I die for you!...See me fall and stop. Just stop for one moment in your safe little one-note lives and hear me sing! Open up to the wound of humanity. In all its ugliness! In all its beauty! In all its possibilities!

**RUTH.** I'd jump for—

**PAUL.** The right to choose?

**DAVID.** Raid my apartment. Go ahead! Raid my rooms, look under my mattress, scour my family photos, study my journals. Spread my personal life across the floor and across every newspaper and TV network in the world and let them know that I lived and that I saw it ALL! I am the eyes of the world!

**MARK.** Do it.

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Carlyle Brown** is the founder of Carlyle Brown & Company, based in Minneapolis. His plays include *The Beggar's Strike*, *The Negro of Peter the Great*, *The African Company Presents Richard III*, *The Little Tommy Parker Celebrated Colored Minstrel Show*, *Buffalo Hair*, and others. He has received commissions from Arena Stage, the Houston Grand Opera, The Children's Theatre Company, and Alabama Shakespeare Festival. He is the recipient of playwriting fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Minnesota State Arts Board, the McKnight Foundation, the Jerome Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Theatre Communications Group, and the Pew Charitable Trusts. He is an alumnus of New Dramatists and The Playwrights' Center.

**Kristina Halvorson** is the author of several ten-minute plays, including *One Hundred Women* and *Now We're Really Getting Somewhere*. Her plays have been produced at Actors Theatre of Louisville, the Guthrie Theater Lab, and at other theaters and educational institutions around the world. Her work has been published by Samuel French (*10-Minute Plays from Actors Theatre of Louisville, Volume III*), Smith & Kraus (*30 10-Minute Plays for 3 Actors*), Heinemann (*More Monologues for Women by Women*), Meriwether (*Millennium Monologues*), and Playscripts, Inc. (*A Bright, Clear Sky; Now We're Really Getting Somewhere*). Ms. Halvorson has participated in educational theater projects with the Educational Theatre Association, the Guthrie Theater, the Playwrights' Center and the Northfield Arts Guild.

**Kevin Kling's** one-person plays include *21A*, *Home and Away*, and *The Education of Walter Kauffmann*. He is the author of *Lloyd's Prayer*, *7 Dwarfs*, *The Ice Fishing Play*, *Mississippi Panorama*, and *Gulliver, A Swift Journey*. His commentaries can be heard on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*. Mr. Kling graduated from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota in 1979. He is a proud member of the trio Bad Jazz.

**Edward Bok Lee** is from Fargo, North Dakota by way of Korea, and developed his first full-length play, *St. Petersburg* (presented at the

Joseph Papp Public Theatre in 2000), while enrolled in the Ph.D. program in Slavic Languages and Literatures at Berkeley. His plays have been produced in New York, Providence, and throughout the Twin Cities, and have appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies, including *Take Ten II* (Vintage Books, forthcoming), *Best Ten-Minute Plays 2003-2004* (Smith & Kraus), and *Ten-Minute Plays from the Guthrie Theater 2001* (Playscripts, Inc.). A two-time national Jerome Playwriting Fellow in Minneapolis, he received an M.F.A. from Brown University and has taught courses there, at Augsburg College, and at the Asian American Writers' Workshop in New York, among various other learning institutions, conferences, and detention centers across the country. He is a current Writing Fellow at the New York Theatre Workshop.

**Melanie Marnich's** plays include *Tallgrass Gothic*, *These Shining Live*, *Blur*, *Quake*, *The Sparrow Project*, *Season*, and *Beautiful Again*. Her work has been seen at London's Royal Court Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Dallas Theatre Center, American Theatre Company, Arena Stage, Denver Center for the Arts, and the Magic Theatre. She is the recipient of two Jerome fellowships, a McKnight grant, two Samuel Goldwyn writing awards, the Francesca Primus prize, and a PEN West award. She is a Core member of the Playwrights' Center.

**Julie Marie Myatt** has had plays produced in New York, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Louisville. *Zealot* and *The Joy of Having a Body* were commissioned by the Guthrie Theater, premiered at Guthrie Lab, and are published by Playscripts, Inc. The Magic Theatre in San Francisco will premiere her new play, *The Sex Habits of American Women*, in October 2003. Her other published plays include *Lift and Bang* in *30 Ten-Minute Plays by 2 Actors from Actors Theatre of Louisville* (Smith & Kraus), *What he sent* in *The Best American Short Plays 2000-2001* (Applause Books), and *Cowbird* in the new anthology *Breaking Ground* (Stage and Screen Books). Ms. Myatt received a Walt Disney Studios Screenwriting Fellowship in 1992-1993, a Jerome Fellowship at the Playwrights' Center in 1999-2000, a McKnight Advancement Grant for 2001-2002, and is a participant in the Guthrie Theater New Play Project, funded by the Bush Founda-

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tion. Her other plays include *August is a thin girl*, *The Pink Factor*, *Alice in the Badlands*, and *49 Days to the Sun*.

**Tracey Wilson** was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey. She received a B.A. from Rutgers University and an M.A. from Temple University. While at Temple she wrote a satiric novel entitled *I Don't Know Why That Caged Bird Won't Shut-Up*. After receiving 28 rejections for that novel in one day, she developed writer's block for one year. To combat this block, Ms. Wilson took a playwriting class at the 63rd Street YMWCA in New York City. The following year she won a Van Lier Playwriting Fellowship from the New York Theatre Workshop. In September 2000, Theatre Outrageous produced her first play, *Exhibit #9*, an outrageous satire greatly influenced by George C. Wolfe's *Colored Museum*. In April of that same year, New Georges Theatre produced her second full-length play, *Leader of the People*. She received the Helen Merrill Award for Emerging Playwrights and was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Award for her latest play, *The Story*. The Joseph Papp Public Theatre is producing *The Story* in December 2003.