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## **Cast of Characters**

DAWN: female, 40

LILLA: female, 24

CAROL: female, 50

MARGARET: female, 50

GUEST ONE: female, 30–40

GUEST TWO: female, 30–40

GUEST THREE: male, 30–40

GUEST FOUR: male, 30–40

HAROLD: male, 25

## **Acknowledgements**

*Blue Lila Rising* was commissioned and first produced in 2002 by New Georges in New York City. It is based on several entries from *The Diaries of Dawn Powell 1931-1965*, edited by Tim Page (South Royalton: Steerforth Press, 1995).

# BLUE LILA RISING

## ONE SILENT FALL IN EIGHT ITERATIONS

by Sheila Callaghan

### ONE.

*(Blackness. Sounds of laughter and talking at a party are heard lightly, as "The King Porter Stomp" by Benny Goodman plays.)*

*(Blue lights very slowly rise. Standing frozen figures are silhouetted in various poses of merrymaking, all well-dressed in the fashions of 1936, all holding drinks. The laughter and party sounds come not from the frozen figures but from above.)*

*(A plush chair in the corner, LILLA seated, head in hands. She is under-dressed, although she is clearly wearing the best outfit she owns.)*

*(Silhouette of DAWN seated down center on a divan, smoking, holding a martini. The only motion is the smoke rising from her cigarette.)*

*(Laughter and talking rise in volume, as blue lights rise, as silhouettes become sharper. Rise and rise until voices are cackling, talking is shouting, hysterical and augmented and manic and far too loud and excessively blithe.)*

*(Suddenly, a deep percussive sound implodes, echoing cavernously, all other sounds shut off and a white light snaps on DAWN.)*

*(She is a round, ruddy lady with sharp intelligent eyes and a calm, distinguished demeanor.)*

**DAWN.** People, not the sun, revolve around each other  
sometimes in eclipse, sometimes in full blaze of sun  
sometimes touching each other  
then remote for eons

We are moved by magnetic forces as if we were dolls  
our reactions to each other are just that

*(A softer light rises on LILLA. She is a lovely sweet-faced girl with long curly hair and a very delicate body. Her head rises and she stares at DAWN.)*

People, not the sun, revolve around each other  
sometimes in eclipse, sometimes in full blaze of sun  
sometimes touching each other  
then remote for eons

We are moved by magnetic forces as if we were dolls  
our reactions to each other are just that

*(LILLA drops to the floor. Frozen bodies shift positions slightly.)*

*(DAWN does not turn around. A trickle of blood begins to dribble from her mouth down her chin.)*

We are moved by magnetic forces as if we were dolls  
our reactions to each other are just that

## TWO.

*(GUESTS are milling about, mingling. LILLA sits in her chair. She is very pale and sickly.)*

*(DAWN enters, shaking her umbrella out. CAROL, in an absurdly long trailing hostess gown, rushes over to DAWN and takes her coat.)*

**CAROL.** Dawn, so happy to see you, so very happy to see you, marvelous, you are looking well indeed, my you're positively flooded

**DAWN.** It's pouring

**CAROL.** Isn't it just dreadful and the elevator strike as well all those men outside shouting about heaven knows "wages-this treatment-that" with the signs and the rain blowing their hats off and umbrellas flipping inside out is that a new chapeau

**DAWN.** No

**CAROL.** Well it ought to be looking as sharp as it does and as you do I might add were you able to get a cab from ninth street was the wait long

**DAWN.** Not insufferable

**CAROL.** It's such a shame March coming in like a lion and all I suppose it would be a perfect bore if we had suitable weather for the entire evening NO ONE IS COMING TO MY PARTY, DAWN

**DAWN.** Don't get your bloomers in a pinch, Carol, the Old Guard will shuffle in with their furs and eveningwear before seven, you know how they are loath to miss a literary fete, I'd love a drink

*(HAROLD runs in from nowhere with an enormous tray of drinks and appetizers.)*

**HAROLD.** Seltzer whisky sherry martini gin limes lemons cherries toasted sausages stuffed olives cheese pockets napkins toothpicks you must eat them eat them all we have no guests they will go to waste

*(DAWN takes a martini from HAROLD.)*

**DAWN.** Thank you Harold

**HAROLD.** Welcome Ms. Powell

*(He exits. MARGARET sweeps over to DAWN and CAROL.)*

**MARGARET.** Dreadful party, Carol

**CAROL.** Thank you Margaret, Dawn this is our guest of honor Margaret Culkin Banning, a Minnesota author of great acclaim with a rather slim cache of talent, this is Dawn Powell, a novelist in relative obscurity due to her fascination with monumentally insipid characters.

**MARGARET.** Charmed

**DAWN.** A pleasure

**MARGARET.** I'm familiar with your work

**DAWN.** And I yours

**MARGARET.** Your fixation with the rural middle class is incomprehensible

**DAWN.** Your depiction of modern urban living is banal

**MARGARET.** You have an enormous ass

**DAWN.** Your breath smells like an underarm

**CAROL.** Well, you ladies have much to discuss, if you don't mind I shall attend to my other five guests...

*(CAROL sweeps off, her train getting caught and stepped on and maligned in various ways.)*

*(LILLA watches DAWN and MARGARET intently from the corner of the room.)*

*(A beat.)*

**MARGARET.** Ms. Powell. Might I speak frankly about your work.

**DAWN.** Please.

**MARGARET.** One simply cannot fathom what you have found remotely intriguing about the fallow yearnings of the misguided Midwestern working-class. Their desires amount to precisely nothing in your books. They suffer beyond measure from the oppressive need to abandon the Great Almighty Nowhere and flee to the solace of a glimmering cityscape, and yet they never even come close to doing so. What is the value in that? Why do they not at least *attempt* to execute their fantasies?

**DAWN.** The inability to act is the most sublime form of self-destruction, Ms. Banning. I provide their necks. They furnish their own nooses. It is the human condition.

**MARGARET.** To sabotage themselves? Again and again? And live out the remainder of their days in misery in Ohio or Lamptown or some other small-town rural prison, when their true desire for cleaner work and fancier buildings and shinier what-have-yous is just a train ride away... I'm afraid it is beyond my range of comprehension.

*(A beat.)*

**DAWN.** Well.

*(They drink. A beat.)*

**MARGARET.** Your new book, however...

**DAWN.** ...yes...

**MARGARET.** Is quite different.

**DAWN.** Yes.

**MARGARET.** May I ask...

**DAWN.** Please

**MARGARET.** Why the switch

**DAWN.** It was time

**MARGARET.** Have you exorcised the beast, then?

**DAWN.** Which beast is that?

**MARGARET.** The one who had you slave to your modest parochial upbringing

*(A beat.)*

**DAWN.** Difficult to say, really

**MARGARET.** Well. The change is remarkable. Perhaps you should chase this new animal for a bit, squeeze out a few similar gadgets...you may be on to something.

**DAWN.** Perhaps I will.

*(A beat. They drink.)*

You haven't flown all the way from the Twin Cities to ponder the works of an obscure small-statured struggling novelist in your agent's flat, have you

**MARGARET.** Wouldn't that be the thing. No, I'm on a publicity tour for my latest.

**DAWN.** Of course. Congratulations. Are you here long

**MARGARET.** No, I'm scheduled to arrive in Chicago at some profane hour in the morning.

**DAWN.** You cannot spend more time? You might like to visit the Empire State roof

**MARGARET.** How long has it been open now, four, five months

**DAWN.** Five years

**MARGARET.** Ah yes.

**DAWN.** It is wondrous

**MARGARET.** Perhaps next visit.

*(MARGARET glances out the window.)*

Good to see the Manhattan proletariat hasn't lost its proclivity toward drama and ostentation. Hollering for hours in the pouring rain for maybe two cents more per paycheck.

*(She continues to glance outside.)*

They've severed the electric wires in the building next door, you know. No heat, no service...patrons must either find hotel rooms or shut down their businesses or walk up twenty flights to freeze in their offices...

**DAWN.** It's a function of their union

**MARGARET.** It's a symptom of the larger issue of a city so bloated with its own sense of magnitude that it infects the minds of those who have little else to occupy themselves.

*(A beat.)*

**DAWN.** Well.

**MARGARET.** So.

*(They both toss back their drinks.)*

*(LILLA rises and moves slowly toward DAWN and MARGARET. DAWN eventually notices her. MARGARET does not.)*

**LILLA.** *(Singing:)* Sharp as the skyline  
Coiled in wait  
Your music is murder  
Your silence is bait

One glittering trance  
And I'm dizzy in ink  
I'd swallow your glance  
In one brutal drink

**DAWN.** I know you

**LILLA.** You don't

**DAWN.** I'm certain of it

**LILLA.** We've never met

**DAWN.** Then how

*(HAROLD rushes in with the tray again. MARGARET takes a drink and a sausage.)*

**MARGARET.** Dawn, you really **MUST** try these sausages, they're perfectly vile

*(LILLA has begun to bleed from the mouth. DAWN touches it.)*

**LILLA.** I glow with you

**DAWN.** I've eaten your spores  
They're burning

*(LILLA disappears.)*

**HAROLD.** Seltzer whisky sherry martini gin limes lemons cherries  
toasted sausages stuffed olives cheese pockets napkins toothpicks  
eat goddamn you

**DAWN.** Was...did you

**MARGARET.** Are you bleeding

*(DAWN looks down at her fingers absently.)*

**DAWN.** I suppose I am

*(DAWN takes napkin and wipes her finger. HAROLD eyes her menacingly. She retrieves a sausage and eats.)*

*(The percussive sound implodes again. All freeze in blue silhouette except LILLA, who re-appears in white light.)*

**THREE.**

**LILLA.** Lilla rising through the night  
touching each star as she passes  
no she does not burn her fingertips  
because they are hotter than the stars

she wears a tiara made from  
brass and tiny jagged pieces of glass  
and in each piece of glass she can see  
her reflection dressed in every dream she ever wore  
before she left her home

and inside the biggest piece of glass  
which is set right at the front like a blue gem  
is her most favorite self  
and she names it Lilla Rising

no  
a reflection so true its name  
cannot hold so many letters  
she sets one loose

an "L"  
the halfway "L"  
the "L" of dirt roads  
and torn country dresses

she sets it loose  
it dissolves into powder  
and the name of the reflection is now  
Lila

Lila Rising  
reflecting herself in present-verse  
as she touches each star with her burning fingers  
and turns them into cocktails  
laughter  
high heels dripping gowns  
heads thrown back  
in cosmopolitan delight  
into chatter fueled by the tongues of

the sly  
the agile  
the dashing  
the arrogant  
the witty  
the quick  
and the vigorous

Lila Rising  
In blue  
A portrait of the future

#### FOUR.

*(DAWN enters the room. She takes off her wet coat and lights a cigarette. She begins to listen to the various conversations. She glances at LILLA every once or twice.)*

*(LILLA sits in the corner, stealing glances at DAWN. She is very pale.)*

*(The GUESTS face front and talk very loudly to no one. They are all drunk. CAROL plays hostess, revolving around them and encouraging them to drink more.)*

**GUEST ONE.** The most fun, however, is when we ladies hit the town without our husbands...we go shopping along the Avenue until about seven, and stop in every bar along the way, and pretty soon we end up in Greenwich Village. What a kick do we get there! Oh boy! The men dressed and made up beautifully like women, the women dressed like men... Perfect! If one could only buy one's husband a suit like the Lesbians!

**GUEST TWO.** So we wandered up the East Side because I hadn't been there for ages and suddenly there were crowds and crowds of people, hanging out windows in undershirts, dirty, on a Sunday night, and I told Frederick to drive a little faster because it depressed me, do they have enough to eat, do they have beds to sleep on, and the noise was simply deafening, radios radios radios, how do they have money to buy radios? That's just it! If they have

money to buy radios, they have money to eat! I wasn't blue any more!

**GUEST THREE.** Isabel stinks on ice. Isabel stinks on ice. Did I ever tell you that Isabel stinks on ice?

**CAROL.** Yes darling, I believe you did tell me once that Isabel stank on ice.

**GUESTS.** Ha ha ha ha ha

*(All the GUESTS drink. CAROL notices DAWN. She sweeps over to her and takes her coat.)*

**CAROL.** Dawn, you made it

**DAWN.** Hello Carol. I'd love a drink

*(HAROLD appears, hands DAWN a martini and a sausage and disappears.)*

**CAROL.** This is Margaret/

**MARGARET.** Fat ass

**DAWN.** Bad breath

**CAROL.** See you...

*(CAROL glides off.)*

**MARGARET.** I'm on a publicity tour

**DAWN.** Seen the Empire State roof?

**MARGARET.** No

**DAWN.** Wondrous.

**MARGARET.** Next time.

*(They drink.)*

**GUEST FOUR.** I've got a dirty story

**GUEST ONE.** Do tell us!

**GUEST FOUR.** The best one is the one—well, I'd better not tell it—it's rather lewd—ladies would get insulted—anyway there's a lot of French in it and so on—I really forget. It isn't so funny, anyways,

it's the manner in which it's told, and in the end the fellow says, "Someday you'll go too far." Ha ha ha ha ha...

*(All the GUESTS drink.)*

**MARGARET.** I'm appalled to admit I don't know a soul here.

**DAWN.** You're not alone...although...

*(She glances back at LILLA.)*

That woman looks strikingly familiar.

**MARGARET.** I believe she's one of Carol's underlings... I've seen her flitting about the office occasionally. Secretarial whatnot.

**DAWN.** Ah...

*(They drink.)*

**GUEST ONE.** When I was twenty-two I jumped out of a six-story building. A six-story building. I had delusions, fears I would be caught setting fire to our estate or stealing our servants' money. I finally had to be put away for a year. My sister too. I came home one day after school and found her muttering and brooding to herself, talking nonsense. We locked her right up!

**GUESTS.** Ha ha ha ha ha

*(All the GUESTS drink. MARGARET and DAWN are glancing at LILLA.)*

**MARGARET.** She's a pallid little nymph. I believe her people come from the south. She's got this gay little twang. "May *ah* help you?" Trying desperately to shake it but it's like breath, it comes without thought...

**DAWN.** She looks ill...

**MARGARET.** You'd be feverish too if you were perched on a two-thousand-dollar Italian dais in your twelve-dollar dress from Penny's

*(They drink.)*

**GUEST TWO.** So I say, Let me be yours again for the next few years—I'll be genteel—I'll change—I know you think I'm frumpy

but I'm going to change. I'm going to branch out. I shall buy a blue cape and a hat to match—I'll look just as I did when you adored me!

**GUESTS.** Ha ha ha ha ha

*(All the GUESTS drink. DAWN continues to steal glances at LILLA.)*

**DAWN.** I don't believe I've ever seen her here

**MARGARET.** Her first visit, I'd venture. The way she's been positively devouring her surroundings with those big mute gaping eyes...first the Persian rugs, then the Sheraton cupboard, then the gold Venetian bed...although presently she can't seem to divorce her gaze from YOU, Ms. Powell...

**DAWN.** Don't be daft

**MARGARET.** Maybe she's settled upon the most valuable *objet* in the room...or, perhaps she's gone a bit "funny" for you...

*(DAWN glances back at LILLA. LILLA turns away shyly.)*

**DAWN.** Ms. Banning, you are a perfect witch

**MARGARET.** These ARE modern times...

*(They drink. LILLA begins to approach DAWN.)*

**GUEST THREE.** Dish-face... Hey dish-face...you with the face like a dish...hey...did I happen to tell you about Isabel?

**CAROL.** Fear not, devoted friends, the TRUE guests shall be arriving at any moment. And if they fail to do so, might I suggest we charge out into the storm with our toothpicks held high and ally with those charming shouting gentlemen next door...

**GUESTS.** Ha ha ha ha ha

*(All the GUESTS drink.)*

**LILLA.** Excuse me...are you Dawn Powell?

**MARGARET.** Why yes she is, THE Dawn Powell, the author.

**LILLA.** Very pleased to meet you...

DAWN. Hello...

*(They shake hands.)*

MARGARET. Pardon me, the washbasin calls...

*(MARGARET strolls off.)*

LILLA. I've wanted to meet you for ages...I positively begged Mrs. Brandt to let me come tonight...

DAWN. That's kind of you

LILLA. I didn't think I'd conjure up the nerve to talk to you...but I said to myself, "look here, Lilla, you took two trains and walked ten blocks in the rain to get here, so just march yourself right up and shake that woman's..."

*(LILLA grabs hold of a piece of furniture to steady herself.)*

DAWN. Are you all right?

LILLA. Yes...

*(LILLA sits.)*

DAWN. Harold...

LILLA. I'm fine...

*(HAROLD appears.)*

HAROLD. Yes Ms. Powell

DAWN. Water for the lady

HAROLD. Yes, Ms. Powell. And a cheese pocket, if it pleases her.

*(HAROLD hands LILLA a glass of water and a cheese pocket.)*

LILLA. Thank you

DAWN. Should you lie down?

LILLA. I'm fine, really...did you have much trouble with the men outside?

DAWN. Not at all...they are picketing the other building, not this one.

**LILLA.** Those poor, poor...in the storm and all. I hope they get whatever they are asking for.

**DAWN.** It won't be enough. It is never enough.

**LILLA.** Do you think they are making unreasonable demands?

**DAWN.** No.

**LILLA.** Oh.

*(A beat.)*

**DAWN.** So you're employed by Carol?

**LILLA.** I do little things around the office for her. She's very kind to me. She lets me read manuscripts.

**DAWN.** Ah.

*(A beat.)*

Well.

*(A beat. DAWN drinks.)*

**LILLA.** I've read all your books.

**DAWN.** All of them?

**LILLA.** And two of your plays.

**DAWN.** You must be deeply masochistic

**LILLA.** I found them touching.

**DAWN.** Touching. That's certainly a word I don't often hear associated with my writing

*(Slowly, the others disappear and DAWN and LILLA alone remain.)*

**LILLA.** They move me in a profound way...Your characters. I suppose I understand something about them, I come from a small working-class town, Ms. Powell, just like the folks you write about, people doing their best to exceed or deny their limits, then grinding to a stop for disappointment or disaster, then starting up again at the first sign of longing or ambition or appetite, and always ALWAYS falling short of their dreams...

**DAWN.** Yes...

**LILLA.** ...And the young people lying awake at night listening to city-bound trains roar by, the humming of the town jagged from time to time by the shriek of an engine whistle or the bellow of a factory siren or the clang-clang of a red street car on its way from

**DAWN.** one village to the next,  
grey train smoke over the town most days  
smelling of

**LILLA.** travel  
of transcontinental trains about to flash by

**DAWN.** of important things about to happen  
and the smaller smells  
of

**LILLA.** frying hamburger  
onions  
boiling coffee  
stale beer

**DAWN.** 6 to 6 smells  
a working town's smell  
but largely  
the scent of travel  
of /trains

**LILLA.** trains  
and with them  
the ache  
a chafing holy need to be ON one  
knowing there is

**DAWN.** no place where trains went that I wouldn't go

**LILLA.** no place  
where trains went

**DAWN.** that I wouldn't  
go

*(A beat.)*

Well.

*(DAWN drinks.)*

Well.

*(DAWN nods in the direction of MARGARET.)*

I must... Ms. Banning, our guest of honor, an arrogant shrew but an important one, I'm afraid I, it was lovely, what was your name?

*(LILLA leans into DAWN. A whisper.)*

**LILLA.** I've read your new book.

It drives with the force of a woman's tongue through a chocolate truffle

Dash, squalor, pernicious beauty

Humans cocked with wit

Slick and dizzy and wailing in thin high notes

The city on fire behind your eyes

It is remarkable

**DAWN.** I...wanted to write a New York book. Full of delicate sharp detail. I wanted to claim my beautiful city in ink.

**LILLA.** Then it *is* true...

**DAWN.** What

**LILLA.** You're free

*(LILLA grows paler. She is very sick but hiding it.)*

**DAWN.** You haven't told me your name

**LILLA.** Lilla. Lilla Worthington. I'm thinking of changing it to Lila. Lila sounds more cosmopolitan. Don't you think? Lila doesn't drive two small boys to school every morning with their little packed lunches and plastic pencil cases.

Lila wears long blue gowns with sparkles and straps, and she is charming and sharp-tongued

and she drinks martinis on a terrace eighty-four stories above the city so she can watch the night spread out beneath her in a garden of golden lights, and every time she laughs one of her straps falls

down over her shoulder but she never pulls it up right away, and her fingers and toes are so hot they burn everything she touches...

*(A beat.)*

Don't you think?

**DAWN.** My last book...my new book...was...

**LILLA.** Don't you think?

**DAWN.** It was supposed to be...Lila's book...

**LILLA.** Lila's book

**DAWN.** It changed...

**LILLA.** But it's a beautiful book anyway...I'm so fortunate to have met you, Ms. Powell. We have a lot in common...

*(LILLA falls.)*

*(The lights rise and a great commotion begins. HAROLD runs to LILLA's side and lifts her, carrying her into the bedroom.)*

**CAROL.** Never fear, all is well, la la la, plenty of cheese pockets to go around, munch munch away, that's it, merry-making at its finest on this stormy eve...

*(The GUESTS resume their chatter.)*

**DAWN.** Carol, that girl/

**CAROL.** Lilla...my part-time clerk...she fainted taking her sons to school this morning. Her doctor told her not to come tonight but she just HAD to meet you...foolish girl

**GUEST FOUR.** Nag nag nag, why do I spend money on elegant restaurants when we have a cook at home—it's extravagance. Nag nag nag

**DAWN.** Shouldn't we do something, call an ambulance?

**CAROL.** Harold's got that under control...her husband has been contacted. He's on his way.

**GUEST FOUR.** I'm a worm, an imbecile, the lowest beast on earth—that's how it begins the moment I step through the door no matter how long I've been away

*(MARGARET strolls over.)*

**MARGARET.** Congratulations Carol, your party has just taken a turn for the thrilling

**CAROL.** She must have accidentally spied the price tag on my silver tea service...

*(They laugh and drink.)*

**GUEST FOUR.** Last time I was feeling too goddamn good so I spoke back, wouldn't let her get started... "Listen," I say, "Please bear in mind I'm a worm and an imbecile of the first order and let's have no more argument about it. Now will you just zip it?!"

**GUESTS.** Ha ha ha ha ha

*(All the GUESTS drink.)*

*(HAROLD walks solemnly from the bedroom.)*

**HAROLD.** Ms. Brandt, we must phone an ambulance...the girl isn't breathing. She has no pulse.

**CAROL.** Oh dear. This simply won't do.

**DAWN.** She's dead? She's not dead.

**HAROLD.** I'm afraid so

**GUESTS.** Ha ha ha ha ha

*(All drink.)*

**DAWN.** She's...she was...

**MARGARET.** Don't fret Dawn, when the rain lets up we'll wander downtown and rope you in a swell new mistress

**GUESTS / CAROL.** Ha ha ha ha ha

*(All drink.)*

**CAROL.** Let us raise a toast in honor of Lilla Worthington, my faithful clerk, who has just passed into the Great Unknown...may

her soul be inundated with all the contracts and manuscripts and ledgers in heaven, and may she file them peacefully throughout eternity

**GUESTS.** *Here here!*

*(All drink. Someone turns the music up. It is “Sing Sing Sing” by Benny Goodman Orchestra. The GUESTS cheer and pair off and begin swing dancing around DAWN, drunkenly, fabulously, frantically, all the while laughing with their heads thrown back.)*

*(DAWN remains still.)*

**DAWN.** Dead...

*(The GUESTS whirl a good deal more. The percussive sound implodes again. All freeze in blue silhouette except DAWN.)*

## FIVE.

*(LILLA falls (flies? floats?) in slow motion behind DAWN. Her hair fans and dress ripples. There is blood on her mouth.)*

**DAWN.** Lila

you are a fog

you are everywhere I turn

you roll in from the sea

and lay a fine mist on my cheek

then you dissolve.

I dreamed of you before you were born.

You wore a tiara.

You floated.

You turned stars into laughter.

Your book, Lila

I fed it slowly

gave it milk

felt it full and glistening as it grew

with you its liquid center

brave and generous you

your toes ticking time to the

brilliant New York night

your heart drenched in longing  
as the sky ripened around you

But the city feasted on my fascination  
and gorged itself  
the book was birthed  
saturated with glamour and alacrity  
and the vast and virile electric horizon  
but you were lost.

My beautiful city devoured you.

I might have stayed its hand  
I might have shaped your curves first  
then allowed the flesh of New York to creep in  
and settle against your outline

I might have  
if the garden of lights hadn't  
filled me first

The blood from your mouth  
is on my hands, Lila

I want to undo this.  
I want to take the book  
press my hand through the pages  
until my fingers feel the last moist morsel of you  
drag you back through its spine  
and tear you into the air  
watch your blue dress fan out like fury around you  
your long blue arms angled at the stars  
your longing tangled around your tongue  
your teeth bared your breath mint blue  
and your body stretching until you are whole again  
until your fingers burn  
until the jewel in your tiara glows blue

*(LILLA falls.)*

Let me find you again, Lila

**SIX.**

*(LILLA is sitting in the corner, now wearing an exquisite sparkling blue cocktail dress and make-up, looking much more glamorous. Her head is in her hands.)*

*(The guests are moving in slow motion, mouthing conversation to each other. A screeching noise is heard above, thin and trebly, for several moments as the GUESTS move in their guest-like spheres.)*

*(Then, a buzzing noise. All resume natural motion and continue to mouth words. CAROL presses a button on an intercom.)*

**CAROL.** Who is it?

**DAWN.** *(VO:)* A Moist Mendicant. A Damp Documentarian.

**CAROL.** It's Dawn.

*(CAROL buzzes her in.)*

**MARGARET.** Dawn Powell? I didn't know she was coming...

**CAROL.** I invited everyone, simply everyone, Margaret, only to be mortified at the spoils of my ten percent party, it is a / deplorable

**MARGARET.** I should like to talk to her about her new book.

**CAROL.** Oh...yes. A devious little bauble, is it not?

**MARGARET.** It is quite different from her others...

**CAROL.** It is

**MARGARET.** I should like to talk to her about it

*(DAWN enters, shaking the rain from her coat. HAROLD sweeps by. DAWN snatches two martinis from his tray.)*

**CAROL.** You'll certainly have the opportunity...Dawn darling

*(CAROL takes MARGARET by the arm and sweeps over to DAWN. DAWN has caught sight of LILLA.)*

**DAWN. CAROL. CAROL.** I'd like you to meet Margaret Culkin Banning/

**DAWN.** A pleasure, excuse me

*(DAWN attempts to approach LILLA, who has her head in her hands. Various GUESTS quickly leap out at her like circus performers. She dodges each one deftly and artfully. They freeze where they fall.)*

**GUEST ONE.** A suit like the Lesbians and a six-story building!

**GUEST TWO.** Radios radios radios and a hat to match!

**GUEST THREE.** Isabel stinks on ice, you dish-face!!

**GUEST FOUR.** And in the end the fellow says nag nag nag!

*(DAWN makes it to LILLA.)*

**DAWN.** Pardon me...are you feeling all right?

**LILLA.** I'm a little dizzy...

*(DAWN hands LILLA one of the martinis. LILLA sips it.)*

Thank you. You're/

**DAWN.** Dawn.

*(DAWN extends her hand. LILLA takes it.)*

**LILLA.** Lila.

**DAWN.** Beautiful name

**LILLA.** I hope to have shoes to match someday.

*(She laughs. Her strap falls over her shoulder. She does not pull it up right away. DAWN and LILLA drink.)*

**MARGARET.** I do think she captures the city rather dazzlingly

**CAROL.** She does

**MARGARET.** Although...

**CAROL.** Yes?

**MARGARET.** As I was reading I perceived a void. An untouchable pocket of air that buzzed with the form of an essence not fully filled.

**LILLA.** This is my first martini

**DAWN.** How do you find it?

**LILLA.** Glamorous.

**DAWN.** Indeed.

*(They drink.)*

**MARGARET.** *(To CAROL:)* You see, her book yearns, open-mouthed and urgently, but not through its characters...through its cast. Its shadows. A phantom ache.

**LILLA.** Have you left your native soil behind, then?

**DAWN.** I believe so...have you

**LILLA.** I'm on my way

**DAWN.** To your journey

*(They both drink.)*

**MARGARET.** *(To CAROL:)* I should like to talk to her about it...but that woman has her positively spellbound...who is she?

**CAROL.** She looks strikingly familiar... I think I saw her performing at Lansky's nightclub last Tuesday...

**MARGARET.** How exotic...

*(They drink.)*

**DAWN.** My new book was supposed to be about you.

**LILLA.** Tell me.

**DAWN.** Full of delicate sharp detail...the sharp detail as perceived by one who sees the city seldomly but then, with desperate longing. No plot but mood, feeling, atmosphere, even glamour, seen but never attained. In shaded fleeting photographic shots.

And you, imprisoned in its center like a blue jewel. Swift, intense, violently real...a brave and generous and gallant woman, entirely bound by your life, your heartache forever pointing to the one far-off star.

**LILLA.** You've found me

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