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edited by D. L. Lepidus

MONOLOGUE AUDITION SERIES

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# Contents

FOREWORD . . . . .	ix
THE ALTRUISTS (4) by Nicky Silver. . . . .	1
ANTON IN SHOW BUSINESS by Jane Martin. . . . .	7
BANANA MAN (2) by Don Nigro . . . . .	9
BE AGGRESSIVE by Annie Weissman . . . . .	13
BEAST WITH TWO BACKS by Don Nigro . . . . .	14
BUNNY'S LAST NIGHT IN LIMBO (2) by Peter S. Petralia . . . . .	15
THE BUTTERFLY COLLECTION by Theresa Rebeck . . . . .	18
CIAO BABY!(2) by Kent R. Brown . . . . .	20
DAMN THE TORPEDOES! (2) by Jill Elaine Hughes . . . . .	23
DEGAS IN NEW ORLEANS by Rosary O'Neill . . . . .	26
DOWN FOR THE COUNT by Robin Rothstein . . . . .	28
DRIFT by Jon Tuttle . . . . .	30
ELEANORA DUSE DIES IN PITTSBURGH by Don Nigro . . . . .	32
FIVE NICKELS by Jack Neary. . . . .	33

HALO	
by Ken Urban . . . . .	34
HOLD PLEASE (2)	
by Annie Weissman . . . . .	35
HORRORS	
by Don Nigro . . . . .	38
HOUSE OF TRASH	
by Trav S. D. . . . .	40
JESUS HOPPED THE A TRAIN	
by Stephen Adly Guirgis . . . . .	41
THE LANGUAGE OF KISSES (4)	
by Edmund DeSantis . . . . .	42
THE LAST OF THE THORNTONS (3)	
by Horton Foote . . . . .	46
LIKE BEES TO HONEY	
by Andrea M. Green . . . . .	50
LOBBY HERO	
by Kenneth Lonergan . . . . .	51
MADDALENA	
by Don Nigro . . . . .	52
MARTIAN GOTHIC	
by Don Nigro . . . . .	54
MOTHERING HEIGHTS (2)	
by Rebecca Christian . . . . .	55
MUTABILITY CANTOS	
by Don Nigro . . . . .	58
ONIONHEADS	
by Jesse Miller . . . . .	59
PRAYING FOR RAIN	
by Robert Lewis Vaughan . . . . .	60
PSYCH (3)	
by Evan Smith . . . . .	61
REALITY (2)	
by Curtiss I' Cook . . . . .	64
SEEING STARS IN DIXIE	
by Ron Osborne . . . . .	67

THE SUMMER OF JACK LONDON	
by Andrew J. Fenady . . . . .	69
THROUGH A GLASS ONION	
by Jason Stuart . . . . .	71
THE VICTIMLESS CRIME	
by Deborah Lynn Frockt . . . . .	72
WHITE ELEPHANTS	
by Jane Martin . . . . .	74
PERMISSIONS . . . . .	77





# Foreword

If you have purchased this book, or if you are thinking of purchasing this book, you are probably an acting student, a teacher of acting students, a professional actor, or working to become a professional actor. You are looking for material to work on in class or to use for auditions. Hopefully, you have found Smith and Kraus's monologue anthologies suited to your needs in the past. It is my hope, as the new editor of this series, that you will find this book even *more* useful.

Almost all of the monologues in this book are from readily available published plays; so now, you will be able to read the whole play as you work on your role. In the case of material not from published plays, we have tried to include contact information for the author — or we will gladly refer any inquiry about getting the whole script directly to him or her.

Almost all of the monologues in this book are about characters close to the actual age of the actors who will use this book — making the material easier for them to understand and use.

In closing, I would like to offer my profuse gratitude to Marisa Smith and Eric Kraus for entrusting me with the daunting but hugely rewarding task of editing this book. I would like to thank Elizabeth Monteleone for her kind assistance in procuring permissions to use the material herein. And I offer thanks, most especially, to all the playwrights and agents who graciously gave their permission to print these scenes from their wonderful plays.

— D. L. Lepidus



# The Altruists

Nicky Silver

*Comic*

Sydney (twenties to thirties)

*Sydney, a rather shallow, anorexic soap opera actress, is talking to her boyfriend Ethan.*

SYDNEY: Ethan, I have had it! I can take it no more. Do you hear me? You can pretend to be asleep, I don't care. Pretend you don't hear me. Your whole life is nothing but pretense anyway! All your causes! Your walkathons and demonstrations! Your rallies and protests! Your firebombs and letter writing! — I AM NOT HAPPY! How could I be? Am I supposed to enjoy your condescension? Should I love your humiliating me in front of your friends? I hate your friends. Cretins. Blowhards and cretins, all of them. With all of your political babble. You care more about your receding hairline than the plight of the disenfranchised! You're more concerned with your thickening waist than the homeless and the needy! You're nothing but a bunch of phonies! How do you think I feel when I'm introduced as "just" an actress? As if what I did for a living didn't bring joy into the world! As if what I *do* for a living didn't make this life more bearable for the disenfranchised you pretend to care about! There is dignity, profound dignity in my life, in my work! But you choose to sneer at it. People LOVE SOAP OPERAS! I get mail by the bushel, letters by the trillion! I have fans! I have followers! All over this country people are worried about Montana Beach! Will she leave Brock for Brick? Will she kick her ugly habit? Will she find her mother, true love, or the meaning of life!? People care about me! Who cares about you?! I ask you. Who cares about you! Not I! Not I, Ethan!

# The Altruists

## Nicky Silver

*Comic*

Sydney (twenties to thirties)

*Sydney, a rather shallow, anorexic soap opera actress, has had it with her boyfriend, Ethan.*

SYDNEY: Was I hurt when you threw my plants out the window!? I was. I cared for those plants! I loved them! I watered them and loved them since they were seeds! They were like my children! But they were, after all, just plants. And, as you pointed out, you didn't hit anyone, you didn't kill anyone when you hurled the pots, the terra-cotta pots from the fifteenth floor! And you were drunk or high on some substance, purchased, no doubt with money taken from MY purse! So I released. I HAVE BEEN HEROIC! Only a heroine, only a mythic figure, could overcome the scolds and the scandals — when you told everyone we knew, my friends, my family, my THERAPIST, whom you had no business talking to in the first place — when you told everyone in New York City that I gave you syphilis, when we both know, we know without a doubt that Maria Potney gave you syphilis during that demonstration — and you in turn gave it to me! THAT WAS NOT FUNNY! I made allowances because every now and then, once a week, once a month, once in a blue moon, you made love to me and I saw fireworks, I heard orchestras! You made love to me and I remembered the beginning, when we made love nonstop, like Olympians! I put up with everything, I entered your world of East Village, Alphabet City, anti-trend-trendies, of sit-ins and marches and protests, because it felt good to have you inside of me! But no more! NO MORE, ETHAN! I'M A PERSON! I HAVE FEELINGS! I HAVE A BREAKING POINT AND I HAVE REACHED IT!

# The Altruists

Nicky Silver

*Comic*

Sydney (twenties to thirties)

*Sydney, a rather shallow, anorexic soap opera actress, is talking to her boyfriend Ethan.*

SYDNEY: I hope you're not hurt. I hope I haven't wounded you. I mean that. Because you are a light that shines in my life. You are a beam, Ethan, that illuminates every corner of my life. You're so good. You're a martyr. You're a saint, devoting your life to other people. I'm nothing! I'd be lost without you. I'd be desperate. I'm greedy and empty and foul. I know that. I do. But, still, it's true, as I was regaining consciousness this morning, I knew things had to change. As I traced through the events of our cohabitation, I realized I can't go on any longer, watching everything I own, everything I *am* walk away from me! It's over! It's all over! I must walk away! — I mean emotionally, you understand, this is my home — I must free myself! . . . Well? Have you nothing to say to me? Don't you care if I throw away everything we've had? Ethan? Are you really so indifferent to us, the being of us, that you won't lift a finger, say a word to salvage it? . . . (*Gaining strength.*) You are just hateful!! You are just a destructive power in a pretty package! That's what you are! I realized that as I gasped for breath under the weight of my pillow, pushed over my face by your beautiful hands. I saw, in a flash, that you're like a poison, seeping, seeping, into every room of me! I HATE YOUR GUTS! . . . Stop me, please! I LOVE YOU! . . . No, no. Strength, strength, I will have strength! I will have courage! You've made me an addict! I've lost everything. My home is bare but for some old shoes and a *jockstrap* hanging over the shower! I have to free myself of you! You! You, who fills me with guilt because I eat meat, because I eat grapes, pay a woman to clean, drive a new car, belong to a union, ONCE

WORE A FUR, WEAR LIPSTICK AND MAKEUP WITHOUT EVER KNOWING WHAT THE FUCK IT WAS TESTED ON, BECAUSE I LIKE TIMES SQUARE BETTER, *BETTER* BECAUSE I FEEL SAFER, NOW THAT THE PIMPS AND THE WHORES AND HOMELESS ARE HERDED AWAY!! I WILL! ETHAN! I WILL FREE MYSELF OF YOU!! (*She produces a gun from her purse.*) Stop me. One word. One gesture! The smallest movement and I'll melt into your arms! I'll forgive you! I swear! We can go back to what we hoped our relationship would be, before it turned out to be what it is! TELL ME YOU LOVE ME!!!

# The Altruists

Nicky Silver

*Comic*

Sydney (twenties to thirties)

*Sydney, a rather shallow, anorexic soap opera actress, is talking to her brother, Ronald.*

SYDNEY: You're so critical. You've always been so critical. Fine, last night at some hour, everyone left. I was asleep, thankfully, but I assume everyone left. And Ethan crawled into my bed, stinking like a Bowery Bum — but you know, frankly, I like that smell, on him, mixed with sweat and this ninety-dollar-an-ounce cologne I bought him. It's sexy. And I've been so lonely. I ran my hand over his shoulders. He has massive shoulders — you can't tell to look at him in clothes, but his shoulders are huge and well-muscled and my god I'm never going to hold him again! Anyway, I ran my hand over his shoulders and kissed the back of his neck. Normally, when he's present, this is a signal. And, at least in the beginning, he responded by making athletic, rhythmic, and unforgettable love. But last night, he did not! I was kissing the back of his head, using my tongue to play with the tiny hairs and trace hearts in the nape of his neck. He ignored me. He pushed me away and he mumbled indecipherably, but it couldn't have been very loving, considering the force, the violence of the gesture. Something in Ethan snapped last night, something very primal snapped. He has hurt me in every way imaginable, but he's never been violent! Until last night! And as he pushed me away he muttered someone's name. I couldn't make it out but *it wasn't mine*, of that much I'm sure. Tears filled my eyes but I was not to be refused! I have poured myself into this man, and I am not to be shunted aside. I licked his ears and stroked his hard-as-marble buttocks, murmuring endearments, purring I love you's, until, all at once, with a growl, he turned over, spun over, holding his pillow and pressed it

over my face! I couldn't protest — I couldn't breathe. I grabbed his wrists, but he had the strength of ten men! I tugged at his arms, but they're like steel! I squirmed! I writhed! I shrieked silently under the down . . . until my eyes closed and I, thank God, lost consciousness . . . He tried to kill me, Ronald. Ethan tried to kill me . . . And so I shot him.



# Anton in Show Business

Jane Martin

*Comic*

Lisabette (twenties to thirties)

*Lisabette is a young actress in her twenties. In this monologue, which ends the play, she is talking to no one in particular (i.e., the audience) about her love for acting.*

LISABETTE: 'Night. (*Lisabette remains in a single light. She looks around her.*)

Wow. Crazy. It's so stupid, but I love to act. It always feels like anything could happen. That something wonderful could happen. It's just people, you know, just people doing it and watching it, but I think everybody hopes that it might turn out to be something more than that. Like people buy a ticket to the lottery, only this has more . . . heart to it. And most times, it doesn't turn out any better than the lottery, but sometimes . . . my dad runs a community center, and back in the day they did this play called *Raisin in the Sun*, just about a black family or something, and it was just people doing it. He said there was a grocery guy and a car mechanic, a waitress, but the whole thing had like . . . I don't know . . . aura, and people wanted to be there . . . so much that when they would practice at night, 'cause everybody had jobs, they had to open the doors at the center and hundreds of black people would just show up, show up for the play practice. They brought kids, they brought dinner, old people in wheelchairs, and they would hang around the whole time, kids running up and down, until the actors went home, night after night at practice, and when they finished, these people would stick around and they would line up outside like a . . . reception line . . . like a wedding . . . and the actors would walk down that line . . . "How you doin'? How you doin'?" shaking hands, pattin' on the kids, and the people would give them pies and yard flowers, and then the

audience and the actors would all walk out, in the pitch dark, to the parking lot together. Nobody knew exactly what it was or why it happened. Some day I'd like to be in a play like that. I would. So I guess I'll go on . . . keep trying . . . what do you think? Could happen. Maybe. Maybe not. (*She looks at the audience.*) Well, you came tonight anyway.

# Banana Man

Don Nigro

*Comic*

Waitress (twenties)

*The character is a waitress in a small New York City café. It's about 1959, and her two customers today are none other than Samuel Beckett and Buster Keaton, taking a break from the filming of Beckett's Film. She has no idea who either of them are.*

WAITRESS: I need a drink. (*She drinks from beer bottle.*) I can see again. It's a miracle. God bless Ballantine Beer. See, if you have an artistic temperament, like I do, you have a lot of nervous breakdowns, and living in this city makes everybody a little squirrely after a while. It's like somebody is always looking at you, you know? In the street, in the buildings, even in my apartment, I keep getting this feeling somebody is out there with binoculars or a telescope spying on me when I run around naked like on the way to the shower or in the shower on the way out of the shower or just for the hell of it, do you know what I mean? Although, I guess a person wants to be an actor because they like being looked at, I suppose that's part of it, but it can't be all of it. I mean, there's got to be something else that makes you give up having a real life in order to take on these, like, other identities, you know what I mean? I guess I do like being looked at, sort of, but I also resent it. It's like I want the audience to love me, but also secretly I hate them for gaping at me. It's like I need to do this thing because I'm so lonely, you know, and yet, the process of doing it seems to separate me more, in a way, you know, from like, real life. Am I making any sense here? Do you want that meatball? I haven't had anything to eat today but a couple of Fig Newtons and a Dilly Bar. Actually I'm a vegetarian, but I've got this thing about meatballs, I just can't seem to say no to Italian food. It's what God must eat in Heaven, you know? Him and the angels, every night,

sneaking into the refrigerator after midnight and pigging out on lasagna and fresh bread with butter.

Of course, if there's meatballs in heaven they'd have to be made out of meat that had never actually been real cows or pigs or anything that could look back at you, you know?

Unlike this meatball, which is however incredibly good, even though I know for a fact that at least half of this thing must be old shredded newspapers and the other half was once somebody's mother. Can I have the rest of this garlic bread?

Thanks. You're a peach, Moe. I should have known this was going to be a bad day because last night I dreamed a house fell on me. I must be really messed up, huh?

# Banana Man

Don Nigro

*Comic*

Waitress (twenties)

*The character is a waitress in a small New York City café. It's about 1959, and her two customers today are none other than Samuel Beckett and Buster Keaton, taking a break from the filming of Beckett's Film. She has no idea who either of them are.*

WAITRESS: I saw you on television when I was a little girl. You were doing *Romeo and Juliet*.

It was the balcony scene. And there was a balcony.

It was this big empty stage in a big old theater with just a balcony with a ladder in back, and some fake bushes down below, and the theater was all dark, but you could hear people laughing from somewhere, it was actually pretty spooky, and you'd be Romeo down in the fake bushes, wearing this silly hat, and then you'd run behind the balcony thing and climb up the ladder and put on this wig and answer yourself as Juliet, and then you'd run down the ladder and back into the bushes and do Romeo, and then you'd run around back and up the ladder and put on the wig and do Juliet, with this wonderfully silly falsetto voice —

It was the most amazing thing I ever saw. It was like — it explained the whole world to me, as a child, you know? I mean, you're trapped in this theater, in this play, this performance, and you don't know what the hell you're doing, and you're like horribly miscast, in way over your head, and you can hardly even remember your lines, and you're stuck in these stupid costumes and this creaky, flabby, farty, falling apart old wreck of a body — no offense — but you keep running up that goddamned ladder anyway, and yanking your costumes on and off, and playing your characters for all you're worth, and you can hear the laughter in the dark, but you don't know for sure whether

they're laughing with you or at you, or what, but you just keep on playing your action. I mean, you couldn't really see for sure. Maybe there wasn't anybody out there in the dark at all, maybe it was just a laugh track somebody had left on and then went away and never came back, or got switched on accidentally when a pigeon landed on it or something. Your life could be like a movie playing in an empty theater, for all anybody knows. But part of the reason we keep playing our part anyway is that we have the eerie, irrational feeling that somebody is looking at us, you know, that somebody is watching us who's at least interested enough in what happens to keep watching, and that's like really horrifying, almost as horrifying as looking in the mirror, and yet, in a way, that's what keeps us alive, the fact that maybe somebody is watching.

# Be Aggressive

Annie Weissman

*Dramatic*

Laura (late teens)

*Laura is a teenager and a cheerleader. She is talking to her friend Leslie about her emotional problems in dealing with the death of her mom, who was killed by a hit-and-run driver while she was out jogging.*

LAURA: *(Beat.)* She used to tell us things, but I barely remember and I can't ask her again! I can't say "Hey mom, tell me things I never listened to! Tell me how to do things! Tell me how to bake sugar cookies so they're soft in the middle! Tell me how to sweep my hair up so it holds with just a pin. Tell me what it feels like when your water breaks and a baby comes out!" I don't have anybody to tell me that! *(Beat.)*

In 1971, she had a gray streak in the front of her hair. Premature gray. She had it for years until she finally got sick of the giggles and stares and she dyed it like the rest of them. I don't even remember barely. I was so little. *(Beat.)*

Is that what happens? You're young, and you believe in things, and then you, what? You get married, you have kids, you move into a Spanish stucco ocean view unit and you forget? One day you wear your white streak like a peacock's tail, and the next day you're letting them paint it with bleach and toner and wrap it in tin foil and you're sitting under a hair dryer to cook for an hour while you learn lip-lining tips from a beauty magazine! Like everybody else! *(Beat.)*

When you sit under those dryer domes, you can't see or hear a thing. You just have to sit there quietly and let all that stuff soak into you. *(Beat.)*

She's really kind of been gone for a long long time. *(Pause.)*

I don't want to be a dead girl. I want to be a person who's alive.

# Beast with Two Backs

Don Nigro

*Dramatic*

Mary Margaret (twenties)

*Mary Margaret is a young woman who lives in a Greenwich Village rooming house with her abusive boyfriend, Jem. It's 1927 or thereabouts. She is talking to Al, a nice guy who's recently rented a room downstairs.*

MARY MARGARET: Will you please oh please God just leave me alone? I don't want to think about it. I don't want to think about anything. Why are you doing this? Why are you being so mean to me? You know who really wants to use me? You, that's who. You keep trying to make me into some person I'm not. I don't care what you think you heard through the floor, I'm not what you want me to be, and I'm never going to be, so just let me alone and go to hell, just go to hell, I don't need you, and I don't want you, I am a perfectly free person and I will do exactly what I please. *(Pause.)*

I really have to go now, or Jem'll kill me. I promised him I wouldn't see you again, but I just wanted to, I mean, I didn't want you to think that — *(Pause.)*

So. You be a good boy, and send us lots of postcards from wherever you're going off to, and take care of yourself, and paint lots of pictures. I understand about you hearing us and all. That's really all I came down to tell you. I guess it wasn't really your fault. I'm not mad at you about it or anything. Honest. Okay?

You don't really have to leave, you know. Maybe you could just change rooms or something. You could move down there with McLish, maybe. He's got lots of empty space since those acrobats died. That'd solve all our problems. Then you couldn't hear us and you could stay here and be my friend. Our friend. Jem's and mine. I'd like that a lot, I really would, and I don't think Jem would mind, as long as it was clear that you and I were just, you know, like brother and sister or something.



# Bunny's Last Night in Limbo

Peter S. Petralia

*Comic*

Sister (late teens)

*Sister is a teenaged girl. She loves lipstick.*

SISTER: I love l-i-p-s-t-i-c-k. All kinds. I've got ten shades of red and five browns. "I have a color to match my every mood." I got that from a Revlon commercial. Do you know the one I mean? It's with Lynda Carter. You know, Wonder Woman? She's in the swimming pool? Never mind. I can't imagine the world without lipstick . . . it'd be pretty boring, I'd lose my favorite snack treat. *(She puts lipstick on and then bites a chunk of it. Then she puts it in her pocket as she chews the bite she took.)* L-i-p-s-t-i-c-k is the world's most overlooked source for nutrition. It's packed full of healthy stuff like vitamins and oils. It goes on smooth and digests right away. Mmmmm. Mary Margaret says l-i-p-s-t-i-c-k is made out of bat poop, but I don't believe her. She doesn't know anything about beauty anyway. Her mom won't even let her wear l-i-p-s-t-i-c-k. My mother thinks beauty is important. That's why she is so pretty. She lets me wear makeup because she wants me to be pretty too. I'm glad 'cause being pretty is fun . . . and important. I'm good at it, aren't I? I get all the boys to look at me, "My lipstick makes me look . . . kissable." That's Maybelline. The boys in Mrs. Harper's class can't stop staring when I come in. I don't blame them. The other day on the playground I kissed a boy. He wasn't that good at it. I had to hold him down. He was chicken. He said he never kissed a girl before so I asked if he had ever kissed a boy and then he bit my lip. I got really mad so I told everyone that he liked boys. He's dumb anyway. Everyone made fun of him. He's a fag, I'm sure. *(She takes out the lipstick again to take another bite. But it's empty — no more lipstick in the tube. She sticks her tongue into*

*the tube, trying to lick out every last bit.)* Hmmpf. I'm gonna have to get some more. I think I want "Tragic Diva" this time, from Urban Decay. It tastes better than Maybelline. I think it's because it costs more. They put special things in it that make it good . . . and it stays on longer. I hope it's not bat poop. That Mary Margaret is crazy. They wouldn't put bat poop in there.

# Bunny's Last Night in Limbo

Peter S. Petralia

*Comic*

Mother (mid-forties)

*Mother is a rather confused woman in her forties.*

MOTHER: Did something happen? When I was little the world was a different place. The cellar was scary and dark. I had to take the garbage down. I hid some kittens down there once and got in trouble. In the back of the cellar were some stairs and they led up to the yard. We were not allowed in the yard unless to retrieve something blown off the line or some such reason. Other kids were allowed in their yards, but Mrs. Murray wouldn't allow us. I shared the back bedroom with Daisy and it was usually a mess because she was a slob. When I got old enough to care I did the cleaning in that room and all the others. I had my first sexual experience in that back bedroom. Sixteen with the man I would eventually marry. It was a big mess in there. Directly below us lived Mrs. Bateman and her husband Davis. I never called her anything but Mrs. Bateman but I think her name was Debra. They were older than my parents. More like grandparents. Mrs. Bateman taught me how to crochet, how to make tea with evaporated milk, how to wash stockings in cold water and store them in the ice cube tray in the freezer — in her “ice box.” Whenever I was sick, which was a lot, she took care of me. We did puzzles, read, played cards. I was anxious for my mother to come home from the factory for lunch. We would sit and sing “Calling Mrs. Weaver” over and over until she got there.

# The Butterfly Collection

## Theresa Rebeck

Seriocomic

Laurie (twenties)

*Laurie is a young research assistant. She's been hired by a famous novelist to help finish his book.*

LAURIE: Just before Ethan and I met, I'd been with someone for a long time, six years, and he was, he worked at the Brooklyn Museum, and then he went over to the Public Library, he was one of those people who's a curator or something, I could never quite get it completely straight, but it was all quite important, scholarly, knowledgeable. And he was a wonderful, decent person, kind, and interesting, he knew everything about everything, but the fact is, he was just obsessed with death. Literally. It was all we talked about.

He knew so much about it. You know, historically how different cultures defined death, what it meant to people, different religions and how they define the afterlife. Anytime we'd go on holiday, wherever we were, we had to stop at the graveyards and study the aesthetics of the local headstones. Because of the Brooklyn Museum, obviously, he knew so much about the Egyptians, so we would have, oh my god, endless, I know so much about mummification, I could do it. I could actually mummify somebody.

But that wasn't even — the field trip aspect of it all was actually kind of entertaining. But the rest of it was just so relentlessly dreary. And I did come to realize, finally, that he may have been fascinating, and honest, and a good person, but he was also completely nuts. I mean, just because you're embracing death does not mean that you're not running away from life. And then I met Ethan, with all that anger and bitterness, and he seemed such a life-force, he . . . (*Catching herself.*) Do you think angels really fly? I mean, you don't ever really see it, in art, paintings and sculpture, and you know, those

things in church, the only ones who seem to fly, ever, are those disgusting little fat babies.

Fat flying babies. But the angels, you know, the titans, they just seem to stand around with those majestic wings and deliver messages, or wield swords or play instruments. Why is that, do you think? Maybe the wings don't work. That would be just like god, wouldn't it, to make something that beautiful that simply doesn't work. Like Ethan. Not like Ethan, not — I don't know what I'm saying. I'm sorry. What's Venice like?

# Ciao, Baby!

Kent R. Brown

Comic

Joan (thirties to forties)

*Joan is talking to Amanda, a friend, in a café.*

JOAN: (*Referring to the notebook.*) Oh, I get it. Separate sections for jottings and observations, ideas for convention papers. “Arousal and Orgasm: The Sexual Implications of the Use of the Exclamation Mark in Victorian Poetry.” Now that’s a title! (*Continuing to page through the notebook.*) Oh, lookee here. “When my heart speaks, it sings your name in the radiant spectrum of an afternoon rainbow. It caresses my lips with your lips, still moist from our lovemaking. It folds me into your arms, warming me, forgiving me, keeping me safe from the pain of the world.” Aw, that’s nice. Simple, stupid, and fatuous, but nice. The utterings of a lovesick sophomore sitting in class with that tingling feeling between her legs. So eager and throbbing. No, not throbbing, the man is always throbbing, wagging, or flopping. Pulsing! That’s better. Of course there’s always dripping. Boy, it’s harder writing great art than great copy, isn’t it? Wait, what do I see? It can’t be. Is this your handwriting? What do you think? (*She shows Amanda several pages at arm’s length.*) “Arousal and Orgasm” see? And “. . . still moist from lovemaking.” Look how you make your O’s and A’s and your —

Oh, oh, you’re beginning to splotch. There, on your neck, the other side. I bet John doesn’t like that one bit. He hates it when I splotch. “Jesus, Joan, you look like a Dalmatian with chicken pox.” Then he starts scratching himself, he’s so cute that way. How can I make it up to you? Kill your husband, maybe? I have a distinct talent for that.

# Ciao, Baby!

Kent R. Brown

Comic

Joan (thirties to forties)

*Joan is talking to Amanda, a friend, in a café.*

JOAN: He got this incredible cramp all of a sudden and barely made it into the bathroom. His laptop was on, I'd been reading his e-mail for years. His password is Joanie, poor dear. Suddenly I got this urge to write you a note. Right out of the blue. One of those "Hi, Mandy. John's in the john puking up his guts and tomorrow's another round of golf or two so I just want to say hi, have fun. Maybe we should all meet tomorrow to coordinate trips for the future." So I went over to the laptop and, my God, there you were on the screen! Confirming your meeting here, for this afternoon, giving directions. Out the hotel, turn left for three blocks, past the dress shop with a red cape on the mannequin in the window, then a quick right, the second left and here you'd be. And how much time would the two of you have, that you couldn't wait to touch him, blah, blah, blah. Signed M. (*Beat.*) And then, like I was watching myself in a movie, I turned in slow motion and opened the bathroom door. John was kneeling over the toilet. I smiled and told him that we were through, all of us: John, you, me, Edgar, Mr. Brimmer. And how when the English department invited you to be a guest speaker at its annual scholarship fundraiser I had to beg off, that Mother was ill and needed me? But that I wasn't at Mother's, that I was spying on the two of you. You do like pickup trucks, Amanda, very much. Out in the field, stark-naked hanging on the tailgate for dear life while you and John got it on. John had stopped throwing up by then and did his best to tell me I was silly and spiteful and sneaky and untrustworthy. I agreed, of course. And I told him about the e-mails and that silly picture of him in his socks and shorts in New Orleans. He was pretty silent by

then and started packing his luggage, throwing stuff everywhere, telling me how sexually repressed I was and how he only felt excited when he looked forward to seeing you and that's when I hit him with his laptop. He lost his balance a bit, but he kept on packing, saying he'd had it, too, with all the lying and the sneaking around and did I know he's reimbursing himself out of the department's scholarly travel fund and I asked where the scholarship came into all this and he said the research into the beauty and emotion of life enriched his poetry, and I had to go open my mouth and tell him his poetry was embarrassing and infantile and that his scholarship paled in comparison to yours and how could he hold his head up in conversation with you and he said he couldn't but that he won the day in bed and that was all you really cared about. Then he got feisty and said he was going to ask you to leave your husband and I replied that sounded just dandy with me and said . . . (*Joan swings a "poker" at "John."*) *Ciao*, baby, as I hit him with that thing they use to poke firewood.



# Damn the Torpedoes!

Jill Elaine Hughes

*Comic*

Tracy (thirties to forties)

*Tracy is a southern woman.*

TRACY: Oh, it's OK, ma'am. Well, I'll tell ya. Gabe an' me, we decided to go on the It's a Smiling, Smiling World ride. We had just finished up Mr. Lizard's Funny Fun Ride and Gabe here was a little shook up, so I thought it'd calm him down a bit. Well, it kinda had the opposite effect. All them little metal foreign kids that sing that song over and over, well Gabriel took 'em for the monsters he used to see comin' out of his closet door at night, back when he was 'bout two or three, and it near scared him to death. What he used to do when he was little when he was scared like that was poop his diaper an' then just reach in and grab around an' throw the poop at what was scarin' him. He ain't done that in a long time, but I guess all them singing baby robots must have regressed him or somethin', cause after he got scared and begged and screamed (I screamed too) for the workers to let us off the ride, and they refused, on account of the fact that it was against regulations to remove anyone from the ride in the middle so he just up and shit himself, and reached right down in there and threw it right square in the face of the little Chinese bride girl, and then smeared it all over the little Dutch boy, and just kept on and on and on until we came out the exit, and all them big ol' security guards came around and grabbed us and said that we were gonna have to go to detention. An' then we ended up here. Anyhow, my name's Tracy Tucker. Of the Akron Tuckers.

# Damn the Torpedoes!

Jill Elaine Hughes

*Seriocomic*

Madori (twenties to thirties)

*Madori is a behavior modification expert in a prison.*

MADORI: *(Pulls an electric shock tazer out of her pocket and electrifies it close to Gabriel's nose.)* You need to obey your mother, child. You see, we don't tolerate profanity here in the Smilingist Prison in the Independent State of Whimsey. *(Madori gives herself a mild shock, making herself jump, and then replaces the tazer in her pocket; Gabriel is scared silent.)* The Whimsey masters know what is best for you. They knew what was best for me, and they are why I am here today as your protector. We at Whimsey are here to enlighten you. In return, you will follow the Whimsey Code of Right Action in your every move in this prison and upon this planet. You will learn the Code soon. You will never question the absolute validity of the philosophy expressed in all Whimsey productions and behind all Whimsey products. You will praise and bow to the Whimsey inner light that is your personal savior. *(Her voice becomes emotional, as if in a trance.)* Think you can't do it? Let me use myself as an example. I was once like you. But one day, after I kicked Smilette Mouse in the groin outside a shopping center, I too was arrested, arraigned, and detained. I spent two years in Advanced Lost Cause cultural reassimilation. Two years! A long time, but not so long as it's taken some people. I used to be in the Guardian Angels and once, I dreamed of going into federal law enforcement. But that wasn't to be. It was hard for the Whimseyites to break through my years of ignorance and immorality. But every day I thank them for saving me and showing me the way, making me one of them forever. You too must learn to love Whimsey. To fear Whimsey. To worship Whimsey and accept Whimsey as your personal savior. *(Sighs.)* Hi ho. Hi ho.

Reassimilation can be done two ways. The easy way, and the hard way. The easy way is just that. They show you some films, you undergo some interrogation, and they give you a test. You pass the test, you're good enough to rejoin the world a bona fide Whimseyite. But if you choose to resist the training, you get the Hard Way. I'll spare you the details of what the Hard Way is.

# Degas in New Orleans

Rosary O'Neill

*Dramatic*

Didi (early thirties)

*Didi is a young unmarried woman who lives with her married sister Tell. Both women are desperately in love with their cousin, the painter Edgar Degas.*

*Two-story rental house on 2306 Esplanade Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1872. Didi and Tell are desperately in love with their cousin, painter Edgar Degas. Didi confronts her sister, appalled that she has won Degas, and lashes out with bitter hostility.*

DIDI: You've already had two husbands, it's not fair . . . *(In confused panic.)* You have to steal Edgar. You . . . you seduced him. You know how to fix yourself up how to flirt — There are no men left since the war . . . You knew I wanted Edgar. How could you? *(Her mood changes to arrogant disdain.)* Don't excuse it. Maybe it isn't your fault. I can't wash away the unwanted birthdays. Men say they want intelligent independent women, but they don't, not really. *(She puts a hand to her face, holding back a sob.)* Edgar and I are perfect for each other. The same artistic ambitions. I'd be happy just living with him, writing my stories. But with you flaunting yourself, he doesn't see me. *(Calls out, guiltily.)* I will not calm down, not this time. You're blind not only with your eyes but with your heart.

*(In a burst of rage.)* Your own husband's having an affair with America, and you don't see. Yesterday I walked in on them in the back hall. But no, no matter what Rene does, you won't see. You lie there, doing nothing, feeling sorry for this baby you should never have had. The doctors warned you, but no, you had to put us through this misery. *(Her voice trembling with suppressed fury.)* Where do you think that sickly baby is? In my room. I'm the one who's got to watch

it die. You're a saint while I'm just a woman without a husband. No matter I sit up nights writing. Nobody ever asks to read my work. My eyes burn while you lie there in your lace and satin, flaunting those new nightgowns Rene brought you. And you know that he did it out of guilt because he's seeing America. I take care of a dying baby so that Rene can sleep with America and Edgar can drool over you. (*Emotion burning through her.*) I've been dreaming of him, prayed he'd come for me, but he never stopped loving you. (*Guiltily with the shocked realization of what she's said.*) There is a bridge between our past and our present. Somehow when he arrived, like lightning you and he were connected all over again. (*Didi chokes huskily, sobs overcoming her, as she barrels out to the front hallway.*)

# Down for the Count

Robin Rothstein

Comic

Wendy (twenties to thirties)

*Wendy is talking to an unseen friend over a glass of wine.*

*Wendy is seated on one end of a couch holding a glass of red wine. There is an end table next to her with an open bottle and a phone. She drinks.*

WENDY: Okay, time to be frank. You're right. There is something going on with me. I really didn't want to say anything yet, but since you're being so persistent. *(Pause. Smiles.)* I have been seeing the world's greatest guy! Aaaaaaaaah! I've said it! Well, it hasn't been that long and I wasn't sure if it was going to stick. I know. Can you believe it? His name is Tim. I mean Timothy. Timothy, Timothy, Timothy. In fact, I expect him to call soon so we can make plans for tonight. Yup. Well, you know what they say, "It's when you're *not* looking." Well, it's only been a few weeks, so I don't like consider us "official" but I'm glad I can finally tell someone I'm so about to bust out of my control tops! And I have this feeling . . . I think he could be "the one"! Aaaaaaaaah! I know! Isn't it crazy? Me. "The General Cho's Chicken-Eating, No-Social-Life, Video-Renting Misfit"! Can you believe it? I feel so blessed. So blessed. He's smart, funny . . . well, I mean . . . in his own way funny. Not laugh out loud hilarious split a gut and accidentally fart funny, more like a . . . beige funny. You know. Like droll? He's actually kind of quiet. But I've discovered that I prefer quiet people. I do. I am actually a quiet person. Whenever I talk, it's just a façade. *(Long pause. Wendy sips more wine and glances at the phone.)* The greatest thing about Tim — Timothy . . . is that he's *not* creative. He's an accountant. I know, can you believe it? Not to say that he's *boring*. I mean, he doesn't say much, but when he does speak, he's very sensual. He has this way of saying "refund" that

makes me want to stick my tongue right down his throat. He also has that kind of great pedigree that mother always dreamed about. The kind that could get you into the *New York Times* bridal announcements? Last name Twitmeyer, undergrad Princeton, mother a descendant of Kierkegaard. And to top it all off, he's *normal*. Yes. Can you believe it? I finally found a normal person. Hoo-FUCKING-ray! And a gentleman, can I tell you? He almost always pays. I make that false attempt to pay my share, you know the hand going toward the pocketbook motion, but he almost always stops me. (*Pause.*) Oh . . . well . . . the sex . . . it's . . . let's just say, "Heaven" is an understatement. (*She drinks some wine.*) Except he has these two cats. They always start crawling on my back right when I start giving him a blow job. Talk about your "ménage a cat-tre." (*She laughs hysterically at this. Then slowly, her laughter dies. Plainly.*) The first time we slept together, Timothy was pumping me hard for, well, a while and I started worrying that I wasn't going to be able to come and the more I worried the worse, well, you know. So, he's pumping and grunting and murmuring and I'm trying to make myself excited by fantasizing that I'm this new girl on the job in a porn video being bonked by her dirty old boss when all of a sudden I get this soft, wet feeling in my ear. Ohmygod. It was soooooo erotic. I *exploded*. I *swear*. I had the most mammoth orgasm I have ever had. Yeah, I know. Isn't that great! I was really happy to know it could happen for me. The only thing is . . . (*She starts laughing.*) . . . now this is really funny . . . I'm not sure if what I felt in my ear was Timothy, or one of the cats. (*She drinks more wine.*) What it comes right down to? Is that it's comfortable when we're together. And that's what's really important. I mean, I'm not like *instantly* attracted to him. My clit doesn't perk up and scream gimme gimme whenever I think about him, or when he touches me, but because we were friends first, it's like we *care* about one another. I, you know, *eventually* get excited. I just have to concentrate. Harder. Unless, of course, one of his cats is nearby.

# Drift

Jon Tuttle

*Dramatic*

Barbara (forties to fifties)

*Barbara is a married woman. She's sitting at a bar, talking to the bartender, Grady. She's a little bit drunk.*

BARBARA: (*Reading the card.*) "I would . . . I would I were thy *bird*." "I would *I* were thy bird." . . . It's what Romeo says to Juliet on the balcony. It's an "allusion." (*Consulting the back of the card.*) And she says, I looked it up, she says: "Sweet, so would I. Yet I should . . . kill thee with . . . much cherishing. Parting is such sweet sorrow . . . That I shall say good night . . . till it be morrow."

The night before our *wedding*. Isn't that amazing? How many men do you know who'd — would *you* think of this? *I* wouldn't. It took me thirty years to figure out what it *meant*. Most men I know — what I could never *understand*, what I could *never* understand: they treat the, the, the *garbage* man with more — my second cousin, *her* husband? Now there's an asshole. Do you mind if I swear Grady?

A miserable asshole. Goddamn, grab-ass, shit-prick bastard goddamn I used to swear so well. He'd tell her how "disgusting" she was, how fat, stupid goddamn *baboon* she was. I mean she is a little heavy and she doesn't exactly "light up the room" but you just don't . . . *talk* that way to — you don't talk that way to *anyone*. In thirty years, I'll give him this, Arthur cannot *bring* himself to say an unkind word to me. And he's one of the best fathers you've ever seen. (*She downs her shot.*) He used to read to Lindsey every night, same goddam story too, because children, he says there's a . . . there's a great *comfort* in being told a familiar story.

I would like another Jagermaster please. So: one morning, listen to this: my cousin, she gets up, she cooks him this big, spectacular breakfast: blueberry pancakes, eggs benedictine, the whole —



grapefruit juice — whole thing. They're sitting there, she takes a deep breath, she says, "Hubert. If you're not nice to me. If you're not *nice* to me. I will leave you."

. . . Isn't that . . . isn't that incredible? "If you're not nice to me, I will *leave* you." I mean it's a perfect, it's, you shouldn't even have to *say* it. What they should do is, they should make one of those needlepoint wall-hangy-thingies to go in the goddam kitchen, with sunflowers and bluebirds: "If you're not nice to me!" She *meant* it, too. In business, this is what Arthur says: you cannot negotiate, if you're not prepared, at any moment, to walk away from the table. You see what I'm saying?

If I stuck a gun, if I stuck a gun at your head and said, uhh . . . "repent!" "Put the toilet seat down!" Would you rather watch the baseball?

# Eleanora Duse Dies in Pittsburgh

## Don Nigro

*Seriocomic*

Duse (fifties to sixties)

*Duse, the great Italian actress, is talking to Eva, a young actress. Duse is in her sixties, just before her death.*

DUSE: Nobody is worthy. No actor in the history of the theater has ever been worthy of this profession. You can't let that stop you. Listen to me, child. You're right, the stage is a holy place. It is the focus of all times and places, the distillation of all human suffering and joy. They come because they're lonely, like us, and they gather in the dark so they can see themselves reflected, as in a mirror, what they are, what they fear they are, what they hope they can be, what they remember, what they've forgotten. We are the best part of them, the worst part of them, we are generations of the unhappy dead, and we become the symbols of their flesh and blood and of the deepest and most hidden secrets locked within their souls. We suffer and die for them each night, and each night we're reborn again for them. It's not a question of failing or not failing. Of course we fail. The lines we say are often not the best lines, the play we're in was written perhaps by the village idiot, or altered beyond recognition by some pompous ignoramus in rehearsal, but if we give to it our best attention, if we are brave enough to trust the play, to trust the words, and trust ourselves, if we can teach ourselves to trust in the best of what we've learned from our own ridiculous efforts and innumerable disasters, if we never give up, if we continue to attempt, despite everything, to find the truth inside us and play our action as simply and honestly as we can, then we are doing our work, and our work is as close to God as we are ever likely to get. Never despair that you are not good enough. Of course we are not good enough. But it's all we have. And there is as much beauty in farce as in tragedy, and as much truth in darkness as in light.

# Five Nickels

Jack Neary

*Dramatic*

Alice (forties to fifties)

*Alice, a woman forties to fifties, is talking to the audience about finding herself a widow and the difficulties of being single at this stage in her life.*

ALICE: (*To audience.*) A few months after Marty died I forced myself to go out with some of our friends. It was then that I became painfully aware of the meaning of the term “fifth wheel.” All I wanted to do was talk about Marty, but my friends seemed to think that even mentioning his name would be like driving a stake into my heart, so they kept complimenting me on how lovely my clothes were, as if Marty had taken my sense of taste to the grave with him. So I kind of stopped going out with my friends. Tried a couple of over-forty singles dances. I’d get to the hall, and there’d be five women for every guy, so the only real dancing we did was line dancing, and all the girls would do the Hully Gully while all the guys stood on the side and watched. Like we were all on the auction block. We could just tell from the looks on their faces what they were thinking. “Hey, check that one out! Looks like she could do a couple of flights of stairs without collapsing into a fleshy heap! Har! Har! Har!” I stopped going to singles dances, too. And I absolutely, positively, unequivocally, categorically refuse . . . to go to bingo.

# Halo

Ken Urban

*Dramatic*

Sue (twenties)

*Sue, a rather violent young woman in her twenties, is talking to her grandmother on the front porch.*

*A front porch, Sue and her grandmother, Sam, sit. Sue smokes.*

SUE: On the screen there's this guy. Skinny limbs, empty eyes, and red-wing boots, nuthin else. He's naked, you get me. A swastika tat on his right thigh, no hair to be seen. And he's right there, then another guy's right there. No more screen, and no one moves for awhile, just stand there, looking. Then it's weird, I don't move and he don't, but then the guys are in different places. (*Deep drag.*) His ass's right in the face and the face's right up to the hole. The face just goes for it. He's like giving it to the face and even though it ain't this other guy's thing, it's the skinny one's gift. Mouth opens and the tongue slaps it and slaps it, the hole puckers and lets it in. The thing is, it tastes fuckin great, sweetest thing, pure and warm, the mouth wants more. Hands spread it apart, tongue goes deeper, but it's not enough. Mouth starts biting, gentle bites at first, then harder. Hands hold the ass in place letting it take in bigger and bigger mouthfuls. Taste changes, there's blood, more and more of it. Teeth are breaking through gristle, muscle, skin. Mouth wants more, more bites, savage ones, deep ones. Gore's boilin, slobberin, slidin down the throat. It's my face, my mouth, you get me. It's me. Not a guy, it's me. (*Puts out cigarette.*) I pull out, a face plastered with innards, feces, entrails, and I'm fuckin grinning. This joy I feel, can't compare, Gram, it can't compare. (*New cigarette.*) Then I wake up. Still happy. Fuckin happy for days. The first thing's made me feel good in awhile. Don't mean nothing though. (*Pause.*) D'you think?

# Hold Please

Annie Weissman

*Comic*

Jessica (twenties)

*Jessica, a young office worker in her twenties, has just been let go.*

JESSICA: I thought her severance speech was a real cop out. Totally derivative. I can't believe I was so into Diana. She's not such hot shit as I thought. Actually, I'm psyched to be fired because now I can pursue my true interest. Hip hop music. Listen to this.

*(A rap.)*

Think you can fuck with a bitch like me?

Nigga PLEASE

I'm the tyra woman who could bring ya to yo knees

I put you on hold

Call you cold

Open your mail

And not break a nail

Duplicate triplicate

Bring it on

I'm hip with it

I'll staple you shut like Carni Wilson's belly

Stop your attempt at talkin like a militant Israeli

I'll turn you over face down and fax you to Japan

Then Scan your ass digitally and do it all again

*(She takes off her headphones.)*

I made it up. It's called Secretary Rap. I want to be the first rap artist with an exclusively clerical content. My name is gonna be White Out.

I think it's a good name, because: a) it's a race-based pun, which is very commercial and b) correction fluid is so charmingly Carter administration. *(Beat.)*

Jonathan said he'd help me record my shit. His stepdad gave him a full suite of broadcast quality recording equipment when he graduated from rehab the first time. (*Beat.*)

And then when Jonathan's band finds a bassist and strings some gigs together, I'm going to be their roadie. Except I'll never leave the apartment. I'll teletour with them, from our IMac at our apartment. I mean, my IMac at my apartment — where he moved in most of the stuff he's not still keeping at his drummer's and his mom's boyfriend's places. It's gonna be fuckin rad, I hope. Nowadays you don't even have to GO on the road to be a roadie. Isn't it a cool time to be alive? You can do it from the privacy of your home, courtesy of the computer. I'm looking forward to the future. I really am. We can't even imagine what's next.

Can you believe there was a time when the notion of electricity seemed like a miracle, a fucking unimaginable phenomenon? And now it's like, so what? We take it utterly for granted. Think of all the things we can't even think of yet that are gonna be that important! Things that seem impossible now are gonna be totally boring in just a few short years. It's so cool to think about. (*Beat.*)

I heard that at Taylor, Traylor, and Dane, they have unlimited free Snapple in the break room. I might pursue a part-time position there if my hip hop doesn't blow up right away. Me and Jonathan really like Snapple.

# Hold Please

Annie Weissman

*Comic*

*Erika is a receptionist in an office.*

*Erika sits at a cubicle, on a headset, visibly pregnant.*

ERIKA: SolomonSanbornSachs can I help you? Hello Diana. How was jail? Yes everything's fine. Yes, I did. I was able to do that. Yes. Will do. Uh, Diana? I just had a question, I know we went over this at seminar but I just wanted to ask you about the new break policy. I wanted to ask when we can take breaks, you know, some of the Tier 2 people were wondering . . . *(Beat.)*

Oh good, cuz, you know, it's kind of hard, what with the baby and all, I mean my fiancé, Jai Sun, that's his whole name, Jai Sun, he's Korean, he wants me to stop working, but I don't think I need to stop until I have her. But I do need my breaks. *(Beat.)*

No, no, I'm sorry. Yes of course. I understand. Of course. *(Beat.)*

What? Oh, I said Korean. He's Korean. Koreans don't always dominate genetically. She could look like anyone in my family. We have strong strong genes. So . . . *(Beat.)*

No, they haven't told me that it's a girl. I just sort of know. You just do. Trust me. You just do. *(Beat.)*

Oh, no no I'm sorry. Of course I'll order your lunch for you.

# Horrors

## Don Nigro

*Dramatic*

Betsy (twenties to thirties)

*Betsy has had a lot of strange things happen to her and almost believes that she has become a character in a horror movie.*

BETSY: No, Lorna, actually, we don't care about that. We want to discuss our situation here. I mean, this whole situation, the one all four of us are caught up in. The bigger picture. Because I can't help feeling that, you know, you must be just as much the — well, victim, so to speak, of this situation as we are. What I mean is, like us, you seem to be trapped in this movie, or this series of movies, or this, series of, like, interpenetrating worlds, in which, you know, you stalk us, and then, one by one, you catch us, and then, you know, etcetera, and I was just wondering if maybe it isn't as frustrating for you as it is for us. I mean, once you've impaled or beheaded twenty or thirty women, I would think, you know, that it must grow a little stale, or at least, you might begin to wonder what the point is. Do you know what I mean? I mean, for us, you see, we seem to live in this fairly normal world, being students, coming up to my father's cabin on the weekend for a slumber party, being murdered by this guy in a ski mask, but you know, more and more, I've begun to think about, you know, is this all there is? You learn your lines, you rehearse and rehearse, you go over it in your head, the baby-sitter thing, the bathtub thing, the midnight-naked-swim-in-the-lake thing, which I guess is my specialty, I don't know, it just, it bothers me, you know?

Because, you see, the thing is, you know, this keeps happening. I mean, I don't know if I was a different girl in that former life, I mean, that former movie, which I just kind of barely remember, or if it was me, the same person, who has to keep getting murdered again



and again in showers and tubs and lakes and having sex in the living room and such. I mean, is that bad karma, or what? And what I've begun to wonder a lot is, just who is watching these movies which are my life? Just who is out there in the dark watching this? And why are they enjoying it?

# House of Trash

Trav S. D.

*Dramatic*

Babe (twenties to thirties)

*Babe is a long-suffering, neglected, abused wife. Her husband Ray is a trucker. Here, she is talking to Toby, an alienated skin-head teenager.*

BABE: It's a long story. I have always had serious reservations about my husband Ray, from the moment I laid eyes on him. Yet, when we were younger, he possessed one beguiling feature which, when employed to its best advantage, would occasionally fill me with a rapture that could be relied upon to blot out every ugly, beastly quality the brute possessed. In short, he was prodigiously endowed and blessed with a fiery animal spirit. Late at night, he would mount me like the mechanical bull at Gilley's, grab a handful of my hair and stick his willy through a hole in his ripped jeans into my grateful and waiting pudenda. Then he'd ram it upstairs repeatedly 'til I'd swear to sweet Jesus he'd cleave me in twain. Up and down, up and down, the bed'd be bouncing like a Puerto Rican low-rider. And Dad'd yell up, "What are you kids doing' up there?" And I'd say, "Watchin' 'Hee Haw,' Dad!" And he'd say, "Well, it ain't that funny." He was a stupid son of a bitch. And, man, those were my Saturday nights for a while, all through high school. Ray brought me to heights of ecstasy in my teenage years I never thought it possible for a human being to achieve. I married him for those moments.

# Jesus Hopped the A Train

## Stephen Adly Guirgis

*Dramatic*

Mary Jane (late twenties to forties)

*Mary Jane is a court-appointed attorney, defending a young Hispanic man accused of murder.*

MARY JANE: I made two mistakes. When I turned down the DA's offer of a deal, I was not humble and I did not suppress my smile. The second mistake was: I overlooked a prosecution eyewitness who was on the list to testify. He was a British Ph.D. candidate doing his thesis on Living Religions who had been at the church that night. I assumed he was some kinda bearded flake from the land of academia, but he wasn't. He was clean-cut, credible and, amazingly, had experience as a witness. He corroborated all the previous testimony of all the previous witnesses who I had previously discredited and I couldn't shake him up. In a moment of weakness, I went to the D.A., looking for a deal, which of course, "Fuck you, bitch!" . . . "Fuck you bitch" — well, okay, fine, but that still didn't change the fact that Angel did not intend to cause Reverend Kim's death! This was not first-degree murder. The law may not have seen it that way, but the fact is: The law is fallible, the truth will not set you free, and, in a courtroom, "legal justice" is an oxymoron because the two rarely coexist, and when they do, it is the product of design, not an inevitable coming together. Angel had tried every means at his disposal to bring back his friend. And when everything failed, he still didn't give up. He made a foolish, perilous statement, but, it was a statement. I find honor in that. I wanted to find honor in myself. And so I did. And it was right. Goddamn it, it was right.

# The Language of Kisses

Edmund DeSantis

*Dramatic*

Mara (twenties)

*Mara, a high-strung young woman, is talking to Blue, a rather slow young man, same age.*

MARA: She likes you better than me. She likes everybody better than me! Always did. She stopped making me lemonade long before I left for New York. We fought constantly about everything. Stupid stuff. It's the reason — I left — to escape, and Johnny Ruvolo the guy I was with at the time who she absolutely hated 'cause he didn't get straight A's, he was going there to play in a band which never went anywhere, the band or the relationship . . . And I wanted to try the whole acting thing, I thought. After almost three years. She'd be a little more — we could maybe come to some kind of — I don't know — I wanted her to transform — an understanding, maybe. Don't ask me why I even . . . but I do. She totally holds a grudge, can you tell? Oh yeah, right! You don't know. She had me when she was young, like twenty or something. She never got over it. I think that's what she holds against me. Some stolen-youth thing.

And it's not like I asked to be born — I NEVER ASKED TO BE BORN. (*Turns away, teary.*)

# The Language of Kisses

Edmund De Santis

*Dramatic*

Mara (twenties)

*Mara is talking to her mother Zan, from whom she's estranged.*

MARA: Who'd a figured you'd ever like them so young, Mom, wake up, if Blue isn't a boy, then, what is he? If you think you're setting some kind of moral or ethical example here, some act of rehabilitation by fucking him, you are sadly deluding yourself. Tell him to leave, don't you think?

For your own good. For his.

You have to — whoosh, let him go — like in the saying, let the thing you love go, and if it doesn't come back hunt it down and shoot it, something like that. It's too bad you can't. Shoot somebody. I'm not talking about his age in years, I'm talking about his mental age but yeah his age age, too. You think he'd mind hauling those boxes or whatever from the basement?

It has to end some time, right? It's about sex. It can't go on forever. You look great now, but what's going to happen in ten, fifteen years? You have Grandma's neck, I don't wanna be around for that spectacle. Is he gonna wanna kiss Grandma's neck? I'm only being a realist here. We all get old. What, is that tacky to say about Grandma's neck but you know it's true, you really have it in for me don't you — !

Who knows, someday, you might even meet a man your own age you can fall for.

# The Language of Kisses

Edmund De Santis

*Dramatic*

Mara (twenties)

*Mara is talking to her mother Zan, from whom she's estranged.*

MARA: *(Starts twirling slowly in the chair and gradually speeds up.)* Y'know c'n I say one thing? In my defense. About that whole New York thing. I swear. That guy? That guy Roy? Suddenly I'm the big criminal. I'm the big stalker. That's all I'll say. I mean, Mara's always the fucked-up one, right, Mara's always the one that turns out to be the wrongdoer when things turn sour, she's the bad bad one, because she tries to be straight with everybody she meets. He was the one who invited me to his roof parties! Stupid goddamn yuppie parties. To look down to the place where he first saw me. Naked. He said keep the extra key! Standing in his kitchen blending daiquiris, didn't I hear him say, keep the extra key, like oh wow I was gonna spend the summer with him in the Hamptons! All of a sudden I'm being called a psycho — ! Talk about psycho. That's all I'll say. He was the most beautiful man I ever saw. Not a hair on his chiseled torso. Called me his pretty girl. Talk about your stories! Maybe that's what you'd call it. "Pretty Girl." No. Call it something like "Lies! Deceit! Treachery! Videotape!" Who figured he ever kept that, I thought he taped over it. That slipped. Not too embarrassing. That's all I'll say. Wow, I'm getting really — this should be a ride at the amusement p — ohmigod Ma I think — *(Stops twirling and turns white.)* I'm gonna be si — !

# The Language of Kisses

Edmund De Santis

*Dramatic*

Mara (twenties)

*Mara is talking to her mother Zan, from whom she's estranged.*

MARA: I'm fine. I wasn't hurt. Physically. Or anything. It. It. It happened in the elevator of my building. This guy, he lived across the street. He was watching our apartment for a long time. Me. Us. He'd go to the roof. Spy down on us. We called the police lots of times. They could never catch him at it. I came home late one night from work. I was doing extra temp work, for the rent. One of my roommates moved out and left Sheri and me in the lurch. I came home and. There he was. Waiting. In the elevator. He whispers, "Pretty girl." But in this sleazy cartooney way — "Pretty Girrruulll" . . . He had this kitchen knife. He cut my bra open. I froze I swear I froze and you know, you think you've heard this a hundred times but you can't believe it's happening to you, you think oh God has this guy ever heard of Ban roll-on and you see the black sprouts of hair in his ears and nose and oh great the burrito I brought home from Burritoville's getting cold and I'm going to miss Seinfeld tonight and then it's over and . . . (*Rocks in her chair.*) He didn't. Penetrate me. He. Came on my shoe. (*Laughs, then gets teary.*) It was scary.

# The Last of the Thorntons

Horton Foote

*Dramatic*

Alberta (forties to fifties)

*Alberta, a confused woman in her forties to fifties, has been put into a home. Mostly, she lives in the past.*

ALBERTA: My mama died eight years after I was born in 1918. They say it was the flu that killed her, but Rowena doesn't believe that and I don't either. We think she died of a broken heart. (*Again there is thunder.*) Hear that thunder? It thundered the night my mama died. The thunder woke me up and my Aunt Gert was standing by my bed and she said, your mama's dead, honey. You're going to live with me now. My daddy gambled and that broke my mama's heart they say. I had two sisters, Gloria, named for my mama, and Rowena. I forgot who Rowena was named for, some cousin or other. I was named for my father, Albert, and my aunt. Patience Texas Louisiana Thornton who everybody called Loula and she was named for her aunt Patience Texas Louisiana Thornton. My aunt never owned slaves but my great aunt did. Colonel Thornton in his will left half of his slaves to my great aunt and half to my grandfather, but the war came and the slaves were freed. (*She begins to sing a song of the period, such as "I Get the Blues When It Rains."* *She laughs.*) I never cared much for school. My aunt worried about that and she used to say, Alberta, take a commercial course, learn typing and shorthand, because you're going to have to take care of yourself, honey. All I have is the farm and with cotton the price it is I just barely am able to put food on the table, and every nickel your daddy earns he gambles away, as you well know. And I listened to her, but my heart wasn't in it. Every day in school I slipped movie magazines into my desk and when the teacher wasn't looking I'd look at the pictures of the movie stars, and I'd say to myself Hollywood's where I'm going and nothing is going to stop me. I saw an



ad in the *Houston Chronicle* about a man from Hollywood looking for talent and he was giving screen tests and I got Rowena to go with me and I looked up this man and I said, I would like a screen test, and he said, what's your experience? and I said, what do you mean? And he said, have you ever acted? And I said, no, and he said, you'll have to have some acting experience before I can give you a screen test, and I said, how do I go about getting that? And he said, well, I have classes in tap dancing and speech and tips on how to act before the camera, and then he said to me, has anyone ever told you you look like Bebe Daniels? And Rowena said, many people say that and I call her Bebe half the time myself. And then Rowena said, how much do you charge for your lessons? And he said, a hundred dollars for three months, lessons twice a week, morning or evening, take your choice. I start off with the tap dancing, so you'll have to get tap shoes. When do you teach screen acting? I asked. That comes after the tap dancing, the third week. I really don't care about tap dancing, I said. Well, he said, one thing feeds the other, Bebe Daniels can sing and tap dance too. Greta Garbo doesn't tap dance, I said, that's true, he said, but she's Swedish. Well, we'll think about it, Rowena said, and we left. When we got outside Rowena said, that man's a fake.

# The Last of the Thorntons

Horton Foote

*Dramatic*

Alberta (fortie to fifties)

*Alberta, a confused woman in her forties to fifties, has been put into a home. Mostly, she lives in the past.*

ALBERTA: And I told him about the letters I read in the slave letters book and about the two from Elizabeth Ramsey and he said that was his great-grandfather's mother and she had gotten to Ohio. And that his great-grandfather had stayed on the plantation until the slaves were freed. And he knew from Little Harry of all our troubles and he said that was our family's punishment for owning slaves and the Thornton name was going to vanish from the earth as one punishment and I said, well, why hadn't I died instead of my sisters? I was the last with the Thornton name, I'm still alive. And he said, your punishment's bound to come unless you ask forgiveness. Of whom? I said. Of every colored person you meet from now on beginning with me. And when he left I told Little Harry what he said I should do and Little Harry said I was making the whole thing up, that he's never said anything like that to him and he wasn't responsible for slavery and wasn't going to ask anybody's forgiveness for anything and then that night when I was all alone in the duplex I heard these negroes from my great-grandfather's plantation hollering and screaming outside the duplex, and I went to the window to ask their forgiveness and when I got there, those weren't any blacks at all, but just white hippies, and that's when I called my cousin Edgar out in California and he told me to take a tranquilizer and I did. Anyway, I don't care what Little Harry says, I know what Ramsey said to me, and every time I see a colored person I ask them for forgiveness, and sometimes they grant it and sometimes they don't, but I always feel better for asking.

# The Last of the Thorntons

Horton Foote

*Dramatic*

Alberta (forties to fifties)

*Alberta, a confused woman in her forties to fifties, has been put into a home. Mostly, she lives in the past.*

ALBERTA: I have a home, I'm happy to say. It's a duplex in Houston, in West University, near Rice University. West University is very desirable. A man came to my door and wanted to buy my duplex. He had a hundred thousand dollars in cash. When I die I don't know where I'll be buried. The Thornton lot is all taken up. Rowena got the last space. My daddy is there, and my grandfather and grandmother and all my aunts. But there is no room for me there now at all. I'm the last of the Thorntons, you know, at least the last with the Thornton name, and I should certainly be buried with them. My mama is buried there next to my daddy, and she wasn't a Thornton, of course, but married to one. I said to Little Harry, if there's no longer room for me in the Thornton lot, I want to be buried as close to them as you can get me. Well, we'll see what we can arrange when the time comes, he said. I worry about it, you know, as he is very unreliable, has been all his life. Says one thing and does another. That's why I'll never let him get his hands on my duplex. Never in this world. Never. Do you all remember Punkin Armstrong? She was a sight that girl. Loved to drink. Got drunk at a dance one night and stood in the middle of the floor and yelled, I'm a Croom Armstrong aristocrat!

# Like Bees to Honey

Andrea M. Green

*Dramatic*

Keisha (late teens)

*Keisha is a black, teenaged girl. Like all the characters in this play, she is dealing with substance abuse problems.*

KEISHA: He never questioned me when I told him I was stayin' overnight at my girlfriend's house. I would change into this slinky, black dress in the bathroom of a gas station on the corner and put on red lipstick and long, dangly earrings. I never had any trouble gettin' served. (*Beat.*) I got laid at twelve. One night, before I went out, I asked my daddy:

"Why are you STARIN' at me like that?"

"Because you look just like your mama when I met her."

"You never told me that before."

"I never saw it so clearly before."

"How — how did she look?"

"Big, bold, brown eyes like yours. (*Remembering.*) Slender and girlish. A smile so wide and bright it could light up the skies."

"Was she — what was she like?"

"Full of fun and mischief — loved to dance — wanted to go and do and know everything."

It was a strange moment. I didn't know till then how much he had loved her. (*Beat.*) He never mentioned her before or since. He was a good man, a thoughtful man. There were three of us kids, and he raised us the best he could after Mama took off. I always knew I was his favorite. I felt foolish and guilty standin' there in my school clothes, knowin' as soon as I left the house I was goin' to change into my nighttime gear. (*Beat.*) Until the day he died, I couldn't look my daddy in the eye.

# Lobby Hero

## Kenneth Lonergan

*Comic*

Dawn (twenties)

*Dawn is a rookie cop. She is talking to Jeff, a young man who works as a security guard in a luxury apartment on her beat — who's sweet on her.*

DAWN: Oh, they think I'm nuts. *(Pause.)* Well, not exactly, I mean, my mother thinks I'm a little bit nuts, but I happen to think that she's nuts too, so there's no harm done there, right?

But I guess generally, they're proud . . . I was near the top of my class at the Academy . . . I just . . . I just fucked up with *this* prick, that's all. And now I'm *screwed*. Because I obviously really misjudged him, you know? And for all I know he's been shootin' his mouth off all over the Department. And it wouldn't have been so hard to avoid the whole thing in the first place. But these guys . . . I mean, they seen so much horrible shit, it's like they don't give a damn about anything. So you gotta walk around like you don't give a damn about anything either. But they know you still do. And they wanna like, stamp it out of you or something. And like, test you, all the time. And it's always like: "Hey — you're not men, you're not women: you're cops. Act like cops and you'll be treated like cops." Only then it turns out they got a pool going as to who's gonna fuck you first, OK? And that's fine. I can handle it. You *make* them respect you. But then somebody decent comes along, and goes out of his way to make life easier for you — and I didn't even *ask* him, because I didn't expect anything different — I didn't *want* anything different. And then, Oh my God, it's true love — Except when he comes down in that elevator, just watch: because *I'm* gonna be the one who's gonna be supposed to act like I'm a cop! I mean . . . *(Pause.)* And then I got *you*.

# Maddalena

Don Nigro

*Dramatic*

Glynis (twenties)

*This drama is a modern retelling of the Medea story. Glynis is talking to Maddalena (the Medea character) about how she took up with her husband, Jason.*

GLYNIS: How it happened. How it happened was — We'd go down to the strip mine, hot summer nights. Con and Jason and me. And one night I said, I'm going swimming, and I took off all my clothes, just like that. I could feel their eyes on me. It was like they were hypnotized, like two cats watching a bird. I stood there naked in the moonlight for a moment and then I went into the water, and then Jason took off his clothes and came in after me, but Con stayed. I thought it would be the other way, I thought Con would chase me and Jason would wait on the shore for me to come to him, but it was Con who waited. We swam in the cold water, it was so odd, it was like a dream. Then Jason pulled me toward him and began to kiss me. Naked bodies together in the water. Naked bodies. I was trembling so hard. But I could feel Con's eyes on us, there on the shore. And when Jason began to enter into me suddenly I was afraid and I pushed him away and somehow got back to the shore and I was sobbing and Con was holding me and then I looked up into Con's eyes and there was so much pain there, I knew he loved me, I knew he did, and that's why he waited, that's why he didn't chase me, because he knew, and I kissed him, and I was kissing him, and kissing him. I was naked and he was kissing me and then we were on the ground and he was inside me and I looked over his shoulder as I clutched at his back as he was thrusting into me and there was Jason standing naked at the edge of the water looking at us. And then

I closed my eyes and everything exploded inside me and I was lost. And when I opened my eyes Con was lying on top of me sobbing like a baby and Jason was gone. I don't know why I did that. Jason was the one I wanted. He was always the one I wanted. But why did he come after me? Con waited on the shore. He knew me. I wanted them to suffer. I wanted both of them to suffer. Because they loved me.

# Martian Gothic

Don Nigro

*Comic*

Sonia (twenties to thirties)

*Sonia is a spokesperson for the nuclear power industry. She is talking to Nofinsger, her boss.*

SONIA: Sometimes I perform cute experiments with static electricity, make little Susie's hair stand on end, that sort of thing. I'm a graduate of Mr. Wizard. I also do a number about how plutonium is so safe you can hold it in the palm of your hand. It's true, you can, really, if you don't mind having a hole in your hand the size of a half dollar. That way you can cry into your hands and still see the men coming to take you away. (*She demonstrates briefly.*) I'm joking. That's how I keep you on my side — show you I've got a sense of humor. Trust me. Would you be paying me all this money if I didn't know what I was doing? These people I work for are not operating a charitable organization here. They're good American capitalists. This is not the Red Cross. And let me assure you how perfectly safe you will be, living in the shadow of this wonderful nuclear power facility we've built in your area whether you liked it or not. You have no doubt heard from certain members of the lunatic fringe wild charges about the dangers of such plants. Now, I don't want to be tacky here — I'm not sure I could be tacky if I wanted to — but most of these people have even less functioning brain matter than my sister, and they're not nearly as good looking. As me. Of course, I was hired entirely because of my extensive scientific background, not for my shapely buttocks, or for my pouting sensuous lips, but for the eloquence that streams out perpetually from them. My lips. They might just as easily have hired a four-hundred-pound dwarf, or the Elephant Man, if he'd had the same intellectual qualifications and communications skills that I possess.



# Mothering Heights

Rebecca Christian

*Dramatic*

Tamara (twenties to thirties)

*In this monologue Tamara, a young mother, discusses her child's first day of kindergarten.*

TAMARA: When I walked my son up to the kindergarten today, he had no idea how I was feeling. Willie was so excited he had packed and unpacked the washable markers and safety scissors in his backpack a dozen times.

I am really going to miss those lazy mornings when I'd settle in with my coffee and newspaper, handing Willie the comics to color while he watched *Sesame Street*. He didn't go to preschool and I'm not exactly Maria Montessori. I hope that doesn't hold him back. He learned numbers by helping me count the soda cans we returned to the store (he could easily charm me into letting him pick out a treat with the money we got back).

I'm not up on the Palmer method, but Willie does a fine job of writing his name on the sidewalk in chalk, in capitals to make it look more important. And somehow he caught on to the nuances of language. The other day he asked me why I always call him "Honey" when we're reading a story and "Bud" when he's helping with chores.

I have to admit that in my mind's eye, an image of myself while Willie is in school has developed. I see myself updating all the photo albums and starting that novel I always wanted to write. As the summer wound down, I was looking forward to today.

And then, this morning I walked Willie up the steep hill to his school; his classroom had a picture of the president on one wall and of Bambi on the opposite. He found the coat hook with his name above it right away, and gave me one of his fierce, too-tight hugs.

This time he was ready to let go before I was. Maybe someday Willie will take a son of his own to the first day of school. When he turns at the door to wave good-bye, his kindergartner will be too deep in conversation with a new friend to notice. Even as Willie smiles, he'll feel something warm on his cheek. And then, he'll know.

# Mothering Heights

Rebecca Christian

*Dramatic*

Jill (twenties to thirties)

*In this monologue Jill, a young mother, talks about her own mother.*

JILL: I had one of those insistent mothers. You know, the kind that always insisted on knowing where I was going and when I'd be back, and before I ever left the house she'd insist on asking me, "Do you have your 'pleases' and 'thank you's' with you?" She even insisted I write thank-you notes for every gift I ever got.

During my high school years, Mom insisted on visiting a girl named Jeanne who was in the hospital with a spinal problem and had no family in town. For six months she had to wear one of those metal braces attached to her head. I don't remember what the contraption was called, but I'll never forget how it looked — painful and scary. And at least once a week Mom insisted I go with her to visit Jeanne even though I felt awkward. Today Mom has a picture of a healthy Jeanne up on the bulletin board in the hallway, and when I go home, she insists on asking me if I recognize her without her metal halo.

Ever since fourth grade, my mother insisted on making me practice my viola every day, and she also insisted on coming to every concert I performed in. While I was planning my wedding, Mom insisted on making the dresses.

When my father died suddenly a few months ago, Mom insisted that although we were grieving, the funeral was also to be a time to rejoice, knowing that Dad was with the Lord and we should see him again some day.

Yes, Mom's been pretty insistent through the years. Am I anything like her? Not as much as I'd like to be, but I insist on trying.

# Mutability Cantos

Don Nigro

*Dramatic*

Tracy (thirties)

*This play, a sequel to Nigro's Seascape with Sharks and Dancer, reunites Ben and Tracy, who haven't been together for a long time.*

TRACY: You know what's going to happen, don't you? You'll keep resisting but eventually I'll wear you down and you'll give in, against your better judgment, you'll look at me and you'll love me because you always have and you always will no matter what, and you'll let me stay, and you won't want to have a child but you won't be able to resist me, like when I'm all naked in the bathtub covered with soap or something, I'll seduce you some way. *(Pause. She looks at him.)* But then sooner or later I'll get scared again and I'll disappear. I'll get scared and I'll abandon you again and then you'll be plunged back into that same hell you've pulled yourself out of a dozen times before, only you're right, this time it'll be worse because of all the other times before when it was weighing on you. It's true. I think I want it now, but in the end I always get scared and run away and leave you holding this huge bag of grief. I'm really sorry. I'm really, really sorry. I can't help it. I should never have kids. I'm not a person who should ever, ever have children. Because I'll love them so much they'll scare the hell out of me and I'll be just a terrible, terrible parent to them, and they'll grow up hating me like I hated my parents. But she'll love you. She'll love you a lot more than she loves me because you'll always be there for her. You'll never betray her. You never will. And then some day she'll just run off and leave you, just like her mother did. Because she'll be exactly like me. I'll see to that. *(Pause.)* Good-bye, Ben.

# Onionheads

Jesse Miller

*Dramatic*

Penny (twenties)

*This drama, which takes place during the Great Depression, is about Oklahoma dirt farmers. Penny is talking to Aloysius (same age).*

PENNY: Like two climbin' vines reachin' fer water. You got clean water? 'Cause I don't do nothin' fer free. An' I know. I know these fiel's take a lot outta a man like you. Times is so hard. *(Beat.)* I lef' my farm. Lef' the lan' my mama was born an' buried on. "Young woman, ol' farm, jus' don't mix." She use' ta say that. But I's jus' happy my mama shut her eyes years ago, 'fore she seen what this place does to ya . . . to a woman, to a man. A man who's use' ta ownin' his own lan', sowin' his own seed, pickin' his own crop. It's a terr'ble thing to have yer han's wrapped aroun' a ripe piece of fruit, pleadin' with ya to bite it open, and then realize, 'at ya has to han' it over to another man who sells it without blinkin'. Like it didn' mean nothin'. *(Beat.)* An' that there is the picker's blues. A song you ain't never played before, up on 'at horse, barkin' at ever'one. You may not have enough money to buy the bushel, but you got change enough for a han'ful, don'tcha? Maybe you'd like to lay yer head against my chest an' tell me about yer troubles. Papa says I'm a real good list'ner. Papa says. *(Beat. She lights her cigarette.)* I'm new aroun' here, jus' like ever'one else, I guess. One diff'erence. See, I am a dancer. Did ya know 'at? Even with all those bushels on my back, my feet ain't never stuck to the groun'. Wil' wil' West. Ya gotta show me a good time, if yer gonna keep a woman like me. Well, Mr. Gunther, can ya compete with my fiel'? *(Lookin' to the fiel'.)* 'At raw jagged feelin' I git when I push my fingers into the dirt, scratchin' the animal ears beneath it. *(Beat.)* I sure am hungry . . . an' cold. You jus' gonna stan' there, er are you gonna ask me in? *(Takes a last drag off her cigarette. Then to herself, cynically . . .)* Welcome to Californ-ee, Papa. Lan' o' milk an' honey.

# Praying for Rain

Robert Lewis Vaughan

*Dramatic*

Liz (late teens)

*Liz, a teenaged girl, is talking to Marc, an ex-high-school jock whose recklessness led to the death of a mutual friend.*

LIZ: Shut up. I don't want to hear anything you . . . Everything I knew up to that point in time, I don't know anymore. Everything I believed in no longer exists. Everything I touch doesn't feel the same and it seems like all I have left is you. So . . . I read it. (*She unfolds the paper but she doesn't look at it.*) I took it out of the drawer and I looked at it for days. I'd pick it up now and then and let it burn my hands. It felt like it was burning my hands. I sat down at our table and opened it and . . . I was struck by your handwriting. I looked at the words you'd written, but I wasn't reading them. I was looking at the nice handwriting and thinking that you . . . how could somebody with such nice handwriting do what you did. Brian had horrible handwriting . . . you don't. Brian is dead . . . you aren't. (*Silence.*) So I read your words. I read your letter.

[MARC: Please . . .]

LIZ: No. I don't . . . I . . . don't know what to do yet. I don't know what to feel. I don't hate that you got the reduced sentence, that you're going to be free in a couple of months. I'm not afraid of you. I'm glad the other one is . . . He got what he deserved. He's a killer and he got what he deserved. I don't know anything about you, Marc. I don't want to know anything about you — other than what I already know . . . what I heard at the trial. I want you to know what I've told you today. What you've done to me. I don't . . . I want . . . I don't care how you feel. And that makes me . . . (*Silence.*) That makes me . . . ache . . .

# Psych

## Evan Smith

*Seriocomic*

Sunny (twenties)

*Sunny, an Ivy League grad, is supporting herself by working as a dominatrix while she applies to graduate schools in psychology. In this monologue, she is explaining the ins and outs of the Dungeon, where she works, to a customer.*

SUNNY: Welcome to Pandora's Box. Uh . . . We have three dungeons. There's one — (*She opens a door to the left.*) It has a body cage, and a dog-cage, and a sling, plus um, various manacles on the wall, and we have dungeon three — (*She crosses to a door on the right.*) — which has a mummification table, and various chairs . . . Oh, and anti-gravity boots, for upside down suspension, and um, there's dungeon two, which has a medical examination table, it's very antiseptic, like a doctor's office, if you like that sort of thing, but it is out of order due to technical difficulties I'm afraid, and um . . . I'm Mistress Serena, this is Mistress Dominique —

OK. There is also Mistress Desiree, but she's running a little late. I guess she'll be here sometime. I hope. You can make appointments with any one of us. We're all of us usually here week-end nights, and there are about five or six other Mistresses who work different schedules, if you want to meet any of them.

We start at \$150 an hour, more if you want two Mistresses, or anything highly unusual —

All we do here are fantasy scenarios. There is no sex between clients and Mistresses, and Mistresses are not allowed to take off their clothes. Don't ask them to. If you do ask them to, or offer them money to, or offer them money for any sexual service, you will be asked to leave, and there will be no refund. We ask that you pay before your session begins; we accept cash and credit cards, and debit cards, but we do not accept checks.

So, what would you like? Would you like a session right now?

# Psych

Evan Smith

*Seriocomic*

Molly (late twenties)

*Molly is talking to her friend Sunny, who has been thrown out of graduate school when they found out she was working as a dominatrix to support herself.*

MOLLY: Sunny. You shouldn't have told anyone. You should have quit that job the minute you got accepted into a clinical psychology program. You should have found some other job. But you didn't. You made a gamble. And you lost. I mean, realistically, do you think anyone is going to listen to your explanation of why being a dominatrix is not the same thing as being a prostitute? It's not that people don't understand the special circumstances of your job; they understand. Yes, it's legal and licensed; no, you don't take off your clothes; and no, you don't have sex. They understand all that. They also understand that you tie men up and they get off and then you get paid. Boom. You're a prostitute. They understand, and to them, you *are* a prostitute. None of which matters, because YOU TOLD SOMEONE! You knew this could get you thrown out of school, and (A) you did not quit, and (B) you told someone. Why?! What on earth were you thinking?



# Psych

Evan Smith

*Seriocomic*

Molly (late twenties)

*Molly is talking to her friend Sunny, who has been thrown out of graduate school when they found out she was working as a dominatrix to support herself.*

MOLLY: Sunny! You can't be friends with everyone! There are people who are just inimical to each other. Jennifer is a bitch. You should just walk up to her and say, "Jennifer, you're a bitch, and if you don't stop fucking with me, I will destroy you."

That she will understand. You try to make nice with her, and she will get very confused and frightened, and then she'll destroy you. You let people like that walk all over you. I've seen it a hundred times. You just keep trying. What is the point of pursuing friendship with someone you don't like? But that's beside the point. What this all really boils down to is, you didn't get accepted at any of the Ivy League schools you were hoping to get into, and you've been miserable where you are, and I'm sure everyone there can tell, whether you mean for them to or not. Maybe it's all for the best. Maybe you're subconsciously trying to get yourself thrown out of a situation that is making you unhappy.

But I will say this, if you go around telling everyone your problems, people will start thinking of you as a person with problems.

# Reality

Curtiss I'Cook

*Dramatic*

Chynthia (late twenties to early thirties)

*Chynthia is talking to her husband Jimmy.*

CHYNTHIA: We've been married for two years and I love you more than I love myself. I'm sorry, I can't give you what you want. I know you say that it doesn't matter and that in time it will take care of itself . . . but I look in your eyes as we make love and see how much it means to you, I see you almost wishing for it: "Maybe this will be the time . . ." "if I just hold her a little tighter . . ." "if I just love her a little more . . ." I see that, Jimmy, and I feel it inside of me . . . I want a child as much as you do . . . I am so afraid that you are going to leave me . . . I know that you don't want to, but part of me feels that if you did, you would have every right to! Don't!! Please don't, Jimmy, I love you, I don't know what I would do if you did . . . At work, everyone keeps asking when are we going to have children, I say we're just not ready. We just don't want children right now. But that's a lie and they know it's a lie . . . they laugh . . . they're not laughing, but I hear them laughing at us. They don't know how much pain we're going through. They just know their books, their TV shows that point and blame and find alternate methods . . . Other ways to do what's natural, what was meant to be done with the one you love the way God meant it to be done . . . They make me so angry!! The ones who have no right having babies, three or four children, no money, three or four different men . . . children, dirty, crying. They shouldn't have that child, I should! I should have that baby! I want a baby, and I can't have one, but they have three or four, three or four. I have none, zero, none and it makes me angry! It makes me want to hurt them, hurt their baby! . . . But she had no right having a baby and I don't have one. She's a whore, she sleeps with so many

men. She's sick, her baby is sick, but she has one. I have none! Now she has none because I don't want her to have one if I can't she can't if I can't . . . I did it for you Jimmy! So that we don't have to look at her coming here every Sunday with that child . . . with that sick baby that we don't have . . . It was wrong oh God it was so wrong but I couldn't stop myself! I stopped it from breathing . . . I jumped down, covered its mouth as everybody yelled, trying not to step on it! . . . I just jumped down there and killed her baby, Jimmy . . . I did it . . . I killed her baby . . . But I meant to . . . I did mean it! I killed her baby . . .

# Reality

Curtiss I'Cook

*Dramatic*

Bertha (mid-thirties)

*Bertha is a black woman, probably in her thirties, talking about her no-good, cheating husband to her friend Carmen.*

BERTHA: Carmen . . . it's strange what you can fool yourself with . . . I think I knew something was going on, but I made myself believe that it wasn't there . . . "Oh no, not my man . . ." "That's for other couples. I take care of my husband . . . He loves me and I love him . . ." All the while knowing that something's not right . . . Why do we do that? . . . Why are we so afraid to look at the truth? The truth is, I'm mad as hell at you right now, but why should I be mad at you? . . . Maybe it's because you gave him something that I could never give him . . . you're totally different from me . . . I can't compete with that. I can't compete with something I have nothing in common with . . . It's like comparing apples and oranges . . . Don't get me wrong, I know that I shouldn't have to . . . But he made me have to. He made me doubt myself . . . Yeah, I may drink too much, but I love him, and I've done nothing wrong . . . He has made me go back into every conversation we've had together and try and figure out what I said to make this happen. I can't find anything . . . I can't find anything and I'm tired of trying to find something, but that's not going to stop me. Even after I tell him that it's over . . . even after I file for divorce. I'm still going to doubt me, part of *me* for this . . . and that's fucked up, isn't it? . . . We give so much power to people when we say we love them . . . when we spend so much time with them . . . So when someone abuses that power, it makes it that much harder to give it again . . . I am so mad at you and at me for feeling like this, Carmen . . . *(She goes for a drink, but it's empty.)* Do you want to know the real fucked-up part about it . . . I miss him already.

# Seeing Stars in Dixie

Ron Osborne

*Comic*

Marjorie (thirties to forties)

*Marjorie works in a tearoom in a small town. Nearby, the movie Rain-tree County is being filmed, and there's a rumor that there might be a role for a local.*

*Marjorie sits at a center table, a cup of coffee in hand. As she sips from the cup, she speaks loudly to Clemmie who's in the kitchen area of the tearoom and unseen at the moment.*

MARJORIE: Of course *my* world-famous fried chicken was to die for. And why not, I ask? Took *Pearline* all morning to fix. (*Looking toward the back of the tearoom:*) CLEMMIE, CAN YOU HEAR ME BACK THERE? Chicken and dumplings, catfish supreme, sweet potato pie . . . everything disappearing faster than you could say sustenance of the South. Everything except the grits. I am still recovering from hearing Monty put the words grits and wallpaper paste in the same sentence.

Speaking of Mister Bedroom Eyes, I've learned the hard way I can no longer serve him black-eyed peas indoors. To save a reputation, however, I must refrain from telling you why. No more, please, I'll be spilling celluloid secrets all over your little old tearoom . . . bring Hollywood crumbling to its knees with a whiff of my tongue. Tempting I admit, but at the moment I elect not to kill off an entire industry. Especially one that guarantees prime seating at the next Academy Awards. (*Standing now, acting as if she were speaking to an audience:*) Ladies and gentlemen of the Academy. How truly wonderful! My first Oscar! And whom must I thank? Monty, of course. Sweetheart, thank you, thank you. (*She blows a kiss toward the audience.*) And of course, Elizabeth . . . there she is! (*She points in the*

*direction of the audience.*) Thank you, Liz! Who have I forgotten? Oh, yes, yes, of course . . . little old Natchez to which I say . . . *eat your hearts out!* Listen to me. Everybody gonna think I'm conceited or something. How about something cute like . . . and little old Natchez . . . *(Sweetly.)* . . . *Don't you wish you were me?* *(Beat.)* I'm carrying on, and I have yet to tell you how sorry I am. I know you wanted to be a movie star too. Then along comes Monty, and the rest — as they say in movie land — is cinema history. I had half a mind to tell him no, no . . . let Clemmie compete. Then I remembered who'd win anyway so I figured why bother. I mean if anyone from Natchez is gonna be in *Raintree County*, surely it will be me.

# The Summer of Jack London

## Andrew J. Fenady

*Dramatic*

Mrs. Bambridge (forties)

*Mrs. Bambridge is talking to her daughter Felicity, who is in love with a sailor named Jack London (the great novelist, before he became famous).*

MRS. BAMBRIDGE: I keep trying to put some sense in your brain. (*Her tone softens.*) Oh, Felicity, I love you. You and Philip are all I have. I want to see you both happy, warm, and protected always. There are a hundred young men who would leap at the opportunity of giving you all in life you'd ever need. Handsome, wealthy young men of your own class and culture. Felicity, pause for just a minute and picture yourself with him years from now, in some garret, boiling soup while he's trying to sell some stupid story, or worse, left alone with child, or children while he's off for months or years on a ship halfway around the world.

Felicity, I'm going to tell you something I thought I'd never tell a soul. But this is too important. I do know something of how you feel . . . you see, I once had my Jack London, someone too much like him, only he wasn't a sailor. It was shortly after the war. I was just about your age. I suppose he was what they call a cowboy. He had just brought the first herd of cattle to St. Louis all the way from Texas. He was tall and strong and wild, foreman of the outfit, and he, too, aspired to wealth and position. He was going to have a ranch of his own, the biggest in Texas. He was no ordinary cowboy, not Blake Morton. We met in the most elegant hotel in St. Louis; I know, because my father owned it. Blake Morton sent the most expensive champagne to our table, charmed the entire family, and swept me off my feet . . . and almost into his bed. He wanted me to marry him and go to Texas. I barely resisted the temptation, thanks to a

conversation like this one with my mother and father. But something about him frightened me. He was too strong and wild and dangerous. Blake Morton wrote me every week and was going to send for me when he bought his ranch. I never went to Texas. Three months later Blake Morton was dead. Killed in a bar in Abilene. Strangely, I didn't feel a thing, except maybe relief. (*She smiles a warm, sympathetic smile.*) So now you know about my wild and reckless love. Later I met and married your father, a sweet and gentle man, and shared a blissful life and cried my eyes out when he died.



# Through a Glass Onion

Jason Stuart

*Dramatic*

Liz (teens)

*Liz has become obsessed with the identity of her father.*

LIZ: Daddy used to paint pictures of me. Pretty pictures of me. I used to sing to him while he was painting them. (*She sings "How Are Things in Glocca Morra."*) I sang for him as he watched me. I have to ask Mom what he looked like sometimes. His face is gone. There are no pictures left. Mom says we lost them all. David says she burned them all. She burned my father? Did she burn my father, David? Is that another joke? He's not a bastard. He's my father. He's the man searching for purple elephants. You can find him. Where are there purple elephants? He used to paint me. I was his little pigeon. I find new memories of him all the time. He can't be a bastard. We weren't doing anything wrong. David, we weren't doing anything wrong. He was painting me. "Little Pigeon . . ." He's finding purple elephants. He never touched me wrong, did he, Mom? He was only painting me. Where are my elephants. Where's my purple elephant?

# The Victimless Crime

Deborah Lynn Frockt

Comic

Woman (thirties)

*The character (not named) is a woman in her thirties. This is the entire play.*

*A twenty-something-looking woman, wearing retro chic circa 1976, is arranging an absolutely stunning bouquet of long-stemmed roses in every color. They are romantic but not clichéd.*

WOMAN: So I never meant for it to go this far.

One day I'm having drinks right at the beginning of everything. I mean I was at that singular moment when it was all just about to begin. And the next . . . it's Eternal Rest Cemetery calling to push plots. Who knew that being in your thirties — your relatively early thirties — was enough to change your goddamn demographic group? Who in their right-thinking American mind would want that?

But I've always had this face. (*She gestures in a showy way to her face.*) This going-to-be-carded-until-I'm-fifty-seven-and-a-half face. So I'm thirty . . . ish. Why couldn't I be twenty-nine? (*She thinks.*) Twenty-eight. At twenty-seven, I return to that singular moment. It's all just beginning. And eternal rest? I'll never need it.

So six months ago, I reincarnated myself as a twenty-six-year-old dot.commer. (What else would you come back as?) Would maturity have gotten me options? Would the truth have allowed me to play Ping-Pong at the office and enjoy team building on the face of the rock? Could I reasonably wear these, (*She indicates her retro chic clothes.*) not acquired from thrift stores but actual vintage duds from my very own Brady years? Would I have this man . . . man-boy . . . boy . . . as my steady?

Would I have this boy just a cubicle away at my beck and call? This great-looking, at that singular moment, it's all just about to begin, hot, naïve, rock-climbing, on his way up, young young . . . really young . . . gonna be a grown-up one day but not too soon . . . would I have this man . . . born in our nation's bicentennial year . . . suggesting that we grow old together? (*She regards the flowers.*) I think not.

# White Elephants

Jane Martin

*Comic*

Giselle (could be any age)

*This monologue is not from a play — it is the play, another great piece by the mysterious, pseudonymous Ms. Martin. In it Giselle, who could be any age, is welcoming the new arrivals to Heaven, which, it turns out, is where all the wealthy white Republicans go.*

GISELLE: Good morning, and to all our cherubim and seraphim inductees, we would like to welcome you to Republican Heaven. If you'll all just flap over here and hover for a minute or two, I'll give you the introductory. First of all, you'll be pleased to know liberals don't go to heaven; it's music we want around here — not whining. You may have noticed there are not black people here; that's not racism — that's interior design. Actually, we do have African Americans, but anyone who is black and Republican has to be so crazy we keep them in a separate space. This isn't about Apartheid; this is about mental health. After the period of acclimatization, many of you will become guardian angels. This means you look after people on earth who make more than \$250,000 annually. They'll be up here with us eventually, and we don't want them damaged or scratched. Obviously, most harpists come from high-income families, plus seeing as we're here together for eternity, we prefer you've gone to cotillion. And, as we say here in Heaven, it's about manners, manners, manners. Dress code: ties for the gentlemen; ankle-length skirts for the ladies. Please socialize, but remember our house rules: no free needle exchange; no condoms (angels practice abstinence); and definitely no abortion. Pick up your tax rebates on the table to the left and, remember, your heirs will not be paying estate taxes. Hey, if this isn't Heaven, what

the hell is, huh? You'll notice the banners, the ice cream cake, the party poppers — that's just our endless preparations for Strom and Jesse. All right, seraphim and cherubim, let's mingle, fox-trot, dove hunt, and swap stories about Tuscany. One final thought about our timing and good fortune — you don't have to be down there during a Republican presidency. Joking.



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