

PLAYING BRIDGE

By Becky Kimsey

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PLAYING BRIDGE

A Collection of Short Plays

by **Becky Kimsey**

SYNOPSIS: A collection of nine plays that have one thing in common, they all take place on a bridge. A diverse, highly entertaining piece of theater that has drama, comedy, science fiction, farce, absurdist and pathos all wrapped up into one amazing play!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1-6 females, 3-17 males, 0-3 either)

TROLL BRIDGE

BARROW (m)

MOLLY (f)

HOCKER (m)

DRAW BRIDGE

PHILLIP (m)

FOSTER (m)

FELICITY (f)

FREE SAMPLE

LYLE (m)

RICK (m)

MANNA

LOTTIE (f)

WALTER (m)

JOGGER (m)

THE VISIT

STAN (m)

MARTY (m)

PAULA (f)

ON GUARD

FLICK (m/f)

DAVIS (m/f)

DARYL (m/f)

A BIT OF RUBBISH

BRIAN (m)

JACOB (m)

DEAD BODY (m)

THE OTHER SHOE

MIKE (m)

TOM (m)

BETTY (f)

THE CROSSING

JULIE (f)

CHRIS (m)

MAN (m)

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**ACT ONE**

TROLL BRIDGE: On a fairy tale bridge

DRAW BRIDGE: On a bridge in 18th Century England

FREE SAMPLE: On a bridge in an American City park

MANNA: On a bridge in Urban Portland, OR

THE VISIT: On a rickety bridge in the deep American south

ACT TWO

ON GUARD: On a futuristic bridge between Plushia and Hydrasia

A BIT OF RUBBISH: On a bridge on the outskirts of London

THE OTHER SHOE: On a bridge in an Alternate Universe

THE CROSSING: A very high American city bridge

PRODUCTION NOTES

SET: The set consists of a bridge that can be re-arranged to appear completely different for each scene. Changing the bridges can be as simple as draping a façade or flag over the rail between scenes, or as impressive as transforming the bridge eight times entirely in front of the audience!

SCENE ORDER: The director can choose which order the scenes go, but the author prefers order listed above.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

Playing Bridge premiered at Stage Coach Theatre in Boise, ID. The production won Best Production, Best Director, and several acting awards for that season. The Work was directed by Becky Kimsey with the following cast and crew:

BARROW, MARTY, TOM.....	John Ode
MOLLY.....	Eloisa Harper
HOCKER, STAN, BRIAN, CHRIS.....	Kevin Kimsey
LOTTIE.....	Kathy Duggan
WALTER, PHILLIP, JACOB, MAN.....	Jeff Thomson
RICK, JOGGER.....	Brian Farino
LYLE, MIKE.....	Nameer Almudhafar
FOSTER, DARYL.....	Alex Campbell
FELICITY.....	Virginia Thompson
PAULA.....	Lynne Tucker
FLICK, BETTY.....	Carly Ode
DAVIS.....	Erin Edwards
JULIE.....	Becky Kimsey

Stage Manager: Teresa Sorensen

Set Designer: Kevin Kimsey, Dan Allers

Lighting Designer: Dan Allers

Bridge Crew: Ryan Kimsey, Linda Ode, Patrycja Nowacka, Teresa Sorensen

Sound Operator: Lora Volkert

Lighting Operator: Amy Reichel

Costumes: Elizabeth Greeley

THANKS

A special thank you Glenda Marie Talbutt; without your generosity, we would never have been able to make that first trip to perform in New York City!

This play is dedicated to my brother Aaron Micah Jaynes who is patiently waiting for me on the other side of the bridge.

TROLL BRIDGE

by Becky Kimsey

SYNOPSIS: Barrow is a Troll about to interview for the coveted Bridge Troll position. When Molly appears, she attempts to sabotage his chances, but has a change of heart when she learns who Barrow could be replacing. It's a story about courage, friendship and a little bit about goats.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 2 male)

BARROW (m) A troll in training. (69 lines)
 MOLLY (f) A clever young girl. (49 lines)
 HOCKER (m) Supervising troll. (23 lines)

SETTING: *On a fairy tale bridge.*

AT START: *BARROW is pacing under the bridge. He is dressed in his best Troll gear. Raggedy clothes, matted hair, he keeps looking at the large book in his hand repeating phrases and doing the best he can to sound ferocious but failing utterly.*

BARROW: Who is that trap tripping over my bridge? (*Clears throat.*)

Who IS that TRAP-TRIP- Tripping over my bridge? (*Checks book.*)

Trip-trap. Not trap trip. UGH! I'll never get this right!

MOLLY: (*Enters.*) Get what right?

BARROW: (*Startled.*) Ack!

BARROW drops the book and quickly picks it back up while trying to be scary. With each sound, MOLLY winces but is amused, not scared.

BARROW: AARRRRGH! RRRRUGH! ARTTHPT!

MOLLY: Do you need a lozenge? Have you got a goat stuck in your throat?

BARROW: NO! No... I'm just supposed to—um. Aren't you scared?

MOLLY: Of what?

BARROW: Of... me.

MOLLY: Well...

BARROW: (*Tries again.*) RARRRGH!

MOLLY: Sorry. No.

BARROW: Oh.

MOLLY: Should I be?

BARROW: Well, I—I'm training to be the new Bridge Troll and I—

MOLLY: The new bridge troll? What's happening to Hocker?

BARROW: He's retiring.

MOLLY: (*Pleased.*) Really?

BARROW: He was supposed to be here this morning to train me and I thought I was on time but—

MOLLY: (*Getting an idea.*) Well. That's your first mistake.

BARROW: What?

MOLLY: Being on time. Trolls aren't supposed to be punctual.

BARROW: They're not?

MOLLY: No! Not at all! Tardiness is one of their greatest strengths.

BARROW: It is?

MOLLY: Oh yes! Have you ever heard of a troll showing up on time for a party?

BARROW: We don't get invited to parties.

MOLLY: Exactly! Because they're always late!

BARROW: Not me. If I was ever invited to a party, I would be on time. I'd bring board games and a dip!

MOLLY: Haha! That's funny.

BARROW: I make the best dip!

MOLLY: Well, that's another thing you're doing wrong. Trolls don't cook!

BARROW: How do you know? You're not even a troll.

MOLLY: No, but I have lots of experience with them.

BARROW: Oh really?

MOLLY: Yes really. For example. (*Circling him.*) The mark of a good bridge troll is the potency of their scent. (*Sniffs and winces.*)

BARROW: Scent?

MOLLY: MmHm! You can't be a proper bridge troll without the right perfume. What are you wearing?

BARROW: (*Sniffs his armpit.*) It's... Eau De Troll.

MOLLY: I thought so. Here. You should try some of my perfume. *(Pulls perfume out of her bag.)*

BARROW: But I thought trolls were supposed to be stinky!

MOLLY: Um, no. That's a stereotype.

BARROW: What's a stereotype?

MOLLY: It's something that everyone expects. It's a cliché, an oversimplification.

BARROW: Wow. Big word.

MOLLY: It's boring! *(Sarcastic.)* "Oh dear. Here comes another stinky troll!" Yawn. You don't want to be typical, do you? You want to impress Hocker with an exceptional, surprising fragrance. You've got to stand out!

BARROW: Okay...

MOLLY: *(Dousing him with perfume.)* Here we go. This will definitely do the trick. Nice... very nice. Under your arm now!

BARROW lifts an arm and MOLLY douses it. BARROW sneezes.

MOLLY: There! Isn't that better?

BARROW: I can't breathe...

MOLLY: It'll fade eventually.

BARROW: Okay good.

MOLLY: So. Now we move on to your posture.

BARROW: My posture?

MOLLY: Yes! Look at you! All hunkered down and crooked. How can you be intimidating if your victim suspects you might be suffering from Scoliosis?

BARROW: Scoli-whats-iss?

MOLLY: A sure sign of weakness. Trust me. Now stand up straight! Chin up! Shoulders back! *(BARROW does.)* There you go. Look how much taller you are... very scary. Oooh. *(BARROW stands proudly.)* Big Scary Monster!

BARROW: AARRRGH!

MOLLY: Yes! Much better! You look like you just swallowed a giraffe!

BARROW: RRRARGH! Haha! Wow. I feel really great about this now! You think I have a chance of beating Corkin?

MOLLY: *(Startled.)* Corkin?

BARROW: Yeah, he's up for the Bridge Troll position too.

MOLLY: Oh no...

BARROW: Yeah, he comes from a long line of Bridge Trolls. Pop says he's a shoe-in for the job. But Mum thinks I have more potential.

MOLLY: (*Nervous.*) Oh boy.

BARROW: (*Off MOLLY'S look.*) I know. He's ferocious! Last week, I watched him eat a whole goat sandwich with purple people cheese in one swallow! But I bet HE doesn't have this perfume and good posture! (*Stomps about.*) AARGH!! ROOWRR!! GGGaaackthpt! Gggrrroowr!!

MOLLY watches BARROW practice, regretting her sabotage.

BARROW: I think I'm ready now! Oops! Here comes Hocker. You better hide or he'll gobble you up.

MOLLY ducks down behind the bridge.

BARROW: (*Stage whisper.*) Thanks for the help!

HOCKER enters with a clipboard and a round badge.

HOCKER: Okay. Which one are you?

BARROW: (*Saluting Troll-Style.*) Barrow, sir!

HOCKER: Don't salute—(*Recoils.*) GOOD GACKER-VINE! What is that SMELL?

BARROW: It's perfume, sir!

HOCKER: What are you wearing that for? You smell like a potted pansy, you nincompoop!

HOCKER pins the round badge on BARROW.

BARROW: I thought it would make me stand out, sir. What's this? (*The badge reads: T.I.T.*) Um... tit, sir?

HOCKER: Troll in Training. It's all very official. We can't have people thinking that you know what you're doing, can we?

BARROW: Well—

HOCKER: Corkin was on the docket yesterday.

BARROW: Corkin?

HOCKER: Exceptional talent. Scared off the town tinker right from the get-go! Wiry little man soiled his trousers at the mere sight of him, he did! Haha! (*Coughs, spits.*) Wonderful stuff. (*Solemnly.*) I'm afraid you have your work cut out for you, lad.

BARROW: I do?

HOCKER: Now, then. Let's get right to it shall we? Have you studied the proclamations?

BARROW: Proclamations?

HOCKER: Page three?

BARROW: Oh yes! Of course! (*Opens book.*)

HOCKER: No, no, no! Recite them, Barrow! You have them committed to memory haven't you?

BARROW: Um...

HOCKER: (*Sighs.*) The first rule of Trolling...

BARROW: (*Pause. Then remembers.*) The first rule of Trolling. Right! Ahem. Know your enemy.

HOCKER: And the second?

BARROW: Show no mercy. The third: Protect the bridge. The fourth... um. The fourth. I had this, I promise. Ohhhh (*To himself.*) what was it?

HOCKER: (*Ticks the clipboard.*) No compromises.

BARROW: No compromises! Right! I knew that one. I really did!

HOCKER: (*Unimpressed.*) Mmm Hmm. Describe the representation of the first rule.

BARROW: Huh?

HOCKER: The first rule? Know your enemy. What is your enemy, Barrow?

BARROW: Oh, right. Goats. Goats are the enemy. Goats are bad. (*Beat.*) Very baaaad.

BARROW smiles at his own joke. MOLLY accidentally laughs from behind.

HOCKER: What was that?

BARROW: (*Covering for MOLLY.*) A joke. A tiny joke. A terrible joke, I apologize. Won't happen again.

HOCKER: Mmm. Frivolity.

BARROW: I'm sorry?

HOCKER: Frivolity is also your enemy, Barrow. Some will try to weaken you with frivolous things. Trivial questions, fanciful ideas. Resist the urge to be included in these things at all times! Remember that.

BARROW: Oh. Kay.

HOCKER: (*Suspicious.*) Are you sure you're cut out for this, Barrow? You seem rather silly-sally to me.

BARROW: Oh, I am, sir! Cut out for this, I mean. Not silly-sally.

HOCKER: Corkin got high marks yesterday you know. Showed incredible talent, he did. (*Coughs, spits.*) Wonderful stuff. I hope you aren't wasting my time. I could just give him the job if you're not up to the task.

Suddenly, MOLLY appears from behind the bridge pretending to gather flowers. Humming softly.

HOCKER: Oh no! (*Shrinks.*) There's that Molly again! (*Coughs, spits.*) She's a tough one. That little prackersnickle has been the boil on my buttocks ever since I was stationed here. She's a tough nut to crack, Barrow! Never scared of anything! She's full to the brim with questions and reasoning and logic and all that nonsense! She's responsible for my decision to retire, you know. (*Shudders.*) This is your chance, Barrow. If you can scare off the Molly, the job's yours! (*He hides behind the bridge.*)

BARROW: Really? Oh! ...Um. (*Wrings his hands.*)

MOLLY: (*Humming.*) Mmmm Hmm Hmmm.

MOLLY stops and looks at him expectantly. BARROW stares at her in terror. She smiles and gives him an encouraging gesture.

BARROW: (*Pause.*) Um... rowr?

MOLLY: (*Shrieks in terror.*) AAAAAHHHHHHH!!!!

MOLLY runs away, arms flailing about, leaving a stunned BARROW behind. HOCKER comes out of hiding and stares after her in a daze.

HOCKER: You did it! You scared off the Molly! How on earth did you do that, Barrow?

BARROW: (*Baffled.*) Proclamation number one sir! Know your enemy.

HOCKER: Well done, Barrow!

BARROW: Thank you, sir.

HOCKER: I'll rest easy knowing that you are protecting this bridge from the likes of her! If you can scare off the Molly, you can scare off anything! (*Removes T.I.T. pin.*) The bridge is yours, Barrow. Carry on! Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got to break the news to Corkin, eat some goat grapes and soak my warts in some liver paste. (*Coughs, spits.*) Wonderful stuff!

HOCKER exits. BARROW is standing proudly by the bridge. MOLLY enters carefully.

MOLLY: Is he gone?

BARROW: He is! I did it!

MOLLY: We did it!

BARROW: Yes! We did! (*Beat.*) Why did you help me?

MOLLY: Proclamation number one: know your enemy. I'd rather have you on this bridge than Corkin! He's the nastiest troll there is! Oh. No offense.

BARROW: None... taken?

MOLLY: Besides, I have a question that Hocker would never answer. Maybe you could?

BARROW: Uh oh... what's that?

MOLLY: Well, it's this whole "keeping people from crossing a bridge" thing. What's that all about?

BARROW: I um. I don't really know. (*Searches the book.*)

MOLLY: I mean isn't that the whole point of a bridge? To let people see what's on the other side? If you never let people cross, why have a bridge at all? It always seemed pointless to me.

BARROW: You're right... it IS kind of pointless!

MOLLY: I don't want to get you in trouble or anything. I just really want to see what's on the other side.

BARROW: Well... what am I supposed to do now? I can't just let you pass. Mum will be so disappointed if I lost my job on the very first day. I can't let my family down, they're counting on me!

MOLLY: *(Disappointed.)* Oh. Well, when you put it that way. I guess I understand. Oh, um... here. *(She holds out bouquet.)* I picked these for you.

BARROW: For me?

MOLLY: Yep!

BARROW: Pretty. *(Changes tone.)* Ahem! I mean... ugly! Ugly, stinking flowers! *(Sniffs them again anyway.)* What are these for?

MOLLY: For being so nice to me. *(She begins to leave.)* Bye!

BARROW: Um. Wait! *(She stops and turns.)* You know what? What if we—*(Stops nervously.)* what if we...

MOLLY: What if we what?

BARROW looks both ways, then he picks her up off the ground and gently places her on the other side of the stream. She stares at him in shock as he pats her on the head.

MOLLY: Barrow! That was a compromise! You just broke Proclamation Number Four! What did you do that for?

BARROW: *(Shrugs, embarrassed.)* For being so nice to me.

MOLLY: *(Thinks.)* You know what? Who needs a bridge? I've got a friend!

BARROW: A... friend?

MOLLY: Yeah. A brand-new friend!

MOLLY hugs BARROW and they share a moment.

MOLLY: That's better than any old bridge! Thanks Barrow!

MOLLY skips off as they wave goodbye to each other. Lights fade.

END OF PLAY

DRAW BRIDGE

by Becky Kimsey

SYNOPSIS: In 18th Century England, Sir Phillip is preparing for a duel, assisted by Foster who's a bit green when it comes to traditional dueling. Phillip is determined to defend his honor but things don't go quite as planned and it all comes down to one question: Who draws first?

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 2 male)

PHILLIP (m)..... A wealthy gentleman. (64 lines)
 FOSTER (m)..... His companion. (62 lines)
 FELICITY (f)..... An English maiden. (26 lines)

SETTING: On a bridge in a lavish 18th century English garden.

AT START: PHILLIP strides onto the bridge with a great deal of pomp. He is followed by FOSTER who is carrying a large wooden box.

PHILLIP: Right! Here we are then, Foster. Here we are. (*Breathes in.*)
 I say it's a perfect day for a duel. Wouldn't you agree?

Looks at FOSTER who has set the box down and is taking in the scenery.

FOSTER: Yes your lordship. A trifle cold but—

PHILLIP: Are you nervous Foster? Is there a twittering in your tummy?
 A little rope in your throat?

FOSTER: Well I wouldn't say that—

PHILLIP: First time at a duel, eh?

FOSTER: Yes, your lordship.

PHILLIP: Oh it's alright Foster. You'll get the hang of it. Upon my word
 there's nothing like a duel.

FOSTER: Indeed sir.

PHILLIP: Yes, there's nothing like the thrilling prospect of watching someone's blood spurting out of his gullet first thing in the morning. The savage slash across the arm. The crimson cut on the cheek. Damned exciting, what!

FOSTER: (*Confused.*) But isn't it my job, as your second, to prevent the shedding of blood, my lord?

PHILLIP: Well of course it is! My blood. Not his. I'm the one who demanded satisfaction and I shall obtain that once he is mortally wounded.

FOSTER: (*Startled.*) Mortally?

PHILLIP: Oh, alright. I'd settle for a severed limb. Yes, that would do rather nicely.

FOSTER: Isn't that a bit extreme?

PHILLIP: Extreme?

FOSTER: Yes sir. Extreme. Forgive my ignorance my lord, but a severed limb seems to be a high price to pay for what he said. I mean couldn't you just... I don't know. Poke him in the thigh and be done with it?

PHILLIP: (*Astounded.*) Poke him in the thigh? My honor is at stake here, Foster. How am I to gain satisfaction if he is not severely injured? Honestly Foster, your knowledge of the dueling ritual is surprisingly deficient.

FOSTER: But what if—

PHILLIP: What? Foster? What?

FOSTER: What if you both... I don't know. Agree to disagree?

PHILLIP: (*Flabbergasted.*) Have you gone completely mad? Nobody does that, Foster. Certainly not when honor is at stake! Agree to disagree indeed. Do you know what that would do to my reputation? To my status in high society? No! I demand satisfaction and satisfaction is what I shall get.

FOSTER: But all he said was—

PHILLIP: (*Hand up.*) Nooooo! Don't you dare repeat it, Foster. I can not, will not hear it again! You repeat one word of that monstrous claim, that disgusting accusation aloud and I'll have you immediately removed from my house with all your belongings, do you hear? Your canvases and sketchbooks will all be torn into ribbons and scattered at the bottom of our chicken coop.

FOSTER: But—

PHILLIP: (*Savagely.*) And you will not be allowed to return. Not even to visit my dogs!

FOSTER: (*Lowers head.*) Yes my lord.

PHILLIP: And stop calling me that. I don't want them knowing who you are. You're wearing my clothes so act accordingly, if you please.

(*Beat.*) You can call me Phillip.

FOSTER: (*Uncomfortably.*) Yes... Phillip.

PHILLIP: (*A beat.*) Gads where is he? It's quarter past the hour.

FOSTER: He might have lamed his horse.

PHILLIP: The man's a coward. He's simply too afraid to face me. If he uses his horse as an excuse I'll double down on the duel.

FOSTER: I'm sure he'll arrive, my Lorr—Phillip!

PHILLIP: (*Beat. Arches a brow.*) Better practice it a few times. Get used to it.

FOSTER: Yes, my—Phillip.

PHILLIP: "My Phillip"? Really Foster?

FOSTER: Yes, my—

PHILLIP: Foster!!

FOSTER: Phi—Phi—Phillip!

PHILLIP: (*Sighs. To himself.*) What will they say if it's discovered that my second came at second hand?

FOSTER: (*Confidently.*) Sorry Phillip.

PHILLIP: Again.

FOSTER: Apologies, Phillip.

PHILLIP: Once more!

FOSTER: (*Loudly. On his knees.*) Forgive me Phillip!

PHILLIP: Better! But not quite so desperate, if you please. Be casual, Foster. Civil. Pretend you are a wealthy gentleman without a care in the world who happens to be courting my sister. Not a vagabond street artist I hired to do a sketch of my dogs.

FOSTER: Yes. I mean no. I mean— (*Clears throat.*) Shall I prepare the weapons? (*Leans over to open the box; he pauses and stands upright again.*) Before he gets here, remind me; do I say "draw" or do you say "draw". That part was a bit unclear to me.

PHILLIP: I say “draw”. I always say “draw”. Some gentlemen prefer to have their seconds say it, but I like to be the one to say “draw”. It has an ominous weight to it and I like to say it very sinister indeed. (*Demonstrating:*) “Draw!” Do you see? (*FOSTER claps obediently.*) Additionally, it allows me the opportunity to insert a biting insult before the duel... put him off guard, you know. Make him uneasy. I’ve got three options in my head and once we begin I’ll decide whether to call him a scoundrel, a blaggard, or a ponce. It’s all about the moment. (*Beat.*) I do hope he chooses the blade over the pistols though. (*FOSTER bends down and opens the box.*) I’ll be honest with you Foster, I’m a decent shot but I much prefer the rapier. It’s far more masculine... merciless...

FOSTER: Missing!

PHILLIP: What?

FOSTER: I don’t see any rapiers in here my Lord!

PHILLIP: No rapiers? Why are there no rapiers! You were supposed to check the box Foster! You’re my second!

FOSTER: Just a second!

PHILLIP: Come come, they must be there!

FOSTER: They’re not there!

PHILLIP: How could you do this to me Foster?

FOSTER: I’ve never done this before!

PHILLIP: This is a disaster! How am I supposed to say “Choose a weapon.” if there is nothing for him to choose? How am I supposed to say “Draw, you scoundrel” when there is nothing for him to draw?

FOSTER: (*Holding up the muskets.*) Well we’ve got the pistols, my lord! He could choose one of these.

PHILLIP: I don’t want him to choose a pistol; I wanted him to choose the rapier! Confound it all!

FOSTER: But you could still say: ready, aim—

PHILLIP: No, no Foster. That’s wrong! It’s all wrong! I can’t be the one to say “Ready, aim, fire”. That would have to be you! The Principal never calls the shot; it allows too much room for cheating! Damn! I was so looking forward to saying “Draw”!

FOSTER: Oh! Someone is coming.

PHILLIP: Blast!

FELICITY steps onto the bridge.

FOSTER: Wait a minute... that's not Sir Fondant!

PHILLIP: (*Sarcastic.*) Oh, well done Foster. (*Brightly.*) Good morning my dear lady. Are you here to witness the duel?

FELICITY: The duel?

FOSTER: Better run along miss. Not a place for a lady.

PHILLIP: (*To FOSTER.*) Quiet Foster! (*To FELICITY. Genteel:*) Yes, indeed. Well, there was to be a duel. But it appears that my opponent has succumbed to his cowardice and has decided not to appear.

FOSTER: Unless he's lamed his horse.

PHILLIP: Nonsense! He's a coward and he shall be dealt with accordingly. Are you here for the view? The gardens are quite lovely, are they not?

FELICITY: They are indeed. But I am not here for the view. I was sent to deliver a message.

PHILLIP: A message?

FELICITY: Yes. (*Pulls a piece of paper from her bosom and opens it.*) Let's see... which one of you is Sir Phillip Ashford?

PHILLIP: (*Bowing.*) At your service.

FELICITY: Excellent. I'm to read this aloud. May I?

PHILLIP: Of course

FELICITY: (*Reading.*) "I, Sir Fondant Bellingham have decided to refuse your challenge to a duel on the grounds that you are no gentleman and therefore are of no equal status. Besting you with steel or musket will neither add nor detract from my honor and is therefore a waste of my valuable time. Furthermore, your basis for demanding satisfaction is frivolous and provides no weight. Your bitches are useless and everyone knows it. Signed, etcetera." There. That was easy. May I go now? (*Begins to leave.*)

PHILLIP: Confound it all!!

FOSTER: It's alright my Lord. I don't think they're useless.

PHILLIP: They are my most prized possessions! They have a royal bloodline!

FELICITY: (*To FOSTER.*) Pardon my asking but... is this really all about what Sir Bellingham said about his dogs?

FOSTER: Well, you see... Sir Phillip brought them to a fox hunt and things went awry.

PHILLIP: It wasn't their fault!

FELICITY: What happened?

FOSTER: Well traditionally, in a fox hunt, you hunt with Fox Hounds.

FELICITY: Naturally.

FOSTER: Yes, except Sir Phillips' dogs are... *(Looks at PHILLIP.)*

PHILLIP: Go on, you can say it! Poodles!

FELICITY: Poodles?

PHILLIP: Poodles and proud!

FELICITY: Ah!

PHILLIP: They are the smartest breed in the world, you know! Highly intelligent! Extremely agile! They're sweet and docile!

FOSTER: Except on a fox hunt.

PHILLIP: *(Defensively.)* Blasted gardener didn't tie them up properly. They followed me on their own, I didn't bring them on purpose!

FOSTER: It was a disaster.

FELICITY: Oh dear. What did they do?

PHILLIP: They didn't do anything! Fondant's lusty hounds all tried to mate with my Mary. She was devastated! You should have seen the look on her face.

FOSTER: And Lulu kept chasing the horses around the field.

FELICITY: Oh dear!

FOSTER: Sir Killian wound up in a tree and Lady Cuthbert landed face down in a ravine.

FELICITY: How horrible!

PHILLIP: It was all Sir Killian's fault! He was reeking of corned beef and cabbage. Lulu was only hungry!

FOSTER: It was utter chaos.

PHILLIP: Ruddy Irishman!

FOSTER: For a moment, it looked like the fox we were hunting had stopped running and turned around to watch. In the end he simply trotted off.

PHILLIP: They're not useless.

FOSTER: I thought I could hear the fox laughing...

PHILLIP: He had no right to say it. I don't care what happened out there. My poodles are not useless. Poodles are a highly intelligent breed! He had no right to say that in front of them. He hurt their feelings! They're beautiful dogs. My poor little ladies! *(Dabs his eyes dramatically with a lace kerchief. Sniffs.)* Foster.

FOSTER: Hm?

PHILLIP: Show her the picture.

FOSTER: Ah. Of course! (*Reaches into his pocket.*)

FELICITY: You carry a picture of his dogs with you?

FOSTER: Well it's a sketch really. (*Shows it to FELICITY.*) I did it myself. I'm an artist.

FELICITY: Are you really? Oh, my. That's a very lovely sketch!

FOSTER: Thank you!

FELICITY: Look at those remarkable lines! They look almost lifelike! I feel as though I could reach out and touch them! And the shading is incredible! You really did this?

FOSTER: (*Beaming.*) Yes I did!

PHILLIP: (*Jealously loud.*) Of course, it helps when the subjects are so sublime!

FELICITY: (*Quickly nodding.*) Oh yes! Yes indeed! They are quite—quite beautiful dogs my lord!

FOSTER: (*Agreeing heartily.*) They certainly are!

PHILLIP: (*Proudly pointing.*) This one is Mary and that is Lulu.

FELICITY: Such lovely names.

PHILLIP: They sat quietly through the entire session. Like princesses being admired at a ball.

FOSTER: Yes my lord. They really are lovely dogs. (*Gazing at his work.*) Quite lovely.

FELICITY: (*To FOSTER.*) Do you only do animals?

FOSTER: (*Misunderstanding.*) I beg your pardon?!

FELICITY: I mean... do you sketch people too?

FOSTER: OH! Oh, yes of course! (*Laughing nervously.*) Yes, I do... do people. (*Quickly.*) Sketches of people. All the time. Quite often in fact.

FELICITY: Would you do a sketch of me?

FOSTER: Well! I'd be honored my lady.

PHILLIP: What? Now see here!

FELICITY: Wonderful! Have you got something to sketch with?

PHILLIP: (*Irritated.*) The duel is cancelled, Foster. We better—

FOSTER: (*Reaching into his pocket.*) Oh, I always carry a sketchbook and pencil with me.

PHILLIP: You've got another session with Lulu and Mary today!

FOSTER: (*Finding two pencils.*) Oh look! I brought two! Haha! (*Holds them out to FELICITY.*) Choose your weapon!

PHILLIP: (*Sarcastic.*) Oh! Oh. Ha ha that's very funny Foster.

FELICITY giggles and chooses one.

FOSTER: Excellent choice!

PHILLIP: Mary will be quite disappointed if we are not back soon.

FELICITY: Where shall I stand?

PHILLIP: You're to do a profile sketch of them today, remember? With me in the background holding a tray of sausages!

FOSTER: (*Officially.*) Ten paces, my lady and then we'll begin!

FOSTER and FELICITY turn away from each other playfully as though about to duel. They count ten paces to opposite sides leaving PHILLIP standing in the middle.

PHILLIP: I say Foster, you have some nerve putting me off like this! I took you in! Gave you shelter! Provided you with the most excellent cuisine in the country! Allowed you to sketch the finest breed in all of Christendom! Are you not listening to me Foster? Foster!

FOSTER: Ten!

PHILLIP: I won't have it, do you hear? I will not be ignored you, you... blaggard!

FELICITY: Turn! (*They turn.*)

FOSTER: Ready then? (*Pencil poised.*)

FELICITY: Ready! (*Strikes a pose.*)

PHILLIP: (*Aghast.*) You wouldn't dare!!!!

FOSTER, PHILLIP, and FELICITY: Draw!

END OF PLAY

FREE SAMPLEby **Becky Kimsey**

SYNOPSIS: Lyle is giving away free samples of sausage. Rick just wants to go to the art museum. Lyle gives Rick a free sample and a vigorous debate ensues about economics and we soon learn the value of another man's sausage.

CAST OF CHARACTERS*(2 males)*

LYLE (m)..... 20-30 yr old. *(46 lines)*
 RICK (m)..... 30-40 yr old. *(43 lines)*



SETTING: *On a bridge in a large American city park.*

AT START: *LYLE enters with a card table under one arm and a box under another with a table cloth folded on top. He sets the card table down and the box behind it. He sets up the card table and drapes the table cloth over it. He disappears behind the table and removes a plate of sliced summer sausage and sets it on the table. Then a sign that says Colton Farms Summer Sausage. Then three sticks of summer sausage. Satisfied with his set-up, he looks around and shouts:*

LYLE: Free Sample! I got free samples here!

RICK enters SR, looking a little lost, holding a flyer.

LYLE: *(To RICK.)* Hi there! Would you like a free sample?

RICK: Huh? Oh, sure. *(Takes a piece.)* Thanks. *(Pops it in his mouth and begins to walk away.)*

LYLE: That right there is Colton Farms Summer Sausage.

RICK: *(Stops. Nods.)* Nice. *(Begins to leave.)*

LYLE: Colton Farms is located in North Carolina. Certified all natural. 100% Organic.

RICK: *(Stops again. Politely.)* Yep. It's pretty good.

LYLE: (*Quickly.*) It's a leaner sausage than most; with a complex but pleasing flavor. It contains no nitrates except those found naturally occurring in celery powder and sea salt.

RICK: (*Chewing.*) Mm hm.

LYLE: Ninety-eight percent lean cut beef and pork! Coarse ground, fully cooked, and hickory smoked in a rustic pine smokehouse built, owned, and operated by a ninety year old settler named Colton Freemont in the backwoods of the Appalachian Mountains!

RICK: Oh. Kay.

LYLE: Do you like it?

RICK: Sure. (*Begins to leave again.*)

LYLE: Well that is good to hear, sir! Because we have a special going on right now; eight ninety nine for a one-pound stick. But, if you buy two, it's only eighteen dollars!

RICK: (*He stops and turns.*) Nine bucks for one and eighteen bucks for two?

LYLE: No, no. Eight ninety nine for one—

RICK: Right, so nine dollars—

LYLE: —and eighteen dollars for two.

RICK: —okay, so that's basically the same price.

LYLE: I'm sorry?

RICK: Well, if its nine dollars for one and eighteen dollars for two, it's not exactly a bargain is it? (*LYLE blinks.*) There's no motivation for me to buy two if it's the same price for both.

LYLE: (*A beat.*) But it's still a really good deal, sir. Don't you just love the flavor?

RICK: Yeah, the flavor's fine but how is that a good deal?

LYLE: It has a wonderful twang to it, don't you think?

RICK: Twang doesn't make it a good deal!

LYLE: It's one hundred percent Organic!

RICK: Yeah, I know that. You said that. What I'm saying is; buying two of them is not cheaper than buying one if they're both the same price. If you want to entice people into buying two, you should make it a cheaper price. Like two for fifteen or something like that.

LYLE: Sir, I don't set the prices. I'm just supposed to—

RICK: Right, well whoever does set the prices should take a basic course in math.

LYLE: Well, I'm only—

RICK: And besides that, you said free sample. Shouldn't you just let it be free? You know, let me have a taste and just leave it at that? Why can't you put more stock into the taste of the sausage? Instead of pretending there's a bargain and going on and on about Organic and Sea Salt and Appalachian Mountains and some ninety year old settler named Albert Colson?

LYLE: Colton Freemont.

RICK: Whatever! Who gives a shit? Who the hell is Colton Freemont and why the hell should I buy his sausage for nine bucks a pop?

LYLE: (*Proudly.*) Well, he's a ninety year old settler who—

RICK: Yeah, I know, I know. He must be something special. Look. All I'm saying is. Your pricing structure is all wrong and your pitch is for crap. I don't want your sausage. I never wanted your sausage. I didn't plan on buying a single stick of your sausage much less TWO sticks of your sausage. I was simply passing through, on my way to the museum and you offered me a free sample and I took it. I didn't think it would take up ten whole minutes of my day to have a free sample. Hell, I didn't think it would take me ONE minute to have a free sample.

LYLE: But it's—

RICK: God, you guys drive me crazy! If it's free, it should be free! Why can't you just let it be free? Why does it have to accompany an all-out, full blown sales pitch? Why can't you just let me have a bite and let the sausage speak for itself? Huh? If it's so amazing, why bother telling me that it's organic? It should TASTE organic! If it was made in the Appalachian Mountains, I should be able to taste the Appalachian Mountains! I should be able to hear banjo music playing and pigs squealing happily in the distance when I swallow it!

LYLE: Woah, woah!

RICK: Look. Just lose the pitch, okay? You don't need the pitch! Just let me decide for myself! Have a little trust in your product, why don't you? Because I can tell you; if the sausage is really so amazing, if it's such a rare, mind-blowing sausage experience that literally stops me in my tracks to the point that I cannot imagine going a single day without it; where I can't even fathom going to the Van Gough exhibit without having two overpriced sticks of sausage tucked under my arm, then I would have turned to you and said:

'Wow. This sausage is amazing! I can't go on without it! I must have some for myself! How much? Wait! Don't tell me. The price is irrelevant. This sausage is so incredibly tasty that I would hand over my bank account, my 401k, my social security number, and my first born to have one; nay, TWO sticks of this amazing sausage!'

LYLE: But—

RICK: Oh! And you must tell me; who made this beautiful sausage? Tell me his name! Tell me his AGE! I want to know everything about him! I want to MEET HIM! I want to shake his sweaty, bony little Appalachian hand and tell him that his sausage literally and utterly changed my ENTIRE LIFE!

LYLE: He... *(Sniff.)* he...

RICK: What? What??

LYLE: He was... my grandfather. *(He starts to cry.)*

RICK: He... what?

LYLE: *(Bawling.)* He died last winter!

RICK: Oh. Geeze.

LYLE: He was going to be ninety one this summer. And. And. He was going to show me how to make the sausage but—now it's too laaaate!

RICK: Oh man. Oh God, I'm sorry. I'm so—um. Here.

Hands him flyer for a tissue. LYLE blows his nose in it.

RICK: Look, I'm really sorry pal. I got carried away there. I didn't mean to lose my temper. I just—I've been trying to cut back on caffeine and—

LYLE: This is all I have left of him! I inherited his business and everything but I just—I don't have the secret recipe! I can't find it anywhere! It's not under his mattress or in the dresser or under the floorboards. It's GONE!

RICK: *(Crossing to comfort him.)* There, there.

LYLE: I don't know where he got his meat or which sea the salt came from. Was it the Black Sea or the Dead Sea? Was it the Sea of Sorrows or the Sea of Tranquility? I just—I don't even KNOW!

LYLE is now weeping on RICK'S shoulder.

RICK: Shhh. Shh. It's okay.

LYLE: And nobody's buying it! I've been here for three hours and nobody's buying his sausage. Nobody cares! And why should they? You're right! You're totally right! They don't know him; they don't know what he went through!

RICK: *(Sympathetically.)* I know. I know.

LYLE: He survived three wars! Learned to live off the land, taught all the mountain kids how to field dress a squirrel. He lost three wives to The Divorce.

RICK: There, there.

LYLE: He survived testicular cancer twice. TWICE!

RICK: Shhh...

LYLE: And now he's gone and I just—I don't know what to do. I don't even know why I try. What do I know about selling sausage? Nothing! I'm a nobody!

RICK: That's not true.

LYLE: I don't know anything about supply-side economics or the four P's of Marketing. I just—*(Hiccup.)* I just wanted him to be proud of me.

RICK: *(Stepping behind table.)* Look, look. Don't worry about it pal. *(Sees nametag.)* Lyle. Listen Lyle, I'll tell you what! I'll buy two sticks of your sausage. Okay? Alright? I won't even argue the price.

LYLE: *(Stepping aside.)* No. You don't have to—

RICK: No seriously! I mean, you're right! It really is a good sausage. It's got great flavor! It's savory and peppery and, hey. *(Smacks his lips.)* It has a really nice twang to it.

LYLE: Yeah?

RICK: Yeah! Kind of a lingering effect you know? Like a really good aftertaste. Your grandpa really knew what he was doing! You know what? This sausage will go really well with some leftover Gouda I have in the fridge.

LYLE: Yeah, it's really good with Gouda.

RICK: Yeah, I could tell that right away. You go ahead and hand me two of those and *(Beat.)* I tell you what; I'll give you twenty dollars for both. *(Pulls out a twenty.)*

LYLE: Oh no! He wouldn't want me to do that! That isn't right!

RICK: I insist! I insist! Hell, if he's dead and all, this stuff is probably worth a fortune! You know? He was like an artist! A meat artist! Yeah, here you go. Take it.

LYLE: *(Takes the twenty.)* Wow. Thank you sir.

RICK: *(Picks up two sticks.)* My pleasure. And call me Rick.

LYLE: Thanks Rick. This really means a lot to me and—it'll mean a lot to him.

LYLE places hand over his heart. Looking up. RICK looks up, too. A beat.

LYLE: Oh. Do you want a bag?

RICK: Huh? Nah, I'll just—*(Tucks one under each arm.)* there we go.

LYLE: Okay.

RICK: Hey! Chin up, Lyle. You did Albert Colson proud today.

LYLE: Colton.

RICK: *(Overlapping.)* Colton.

LYLE: Freemont.

RICK: *(Overlapping.)* Freemont. Yeah. He's proud of you Lyle. I'm sure he's looking down on you right now with a big smile on his face.

LYLE: Thank you sir. *(Wipes his nose again and smiles. Re: snotty flyer.)* Oh, sorry about your flyer. Do you want—*(Holds it out.)*

RICK: No, no. That's okay, you can... just toss it.

LYLE: Alright.

RICK: Mokay. See ya around Lyle. And thank you.

LYLE: No, no Rick. Thank you.

*RICK, now satisfied exits with two priceless sticks of sausage under each arm. LYLE watches him go, then bends over and pulls out the box, lifts the lid displaying a large "Hickory Farms" label *or some other recognizable brand*. He removes two more sticks of re-labeled sausages and sets them on the table. He pats them lovingly, wipes his eyes and calls:*

LYLE: Free Sample! I got free samples here!

END OF PLAY

MANNA

by Becky Kimsey

SYNOPSIS: Lottie, an urban homeless woman is feeding her pigeons awaiting the arrival of a mysterious stranger. Walter joins her on the bench and teases her about her “fantasy man.” After the stranger appears and the encounter doesn’t go as she had hoped, Lottie must come to terms with the reality of her situation and is consoled only by her friendship with Walter and her equally homeless pigeons.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 2 males, 1 extra)

LOTTIE (f)..... A woman experiencing homelessness. *(42 lines)*

WALTER (m)..... A man experiencing homelessness. *(46 lines)*

JOGGER (m) *(Non-Speaking)*



SETTING: *A bridge by the Columbia in Portland, OR*

AT START: *LOTTIE is sitting on a bench US of the bridge feeding invisible pigeons. We hear the low cooing of the birds as she feeds them bits of a leftover sandwich. We see immediately that she is homeless. Her clothes are layered, tattered, and dirty. Her arm is looped around the long handles of an enormous cloth bag filled with all her possessions. She is feeding the birds but somewhat distracted. She looks up expectantly off in the distance, disappointed when it's not who she thought, she goes back to feeding the birds. Walter, also homeless but happy as a clam, enters and sits next to her on the bench.*

LOTTIE: Oh, it's you.

WALTER: *(Chuckling.)* Aw, come on Lottie! Why you gotta be like that?

LOTTIE: Walter, I don't have time for you and your nonsense. Go away.

WALTER: No ma'am. It's a fine afternoon so I am gonna sit right here. I'm gonna sit right here and listen to you breathe and watch these here birds.

LOTTIE: What for?

WALTER: Because I enjoy your company.

LOTTIE: No. You enjoy pestering me.

WALTER: That too, yes ma'am! But I also enjoy watching you work.

LOTTIE: I'm not doing anything.

WALTER: Well that ain't exactly true! These birds here would disagree with you. Wouldn't you disagree with her, little fellas? Haha! Yeah, look how they congregate around you; hard at work, breaking your back making sure they're all taken care of. They love you, Miss Lottie!

LOTTIE: No they don't.

WALTER: Why sure they do! Without you, they'd starve to death.

LOTTIE: They'd just find food somewhere else. Has nothing to do with me and it has nothing to do with love.

WALTER: Maybe. But you do make it easier on them, don't you? These birds know that every afternoon, you'll be sitting right here tossing those little bits of bread on the ground. They count on you Lottie.

LOTTIE: God I hope not. I'd be doing more harm than good. Creating an expectation like that.

WALTER: How do you mean?

LOTTIE: If they actually depended on me to feed them every day? Like I was their mother or something?

WALTER: Yeah! It's just like that! You're like their mama. Now what's wrong with that?

LOTTIE: What if something happened to me? I could get hit by a bus tonight. Or get mugged in the alleyway or I could jump off this bridge.

WALTER: Don't talk like that.

LOTTIE: Anything could happen. And when it does, would they still be here congregating the next day? Waiting for the handout that'll never come? How long would they last?

WALTER: I never thought about it that way.

LOTTIE: How long do you think would it take before they decide to scavenge somewhere else?

WALTER: That's a good question. I expect not long.

LOTTIE: You sure about that?

WALTER: Sure, I'm sure! Don't you worry about them. They'd... just find someone else! There's always someone else, Lottie. They wouldn't starve themselves to death.

LOTTIE: Then it has nothing to do with love. They don't love me. They don't depend on me. I'm not doing them any favors. I'm just a faceless figure tossing them Manna from above.

WALTER: Manna... you mean like in the Bible?

LOTTIE: Yeah. Like in the Bible. Except I don't make them work for it. I don't ask them to pray for it. I don't even require them to 'be kind to one another'. Hell, Blackie there has been pecking at Ralpie's feet ever since I sat down. Just like he does every day, and I still feed him. I still feed all of them. But they don't care about each other and they sure as hell don't care about me. When I die and the Manna doesn't come from me anymore, they won't miss me. Just like you said. They'll get irritated for awhile and go find some other... god to worship.

WALTER: *(A hearty laugh.)* You know, that right there. That is why I like your company. Most people in our "profession" don't talk like that. They don't reason like that. Or talk about things in the bible and shit. That right there was like angels whisperin' in my good ear. Haha! *(Pause.)* You never talk about your past, do you? Well, most of us don't, I know. But you, Miss Lottie. Ya gotta tell me, I just gotta know. What did you do before?

LOTTIE: Before what?

WALTER: Before all this.

LOTTIE: *(Pause.)* Doesn't matter. *(She tosses another chunk of bread.)*

WALTER: Matters to me.

LOTTIE'S eyes lift again as she sees someone in the distance. But her eyes fall in disappointment. WALTER clears his throat.

WALTER: He is coming today, isn't he? *(Looks at an invisible watch. Holds it to his ear as though it needs winding.)* Damn this thing. It IS today, right? It's Saturday, isn't it?

LOTTIE: *(Irritated.)* Yeah, it's Saturday.

WALTER: (*Slapping his knee.*) He Hee! Yes it is, isn't it? Saturday! Saturday is Pot Roast day! Mmm Mmm my favorite.

His laughter turns into a wet cough. LOTTIE instinctively leans away from him as he covers his mouth with a rag. He wipes his mouth, nose and shoves it back into his pocket.

WALTER: So, where is he then?

LOTTIE: Where is who?

WALTER: Where is who... give me a break. (*Pulls a pill bottle from his pocket. LOTTIE'S eyes widen.*) Your beau... your 'gentleman caller' (*Pops a pill.*) Your boyfriend.

LOTTIE: He's not my boyfriend. Where did you get those?

WALTER: They're prescription.

LOTTIE: Bullshit.

WALTER: Language, Lottie.

LOTTIE: Where did you get them?

WALTER: They're for my hip, alright? Sleepin' on the ground ain't exactly helpin' my—

LOTTIE: You told me you were getting off those things, Walter.

WALTER: I will sweetheart, I will.

LOTTIE: They're not good for you!

WALTER: Ohh yes they are! These are my happy pills! (*Shakes pills like a maraca.*) They keep me happy!

LOTTIE: I'm serious, you gotta get off them! They'll get you in the end, Walter. They'll ruin you. Believe me!

WALTER: Is that right? (*Sees her expression. Then realizes.*) Ohhh.

LOTTIE: God, you're such a pain in the ass.

WALTER: Correction: I HAVE a pain in the ass. There's a difference. (*Off her look.*) I'm sorry, Lottie. I'll try. (*Pause.*) Good to know that you care, though.

LOTTIE: I don't care.

WALTER: Sure you do. You care about your old pal Walter! (*Teasing, he goes to put his arm around LOTTIE.*) Yeah... you CARE!

LOTTIE: (*Pulling away.*) Knock it off!

WALTER: Alight, alright! No need to push all your friends away just cause you're upset that a certain someone hasn't shown up yet!

LOTTIE: He'll be here. And when he comes, I don't want you hanging around.

WALTER: Why not?

LOTTIE: Because... you smell.

WALTER: I do? (*Sniffs self.*) That's just salt and dirt, my dear. Salt and dirt. Ain't much different than the way you smell. And I think you smell divine!

LOTTIE: You talk too much.

WALTER: Oh, I see. My chatter is gonna interfere with one of your deep meaningful conversations with that man. You think I might scare him away? That he might see me as a rival and leave? You don't want him to get the idea that we're together, is that it?

LOTTIE: (*A mocking laugh.*) We are NOT together!

WALTER looks stung. LOTTIE instantly regrets saying it but says nothing. WALTER stands and moves a few steps away.

WALTER: Lemme tell you sumthin'. That MAN doesn't know you exist, okay? He runs by here every Saturday afternoon, he stops right there for a stretch, looks out at the river checking his pulse, and then he jogs away! That's it! That's all there is to it! Why you gotta think there's more to it than that? There's nothing more to it than that!

LOTTIE: Today's going to be different.

WALTER: (*Sits back down.*) How? How is today gonna be different than any other Saturday?

LOTTIE is about to say something then decides against it. She folds her arms defiantly instead. WALTER stands.

WALTER: You are crazy, woman! Today is no different. He's no different! He's gonna look right through you Lottie. Just like they all do.

LOTTIE: No he won't.

WALTER: Yes he will!

LOTTIE: He's not one of those.

WALTER: Well he's not one of us!

LOTTIE: He sees me!

WALTER: (*Angrily.*) He DOES NOT!

LOTTIE is shocked. He's never raised his voice to her before. WALTER sighs and repeats it again, but softly.

WALTER: He does not.

A tear escapes and rolls down LOTTIE'S cheek. She wipes at it angrily. WALTER stares at her for a moment, then puts a hand on her shoulder.

LOTTIE: *(Shrugging him off.)* Go to hell.

WALTER pauses, then he stands back up, pushes his hands into his pockets and walks away. A boat horn sounds across the river and she lets another tear fall. She straightens, takes a deep breath and thrusts her hand inside her bag and pulls out the top-half of a makeup compact. She wipes the cloudy mirror with her sleeve and tentatively looks at her reflection. She scrutinizes her face, pulls back her hair, and wipes away the tear streaks. Horrified at her appearance, she searches her bag for something, anything to make her feel pretty. Finding nothing, she closes her eyes in despair and covers the mirror with her hand. Silently vowing to never look at her own reflection again. Suddenly JOGGER runs past her. Excitedly, she straightens her back. It's HIM! She watches as he stops at the center of the bridge. She smiles her very best. He stretches his hamstrings and she straightens her hair. He checks his pulse. And LOTTIE shifts in her seat, clearing her throat. The sound catches his attention and he glances over. Her hand shoots up and she waves at him. He furrows his brow, turns around to see if someone is behind him and, finding no one there, turns back, gives her a meager wiggle of his fingers and he jogs off. Devastated, LOTTIE sits frozen with her hand still in the air. She doesn't watch him go. Her eyes don't follow him. She just stares at the river in shame. Slowly, she lowers her hand and places it back over the looking glass. WALTER enters again. He sits next to LOTTIE.

WALTER: *(After a long pause.)* It's Pot Roast day.

LOTTIE: I know.

WALTER: They make good Pot Roast over there, don't they? Red potatoes. Them little baby carrots. MMM MMM MMM! Just like Manna from heaven, right? Isn't that right, Lottie? Yeah. I tell you what, we sure are lucky to have that shelter. They take real good care of us over there, don't they?

LOTTIE: *(Pause.)* I was an art dealer.

WALTER: What?

LOTTIE: I owned a gallery on eighth avenue. God. I used to be fine, Walter. I drank champagne with the Governor. Went on trips to Belize, Italy, France. I was even going to learn how to speak French and move to Paris. I had a life five years ago. Five long years. Lost it all in an accident. Got hooked on those goddamn pain pills and I—I lost everything, Walter. Everything.

WALTER: *(Long pause. Softly.)* I'll get off them pills, Lottie. I swear.

LOTTIE: He was one of my clients. His name is Brian Henley. He—
(Embarrassed laugh.) he used to flirt with me.

WALTER: I bet he did.

LOTTIE: But you were right, Walter. He didn't see me. I'm just background noise now. I'm just the scum on the sidewalk... the pigeons in the street. I just thought that... you know, if I could get him to look at me. Just look at me. He'd see me, you know? The real me. But he didn't. He just... he didn't even—

LOTTIE finally succumbs to her sorrow and cries softly. WALTER embraces her tenderly.

WALTER: I see you, Lottie. I see you.

END OF PLAY

THE VISIT

by Becky Kimsey

SYNOPSIS: Stan and Marty are on a bridge waiting to see if the Alien ship Stan saw the night before will come back. Stan wants to capture it on film. Marty is just there for the free beer. When Paula the park ranger comes on the scene and has a bit of a laugh at their expense, she experiences her very own close encounter.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 2 males)

STAN (m) A man. *(54 lines)*
 MARTY (m) Stan's friend. *(57 lines)*
 PAULA (f) Park ranger. *(26 lines)*

SETTING: *Late at night on a rickety park bridge somewhere in the rural American South.*

AT START: *STAN and MARTY enter and walk onto the bridge. Both are dressed for cold weather. MARTY is carrying a small cooler, two foldable lawn chairs slung over his shoulder a pair of binoculars and a camera hanging from his neck. STAN is wearing a hat with earflaps. He carries nothing but the weight of a man who is about to make history.*

STAN: Right here, let's set up right here, Marty.

MARTY: I thought you said it was on the overpass.

STAN: It was! *(Points out to audience.)* Right over there! But there isn't anywhere to park on the overpass now, is there?

MARTY: I suppose not.

STAN: Naw, this is more secluded. We don't want anyone else in on this whole thing now, do we?

MARTY: MaryAnn really wanted to come.

STAN: We do NOT want your sister here setting a bad example. First impressions are everything, Marty. You think they'd be interested in us with MaryAnn standing here, mouth breathing with her pinkie sticking up her nose? Hell no! We don't need her.

MARTY: But MaryAnn speaks Spanish. Maybe they could use a linguist.

STAN: She ain't no linguist.

MARTY: Well she caught on to the Spanish way better than I did.

STAN: Marty, the only Spanish your sister is ever gonna catch on to is the one that ends in Flu. Besides she only wanted to come cause she's sweet on me.

MARTY: That was the sixth grade, Stan. She's moved on.

STAN: Naw, she still wants me. I can see it in her one good eye. *(Suddenly, he holds up his hand.) SHH!! Quiet!! (Listening. All we hear are crickets.)* Crap stick. Never mind.

MARTY: Where do you want these chairs, Stan?

STAN: *(Pointing.)* Right there. Just right there.

MARTY sets cooler down and leans the chairs against the railing. During the following, the binoculars and camera keep getting in the way, making it difficult for MARTY to open the lawn chairs and set up properly.

STAN: I am telling you Marty, this is a historical event! A moment people in this town will remember. You and I, we're gonna be famous. Hell, we're gonna be legends! Right up there with Dale Earnhardt, Garth Brooks, William Shatner and—

MARTY: Giorgio Tsoukalos?

STAN: Who?

MARTY: Giorgio Tsoukalos. You know... the alien guy on the History Channel? *(STAN stares at him blankly.)* The one with the hair?

STAN: Oh right! Right! Yeah, 'cept after tonight, WE'RE gonna be on the History Channel. They'll be fightin' tooth and nail tryin to get us to appear on one of them shows. We're gonna be experts on the whole gol-darn thing!

MARTY: You think so?

Chairs are now set up and the two of them sit down facing the audience. STAN opens the cooler and pulls out a beer, cracks it open during the following.

STAN: Oh hell yeah! We make contact tonight, we're gonna be celebrities! Especially if we document the whole thing. You brought the camera, right?

MARTY: Yep. Right here. *(Shows camera.)*

STAN: Not that one, the other one.

MARTY: What other one?

STAN: The VIDEO camera, Marty!

MARTY: I don't have a video camera.

STAN: You said you had a video camera!

MARTY: No, I said MaryAnn has a video camera, but you didn't want her to come!

STAN: Goll-darnit, Marty! How the hell are we supposed to document this thing if we don't have a video camera!

MARTY: Well EX-CUSE ME!

STAN: Dang-it Marty!

MARTY: Well, I brought my camera and it takes real good pictures, Stan.

STAN: Yeah but—

MARTY: It'll work, it'll work!

STAN: *(Irritated.)* Crap stick!

MARTY: *(Awkward pause.)* Pass me a beer, will ya?

STAN: *(Angrily hands him one.)* Here.

MARTY: Thanks.

The two of them sit and drink beer, looking up at the sky. Finally, MARTY lifts the binoculars and peers up. STAN stares at him.

MARTY: So... what did it look like again?

STAN: Marty.

MARTY: I mean was it really big? Or was it kinda small?

STAN: Marty.

MARTY: *(Excitedly.)* Cuz if it's really big it might be over us right now. I don't even see any stars!

STAN: Marty. Take the lens caps off.

MARTY: *(Grins sheepishly.)* Oh. Right. *(He does.)*

STAN: Cheese whiz.

MARTY: Yeah, that's better. *(Peers through them again.)* There we go.

STAN: *(Heaves a sigh.)* I shoulda come by myself.

MARTY: No. No! Like you said before; it's better to have a witness. When you saw it last night there wasn't anybody there to collate your story.

STAN: Corroborate.

MARTY: Having me here will make sure people believe you.

STAN: I'm beginning to doubt that.

MARTY: Hey, you want to use my camera? I could look up through these and if I spot something, you could have the camera ready.

STAN: *(Thinks.)* Sure. Hand it over.

MARTY: *(Hands him the camera.)* Here you go.

STAN: *(Mutters.)* Thanks.

MARTY: You're welcome. This is gonna be SO COOL!

PAULA enters, she's wearing a park-official uniform.

PAULA: Hey there boys, what's goin on here?

STAN: CRAP STICK!

MARTY: Oh my God! *(Both of them stand up. MARTY waves.)* Hi Paula.

PAULA: *(Points to her badge.)* Sergeant Butler.

MARTY: Riiight. Sergeant Butler.

PAULA: You aren't supposed to be here after dark. Park's closed.

STAN: What?

MARTY: We're not in the park! This is a bridge!

PAULA: Yeah. I know that Marty. But this bridge here is on park property. You seen the signs. No loitering in the park after 9pm.

STAN: That's stupid!

MARTY: We're not loitering! *(To STAN.)* Are we?

STAN: No, we're not! We're... we're doing *(Hides beer behind his back.)* scientific research!

PAULA: Scientific research?

MARTY: Oh yeah! See! I brought my scientific binoculars.

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