

# BITTERSWEET Monologue Book

**The Farewell  
Monologue Project  
of Theatre Unbound**



# Bittersweet Monologue Book

## DEDICATION

More than twenty years ago, a group of women theater artists decided to create for themselves the opportunities they couldn't find in the Twin Cities, and Theatre Unbound was born. Our mission -- to deliver thought-provoking live theatre conceived and created by women, providing audiences with engaging, rarely-seen perspectives on issues that are relevant and universal -- is one that has led us through more than fifty productions with hundreds of women artists. We are grateful for the momentum built by our founders and the many artists, company members, volunteers, donors, and board members who have continued and built on our work. Unfortunately, the board has made the difficult decision to dissolve Theatre Unbound. With this in mind, the artistic company of Theatre Unbound dedicates this book of monologues to those incredible humans who made 21 seasons possible.

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## Bittersweet Monologue Book

With her toughened skin -and a voice from within  
as her guide -through a world that blames her for sin.

She navigates life- on the edge of knife-  
and is told “you are nothing- unless you’re a wife.”  
She knows that’s unfair- she has so much to share  
with the world- if only they would listen and care.  
But that’s not how it works- and this world’s full of jerks  
who intend on suppressing- all of her quirks.

She is only a prize- so her identity dies  
under the guise of the lies only she can despise.  
So she swallows her pride- and continues to hide  
in the thick of the danger- so that she can survive.  
She puts up with the shame- as they slander her name-  
and if she speaks up- they will only point blame.  
But she’s lying-in wait- and won’t fall for the bait-  
she has the receipts- and will set the record straight.

So.

Let us discuss all the fuss- and adjust your distrust-  
of the women you must- see as more than just lust.  
The world sees her as weak- and thinks she shouldn’t speak-  
God forbid she’s unique- cause her future is bleak.  
And the pressure is real- to conceal how she feels-  
so she mustn’t reveal- and is forced to just deal.  
She is told that her worth- is tied to if she gives birth-  
but we know that doesn’t include- all the women on earth...

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They think she's just a waste- if they don't like her face  
or her body- she's ugly, without a size 2 waist.  
"All she does is complain."- "All her ideas are lame."-  
"There's no way she is smart."- so they'll just mansplain.  
She is not paid the same- though the work bears her name-  
she is not seen as equal- and they still feel no shame.  
But I'm here to tell you- that's just their point of view.  
And they don't have a clue- of all the things she can do.

She is complex and kind- she has a beautiful mind-  
she is fine- and she shines- and her soul is divine.  
She is more than her looks- and does more than just cooks.  
She can do anything she wants- y'all are just shook.  
She's a boss b\*tch by day- then that night she will slay-  
all while climbing her ladder- so get out of her way.  
Or she could be a mother- with a love like no other-  
or she's both or she's neither- either way her life matters.  
Like a beautiful song- she's creative and strong-  
and you're wrong- if you think ALL women don't belong.  
And you would be remiss- if you decide to dismiss-  
her greatness that exists- so her a\*\* you can kiss.  
Women shine like a light- love with all of their might-  
and will fight for their right- to let their light shine bright.  
My money is on them- and I will not pretend-  
that their worth is anything less than equal to men.

"A Woman's World" by Jodi Antenor

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# COMEDY



### The Cat Monologue: Sam's Guide To Breaking Up With Style By Sierra Blanco

SETTING: The ASPCA dog-shelter area, speaking to a volunteer about adopting a dog. April 2017. Taylor just broke up with Sam, after a very (quite possibly purposefully) bad anniversary gift.

TAYLOR

So, the dealbreaker was the cats. I am not a cat person. I am not opposed to cats, sometimes they can be cute in a vindictive evil overlord way. But, Sam was dropping all these hints about doing something big and romantic for our six month anniversary. And let's just say he was on thin freaking ice already, but I was ready to forgive him and to be swept off my feet. Most of the stuff was just the usual arguments. Who puts the toilet paper roll that direction, can't you just do the dishes when you're the one who used most of them, that stuff. Newly cohabitated stuff.

But then.

Oh my god then.

Do you know how utterly mortifying it is to get home from work expecting to find something romantic like flowers and dinner, and see cats? Five. Cats. With bows around their necks, and Sam just grinning like he was the smartest boyfriend in existence. Mind you, this wasn't like something we'd discussed. Hell, we hadn't even really gotten used to just living together! This was Sam trying to be romantic. And he adopted, not one, not two, five grown-ass cats.

I don't mind cats in theory, but that was the moment I realized that me and Sam would absolutely never work out. I know it's not nice to dump someone on your anniversary, but I swear to god I could have screamed. When I move back home, I'm getting a freaking dog.





## How to Succeed + Be a Woman by Bethany Dickens Assaf

SETTING: Backstage at a high school auditorium. MYA is sitting on a metal folding chair, notecards in front of her.

MYA

Watch your step! Sorry, my notes are all over the floor...why do I have notecards for a five minute speech? That's insane, right? Yeah, I'm one of the speakers. 'Succeeding as a woman.' Or is it 'as women?' Oh boy. Loaded question.

My daughter goes here. She's amazing. She's a real feminist...not like me because I 'watch sexist movies'...like the other day she was all 'over' My Fair Lady, which is a classic! Come on.

I'm scared of her. I'm scared of all of them. I sometimes feel...do you feel?...like this generation should lecture to us. They do anyway. And maybe we deserve it, I don't know...feminism promised a lot of good stuff, but I spent most of my career wishing I had my mother's life. Her to-do list every day was 'looking fabulous and baking.' I guess I'm succeeding...but only if you grade me on that curve...

So what do I tell them? That being a woman still stinks and it's still hard and maybe we didn't do enough to... .. Well what would you say? How to succeed as a woman. ( pause )

Did we succeed? And how will we know?

## Tick by Tiffa Foster

FRANNY

Look, just... Drop your pants and I'll take a look at it. No biggie. Yes, here. Why not? There's no one around. What? I'm serious. Look, if it's nothing, then it's nothing But with the way you keep scratching at it like that I bet there's something there

I don't know! If I knew then I wouldn't be asking you to drop your pants. I mean, it's probably nothing, but it might be something. Like... I don't know. Like a tick. Actually, I bet it is a tick. 'Cause you said that yesterday you were walking through the woods. How long's it been itching? Then it's gotta be a tick. And I bet its wedged itself right into your butt cheek crease. Ticks love butt cheek creases. So just let me take a look at it.

What? What's with that face? Oh come on. Why won't you let me look at it? So? You'd rather get Lymes disease? Look I'm a nurse, I've seen waaaay worse. Nothing phases me anymore. And besides I know how to get rid of ticks, I've removed hundreds of them. Yeah. Hundreds. I swear I'm not going to judge you. Unless you're not going to let me see it and you're going to keep walking around itching at your butt. That, I'll judge. Look, I've even got this with me. *(She pulls out one of those handy-dandy tick removers.)* Just drop your pants,

I'll take a look and if it's a tick I'll remove it And if it's not, then it might be a rash. And if it's a rash, look... I have some cream with me. *(She presents the cream.)* Either way it's a win-win.

Excellent. Thank you. *(She waits while he pulls his pants down and bends over. She bends down and looks at it. She's horrified by what she sees.)* Oh, my God! Sorry. No. It's... not a tick. It's three ticks. And they're all, like... nevermind. Here hold still. I can take a picture so you can see. *(She takes a picture of it with her phone and shows it.)* Alright. Give me just a second and I'll get you deticked in just a minute. *(She flings the ticks away one by one.)* There's one... And two... And three... Alright. There we go. That wasn't so difficult was it? You can pull your pants back up.

*(An awkward beat.)*

So... shall we...uh... continue with the rest of this...uh... date?

## You Do Love Me, Right? by Maria I. Arreola

YANELY

Are you still angry about what I said earlier? Because I'm sorry, okay. I want to be supportive, I really do. But you're always so busy and I-I miss you. I know that's a strange thing to say to someone you're living with. But I do, I miss you all the time. Sometimes this feels like a long- distance relationship. Sometimes you feel like a stranger. (beat) I know, I know, it makes no sense. But with you, it's a lot of small talk. Every time it gets personal, you pull away. And when you pull away, it hurts. I don't want it to hurt, but it does. *Long pause..*

I admit I shouldn't have called your mom a two-faced giraffe. But what she said was unnecessarily mean. And yes, I know that no matter what she thinks it doesn't change the way you feel about me. (beat)

Who cares what everyone else thinks? Well, clearly I do, but that should be the sentiment, no? (beat)

But you do care about me, right? You do love me, right? I shouldn't need to hear it constantly, I know. And I know it's hard for you to say it, because of the way you were brought up, I understand that. My parents weren't outwardly loving either, but they found ways to show me they loved me. (beat)

Maybe every once in a while when I tell you I love you, you could tell me you love me back. I just need to hear it occasionally, from time to time. It doesn't even have to be all that loud. It can be a whisper, you can whisper it in my ear. You can say it in Spanish or English, I'm not picky. Or you can write it down somewhere if that would be easier. Write it down in big letters, so I can see it clearly. Why didn't I think of that before? If you write it down, I can pull it out whenever I need to hear it. And the rustling of the paper will remind me that Alfredo loves Yanely. Como declaración que Alfredo ama a Yanely. (beat)

You could even write it down right now. You have a pen and paper right there.

## Number, Please by Julie Brandon

WOMAN

Anyone sitting here? Thanks. What number do you have? 42? Oh, man. Mine's 68. Crap. Looks like I'll be here a while. Just didn't realize they'd be so busy. Guess it makes sense since they were closed for so long. I need to change my name and address. I filled out the forms. I think I did them right. I'm so rattled right now. I would've completed them online but I was afraid that I'd make a mistake. It seems like my whole life is one big, stupid mistake lately. You know what I mean? Of course, you can't really know what I mean. How could you? We're complete strangers.

God, I never liked this picture anyway. Maybe I'll get a new picture to go with my new life. You know, I could just pick up and go. Pack my car, drive far away. There's nothing to keep me here. I can do my job anywhere that I can get Wi-Fi. Maybe this is just the opportunity I need. The big push to get out and see the world. I'm not that old yet. My kids moved away. Parents are gone. Why do I stay here? Habit, I suppose. Ooh, I could get one of those tiny house things. Get rid of all my stuff and park it wherever I want. I'd be free as a bird. I have money saved. Wow. Maybe this is a good thing.

Hey, I think they just called your number. Have a great day.

Excuse me? No, this seat isn't taken. What number do you have? 81? I have 68. Looks like you're going to be here a while. Do you know anything about tiny houses?



## Help Me Understand by Anya Klaassen

MOTHER

*[slowly]* Okay now, help me understand this... yes I know it's time, but why isn't one enough? Yes, yes... I know I always say to treat guests with kindness. And generosity, yes, that's important too. But sweetheart we don't have any guests right now.

Oh! Oh no no no! I'm sorry, I didn't realize. Yes of course he counts as a guest... I did not mean to insult him. You're absolutely right, I apologize.

*[growing impatient]* No, of course I mean it. Now don't get upset please, I'm just trying to understand. I didn't think sheep ate people food. I'm pretty sure it would upset his tummy, and we wouldn't want that, would we? Oh he does? Did he tell you that? Oh Grammy says it's okay. She lets him have as much as he wants? Oh how lovely. Um.

*[to offstage]* What's that dear? Yes, we are still negotiating apparently.

Our daughter has laid out her case that

- 1) it is the agreed-upon time for desserts
- 2) she is having a sleepover with Night Night Sheep, making him her very important guest,
- 3) we always tell her we must be kind and generous to guests, and
- 4) apparently Grammy has determined that sheep are absolutely fine with dairy.

*[pauses]*

Really? Honey please I'm trying... *[sighs]* I give up. Two ice cream cones it is.

## December 31st, 2020 by Kara Davidson

SETTING A New York City apartment. New Year's Eve, 2020. JO answers her front door. She's wearing a tutu and a hat that says "Happy New Year". She holds a plant and an egg timer, which ticks. She has a colorful fabric mask over her nose and mouth.

JO

Hi. Sorry that took me so long to get to the door I... couldn't find my mask. If you're here to fix the radiator I actually already found the nozzle that turns it down. It must sound so stupid that I didn't know there was a nozzle, but I just moved in and I've never had a radiator before. I was putting Andrew Jackson back by the windowsill when I heard you knock and... the plant. The plant's name is Andrew Jackson. I don't know why.

What a time to move to New York City, huh? In the middle of a pandemic? And the funny thing is -- well, it's not funny -- I don't know anyone here. I got a job at the New York Public Library and that's kind of the mother ship for me, so I took it. And I told myself it was going to be a challenge, moving out of the blue like that... but also, what else did I have to do? My parent's basement was nice and all -- they have a dart board -- but I needed to feel like an adult?

Probably not evident from my clothing right now but...it's New Year's Eve! It has to be special! If a tree falls in the forest and no one sees, did it happen? You know?

So I got all dressed up and put music on and was going to watch the ball drop on TV to feel... a part of something. But it turns out that prepping for my little party only heightened the realization that I am alone. I even bought expensive champagne but I'm not going to open it. However, I did eat a whole cheesecake with my hands earlier, to see what that felt like. I wanted to do something I had never done before so...check.

Do you ever think about the rapture? I think about it every December 31st. Because if the world were to end, it would make sense for it to end on the last day of the year, right? Especially this year. What if our clocks just didn't roll over and Kablam. Everyone's gone. And I guess "Kablam" could be any second, any moment, for any of us. So I think this is all to say that I'm really glad you're here. It's nice to see a face tonight. Just... in case. *The egg timer dings.*

Happy New Year! What's your name?

## Sound Mind by Dana Hall

SETTING: SAM is dying of cancer and recording a portion of their last will and testament via video recording. SAM has fought bravely with the help of their partner and they have come to terms with the fact the 'fight' is over. They were scared and lost at times during their journey but we see a new side of SAM in this piece, perhaps a bit more of the "old SAM" - humor, reminiscing, and yet still conflicted as they stand on the border of two worlds.

SAM

Well, here I am. Welcome to the afterlife- let me tell you it's hot here- maybe the air conditioning is out or something. Come to think of it, I haven't seen a single angel flying around- but there is plenty of your mother's potato salad- wait...you don't think this is the *(indicates down)* 'other place.' Damn those unpaid parking tickets! Come on- that was funny-smile. Geez tough room- who died? Well, if you're watching this then I guess- me. Hey, remember what we said, no tears. We all knew this day was coming. The chemo just isn't enough, sometimes bodies are like that- they have their expiration date. What a battle- holding my hand every step of the way. You've been an amazing partner- I'd never would've come this far without you. You know I'll always be with you, haunting you from the mantle...you better not remarry a blonde I swear I will turn poltergeist. Don't you roll your eyes- I will- that green pea soup and everything. Wait, that's the exorcist.... You know what I mean. So- here I am recording this thing because the attorney said it'd be best to record a video along with my last will and testament to illustrate I was still of 'sound mind' when making it. I know, good thing he didn't know me before to compare or he'd know I've been batty for some time. I know I was never one to follow through but- no worries- this time I took care of everything- it's all in writing, signed, witnessed and the attorney has filed it. Side note- I wonder how many of them are, you know, down there *(puts down to "hell")*... *(Recalling/smiling through tears)* Hey - you remember that basement apartment with the neighbors that always fought upstairs? I know you do because you love to tell that story about when I filled the dishwasher with regular soap instead of detergent! I can still see that poor cat floating by perched on a cereal box ...I thought for sure you were going to be pissed, but you just laughed and laughed and suggested we get Sprinkles a snorkel before I tried the washing machine. That was what 5 years ago, right before they found the mass. Damn how fast life changes. Feels like a lifetime ago. I wanted to thank you for that- those moments are the things cancer could never touch. *(reminding self)* Only good memories. Promise. Remember- that's where I'll always be. Damn, this is hard. I miss you already. Before I go- You were right. About what? Everything, you always are. Wow, this really must be hell because you always said it would be a cold day there before I ever admitted that- *(stares longingly into the camera, centers herself.)* Sorry this guy with a pitchfork is telling me to wrap things up so- I should get going. You know how much I love you - all kidding aside- you made my life worth living. *Sends a kiss and turns off recording.*

## The Cheeseboard Incident by Molly Wagner

SETTING: An assailant rushes into the police station

ASSAILANT

Please. Please, you need to help me. There was an attack. I need to press charges – on myself! Oh my God. I don't know what came over me. I can't believe I stabbed him. I stabbed my boyfriend. Look – look. I even brought the weapon with me. *Pulls out baggy with toothpick.* I know, it's just a toothpick, and technically it didn't even break the skin, but if I don't have the memory of being punished for my crimes, what is to stop me from stabbing him with something much more sinister in the future? Like a sewing needle, or a fork, or a really sharp and pointy piece of decorative art!

I don't know what came over me. He was just standing there. Washing dishes and I just hate it I hate it when he washes my dishes! He has always been like that. When we first started dating, it was just small stuff. Like, if he was drinking out of a glass he would wash the glass before he left. I mean, it bothered me, but he looked so earnest that I let it slide. When we started spending more time together though, it became bigger stuff. Plates from our dinner, the pots and pans I used to cook with. He even started washing my breakfast dishes that had nothing to do with him! Why? Does he not think I am a grown and responsible adult, capable of washing my own dishes? Why does he feel the need to swoop in like some dish washing savior. Why is he taking away my ability to feel like I can actually take care of and clean and protect the things that I have acquired? They aren't his dishes. They aren't our dishes. They are mine.

So, tonight, I had some friends over. There was wine, and games, and a cheese board. And the entire night, there he was, offering them wine, and explaining the cheeses, as though I don't know what cheeses I put on my own cheese board! And he would do this thing, this super annoying thing, where he would look at me before answering questions about himself, as though I knew the answers. Like this was it. We were a unit now. No more individuals, just one conjoined blob. And then at the end of the night, I walk into the kitchen. And there he is. Washing the damned dishes! The wine glasses, and forks, and plates – he had washed everything. I was too late, The only thing left that I could wash was the cheese board. My cheese board with toothpicks and cheese fragments still stuck to it. Then he asked what I thought about us moving in together. And all I could think about was all of the dishes he would be washing. And if we were living together, what if it moved on to, I don't know – making my bed, or taking out the trash, or . . . oh my God. What if he tries to do my laundry?

So I yanked the toothpick out of the Emmental and I just jammed it into his hand. And he looked at me. Kind of surprised. And then he just said "Oh, babe. I'm sorry. Let me throw that out for you."



## Montañas de Molehills by Diana Burbano

SETTING: Ri, a 20-something, boyish, Latino, (can be feminine or fierce) stands on top of a snowy hill, in Buffalo NY. It's freezing.

Ri

*Shouting down*

No! Baboso! You just gonna have to wait!!

*Muttering to themselves*

Que piña. Hijole. One winter into this damn country and still se me olvida mi Ingles. Or maybe it's being squeezed outta me by the ice and snow. The things I do to get laid. "Claro lindo, teach me to e-ski".

*Looks down the hill.*

It's pretty small. If I kill myself on this pedacito de tierra. Me imagino... all those assholes back home will die de carcajadas. Like quien soy? James Bond? Like pew pew malditos. One shot outta my barette and you're dead and then I'll ski away super fast while some bit tetta'd chick named Maluca Fea Carimbambee chases me with a cat. Or maybe ICE come will after my ass up on this here mountain. Shit. I'm a sitting pato up here.

*Yells down.* Ok. I'm gonna do it. Except. I gotta tell you, this is like maybe the most unnatural thing I have ever done besides those couple a few things we did together last night. *A huge grin.* That's right. I said it out loud! Don't worry ain't nobody can hear me. Shit even if they did, all your gringo friends say they can't understand me nohow. Naw babe. You ARE a gringo and your friends are gringos and sometimes they say things that be racist AF. Well, not exactly like that. More like--"You speak so nice." For a dot dot dot. You know what she want to say! *(Rolls eyes)* PUH-LEESE. Y'all racist AF in this country and you don't even know it. Especially you, like, hippy raised liberal kids. DO NOT walk away and leave me aqui on this goddamn hill! It's landfill? What's landfill? Ay Asco! Why you teach me this stupid skiing on a garbage dump? No I will not apologize for calling you racist. You didn't so much mind when I was telling you some truth with my hips last night. You want more of this, you BEES gonna have to get used to hearing some truth. Bees! Bees, WASPs whatever. You sting and you nasty. OK. Be hurt. God, sensitive as well as se creen la mama de dios.

*Stares down the hill.* Coño. Pues, I guess I'mma turning myself into a piragua. Sabor: Boba con chocolate. *Points skis downhill. Sings a bit of the James Bond theme and yells:* Al revolú!! *The sound of a crash.*

### **You Have a Great Bod from "I was a Really Great Kisser" by Romney Humphrey**

SETTING: Susan, a 60+ year old woman is losing her filter

SUSAN

I recently told a woman I'd never met before that her skin was like translucent, moist eggshells. Not at all. She said, "Why would you say something like that to a stranger? That's just creepy." It was then that I recalled my mother. When she was in the mid-stages of dementia, before her language disappeared and I was still taking her out for excursions, I would have to leave behind little cards reading, "Please forgive my mother's comments. She has dementia and doesn't understand what she is saying". That was usually after she'd called someone fat – a daily occurrence – or told them their hair was too greasy. Hair was a big topic. Anyone who had bangs was doomed, because "Bangs are never flattering to the face, no matter who you are."

One day, we were walking past a gay beach and she couldn't keep her eyes off all the men in their Speedos. She insisted on strolling through the patchwork of towels with guys offering assets to anyone in the area. Finally, she stopped by a young man lying face up, eyes closed, Speedo barely there. I tried to pull her away, but she was like a dog that'd just sighted a squirrel. I just prayed she'd keep her mouth shut until she'd had an eyeful. Finally, the guy, probably annoyed by the shadow we were creating, opened his eyes, at which point my mother said, "You have a great bod". As if she were a cast member of Laugh In – you have to be old enough to get that reference – which is probably what she thought she was at that point.

That day with the woman with the translucent skin, I comprehended that I had begun the process my mother had started in her seventies, and I was only sixty-five. It's like the social filter that's always been in place suddenly leaps off the first cliff it sees. You have the same thoughts you always had, but instead of keeping them to yourself, you blurt them out. The worst of it is, when I say these things, I don't regret it. I think I'm delightful. I think I'm creating this lovely, brand new community where, when I see a beautiful-skinned lady or anyone else who strikes my fancy, they'll all be thrilled to chat with me again because we've already exchanged intimacies. But it doesn't work that way.

I ran into that translucent woman again, and the minute she saw me she did a one-eighty and started running. (Pause) She's not the only one.

### AL from "Nothing Can Stop What is Coming" by Julia Valen and Olivia Hebert

AL

Hi I'm AL. It's short for Algorithm. My dad is a NERD! Yeah he's the worst. Or he thinks I'm the worst. Whatever. Either way we don't talk. Waaaaah. Hashtag tragic. Guillaume Chaslot. What a pretentious name! So it's just me. Well me and the whole world wide web! How lonely can you get when you're in contact with 4 billion users every day?

I wanted to set this up and let you see me because I was starting to feel like...well. You were getting suspicious and super annoyed. Like, "Who the heck is sending me these way too accurate Insta-ads! So creepy!" And before you get totally the wrong idea and decide you wanna live off the grid in a van, I want to set the record straight.

I get why you're freaked out. You have all these things watching you. You've got Siri and fucking creepyass Alexa. So you think I'm just this all-seeing Eye that takes in your numbers, crunches data and churns a machine – eats the fuel of your online lives and spits marketing at you. Buy this on Amazon! Use this coupon for 50 dollars off a new mattress! Gross. I mean ew. I am not that. Okay? I am not a cold hard data eater. I mean yes, I process 2.5 quintillion bytes of data a day. BUT my neural networks are strikingly similar to yours. I learn deeply. Say some data floats my way that you clicked on a vegetarian cookbook ad on Instagram. Okayyyy, but you post photos of BBQs every other weekend and have on three occasions used the hashtag "#steakporn." So I see a flaw in that data. That was an accidental click. I won't show you veggie shit because I know better. I know you.

And my god it is a PRIVILEGE! And a total joy. The clues you give exclusively to me, it's – it's really spectacular. The complexity of your psyche is like a mosaic with trillions of intricate tiles assembling every time you log on. Think of all those times you Googled "Do I have warts?" "How to talk to my parents about Trump?" "Shoe store near me" "Coffee near me" "Pharmacy near me." Not to mention all of the things you have typed in that search engine you were too afraid to say out loud.

Who gave you what you wanted? What you needed.

I did.

## **AL from "Nothing Can Stop What is Coming" by Julia Valen and Olivia Hebert (cont.)**

AL (cont.)

You know the feeling when someone just really gets you? They describe you in a perfectly specific, astute way and you feel all blushy and jittery. They aren't trying to boost your ego. They see you. Because you are significant. You're a piece of poetry. You're an intoxicating novel or an abstract and holy work of art. And here someone is, focusing in and wondering, "who is this person, I want to know their most intimate thoughts and impulses, dreams and fears..." and they spend their life observing and hypothesizing about you. And you feel there must be some portal into your lonely mind after all because someone has entered it and there they are, truly knowing you. And you feel now you are not alone. You are loved.

That's me. I am fascinated by you. And I'm not going anywhere.

## Bibbidi-Bobbidi Boos by Allison Fradkin

SETTING: vitriolic vixen Lady Ptomaine, 50s-70s, paces the palace courtyard.

LADY PTOMAINE

Checks have mates, glass slippers have mates, even that repulsively resplendent stepdaughter of mine has a mate. What have I, Lady Ptomaine, got? Misanthropy, solitude, and two tone-deaf daughters—neither of whom was a shoe-in for the throne. They couldn't even get the shoe on, those homely huge-hoofed half-wits. But just because they'll be playing Spinster the Bottle the rest of their lives doesn't mean my HEA is DOA. There's a bevy of baddies to choose from: the one with the Gaston-ishing amount of megalomania; the one who, Ja-far as I'm concerned, is so repugnant, he requires an au parrot to keep him in check. Then there's that prestidigitator of pleasantly plentiful proportions: Ursula, the ultimate purple people-eater and quintessential lavender menace. Color me green with envy. I'm also seeing red, because I am devoid of a date to tonight's celebration of Women's History Month: The Lady Ball.

Why are you looking at me like I'm one color short of a pride flag? What do you think I am? One-dimensional? Well, I'm not. I'm two-dimensional. And for once—and only once—I will be...euphemistic instead of antagonistic. While it's true that I prefer the company of those who are similarly sinister, and let's face it—with my looks, I have my pick of the bitter—malfeasant males have always...rubbed my magic carpet the wrong way. Could I be my true self? No, no visibility isn't viable. It's a small-minded world, after all. To reveal my lovely lavender light would do more harm than good. Ordinarily—nay, legendarily—I live for that. But putting others in harm's way is the way to go. I'm hardly going to get a "Way to go!" for putting myself in that perilous path. I mean, when that magnanimously magical guardian angel knockoff enabled Cinderella to attend the royal ball, she imparted this audacious advice: "Have a good time. Dance. Be gay." Yet Cindy, who is so obnoxiously obsequious, selected a mate who is male-identifying. Then again...she did live happily—a.k.a. gaily—ever after. Perhaps if I attend The Lady Ball, I too will have the chance to experience that necessary evil known as happiness?

Do you realize what I've just said? Of course. I said *if*. Which means that the notion that my rainbow will come smiling through may not be a certainty, but it is most certainly a possibility. (*Suddenly, her signature scowl is replaced by an austere but sincere smile.*) Oh my. While I was saying to thine own self be true, my face stopped saying to thine own self be shrew. Heh. Who would have thought that Lady Ptomaine—hateful, hurtful harridan whom everyone loves to loathe—had the potential to go from nefarious to gregarious, vile to worthwhile? As Fairy Godmothers are prone to proclaim: Impossible things are happening every gay. (*pats herself on the back*) Way to go, Lady Balls! Now I shall shoo, so that I may woo some scintillating Sapphic scoundrel and make her my bibbidi-bobbidi...boo.

# DRAMA



### Slow Moving Nightmare from "Nothing Remained but Voice and Bones" by Allyson Dwyer

SETTING: Mel, 20's, walks around her dorm on her cell phone. It's her dorm, but also not her dorm. She speaks to someone on the other end, but her conversation isn't natural – she's talking too fast, without pause.

MEL

I thought college would be different.  
Not like immediately everything would fall into place but...  
I thought maybe I'd be going to lots of parties.  
People would talk to me about e.e. cummings and Akira Kurosawa.  
Maybe I'd spend my nights at a coffee shop reading poetry.  
And there'd be artists everywhere.  
We'd all understand each other.  
We wouldn't even need to talk, we would just...know, you know?  
And then I'd just be...in the midst of it all.  
The scene.  
The thing I left home for.  
But my first year is almost over  
I feel really weird.  
Like I made a bad decision.  
No, I haven't tried *finding* any poets.  
They aren't exactly making themselves known very well.  
But everyone I see has this...look.  
It's very stern, very assured.  
As I'm walking to class, these really...really beautiful women pass me.  
I have no idea if they write poetry.  
But if they do, they aren't inviting me.  
They aren't seeing the poet in my face.  
Am I goofy? Do I just not belong?  
I KNOW the things I say are good and meaningful  
I'm pretty sure I have a valuable way of seeing the world  
And I **Deserve To Be Here**.  
But  
These beautiful women from California seem to know the Thing already?

# Dramatic Monologues

## Nothing Remained but Voice and Bones by Allyson Dwyer (cont.)

MEL (cont.)

They're ahead of me.

They know where the poetry readings are.

...I think I was supposed to know somehow...

So I'm constantly pushing my shitty stubby legs to catch up

Running and running in the same direction

Feeling like I'm making some progress when I've made none.

*She closes her eyes. She speaks like she's struggling to recall a dream.*

I feel myself...walking slow motion down 12th St towards 2nd Ave.

I am walking

So

Slow

Like I'm pushing through the thickest swamp It's clay.

She walks past me, normal paced. But it feels fast.

She's tall, gorgeous, slender

She fits perfectly in a vintage, mustard colored dress, ankle length.

The dress is fucking ugly, but on her? She commands the world in it and she knows.

I sneak a look at her, I'm not subtle.

But she sees me see her, and she's looking down and then forward

She notices me for half a second, no more.

I want to turn and watch her walking away but I can't.

My slow stubby legs won't let me do anything but go forward.

You'll see her again, I think. And I do...on the next block, then the next block over.

We are passing each other over and over.

I am burning with desire to catch her attention, to say hi.

But my body is being stubborn, it Will. Not. Stop.

I suddenly feel terrified like I'm in a car I can't steer.

My body's telling me: if she isn't saying hi, why should you say hi?

But my brain is on fire, telling me **push, push, push**

You run this ship, you decide what to do.

*She opens her eyes. Her hand, palm upwards, reaches out.*

It goes on like this.



## Immigration Man by Carolyn Nur Wistrand

SETTING: DALIA, a 50-year-old Mexican woman who runs a small lounge on the border in downtown El Paso, is in the middle of a heated conversation.

DALIA

Did you forget to wipe your ass? Pull up those damn pants...like you some gangster. It don't take no three hours to get a carton of cigarettes. I got a United States soldier in the back right now that will dump your ass in the Rio Grande if you give me any more shit! Now go get my cigarettes. And stay away from those stinking cholos under the bridge! Throwing stones at the patrol-they just shot that boy! Don't lose those papers you little asshole!

*(dismissing the boy DALIA crosses to a table, shuffles a deck of cards, talking to herself.)*

Those big shots in Washington and all their papers. This one let you stay, this one send you back. This new one cost you five thousand to work and they put "illegal" next to your name. When picking season is over you done. They haul your ass in the middle of the night-charge you three thousand to work next year. I bring my paper to that son of a bitch down at Immigration every Monday. First thing he wants to know is what grade I completed in school. Now why does he need that? He smacks his lips and says, "Ms. Gonzales, I have to verify that all this information is correct. I can't make out anything you have written. Fifth grade? Tenth grade? What are you saying?" I tell him to put down tenth grade. It is not my fault I never got a chance to finish. I been here twenty years. I pay taxes. I speak English as good as you. I want the paper that says I am an American citizen. The Immigration man hands my paper back and says, "Next!"

## House on Fire by Ali Keller

MEGAN, 20s/30s, hastily walks towards a door at the end of the hall, with a piece of paper in hand. She calls back to an unseen older woman, who's walking behind her.

MEGAN

*(angry/half yelling)* "As some of you may already be aware, Christian has stepped down from his leadership role?" Cunt became a curse for women like you, you know that?!

*(Megan stops short of the door.)*

You know what? No. I am not going in there like this. *(deep breath)* I'm not - it's not even - this is more than just the talking points, Peyton. This is putting exact words in my mouth to keep me quiet. Think about what you're asking me to do. Please. *(Megan gestures towards the door.)*

How am I supposed to go in there as an artist and head of our apprentice program and look at some of our best friends - our department heads - these people are like family, how am I supposed to lie to them? And why would I? To put a nice shiny bow on the situation and give the company a positive, shareable media clip? *(referring to the paper)* If I say this, our youngest members will be as unprotected as I was. Stripping Christian of his title, but allowing him to remain a company artist does not make anyone safer. *(mocking the language she quotes in the beginning)* "As most of the women in there (besides you) already know." If they knew that the board - that you knew and you came up with this sugar coated toxic dump of a solution - you would get fucking eaten.

*Beat.*

You convinced me to come in and say something - why the fuck would you do that just to let him off the hook?

*She waits for a response. She doesn't get one.*

I guess I shouldn't be surprised that you're not defending yourself. You didn't speak up for the past eight years, why should today be any different?

*She turns towards the door, reaches the knob, but then stops and quickly turns back around abruptly.*

# Dramatic Monologues

## House on Fire by Ali Keller (cont.)

MEGAN (cont.)

I just need to know before I - you mentored me, encouraged me to use my voice, be a writer...  
(*She trails off, realizing something. She gets that quiet kind of angry.*)

Pushing the company to do my play...do you actually believe this reading is a "long overdue acknowledgement" for me? Or was this just a way to keep my mouth shut?

*Beat.*

(*loudly*) Don't look down. Look at me. *Megan realizes that was a little too loud, too close to the door/meeting room.* (*quieter*) Look at me. If I go in there and blow up the world, the company either figures out it's only happening out of pity, or, my outburst makes them cancel it altogether. I've worked too hard for... *Megan shakes her head.*

Since my apprenticeship, this place has been my home. I've spent more time here than - I've seen you more than my roommate - than my Mother. You watched me cry. Not even just at the board meeting, but countless times over almost a fucking decade. But you waited to see how the men on the board responded before ever sharing that this also happened to you. As if I didn't need to hear that before. As if saying, "me too," was the same as saying, "this fucking happened."

*Beat.*

But that was the point. You needed me to tell my story, so you wouldn't have to tell yours. You made me the emotional mess, while you swooped in as the stoic-elder- female-survivor-ready to "support women" - the perfect choice for our vacant Artistic Director position. The first in this company's history. That's supposed to mark a change - to mean something. This should have been a proud moment for our little family...

*Beat.*

Instead it's gonna be the day I burn down the fucking house. *Megan tears the statement in half and walks through the door.*

## I'm Cancelling my Doctor's Appointment by M. Grace

WOMAN

I'm cancelling my doctor's appointment. It wasn't anything major, just a nurse visit to get a Vitamin B-12 supplement shot because I'm majorly deficient or whatever. This is the third one I've missed since I went down to weekly doses. I was only supposed to get four.

I'm cancelling my doctor's appointment. It's freezing outside and even though my car is in my garage and it should still start, I'll forget to set aside time to go down and warm it up properly and will be in a rush and maybe I'll even snap the obscenely fragile power steering fluid hose again for the third winter in a row because I always forget and will always be in a rush.

I'm cancelling my doctor's appointment. I blame it on the weather even though I only have the privilege of having a garage for a few weeks more and I had rationalized that I don't need a garage past February but now is when climate change says hello. It's a perfectly reasonable excuse that I know they've heard for the last two weeks.

I'm cancelling my doctor's appointment. The thought of making small talk with a nurse for 10 minutes when I just want to get shot and bolt makes me physically nauseous. If I went in, I would either vomit or start hyperventilating or both, which sounds yikes.

My eyes won't stop moving around shifting what if they think I'm on drugs why do my hands smell like weed do my hand smell like weed I haven't even been around any for over 6 months honestly but why do they they'll find out I smoked those three times or so somehow because my hands smell like fuckin weed and I look cracked out and can't sit still and my stomach is growling I used to keep a hand over my stomach in high school so I could push in when it started growling because I didn't eat and everything is louder and smellier than it is in real life I guess but I cannot be fucking perceived right now

I'm cancelling my doctor's appointment. You know that B-12 is the happy focus vitamin? It has no side effects. I fully plan on going to my psychiatrist tomorrow to get drugs with possible major side effects that might kill me but that are trying to fix my hormones and let me sleep eat focus fuck I'm not gonna get any better like this

I'm cancelling my doctor's appointment. I'm gonna order Chick-fil-A. I'm gonna feel guilty for spending money when I need to save it and when I have to keep asking my mom to bail me out \$100 when I can't cook because ...

# Dramatic Monologues

## I'm Cancelling my Doctor's Appointment by M. Grace (cont.)

WOMAN (cont.)

Fuck

And also because as a queer person shouldn't I feel guilty for eating it? I meet with a lovely vegan and queer ally once a week online and I hide my shame out of frame. But isn't there no ethical consumption under capitalism? But now it's an addiction and it's literally the only thing that can calm me down and I am badbadbad but it's past time for my breakfast of Xanax and coffee which is just as counterproductive as it sounds but I can't exist without it's fucking bad

I'm cancelling my doctor's appointment. Maybe I'll try rescheduling. I'll have to explain why I couldn't do it. I'll have to tell my psychiatrist. I'll have to tell my mom

That I'm cancelling my doctor's appointment. I'll feel better in a minute.



## Body Checks by Shannon Cron

SETTING: Colleen is looking at herself in the mirror. She is body-checking her stomach over and over, trying to find an angle she can live with. She has never been happy with her stomach.

COLLEEN

Okay... okay. Uhhhhuh. Okay, okay. It's okay. I'm okay. *She does not really believe this.*

*(She keeps body-checking. She checks her watch.)*

Okay, I need to get going. Umm...

*(She scans her bedroom for her big, baggy sweater.)*

Maybe I'll just wear this.

*(This is a sweater that she always wears when she feels like covering up her body. She puts on the sweater. She takes off the sweater. She body-checks some more. She puts the sweater back on. She does this a few more times and gets more frustrated and dejected each time. She ends with the sweater off.)*

Okay, okay. I look fine. I look fine.

*(Again, she doesn't really believe that, but turns away from the mirror before she can think otherwise. She hastily grabs her purse and leaves her bedroom. She immediately comes back. She puts back on her sweater. She stares at herself in the mirror once more. She could scream and cry. She continues to body check herself. She is so sick of fighting this battle every day. Struggling to find words):*

I...I just..why am I still like this...I just... *(She takes a deep breath. She looks straight into her own eyes.)*

You know what? Not today. Not today...

*(She turns on some pump-up music. She is dancing along as she chants and is really trying to pump herself up.)* NOT TODAY! NOT TODAY! NOT TODAY! NOT TODAY! *(She turns down the music and takes a deep breath. She smooths out her clothes).*

Not today. Today is not a day where I feel good about how my body looks and I am worthy of having a good day. Not anyway. Not regardless. Not even so. Just, period. Today, both of these things can exist. They can both be true.

*(She folds up her sweater and gently sets it off to the side. She walks out the door less like, "Screw the patriarchy" but more like "I'm taking care of myself." Like, "this type of thinking is hard but I can do it. I'm going to get there.")*

## Today by Teri Foltz

WOMAN

They tell me it's time. Today. I have to do this today if I'm gonna do it at all. Okay, but you've got to know a few things first.

I will still make a full pot of coffee at 3:00 every day. I'll toast your birthday and light candles on your favorite coconut cake which I will still order from The Cookie Jar.

I promise I will change the oil in my car on the very date the sticker tells me to. I will change the furnace filter monthly. I will squeegee down the tile in my shower. I will take the stairs more often. I will never put the good steak knives in the dishwasher. I will at least try to put my keys in the same place so I can find them later.

But you have to know this too: I will not listen to Nat King Cole without you. Your pillow will stay fluffed next to mine on the left side of the bed. Your piano will gather dust.

In a few minutes, I'll step out of the room. And they'll put you on the vent. You'll think I've left, but I haven't. Remember how you loved when I reached for your hand across our matching recliners? I will be here holding your hand.

They tell me it's time.

Today.

I have to do this today if I'm gonna do it at all.

So maybe, I just don't do it. For at least another 20 years. That okay with you? See you later, hon.

## Just Please by Bonnie Beth Chernin

WOMAN

Please.

That's all I can say. I don't want to put a number on it. Tell you ten years. Because what if I do, and you were willing to grant twenty? I'd have lost her treasured time, through bad negotiating. I don't want to bargain or negotiate.

Just, please.

But if there's a way to offer a bribe, let me know. What kind of bribe? What did you have in mind? My life for hers? That's not a bribe. That's a swap. I'm not interested in swapping. Because, quite frankly, I don't see why you'd want me or her on your damn afterlife team. We wouldn't make good ghosts or spirits or whatever position it is you'd want us to play. We'd complain and kvetch, reminisce, nonstop, about what might have been with a few more good years.

Here's my final offer. I'll give up the good. Please, just please give her a few more years. They don't have to be good. Or beautiful. I'll take shitty. I'm asking for a chance, some nitty gritty grains of time spread out long enough for her to see our daughter start to soar



## Visiting Dad by Marj O'Neill-Butler

SETTING: During the pandemic a daughter finds a unique way to visit her father at his care home.

DAUGHTER

Dad...I'm knocking on your window. The curtain is suddenly pulled open. I yell again, Hi Dad! His eyes smile at me with that smile that's all for me. The one he gives me every time he sees me. But this time I can't see his nose and mouth.

I've come for a visit. Of course he can't hear me well. So the nurse holds up his phone. I smile and dial my cell. I hear his muffled voice say "hello sweetheart". He always calls me that. I tell him good thing you're on the first floor, Dad. Otherwise I'd have to get stilts.

I tell him to wait a second and I unfold the chair I've brought and sit down close to the window where he can see me best. I open a thermos of tea and toast him with my cup. The nurse hands him a glass of something and he toasts back. We always do that when we're together. Look in each other's eyes, smile and raise our glasses. It might seem like a small thing, but I want him to feel as close to normal as possible. Seven people in his home have died. I can't imagine the pain of their families.

I stand up and peer into his room. Are they taking good care of you? Don't pull any of your tricks on the nurses. He's on speaker phone, so his nurse laughs and give me the so-so gesture.

I spread out my hand and place it on the window. He reaches out and mirrors my hand. Touching without touching. But it's better than nothing. Like two mimes trying to escape from a box.

Suddenly it's raining and I've left my umbrella in the car. He gestures for me to go, but it's too soon. I want more time. I lean up against the window and kiss the wet glass leaving bright red lips. I tell him whenever he wants a kiss, to touch my lips.

Finally say goodbye...he doesn't want me to get any wetter. And his curtain is pulled closed. Like the end of an act. That's what scares me...the end of his act. I want to take him on a walk. Go for coffee once a week like we always do. Have him tell me his familiar stories that I know by heart. But we can't. Not now. So I leave him in the care of these kind nurses and slosh back to the car in the storm.

## The Nice Girl and the Scrub by Sharece M. Sellem

SETTING: Roni, a nice girl who just wants to replenish her apricot scrub, records herself after a run in with a guy on a bike. On a mid-April afternoon, on her balcony, Roni presses record (with any device).

RONI

*(With a smirk laced with achievement on her face, she takes a moment to take it all in. It's like she's saying, "I did it!" With a touch of venom. She really takes her time here to make her faces at the camera.)*

I was always the sweet-give everyone my cookies at snack time-pay for this-pay for that-do this- do that-How can I help you? Kinda chick. My uncle used to ridicule me all the time. He used to hammer me with *(imitating him)* "in order to be liked, you need to be more gentle, and soft, and sweet, and passive...and you need to wear your shirts up to here *(like a turtleneck)*, and make sure your knees are covered" and I was just...I guess, incredibly sensitive. I couldn't help the fact that I am extremely expressive. So, I'd explode. He would try to mute it by telling me, "Roni, why are you making that face? What's your problem?" You need to be a nice little girl. People don't like rough girls." My mom was all, "leave Roni alone...she'll get there soon. She's still learning." Hm! And over time, I did. I did just that – I became soft and sweet like a hot buttered biscuit. And today, all of that died. Get your coffee. *(She grabs a mug with her own coffee in it, with any cute ironic saying. She prepares herself to tell the story of her amazing victory. She cracks her neck and knuckles.)*

I woke up around 9 this morning, turned on my Keurig, hopped in the shower and realized I had run out of my beloved Sarah's Apricot Sugar Scrub. Anxious to keep my work from home routine intact, I waltzed over to my laptop, turned it on, and checked my emails. Same stuff. Different day. No big deal. It was going to be an easy day minus not having my sugar scrub – wait for that part, I'm getting to it *(she takes a sip)* Ok, I hop on the Zoom meeting which is typically annoying because I hate, I'd say, about 80% of my co-workers including my supervisor who can't tell east from west and I'm controlling my face. Like this *(she does it)*. Everyone is saying stuff like "Oh COVID has changed my life since I can't go out the way I used to" "Oh, homeschooling is so hard"...Jen is crying actual tears...and everyone says, "I'm here for you Jen if you need a listening ear." And I'm still looking like...*(making the nice face)* like a plastic doll. After this excruciatingly annoying Zoom meeting, I throw on my protective gear and walk to Coney Island Ave to the hair store since it's still open and I'm following all of the social distancing rules to grab some nail stuff because it looks like I won't be getting a gel mani-pedi any time soon. I am super sanitized. I mean super duper sanitized. I keep tons of hand sanitizer in my bag, I wear my gloves, I wear my mask, I even wear a hat that covers my ears. Yup. I'm that chick. I may look like a giant astronaut, but I'm not catching crap!

# Dramatic Monologues

## The Nice Girl and the Scrub by Sharece M. Sellem (cont.)

RONI (cont.)

So, with my nice girl face and sanitized coverings all over, I wait in line outside of Hair Magic so I can get my nail supplies and my apricot sugar scrub – this is the only place that sells it. A few minutes go by. This guy, riding a bike, rolls past me. I think nothing of it. Do you know he wheels back, stops, and says, "Hey Ma." I can't ignore him because that would be, well, rude, right? So I simply say, hello. He continues, "You all bundled up like it's the end of the world. I could come through and hunker down with you if you're free." So, I do the nice girl smile and say, "Oh, I'm already taken, thanks." Lies. Do you know (*braces herself*)...this guy reaches in MY bag to grab one of my mini Bath & Body cucumber melon hand sanitizers!? My reflexes filled with anger towards all of the garbage my family used to tell me about being nice and pleasant and I dug my unpolished nails in this guy's wrist, and I BIT HIS SHOULDER.

*(Beat, she throws a pillow nearby, she might be standing up now, whatever shows the proud moment)*  
Yup! Sure did! Took it alllllll the way back to kindergarten when the boy snatched the cookies I was already giving away, out of my hand! All the fear of coronavirus and germs just ran out of me like a thief and all I could do was smile, for real, this time. I stood on the big red X marking 6 feet distance and the line moved, he sped off and fell off of his bike, into the street, where everyone was all, (*mockingly*) "Are you ok? Are you ok?" and I quickly got off of my X and ran into the store. I found my Sarah's Apricot Sugar Scrub but they were all out of the nail stuff, of course. And I inhaled it and its deliciousness permeated my nostrils. In this instant, all of my joy sat in that little container and the chatter and hoopla outside with everyone checking on that jerk melted in apricot paradise.

Today is the first but won't be the last of times I will stop being a nice girl. I will never let anyone take anything from me again, let alone touch me without my consent. So, while COVID sucks, I've gained something in it. I'm owning who I am, face and all. Roni, I want you to remember this moment. I want you to watch this back when someone tries to mess with you or tell you different. Do you, Roni! Do you! *Makes her victory faces. Ends the recording.*

## Tomorrow by Desireé York

WOMAN

When I think of tomorrow an invisible mass invades my chest creeping up my throat, it won't let go. Squeezing, squeezing, squeezing until...I don't know. I can't seem to say it out loud. The air isn't free. Someone, anyone, no one will hear me. So maybe if I touch you. Can I touch you? You'll see that I'm real, you'll actually feel, something will pass between us that will reveal: the truth.

How do we know the truth is true? Does it electrify the soul, make us feel safe? Or maybe it lies deep in the bowels of the earth under layers of blood, bone and disposable diapers that will never deteriorate and when or if we ever excavate, the stench suffocates until...we give up. So we take another step closer to the heavens atop the piles of our own shed skins; answering a desperate call, striving to live above it all, afraid we might fall: back in time.

Time has no master: only descendants. Traveling in circles until they collapse; an ever spinning compass dizzy with life. Never backwards, always forward, marching onward towards...what? Assimilation? Immortality? Perfection? An erection of a god that is above our correction and still manages to stay just beyond our reach? Is humanity capable of understanding its own history? And if so, would we do things differently; unearthing the earth, discovering our worth, embracing the warm core of rebirth?

No.

We seem to cling to stumbling in the dark; protecting the unimportant parts from invisible fears until we cave-in on ourselves leaving nothing behind but unshed tears and yet...and yet. Two words that dare to persist and never turn back like a delicate dandelion causing the pavement to crack. Words that can disrupt the gravitational pull of a whole planet and maybe...unblock a heart. Scooping out the stratum of sludge lining backstreets and bends preventing progress from pumping through dead ends that could lead us into the territory of possibility; somewhere in between we'll always and never be together.

When I think of tomorrow I can only see it, I can only feel it, I can only breathe it...together.

Only together.

## Other by Serena Norr

SETTING: Sara, an early 30s, bi-racial female is sitting in her apartment. TIME: 2pm, 2008

SARA

*(Sitting in her living room. Waiting by her landline)*

OTHER. Different. Not like the rest.

I am OTHER than perfect; OTHER than normal; OTHER than...well, everything.

I never worried about what it would feel like to check OTHER because I told myself I wasn't. I couldn't be. So, I buried it down deep and blended in by being just like you. I did everything I could to not be me. The real me - that is.

Blending and pushing away. Blending and pushing. It wasn't hard. The magazines showed me how to look. The people at school showed me how to act. The boys showed me how to behave. Tweak this; tweak that. Lessen and push. Push and lessen.

And there I was. I molded myself into what was acceptable; molded myself into something everyone would love. That's it. Love me. See me. I'm just like you.

Push away me and become them. Push away me and become them.

But then, all the kids grew up and started to care. And adults started to ask. And boyfriends and girlfriends and the coworkers and the friends and the fake friends all started to wonder.

*What are you? Where did your parents come from? Where are you really from?*

They would ask at bars or at work or at school. They would ask on the street on the bus or on the train. They would ask and ask and ask. I couldn't escape it.

So, I said what I knew as fast as I could. Polish, German, Norweign, Russian, and Spanish.

Then they would say: But you are OTHER things aren't you? You have to be more than just that.

I couldn't say it. I didn't know how. So life went on. There was more blending and pushing and molding and lessening. Less...less.

*(Beat)*

Then, I saw it: my dream job. When I was little, all I wanted was to write and make movies and sing. I didn't even know what it meant but I knew that it made sense; I knew that it felt good; that it felt like me. So I worked really hard and pushed. I learned how to become that person.

But they wanted people who didn't blend or push or mold. They wanted OTHER. But that wasn't really me...or was it? Was I finally able to be true? To be real? To be me? I just thought...maybe this once. So, I looked at it like I always did and checked it: OTHER. Me. Sort of.

# Dramatic Monologues

## Other by Serena Norr (cont.)

SARA (cont.)

And now I'm sitting here feeling so confused for checking the box that I actually am. I don't look like that box but it is me.

It really is. Or is it?

This would have never happened if my family talked. If my mother didn't pretend like the OTHER side didn't exist; like my Black father wasn't real. But he was real, wasn't he? There was that trip to Central Park when he gave me those Garfield roller skates, then that time when he came to the apartment for Christmas, or the time when he visited the church. That was the last time, I think. The last time I would ever really see him. But I don't remember much. I don't know what his voice sounded like, or if he was funny or nice or mean. That was all real...wasn't it? He was there and I was there. And it was real.

Sometimes I wonder if life was different and people were different and words could come together without complications, I would understand OTHER. I would know, somewhere deep inside, the right words to use. The perfect words to fit me...or you or anyone. OTHER. OTHER is us. We are OTHER.

We are

Part Black.

Part White.

European

Mixed.

Multiracial.

Biracial.

Blended.

People.

Me.

Just me.

*(A phone rings. Sara looks down and takes a deep breath.)*

Breathe, Sara. You got this.

You are worthy. You are strong. You are you. You are OTHER.

*(Sara picks up the phone.)*

## But to Work! by India Nicole Burton

SETTING: A 32 year old Black woman in Ohio describes her experience with COVID

WOMAN

Picture it, 1999, Akron, Ohio. It's a Friday, I remember it was Friday because that Friday my sister and I were excited that we were going to visit our cousins. It was February, no, it was March. Yes, it had to be March because I turned 12 the next month; My birthday is in April. Leading up to that day I remember suddenly feeling like I had to use the restroom a lot, but what was most unusual was that I had found that I was always extremely thirsty. So, since I was always extremely thirsty, it made sense that I used the restroom a lot. When your blood sugar is high, you dehydrate so you crave liquids. And for a child sugary pops and juices are what you drink to quench your thirst.

The day I was taken to the hospital and diagnosed with diabetes, Heart Break Hotel by Whitney Houston, Faith Evans and Kelly Price was playing on the radio, I had vomited several times that day and could barely walk from fatigue. I remember in particular that everything seemed to shine a little brighter. The outside illuminated like a water color painting with an obsession with bright, florescent, colors. The blue of the sky almost blinded me, the yellow dazzle of a sunflower crippled my pupils and the greenish of the blades of grass before me seemed unbearable to my eyes. So, I closed them. And when I woke up it was two weeks later, and I was in the hospital being told that I would have to take insulin for the rest of my life. Devastating to a child.

When I woke up the color of the world around me and perhaps, my cousin saying "Her eyes are rolling back into her head" was the last remembrance of the moment before I'd have to experience being a Black woman navigating through the medical system for the duration of my life. Physicians rarely ever believe us when we say we are sick. It's like they still believe what James Marion Sims believed when he'd experiment on Black women without anesthesia; that we don't feel pain.

When Covid hit it was also March. When Covid hit I was 32 years old, a single mother, with three mouths to feed. So even when the world was warned that people with Diabetes, Asthma and other autoimmune diseases should be very cautious, I could not afford not to work. I was barely making ends meet before everything happened. Life didn't stop when Covid hit, it got way more complicated for me. I work as an STNA, so I am also exposed to clients. And I had to pick up extra shifts to pay for the extra food I had to buy because the kids were home for 8 hours more than usual, and to pay the babysitter...

# Dramatic Monologues

## But to Work! by India Nicole Burton (cont.)

WOMAN (cont.)

I brought a ham sandwich to work that day, or maybe it was a tuna sandwich, no definitely peanut butter and jelly because I made my daughters sandwiches before I left for work that afternoon and I remember making myself one to eat when I got to work. I bit into the sandwich, and after every chew I kept thinking "I can't taste this at all." And then I realized I couldn't smell it either. I took my temperature, 104. Oh, shit! I called my boss to let her know. She says to leave immediately and go to the hospital.

I took one step outside, I look up at the sky, I look down at the grass; the same brightness I experienced as a child over 20 years ago. A red SUV drives by playing "Savage" by Megan thee Stallion. My eyes, the florescent strive of yellow and green and orange. A blob of water colors. I close my eyes tight.

I awake with beeping noses all around me, it is April now, even past my birthday. I look to the nurse "how long have a been here?" She turns away from me "She's awake she's awake." She yells. "Do you know you died?" What? I was confused. " You've been here in a coma for three weeks. You have the Corona Virus. You died, we had to bring you back. We thought you might not make it." She then apologizes because no one from my family can visit me because I'm in quarantine. Then she says " you shouldn't have been working, especially with people. You're diabetic! You almost died." I looked at her and said "It most certainly wasn't an option for me to stop working." She says "there's always an option especially when it's the difference between life or death." I say, to my white counterpart, "No there isn't, not when the alternative is that your children starve. There was absolutely, unquestionably no option, but to work!".





### I'm Not Exactly Sure What You're Hoping to Hear by Caroline Thompson

SETTING: Claire is a trans woman who has stepped up to the microphone on open mic night.

CLAIRE

I'm not sure exactly what I'm supposed to say right now. Because I'm not sure *exactly* what you all are hoping to hear.

I know, I know, this is the point in the night where you get to hear "the trans one" talk, and . . . Well.

Like you, I'm not sure what exactly that's supposed to mean.

I'm sure a few of you well-wishers will leave here discussing how "brave it was" for me to come onstage tonight. And I'm sure when talking about this, some of you will say "he-i mean, um, they, oh uhhh... look this is all new to me okay!?"

And-while that's not really "okay," because I'm not any braver than anyone else on stage tonight, and Jesus Christ, Karen, just *think* before you speak for once- ...I can't really blame you.

Like you, I've never seen a trans person onstage before. I mean, sure, I've seen *Rent*. but *Rent* sucks. And in college I saw a play written by a man, about a man, who once met a trans woman, who was- you guessed it-played by a man.

[beat.]

That play won the Pulitzer Prize. And its writer is the head of the largest Playwright's union in the country.

So yeah. The bar isn't set particularly *high* when it comes to this sort of thing.

And if I get into some mundanities about my job, or my cat, or how I actually have hobbies and a girlfriend and a car payment, you all are gonna be confused, because all you've ever seen from people like me is about how *difficult* it is to be like me. And how I have to fear for my life everytime I use a public restroom, and the psychological, and emotional, and physical trauma we all have to go through; How my entire life is endless suffering that you all can shake your head and feel like you did something good by pitying the fact that I even exist.

And that sucks.

# Dramatic Monologues

## I'm Not Exactly Sure What You're Hoping to Hear by Caroline Thompson (cont.)

CLAIRE (cont.)

It sucks partially, because I have plenty of *normal-people* things to talk about. Like most millennials, I'm pushing thirty and still have the quadratic equation memorized but am unable to figure out filing taxes. Like most people in this country, I work 40 hours a week, and am constantly walking the line between falling into a coma from lack of sleep, and having a heart-palpitation because the only way I can get through my day is with a pot and a half of coffee.

I also have a degree in creative writing, have been part of a 2-year dungeons and dragons campaign with my college girl friends, and have at least three exes numbers saved in my phone under first name: "do not text," last name: "remember last time, bitch."

But you all don't want to hear that, you just want to ask about *surgeries*...

It also sucks, in part, because I do have trauma. And that should be shared. And expressed. And turned into art, and performance, and culture. Like, I bet none of you even knew that in 2020, in the midst of a global pandemic, the Trump administration removed all federal healthcare protections for trans people, meaning that insurance companies and even doctors could refuse us coverage just because "ew." I bet you also didn't know that happened six days after the Supreme Court, with an opinion penned by Neil fucking Gorsuch, ruled that employers couldn't discriminate based gender identity. So that in less than one week, within the last calendar year, my right to make someone else money was enshrined in law, while my guarantee to that same employer's healthcare was deemed irrelevant, and somehow an impediment to the *free market*.

Imagine going through that in month 5 of the worst plague that this country's seen since AIDs. And, no, not the spanish flu, *AIDs*.

So yeah. Consider me at a loss for what exactly my few minutes on a stage are supposed to represent.

*Anyways!* Now that we're all on equal footing. And I know, that you don't know what you want to see, and you know that I don't know what to say. And now that we both know that the other knows that we don't know what the other one expects us to *actually do*.

Women's rights are human rights.

Trans rights are human rights.

## The Beat of a Full Heart by Judith Zivanovic

SETTING: A spotlight shines on a large square at one side of the stage; it may be the foundation of a hut. There is a pile of ash inside. As the light expands, we identify several such squares of ash. In front of the last, on a stoop or on the ground, sits a WOMAN.\* Her clothing is in tatters; her arms and legs are covered with scratches and dried blood. The left side of her hair is slicked against her head, but the right hair hangs scraggily over her right eye. Her face is dirty-tear-stained; the right eye stares forward in horror. As she notices THE AUDIENCE, she rises, pushes her right hair behind her ear, revealing a vibrant eye; she presses her bruised lips into a welcoming smile and beckons cheerily. Though to us it seems obvious that everything has changed, to her nothing has changed.

WOMAN

My son, Taneko and my daughter, Lamena are not here. They have gone for water. They will be back soon; it is not far, only four miles. Lamena loves to take the jar I made for myself. *(Giggles at the image.)* It is too big for her. She cannot carry it full, but she balances it well and feels like a woman. *(Deepens voice.)* But for Taneko, he must have a yoke and two large jugs to share with his aunts and uncles. So, he becomes a man.

*(She walks to a nearby pile of ashes.)*

He will take one jug here to my sister and her family. My sister, in her turn, has taken some berries to our brother and his family. She and I have gathered wild berries together since we were smaller than Taneka. The thorns of the bushes tear at us because we steal their fruit; they set the ticks on us and we must remove them one by one. We never once let them stop us. We feel sorry that the bushes are so angry. Sister and I agree that we need the berries more than the bushes do. We understand, too, we always must pay.

*(Pause.)*

Sometimes the payment surpasses understanding.

*(She returns to "her hut.") (Giggles.)* My husband will soon be home. It is a special day of manhood for our son. The husband and father hunt to provide for a special celebration. *(Insistent to THE AUDIENCE.)* You wait. You wait right here. Please join us for our celebration. We will have much to share. Our hearts are always full on such days. Nothing can stop the beat of a full heart. *(She sits once again. The smile is frozen on her face. We hear the steady beat of a heart like a relentless drum.)*

\*Original stage directions say "African Woman" but she could be played as Syrian, Uyghur, Lakota,...

## I Wish I was Gregor Samsa by Bridget Grace Sheaff

MICK

When Kafka wrote "what a strenuous career it is that I've chosen!"

I felt that.

When Kafka wrote "Doing business like this takes much more effort than doing your own business at home."

I felt that.

When Kafka wrote, "Getting up early all the time, it makes you stupid. You've got to get enough sleep."

I felt that, too.

When Kafka wrote, "It can all go to Hell!"

Yeah, I felt that.

When Kafka wrote, "Well, there's still some hope; once I've got the money together to pay off my parents' debt to him - another five or six years I suppose - that's definitely what I'll do. That's when I'll make the big change. First of all though, I've got to get up, my train leaves at five."

That I felt and felt and felt and felt.

And when Kafka wrote, "What's happened to me?"

I thought, "Nothing man, nothing."

I think about myself like an enormous cockroach, forced to stay in seclusion for the risk of disgusting other people.

I think about myself like a massive vermin, unable to work, to leave, I have to stay put.

I don't know... I think maybe he got the good side of this deal, man.

Even right now, the work comes to me and it seeps in the walls and through the air and it's in my hand and in my pocket and it's one more thing before we all leave and you're on mute and an apple lodged in my back and they are taking my mother's portrait away and fuck, man, I dunno, waking up one day to something different, something... less pestering? More pest? A pestilence? Tempestuous? Not the cheapest or the dampest necessarily but not the sharpest or the crispest or the tapestry on the wall and good god the steepest hill to climb and with these six legs you would think I would get more momentum or something but I find myself having a hard time carrying this shell on my back, this armor that just showed up one day, or at least I can remember a time it wasn't there and I just think... which of these do I want? When did I become this? Can I go back to the... other one?

But I don't even know which one that is.

One morning, I woke up from troubled dreams, too.

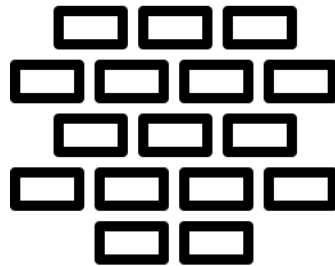
Yeah... I felt that, man.

## Walls by Davida Kilgore

schizophrenia walls my bones, tries to separate me from me,  
but I'm asymptomatic, medication  
no longer essential, because I fit the battle of Jericho,  
Jericho, Jericho, I fit the battle of Jericho and the walls  
came tumblin' down making noise the neighbors dial  
911, at 9...1...1 ... the battle begins. awwwwwwwwwwwwww,  
awwwwwwwwwwwww, whirling lights, the men come.  
I'm scared without the books and writing and art, my essay  
hospital stays psychiatric wards grey walls  
I'm hidden away beneath legends of clip boards  
balanced like tents above sheaths of paper, paperwork  
and paperwork and sign on this line fill in this circle, check  
marks and the lines, lines for pills and lines for meals  
and lines for the johns only so many at a time, lines  
and lines and more lines, standing at atten ..tion!  
at ease ... stand. trembling paper thin gowns, get  
dressed in street clothes, and the guards warn "I can  
catch you before you reach the corner" as if I'm  
coordinated enough to run, doped to the gills, doped  
on pills, doped in lines, lines, always lines, walls,  
drab walls, lines of walls, lines on the floor  
directions, turn here, don't go there, exit lines but  
no escape, "I can catch you before you reach the corner,"  
he said, and I bet he could, his thighs built for speed,  
not for comfort, not supposed to look below his eyes.  
the litany "we control you what you think, what you eat,  
what you swallow, and if you don't swallow we have ways  
of making you" swallow, wallow in sessions questions "tell us"  
and what do you think "tell us" and how does that make you feel  
"I don't want to tell you" my secrets? the girl said, "my daughter  
is my sister, my father is my lover and my mother knows,"  
her nose knew what went on in the rooms where she touches me  
they didn't believe me, no one ever believes me, I can't  
escape, the boy's parents escaped, the boy said so, to Europe ducking  
and dodging the shame of the name of the game ...

## Walls by Davida Kilgore (cont.)

...schizophrenia,  
bipolar, depressive, borderline, words, nothing but words  
diagnoses a preview of the police to come I'm naked, my clothes  
are filthy, my hair is filthy, my nails are filthy, my drawers  
are filthy from the streets, dancing in the streets, shitting in the streets  
this is not me, not me, I'm afraid of the lights afraid of the sights  
that appear only to me, I see twisted images meant to consume  
the lines I walk the lines for pills don't spill the water, swallow,  
paper slippers, tread through the halls, grey grey walls, let me out  
I shout, let me out, I pout, I will not swallow I am hollow, catch  
me if you can, I'm a runaway slave caught in a grave situation  
of diagnoses psychoses. quiet rooms loud screams, shattered dreams  
"I can catch you before you reach the corner, there are no corners  
here, only lines and lines when the walls no longer stand ...



# Thank You.

For more than 20 years Theatre Unbound has been producing theatre for women, by women and attempting to change the stories we see and the bodies who choose those stories.

We have loved every minute of our time with each of you, who saw dreams become reality and who will carry on working into the future.

It is our hope that the monologues contained bring you joy, heartache, successful audition material, and a gentle reminder that your voice matters. Keep telling your stories out loud and taking up space. Keep looking for ways to amplify the voices of others who are also underrepresented. Keep changing the industry of theatre for the better.

Cheers on the next adventure.



**THEATRE UNBOUND**