

## CONTEMPORARY MONOLOGUES

# WOMEN

### *Moving*

by Lee Kalcheim

DIANA

I went to a Quaker school. Absolutely uncompetitive. We used to have an awards ceremony at the end of the year. Everybody got an award! Then it dawned on me that if everybody got an award, it didn't mean anything. So I went to the headmaster and I told him, "Why don't you give up the awards altogether. I mean, if everybody gets an award, it doesn't mean anything." He looked at me and said, "Diana, not everyone realizes that. There are boys and girls here who have never ever gotten an award in their life. It means something to them. So far that reason, we do it." And I said, "But don't you realize how condescending that is to them? It's ultimately going to make them feel worse." He just glared at me and said, "Miss Schmidt. Someday somebody's going to prick your bubble." I just... I couldn't help it. I burst out laughing. So he called my mother.

She came into school. Came in looking like a million dollars. Camel hair coat. Blonde hair. Came in smelling like an ocean breeze. I looked at her and said to myself. "I'm gonna get it." Mr. Dumwalt, the headmaster, told her what I said...and Mom took me aside. She sat me down...and said. "Don't worry about Mr. Dumwalt. He was born with a pole up his ass!" I couldn't believe it. I think that's one of the reasons I've never abandoned hope for Mom.

### *Vital Signs – "Cocaine Hotline"*

by Jane Martin

Good morning, Cocaine Hotline, Ms. Bottendorf here to help you break the cycle of despair. Uh, huh. Uh, huh. Uh, huh. Well, I don't really see anything we can do if you're going to behave like that (she hangs up.) Will somebody get me a Diet Pepsi for God's sake before I start screaming and put my tongue into my Panasonic pencil sharpener. What kind of society is this!

(phone rings. She answers it.)

Good morning, Cocaine Hotline. Uh, huh. Uh, huh. Uh, huh. Uh, huh. Hold it right there. All right, Cornelia, you called for advice. I am giving you advice. Tell him you are flat out going to leave his ass. Uh, huh. Well, that's just too bad. Tell him when he wants help he can write you a letter. Tough Tootsie Rolls, Cornelia. You have to cut off the sex, cut off the money. Figure out the one thing he wants, Cornelia, and cut that mother off! If you do not act, and I mean before the sun sets, he's going to nosebleed his life all over your prairie-pattern quilts. Yes, well take it or leave it. I have three calls waiting. (*Hangs up. Stands up.*) I would like to say to all of you here at Cocaine Hotline that we are going down, going down with the ship, and we are out of Diet Pepsi, folks. No society can help itself without a constant supply of diet drinks that you can count on. I'm taking a john break. Let me know if the country buys the farm.

### ***In the Cards***

by Caroline Russell-King

RIVKA

I know what some of you are thinking. Is she the psychic? She doesn't look like a psychic. Surprise! I wasn't born one though. My childhood was hell. My mother was psychic. The only good thing was she was the only mother on the block who never asked me where I was going, who I was seeing or what time I'd be home. They say mothers have eyes in the back of their heads. My mother's eyes used to be in the back of my head, on the inside. Most mother's read romance novels for fun – my mother read the neighbour's minds. She used to spank me for things I was going to do. When I was seven, I got grounded for six weeks for something she said I was going to do in the back seat of a bus when I was sixteen.

Anyway, my life changed when my friend Daisy and I found a package of cigarettes on the street and we decided to climb a tree and smoked them all. I got dizzy, fell out of the tree – that's when I learned smoking is hazardous to your health. Daisy got really scared because I'd hit my head and was unconscious and so she ran to tell my mum, which was redundant because she already knew. I wasn't out for very long, but when I came round I found that I had the curse too. No, not that. That didn't happen until I was thirteen. The psychic curse. At age the age of ten I got even with my mother – I was psychic too. We never really discussed it, but all I had to do was gasp, or giggle at the appropriate time and watch her cringe. Growing up I found out all sorts of things a child shouldn't know. My mother lusted after Frank, our grocer. My dad fiddled his books, my aunt drank, the minister wore women's underwear. Life isn't pretty when you're psychic, but it sure is colourful.

### ***Promedy***

by Wade Bradford

BEATRIX: That's not true, Young women need the prom. It's a rite of passage as sacred as getting your driver's license or buying your first bra. There are only a few things in life that are guaranteed to be glorious and memorable and sparking with gowns and cummerbunds. Prom is the quintessential teenage experience. Think of the unlucky grown-ups and the elderly who lament the day they decided not to go to the prom. It is a key ingredient to a happy and meaningful life. Prom is short for promenade, a slow gentle walk through a shady glen, and this beloved ceremony symbolized our journey from the shadows of adolescence to the bright sunshine of the adult world with all its freedoms. And it may be the only chance I'll ever have to dance with a boy. Maybe I'll never have someone get down on their knee and offer me a diamond ring. Maybe I'll never walk down the aisle with a smug look of bridal triumph. But it is my right and the right of every plain, frumpy, book-wormish, soon-to-be librarian to have one night of Cinderella magic. Even if we have to go with our cousin or our gay best friend from tap class, we will have a prom. And you will help me.

### ***Making Reuben Propose***

by Mayme Riddle Bitney

MOLLY: *(She speaks very bad French with an English accent and English with French gestures and some sort of affected accent; with enthusiasm)*

Oooo! Bon Jour mamsell, bon jour. Setzen sich. *(shakes hands; starts)* What have I said? Oh, I mean sit down. That's it, isn't it? Setzen sich. Oh, Lord, I – I beg your pardon. I'm getting my German mixed with my French. It's awfully hard to keep them separate. *(Boastingly.)* I speak so many tongues. Yesterday. I said. "come sta." *(Patronizingly.)* That's Italian, perhaps you know – to my French teacher, and "Guten Morgen" to my dancing master and he's French. *(laughs)*

You're French, aren't you, Miss Valier? I thought you were. You look French. You're so thin and you wear such short skirts. It's awfully sweet of you. Oh, oui, oui *(shrugs shoulders Frenchily)*. I want to ask a favor. Si si fraulein. *(bends forward eagerly.)* You know, I think it would be lovely if you would talk only French to me and I would speak only French to you. It's the only way to learn. Of course I know my accent is all right. *(Holds nose with fingers and says ong-ong through nostrils, making peculiar nasal sounds)*. See, right through the nostrils. I do that spendidly.

I'm neither French nor German and I've vowed to speak everything. A knowledge of tongues is really essential nowadays. Idioms of languages are fascinating to me. I can't understand why you look so blank when I speak to you. In French every syllable is audible, isn't it? *(slowly and jerkily)* Comment vous portez-vous. Yes I'm sure that's right.

### ***Catholic School Girls***

by Casey Kurtti

ELIZABETH

So that's it, I guess. Except that a couple of weeks ago. I was at a party. For some reason I began telling all these wild Catholic school stories. I hadn't thought about that part of my life, for a long time, but all the memories came back. We laughed for hours. Then as I was leaving, someone I didn't know very well, a public school refugee, asked me what I thought about God, now. I said I didn't think anything about Him except that maybe He wasn't a guy, and left. When I got home, I couldn't get to sleep. The tail end of "Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street" was on. The little girl was driving in a car and she had her eyes shut tight. She was saying over and over in the sweetest MGM voice, "I believe, I believe," over and over. I turned it off. I pulled my blanket up and I shut my eyes tight. I remembered how I used to believe in miracles, falling asleep with some question in my mind. And that night, it seemed the whole process was beginning again. Because I found myself asking, into the dark distance, a vaguely familiar question, "Are you there? Are you there?"

## *Texas*

By Ramona Abraham

ANNETTE

I love the way you talk. It's so choice. Say that for me again. What you just said about your dad's Lincoln. (Imitates his Texas drawl) "It goes like hell on the highway!" That's so choice. That's a Texas drawl, eh? Only you said it better the first time...you know, more dramatic. (Imitates again) "It goes like hell on the highway!"

You just can't hear yourself. If we had a tape recorder I could prove it. Say something else. Anything. Say...say...I know, say "get up you scum sucking pig."

I saw Marlon Brando say that in a cowboy movie. Not *too* choice. Do you like Marlon Brando?

Then say that for me. Please...please. You have to stand up to say it. It doesn't make any sense if you're sitting down...please.

Pretend that big rock over there is the guy you're talking to. Did you see the movie? It was so choice. I don't remember the name of it but it was a cowboy movie. I'm gonna sit over her like I was in the movie theatre. See, I'm eating my popcorn.

## *I'll Never Give Up My Independence*

by Jules Pfeiffer

GIRL

Try to see it my way. I am nearly twenty and if I was ever going to make a break, now is the time to do it. Imagine. Half my girl friends were already separated from their husbands and here I was still living at home.

So I told my parents I was moving out.

You can't imagine the yelling and screaming. My father said, "You're breaking your mother's heart." My mother said, "What was my crime? What was my terrible crime?"

And before I knew it we were in an argument and I told them both they needed analysis and they told me I had a filthy mouth, and suddenly I was out on the street with my raincoat, my suitcase, and my tennis racket but I had no place to move!

So I looked around downtown and everything was too expensive and evening came and all my girl friends had reconciled with their husbands so there was absolutely no place I could spend the night.

Well, frankly, what on earth could I do? I waited till it was way past my parents' bedtime – then I sneaked back into the house and set the alarm in my bedroom for six the next morning.

Then I slept on top of the bed so I wouldn't wrinkle any sheets, sneaked some breakfast in the morning and got out before anyone was up.

I've been living that way for two months now.

***Cowboy Mouth***  
by Sam Shepard

CAVALE

Ya' know what? Once I was in a play. I was real glad I was in a play. 'Cause I thought they were just for pretty people, and I had my dumb eye-patch and those metal plate shoes to correct my duck foot. It was *The Ugly Duckling*, and I really dug that 'cause of the happy ending and shit. And I got to be the ugly duckling and I had to wear some old tattered black cloth and get shit flung at me, but I didn't mind 'cause at the end I'd be that pretty swan and all. But you know what they did? At the end of the play I had to kneel on the stage and cover my head with a black shawl and this real pretty blonde-haired girl dressed in a white ballet dress rose up behind me as the swan. It was really shitty, man. I never got to be the fucking swan. I paid all the dues and up rose ballerina Cathy like the North Star. And afterwards all the parents could talk about was how pretty she looked. Boy, I ran to my hideout and cried and cried. The lousy fucks.

***Sports Night***  
by Aaron Sorkin

MONICA

Can I ask you a question? (holding up a necktie). Do you know what color this is? It's called gun metal. Gray has more ivory in it, gun metal has more blue. Can you tell me which of these shirts you should wear it with?

No you can't. There's no reason why you should. You're not supposed to know what shirt goes with what suit or how a color in a necktie can pick up your eyes. You're not expected to know what's going to clash with what Don's wearing or what pattern's gonna bleed when Dave changes the lighting.

You get so much attention and so much praise for what you actually do, and all of it's deserved. But when you go on a talk-show and get complimented on something you didn't do, how hard would it be to say "That's not me. That's a woman named Maureen who's been working for us since the first day. It's Maureen who dressed me every night, and without Maureen, I wouldn't know gun metal gray from a hole in the ground."

Do you have any idea what it would've meant to her? Do you have any idea how many times she would've played that tape for her friends and her family?

I know this is when it starts to get busy for you, and I hope I didn't take up too much of your time.

***Serpent in the Sky***  
by Dianne Warren

JOY

You know, before you came along, I was scared. I was standing by the side of the road and it was getting dark and I was scared. Then you stopped and you were grinning and you had on that brand new cowboy hat. You reminded me of somebody's brother. No one in particular. Just somebody's brother. You gave me a lift and we...we spent the night in

that motel. (Pause). After you went to sleep I lay there as close as I could get to the edge of the bed. The sheets were touching me all over, cold and starchy, and I was afraid to move. I lay like that for a couple of hours, then you woke up. You moved over close to me, so we were both on the edge of the bed, and you put your arm over me and moved your head into my neck. And you were warm. You were so...warm. And I felt myself putting my arms around you and you held onto me and I held onto you and it was...it was like we were going to fall...just fall through space forever if we didn't hold on. (Pause). Now, I'm afraid again. I'm afraid if I leave I'll just start falling through space.

***I Am Yours***

by Judith Thompson (Canadian)

MERCY

You make me sick you are so smug and beautiful, you have no idea what it is to be me, all the boys looking straight at you, never at me. That time at the dance when you went right up to Stephen Gilroy who you knew was crazy about you and said "Oh dance with Mercy, she loves you so much." And the other time in front of all our friends when you made me pick my nose and eat it; you said I had to, to get in your club that you'd all done it. Do you know how much I hated you? Do you know how much?

***The Reeves Tale***

by Don Nigro

MOLKIN

I want to go to the circus. Can I have a dollar to go see the elephants? Now, elephants is mammals, although they don't have much hair and they talk through their noses like the French, but they're very intelligent although I think we kill most of them to make pianos or something. Mammals is warm-blooded. That means they carry the heat inside them and hatch their eggs right inside the mother, see, and then give birth to them alive, which is a real mess, and they got to take care of their offspring for a very long time, or they die, like from, you know, lack of warmth. Mammal babies, they need lots of warmth. They need to be touched and held, or they just shrink up and die, from the cold. I like the circus because of the animals. I like all kinds of animals, especially the mammals, because of the warm nature of their bodies. It's just people I don't like very much. Of course, the problem with animals is, you get kinda attached to them, and they tend to croak on you. I guess no circus, huh?

***Cats Can See The Devil***

By Tom X. Chao

TUESDAY

I wish I was famous. Wouldn't that be nice? I wish I didn't have to perform in tiny theaters that nobody's ever heard of. I wish I could play the lead in a big show on Broadway. With my name up in lights. I wish I could appear on TV and in movies and in magazines. And everyone would know who I was. I'd be so famous, people everywhere would recognize me. Everywhere, all over the world. I wish I was so famous that even people in the most remote locations on earth would be familiar with me. Even in the most hellish, disease-ridden, war stricken, famine-ravaged, politically unstable countries, people would all know me! Though they have no food to eat or water to drink, they could draw spiritual and emotional sustenance from the image of my face! My face! Shining down from billboards and TV's and magazine covers! Bringing life to the arid desert and frozen tundra! My face!...

Well, you've got to have a dream. (Pause.) Oh, I know it sounds egotistical. But you'd like to think that you could rise above the level of – (she looks around, shrugs.) you know.

***Still Life*** (from *Special Days*)

GIRL

A few times a week, you know, they come in here and prod me. The doctors. The psychoanalysts. The physical therapists. And we go through the same routine every time. They – they take needles and poke at my hands. I watch them do this. Each finger, my palms, my thumbs. Watching for any kind of reaction. "Did I feel that?" No. "Can I move this?" No. "What sensation do you get when I do that?" Nothing! They give me balls to squeeze, and "fine motor" tasks to practice. They hook me up to a machine and take turns running electrical currents. Just to see which fingers twitch a little and which ones remain lifeless.

We have the talks. The talks about...about degrees of progress...about long-term improvement and adaptive skills for the real world and all that shit.

That's my life now.

You do a thing long enough, your whole life, I guess...I don't really think it matters what the thing is...bowling, playing poker, art...I don't think it matters. Eventually it becomes you – that part of you that gives you a reason to wake up and breathe every day. I mean, that's what it's all about, right? Your purpose, right?

The FIRE took that from me. It took everything. Every single thing I ever made – painted – all of it just torched to high hell. You have no idea what that means. What that felt like. I was meant to burn there, with everything else.

## ***No Soliciting***

by Shel Silverstein

WOMAN

I could have used a sign...that said... “Talk to me, Jim” – Turn on the TV, Nellie...I want to talk, Jim...

Too late, all too late – Do you have one that says “*Too late*” or... “*I’m Sorry*.” I’ll buy that one. “*I’m Sorry*.” I am you know. (she peeks at sign.) “Help”? That’s one I could have used – “Help.”...

“Help Wanted.” Yes – but *wanted* – past tense – wanted – an entire lifetime...conversation. Signs. What kind of a day did you have? I had a lovely day, Jim. I tied the tomatoes and I put up some green beans and I took a nice long walk to the bridge and back. The leaves were turning, Jim. What did they look like, Nellie? *Flaming* – orange and red and yellow – on fire – let’s talk about it. Jim...Come on Jim. We can talk about it no. We have signs – I love you, Nellie – I love you, Jim...What?...Did you say something?

Too late – another time will be...there’ll be a “Too Late” sign on the door...somebody else’s. Will have sold it to me...too late... “Closed”... “No Trespassing”... “House for Sale...”

You’ll come back to shuttered windows...Dusty doors and shuttered windows – Do doors get dusty? *Rusty* rusty hinges...*Rooms* get dusty...Rooms with furniture covered with sheets – to keep the dust off – what’s under the sheets? Is it...it...or is it a who? You can’t tell...people can look a lot like furniture...I did – I became furniture.

## ***Sans-culottes in the Promised Land***

by Kirsten Greenidge

LENA

People usually understand after I explain, after I tell them that letters don’t work for me. Letters twist around before my head gets a chance to figure them out. People usually understand, but sometimes, sometimes they don’t. That’s...that’s what happened at my last place. The mother there would write me things. I was really good at figuring them out except this one time, my last time, I wasn’t so good. It was a birthday party. I was supposed to take her two girls to this birthday party. She wrote the directions on this piece of paper. Easy, I thought. I just get the big one to read it, say my eyes hurt, or I forgot my glasses. I got a whole list of things I can say. And I can drive okay, but directions, when they’re on paper like that, are no good.

So I stay calm. I drive around for a little. I wait. I drive a little more, then I make a joke: I say “Hey, make yourself useful.” I give a little laugh, too, to go with the joke. But the big one, the ugly one with the big teeth she says “No.” Just “No” flat out like that. She says it’s not her job, it’s mine. She says it’s what her mother pays me good money for. So I ask the little one. I don’t get huffy I just ask the little one if she can read. But. She can’t. so I drive. Around and around ‘til they both fall asleep. Big teeth and her sister. Useless. I drive thinking maybe I’ll see a house with balloons. But I don’t. Next day the agency

calls. They say don't go to work today. They say I get one more chance before they have to let me go. This is my one more chance but they keep leaving me notes. I hate that. How am I supposed to keep my job if they write no notes?

*Kissing Christine*

by John Patrick Shanley

CHRISTINE

Being single is mysterious. It's silent. You live large parts of your life unobserved. There's no one there saying that's the third time you've gone to the bathroom. Why do you laugh like that? Are you going to do anything, today? There's no one there saying, you look unhappy. What is it? I find for myself that when I live with someone, my life lacks depth. It has scope, it has activity...I don't know what I'm trying to say. Single, married, both ways are hard. Sometimes you want to suffer and not be seen. Then it's better to be single. Sometimes, you don't even suffer unless there's someone there seeing you. Then it's much better to be single. It's better to be married when it's better to be married. For a woman, it's great when you're checking into a hotel and you're Mrs. Whatever. A very solid feeling I can only imagine.