

BRUSH THEM FLEAS

A Play in Two Acts

by *Tara Meddaugh*

Brush Them Fleas

A full-length play
in two acts

By Tara Meddaugh

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Dedicated
With love and in memory to
Bryan Bumsted and Robb McDonald

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Brush Them Fleas was first presented by Bobik Theater Company in October, 2001 at the Sanford Meisner Theater in New York City with the following cast:

Tootsie *Kari Neilson*
Mr. Boland *Ryan Bair*
Stacy *Lilah Fisher*
Estelle *Annie Attina*
Mrs. Hilton *Carrie Flynn*
Police Officer *Bryan Bumsted*

Directed by Tara Meddaugh

Brush Them Fleas

Character Breakdown (4 female, 2 male, or 5 female, 1 male)

TOOTSIE	A woman in her 30s-40s.
MR. BOLAND	A man in his 30s-50s.
STACY	A young woman of about 20.
ESTELLE	A young woman of about 20.
MRS. HILTON	A woman in her 50s-60s.
POLICE OFFICER	A police officer, 20s-60s. May be played by a male or female actor.

Setting

The waiting room in a dog grooming salon called *Brush Them Fleas*. 1990s-Early 2000s.

BRUSH THEM FLEAS

At Rise: The curtain opens on an office area of a dog grooming salon. There are several files strewn about on a desk, a few standing file cabinets, a large water jug, a small television, a desk and several chairs. There are pictures hanging of prize-winning dogs and several commercial posters for different brands of dog shampoos and other accessories. There is a young woman around eighteen years old, STACY, who is kneeling by the file cabinets and sorting through items. She is pretty, but plain, a bit anxious and lacking confidence. At the desk, sit a man and a woman. The woman, TOOTSIE, is filling out a sheet of paper while grinning at the man. She is an energetic Southern woman probably in her forties (her age is difficult to decipher with the amount of makeup she is wearing). She wears a smart business suit, which does not quite compliment her figure. She is the owner of the grooming facility. The man, MR. BOLAND, is one of her clients. He is a nervous man, and like approximately half of the dog grooming clients at *Brush Them Fleas*, he is found lacking in at least one common social skill. He is most likely in his 40s-50s. He sits facing away from TOOTSIE.

TOOTSIE

Can you at least give me an approximate age?

BOLAND

I told you, I don't know.

TOOTSIE

Well, you must know *about* how many years.

BOLAND

I don't.

TOOTSIE

Well, you must.

BOLAND

But I don't.

TOOTSIE

Mr. Boland, I cannot leave this line empty.

BOLAND

Why not?

TOOTSIE

You need to give me an age. Everyone fills out this part and if you don't, other customers would start coming to me complaining and soon no one would "know" the age of their dogs.

BOLAND

But I really don't.

TOOTSIE

I'm sure.

BOLAND

I don't.

TOOTSIE

I'm sure.

BOLAND

My wife gave him to me, so I guess sometime in the past fifteen years. That's all I know.

TOOTSIE

That's not good enough, Mr. Boland.

BOLAND

Do you want me to lie?

TOOTSIE

I want you to give me an age.

BOLAND

Do you want me to make up one?

TOOTSIE

Now, Mr. Boland, I would never ask one of my customers to lie. In fact, right now, I'm advocating the truth. What is the truth, Mr. Boland?

BOLAND

I don't know what age she is.

TOOTSIE

Do you desire anarchy, Mr. Boland?

BOLAND

Anarchy?

TOOTSIE

Yes, anarchy. Is that your goal, Mr. Boland?

BOLAND

Why—no. I—

TOOTSIE

Do you wish an overthrow of good will?

BOLAND

No.

TOOTSIE

Do you wish destruction to my lovely grooming facility?

BOLAND

To *Brush Them Fleas*? Why certainly not, Tootsie.

TOOTSIE

Then why do you harass me so?

BOLAND

I'm not hara—

TOOTSIE

Harassment! Stacy!

(STACY, by the file cabinets, turns around)

Did you hear Mr. Boland?

STACY

I'm not listening really.

TOOTSIE

Well, you must have heard him harass me.

STACY

I'm sorry. I was alphabetizing.

TOOTSIE

Oh, well, good girl then. Keep at your paper work, darling. See that, Mr. Boland? That's a girl at work. That little Stacy just does her work, keeps her nose to the grindstone, so to speak.

BOLAND

That's good.

TOOTSIE

Yes, I think so too. Just a little girl of eighteen. Trying to make it in this world. Helping out a poor woman such as myself run a little, but honest, business in this world. Just doing her job.

BOLAND

Yes, I see that. That's good.

TOOTSIE

Yes, it is. Now, Mr. Boland, do you want that darling little Stacy, that darling little good worker . . .to get burned up in a fire?!

BOLAND

Why no!

TOOTSIE

I cannot be unfair to you, Mr. Boland! If I don't make you fill this out, there will be rioting amongst the customers, and I am sure you are aware that rioting always results in cruel fires and unnecessary deaths of innocents little Stacys!

BOLAND

Tootsie, I would never wish such a thing on Stacy. I just honestly didn't know my Shooshoo's age, but I—I—

TOOTSIE

Sometimes, Mr. Boland, what we *think* we know or don't know is, in fact, not at all so.

BOLAND

I guess now I remember. She's four.

TOOTSIE

Now, that wasn't so hard, was it, Mr. Boland?

(MR. BOLAND shakes his head.)

BOLAND

Um, when will you brush her?

TOOTSIE

Soon, soon, Mr. Boland. My associate is preparing her right now, I believe. A few other questions first. We're almost done. When is the last time she had fleas?

BOLAND

Um, I'm not sure she's ever had fleas.

TOOTSIE

Come, come, now, Mr. Boland. All dogs have had fleas.

BOLAND

I don't think she has.

TOOTSIE

Well, she must have had them sometime.

BOLAND

Yes, I...I...guess she did two months ago?

TOOTSIE

There. And...what shampoo do you use on her?

BOLAND

I've never washed her myself before. Unless, you think I have?

TOOTSIE

No, no, perfectly acceptable. Most owners don't wash their own dogs. Silly little man, that's what *Brush Them Fleas* is all about. We take care of you. Stacy, why don't you get this good man a cup of water? It's fresh from the springs. Well, that's what the bottle says. I'm a little nervous drinking it sometimes, what with all of the bottled waters scares there are these days.

BOLAND

Yes.

TOOTSIE

I really would rather not catch any horrific disease, thank you very much! But you know, Mr. Boland, the taste of tap water sometimes is enough to send me into convulsions anyway, so why not enjoy yourself at least, right? Now, you drink up, Mr. Boland. You need to rehydrate yourself after all that sweating you've been doing through your shirt. Oh, now, don't worry. I sweat too. We all do, Mr. Boland. That's because we're God's creatures, as they say, and he gave us sweat glands. How would you like to be a dog and not have those glands? Have to pant day in and day out?

BOLAND

No, I wouldn't like that.

TOOTSIE

Neither would I, Mr. Boland. Neither would I. Very well, then. Only two more questions left. What is your dog's favorite meat?

BOLAND

Um . . . steak?

TOOTSIE

Quite possible. Quite possible.

BOLAND

Excuse me, Tootsie, but may I ask, why do you need to know these things?

TOOTSIE

Oh, Mr. Boland. Do I ask you why you need to see my insurance before you fill my prescription?

BOLAND

Don't believe you ever have.

TOOTSIE

That's right. I don't question your business. You don't question mine.

BOLAND

I was just a little curious, that's all. I wasn't complaining.

TOOTSIE

Well, that's a relief. Phew! Because you know our rule here, right? What does that sign say in the waiting room?

BOLAND

Thou Shalt Not Complain.

TOOTSIE

That's right. Good boy, Mr. Boland. Good boy! Now, the last question and I can let you get out of this stuffy ole room! How much time does your dog spend exercising each day?

BOLAND

I'd say, well, um, probably—um—

TOOTSIE

Roughly, Mr. Boland.

BOLAND

Roughly?

TOOTSIE

Yes—

(like a dog)

Ruuuuuuffly! But seriously though. How much time?

BOLAND

About half an hour a day, I suppose?

TOOTSIE

Fair enough. Fair enough. Now, I'll briefly describe to you the services you're paying for and what you can acquire for an additional cost.

BOLAND

Okay.

TOOTSIE

The basic groom includes a flea shampoo, coat glossing conditioner, the groom and a complimentary flea collar. Now that's your basic package for \$79.95, plus tax, of course. If you want a cut or a style, that's additional, and we have many shampoo, food, and toy items you can purchase, as well. You can take our brochure of the items we sell and peruse through it while we clean up your little...Shooshoo, right?

BOLAND

That's right.

TOOTSIE

Let me get you the brochure.

BOLAND

Thank you.

(TOOTSIE looks in a drawer, but does not find it. There is silence except for her fumbling around and occasional quiet, "Hms".)

TOOTSIE

Stacy, dear, do you know where the brochures are?

STACY

I think Estelle took some of them to the storage room.

TOOTSIE

Now why would she do that?

STACY

I don't know.

TOOTSIE

Mr. Boland, would you kindly excuse me for a moment while I search for the brochure?

BOLAND

Okay.

(TOOTSIE exits off right. STACY continues filing. MR. BOLAND continues sitting. TOOTSIE returns.)

TOOTSIE

Well, here they are, Mr. Boland. I do apologize for having you wait here like that. They were on top of the old freezer. Odd.

STACY

I think Estelle plugged it in.

TOOTSIE

Very well, then, Mr. Boland, here is your brochure. Now we don't mandate a purchase from this brochure, but we highly encourage it. Now then, Mr. Boland, you may scoot along and we'll have your Shooshoo under care in no time. I believe Estelle has already prepared her. Now how is that for efficiency, Mr. Boland?

BOLAND

Oh, that's good.

TOOTSIE

Can't beat that, huh?

BOLAND

No, M'am.

TOOTSIE

Huh?

BOLAND

No, M'am. Certainly cannot.

TOOTSIE

Very well, then. Scoot along, Mr. Boland. The door is over there, Mr. Boland. To the left. It's right where you came in.

BOLAND

I know. Thank you.

TOOTSIE

Well, go on, Mr. Boland. Estelle is the woman in the green leather dress. She will let you know the status of your dog.

BOLAND

Oh, okay. What do I say to her?

TOOTSIE

Oh, for goodness sake, Mr. Boland! I'll walk you out there. Follow me.

(TOOTSIE exits followed by MR. BOLAND.)

(STACY continues filing for a moment, then stands up and stretches her back. Her head turns toward the left a little as she hears sharp giggling and shrieking. She then ignores it and pours a cup of water for herself. She holds the cup at first, then dips her finger into the water and licks it. Apparently satisfied, she drinks the water and throws the cup out. She bends down to the cabinet again. ESTELLE enters hurriedly tightening her fists and grunting. She is a young woman in her twenties wearing a tight leather dress. Her hair is firmly in place and she speaks in at least the sound of confidence. She is followed by TOOTSIE, who is pushing MR. BOLAND back into the waiting room.)

TOOTSIE

Just wait there, Mr. Boland. Just wait there. We'll be with you in a moment.

ESTELLE

Pervert!

TOOTSIE

Now, Estelle.

ESTELLE

Don't "Now, Estelle" me! He touched my butt! He touched my butt!

STACY

He did what?

ESTELLE

He touched my butt!

STACY

How?

ESTELLE

He just touched it, moron! How can I say it any clearer?

TOOTSIE

Now, Estelle, I don't think it was on purpose.

BOLAND (o.s.)

It wasn't!

(ESTELLE runs over to the doorway and flips him off in the waiting room.)

TOOTSIE

Estelle! Be professional about this! This is a business. I can't have you treating our customers that way.

ESTELLE

What about me though, Tootsie? Don't you care how he just treated me?

TOOTSIE

Don't you think you're overreacting a little bit, honey?

ESTELLE

I do not. I don't think you'd be so calm if it was your butt his slimy sweaty hands were groping!

(STACY giggles)

Shut up and stay out of this, Stacy!

STACY

I'm sorry.

TOOTSIE

Estelle, don't take this out on her. She wasn't even there.

ESTELLE

I know, so she better keep her damn mouth shut since she don't know what she's talking about.

TOOTSIE

Have some water.

(she goes to get her a cup)

ESTELLE

I can't believe that man. What's his name?

TOOTSIE

Mr. Boland.

ESTELLE

Well, that Mr. Boland is a perv and I'm not going to brush his dog's hair.

TOOTSIE

You don't have to.

(she hands her the water)

(STACY giggles quietly and turns around to face the cabinets.)

ESTELLE

What are you laughing at, weirdo?

(pause)

Come on, idiot! What's your problem?!

(STACY still says nothing and squats down to continue filing)

TOOTSIE

Don't use those words here, Estelle.

ESTELLE

Don't ignore me, Stacy! You little baby!

(ESTELLE kicks STACY lightly, but hard enough so that STACY loses her balance and falls over)

STACY

Hey!

TOOTSIE

Estelle, that's enough! Why don't you leave her alone? Are you okay, Stacy?

STACY

Yeah. I just lost my balance. I'm fine.

TOOTSIE

One more outburst like that, Estelle, and I will have to let you go.

ESTELLE

Then tell that bitch to stay out of my way!

TOOTSIE

I will not have you talking to anyone in my store that way, Estelle. Do you understand that?

ESTELLE

(pause)

Yes!

TOOTSIE

Why don't you take a few minutes to cool off, Estelle? Go to the storage room or go for a quick walk or something. This kind of behavior is unacceptable here.

ESTELLE

Well, you better make sure that man apologizes and keeps his damn hands off of me. He's lucky I don't sue him. I still might though. You can tell him that too.

(she gets up, slams the chair into the table and walks toward the storage room)

I'm going for a smoke. Don't follow me, Stacy, or you'll be sorry.

(Estelle exits)

TOOTSIE

Are you okay, honey?

STACY

I'm fine.

TOOTSIE

I know she's harsh, but you know she's mostly bark but no bite.

STACY

Yeah.

TOOTSIE

She's an angry girl.

STACY

Yeah.

TOOTSIE

You're a very good girl, Stacy.

STACY

Thanks.

TOOTSIE

Why don't you get a cup of water for yourself?

STACY

I already had one.

TOOTSIE

Well, have another.

STACY

No, thanks. I don't want to have to pee. The bathroom's back there.
(she points to the storage room where ESTELLE has exited)

TOOTSIE

Very well then. Are you sure you're okay?

STACY

Yeah. I'm fine.

TOOTSIE

I need to go apologize to our customers for that outburst. Are you going to be okay?

STACY

Yeah. I'll be fine.

TOOTSIE

Do you want me to wait with you until she comes back?

STACY

I don't know.

TOOTSIE

I'll leave the door open.

STACY

Okay. That's good.

TOOTSIE

Honey, you don't look good. Are you worried?

STACY

Not really.

TOOTSIE

Have a seat here. You've been working so hard today. You gotta take care of yourself too, Stacy.

STACY

I know.

Who's the most important person?
TOOTSIE

I am.
STACY

Who do you love the most?
TOOTSIE

Me.
STACY

That's right. Don't forget that, Stacy.
TOOTSIE

I won't.
STACY

Why don't you look at some magazines or something?
TOOTSIE

We don't have any.
STACY

That may be true. Oh, here's our brochure.
TOOTSIE

I know that one already.
STACY

Nothing better than the familiar to calm one down.
TOOTSIE

I guess that's true.
STACY

(pause)
TOOTSIE
Let me know when you want to bring your dog in again. She hasn't been here in a few weeks.

Yeah, I was letting her hair grow out.
STACY

TOOTSIE

She's such a darling little dog.

STACY

I know.

TOOTSIE

Don't let her eat any more of that cheese though, remember?

STACY

Or chocolate. I know.

TOOTSIE

You don't want to take any chances, right?

STACY

Of course not.

TOOTSIE

Well, then. I'm right out here if you need me.

STACY

Okay.

TOOTSIE

You're a good girl, Stacy.

(she strokes her hair gently)

Good girl.

(She exits left)

(STACY stands up after a moment and pours a cup of water. She takes it and walks over to the left doorway and looks out. She hears the squealing off stage.)

TOOTSIE (o.s.)

I am soo sorry, Mr. Boland, for her running out like that. But you know the rules of harassment, now don't you?

BOLAND (o.s.)

I didn't mean to touch her.

TOOTSIE (o.s.)

Regardless, Estelle is very upset. You need to apologize to her when she returns. She's a very sensitive girl.

(ESTELLE enters, but STACY does not see her yet)

BOLAND (o.s.)

I'm so sorry. Maybe I should just leave.

TOOTSIE (o.s.)

Nonsense, Mr. Boland. That won't be necessary. We hate to lose a customer over something as trivial as this. Don't you agree?

BOLAND (o.s.)

I would like you to clean my dog.

TOOTSIE (o.s.)

And that is our service. We'll clean your dog so she's sparkling like a wet puppy again!

BOLAND (o.s.)

Oh.

ESTELLE

Hey, Bitch.

(STACY turns around quickly)

I thought I told you to stay out of my way.

STACY

You came in here. I didn't go in there.

ESTELLE

You're still in my way.

STACY

I work here too, Estelle.

ESTELLE

Whatever.

(STACY throws out her cup quickly and begins to exit left)

Are you running away now?

STACY

You said you didn't want me in your way.

ESTELLE

You're such a wimp. Where is your spine, Stacy? Where is it? Where'd it go? Where did Stacy's little spine go? Oh! There it is! In the trash can. Along with the shredded

paper and dog fur and all the other useless things we don't care about. There it is. All wadded up. Well, at least that explains why you have no spine.

STACY

Shut up, Estelle.

ESTELLE

Is she growing a new spine? Is she growing a new, clever, witty spine of her very own?

(STACY turns around and starts walking out into the waiting room again)

Nope. I was wrong. Spineless as usual.

STACY

Estelle!

ESTELLE

She has uttered a word. She appears to be trying to make some sort of point.

STACY

Cut it out.

ESTELLE

You're the one always hiding the scissors.

STACY

What?

ESTELLE

A slow girl too. Maybe her brain is in the trash can too. I'll go check.

STACY

Stop it, Estelle.

ESTELLE

Why don't you go tell on me, Stacy? Tell Tootsie that I'm making fun of you. I'm making you feel bad. Go ahead.

STACY

(pause)

Did Mr. Boland really touch your butt?

ESTELLE

I don't even know what you're talking about, Stacy.

STACY

Did Mr. Boland touch your butt like you said?

ESTELLE

No one touched my butt, Stacy. Don't be gross.

STACY

But you just said—

ESTELLE

I never said anything like that.

STACY

Yes, you did. You just told Tootsie Mr. Boland touched your butt. I heard you.

ESTELLE

Maybe you thought that's what I said, but you have no proof. Do you want Mr. Boland to touch your butt, Stacy? Is that what you're trying to say?

STACY

No. I—you shouldn't make up things like that.

ESTELLE

Who said I made anything up?

STACY

You did.

ESTELLE

Stacy, I think you need a reality check.

STACY

That's not very nice.

ESTELLE

I can't believe you want to jump Mr. Boland's bones.

STACY

I don't! I never said that!

ESTELLE

You are so transparent, Stacy. I shiver at the thought of his—gross little being.

STACY

That's not nice, Estelle.

ESTELLE

So you do want him.

STACY

I don't! I was just saying—it's not like he's an alien or something.

ESTELLE

You gotta problem with what I'm saying, Stacy?

STACY

All I was saying was—

ESTELLE

An alien? Why would you even say that? That is one of the stupidest comebacks I've ever heard.

STACY

I was just—

ESTELLE

You just better keep your mouth shut unless you got somethin' good to say.

STACY

You're being so mean to me today.

ESTELLE

Just shut up, Stacy.

(ESTELLE paints her nails with the appearance that nothing is out of the ordinary. STACY stands mute for a minute looking at ESTELLE. Her face slightly scrunches up, as she is determining how to channel her anger. Her eyes move quickly to the waiting room door, then ESTELLE, then the floor. She finally quietly stomps over to the file cabinet she has been working on and continues her task.)

That's right. Make sure all the bitches have their own flea file. Wouldn't want to mix up Mrs. Jenkins's teacup poodle with Mrs. Philmore's teacup poodle. I don't think they like the same meat.

(STACY slams a cabinet drawer and opens a different one)

Oh, did I offend you? I'm sorry, was that the question you asked Tootsie to put on the form?

STACY

Those forms are important. You shouldn't make fun of them.

ESTELLE

I knew you couldn't stay shut up for long. Do I dignify her with a response or not?

STACY

Why are you talking like that?

ESTELLE

Why are you talking at all? You're really askin' for trouble, you know that, Stacy? I'm gettin' real sick of you.

STACY

I don't have to listen to you.

ESTELLE

You better watch yourself, Stacy. The dogs aren't the only ones who bite around here.

(STACY is frozen for a moment with a look of fright on her face.
ESTELLE laughs.)

I'm not gonna hurt you, Stacy. I'm not an animal. Go to Tootsie. Tell her whatever you want. I don't care.

(She walks back to table and arranges her nail polish)

(pause)

STACY

I'm going to tell Tootsie you lied about Mr. Boland. You know, Estelle, if you don't care about the job, you should just quit.

(STACY exits)

ESTELLE

"If you don't care about the job, you should just quit."

(ESTELLE fiddles with her nail polish bottles for a moment, then puts them away just as TOOTSIE and STACY enter from the waiting room. Tootsie moves over to ESTELLE upon entrance, but STACY stays quiet by the doorway.)

TOOTSIE

Estelle Groveland! Is it true that you falsified the allegation about Mr. Boland?

ESTELLE

Now, why ever would you think such a thing, Tootsie?

TOOTSIE

Stacy here told me what you said to her.

ESTELLE

Oh, Stacy here told you that, hm?

TOOTSIE

That is true, young lady. Now what do you have to say for yourself?

ESTELLE

Well, if Stacy said it, it must be true, right, Tootsie?

TOOTSIE

I didn't say that.

ESTELLE

Well, you certainly implied that.

TOOTSIE

I did not, and I shall not have you speaking so to me.

ESTELLE:

Okay, Tootsie. I'm sorry. I am. I'm just a bit shaken up, that's all.

STACY

Shaken up from lying?

ESTELLE

I don't know what you're talking about, Stacy. Mr. Boland touched my butt—I would never lie about that.

STACY

You told me he—

ESTELLE

You are really screwed up, Stacy.

STACY

I'm not! I—

ESTELLE

Just shut the hell up, huh?

TOOTSIE

Estelle, sit down and speak like a young woman.

(pause)

(ESTELLE sits)

This cussing is getting to be ridiculous.

ESTELLE

I'm not swearing, Tootsie.

TOOTSIE

You don't call that a cuss word? Well, I do, and in this facility we don't use those words. Do you understand that, Estelle? Estelle? Do you understand that?

ESTELLE

Yes.

TOOTSIE

You're much too smart of a girl to make yourself sound so ignorant by speaking that way.

ESTELLE

I don't sound—

TOOTSIE

You do too and you know it. Intelligent people can find real words to describe their thoughts.

ESTELLE

They're real words.

TOOTSIE

What language you use on your own time is your business, but when you are here, you are to behave in a professional manner. And cussing as you do is not professional. Now today even the customers have started complaining, and this has to stop.

ESTELLE

I hear the customers complain all the time that Stacy is a moron who can't do anything right, but I don't hear you yelling at her about that.

TOOTSIE

I am not yelling at you, Estelle. Stacy's performance is none of your concern, and making up vicious lies about her is also unprofessional.

ESTELLE

She is a moron.

(MRS. HILTON enters from the waiting room. She is a plump insincerely happy woman probably in her fifties.)

MRS. HILTON

Excuse me, Tootsie?

TOOTSIE

Oh, Mrs. Hilton. How are you, darling?

MRS. HILTON

I'm fine. It's just, well, you see Gabriella has been in the tub for quite some time now and I was just wondering if maybe you forgot she was in there?

TOOTSIE

No, I certainly did not, Mrs. Hilton. Now have you circled any items you would like to have in our brochure?

MRS. HILTON

Why, no, I—

TOOTSIE

Then you need to go back out there and sit and circle them items.

MRS. HILTON

Yes, but you see, Mr. Boland's dog, Shooshoo is—

TOOTSIE

Shooshoo should be no worry of yours, Mrs. Hilton. Now why don't you just shoo shoo back into the waiting room and have a cup of coffee. Jenny is right there and she'll fix one up for you. We have cream and sugar, and even a few donuts from the morning rush, I think. I know how you like your jelly filled donuts.

MRS. HILTON

Oh, I do. Why I just had one yesterday that was filled with avocado jam. Can you imagine that? Avocado in a donut?

TOOTSIE

I can't imagine it, Mrs. Hilton.

MRS. HILTON

Oh, try to picture—

TOOTSIE

Why don't you tell Jenny all about it? She worked in a law firm for two years, so I'm sure she'd be quite intrigued by the avocado story. Now scoot along, dear.

(SHE pushes MRS. HILTON out the door)

ESTELLE
See that?

TOOTSIE
What?

ESTELLE
Stacy is the one who put Mrs. Hilton's dog in the tub. She just left her there and started filing in here. Is that professional, Tootsie?

STACY
You told me you were going to finish—

ESTELLE
Oh, whatever, Stacy.
(to TOOTSIE)
See? She's the one who's always lying to cover her ass. Why would—

TOOTSIE
Enough of the language, Estelle!

ESTELLE
Oh, shit, I forgot.

TOOTSIE
That is it, Estelle. I have given you too many chances. You need to leave here right now.

ESTELLE
Are you firing me?

TOOTSIE
I am suspending you for the remainder of the day. Come in tomorrow morning and we'll see if you're ready to behave in a professional manner.

ESTELLE
What? You can't suspend me!

TOOTSIE
I can, Estelle, and I am.

ESTELLE
Well, I better get paid for today.

TOOTSIE
You've been off the clock for the last fifteen minutes.

ESTELLE

Shit! This has gotta be illegal or something.

TOOTSIE

Please exit through the storage room. I don't want a scene with the customers.

ESTELLE

Oh, man. This is so stupid. Hey, don't you have to talk to me about Mr. Boland still?

TOOTSIE

It can wait. I don't think discussing that with you right now would be in your best interest.

ESTELLE

This is ridiculous. Reality! I didn't even do anything.

(points at STACY)

She's the one who's lying and being unprofessional and shit.

TOOTSIE

Please leave, Estelle. Take today to cool off.

ESTELLE

This is so corporate. Get rid of the strong ones, praise the weak. Yeah, well, I'm not gonna be out of mind anyway, I'll tell you that much. And you Stacy, better pray that I don't see you tonight or you're gonna be sorry.

TOOTSIE

Good day, Estelle.

(ESTELLE exits. TOOTSIE turns to Stacy.)

I'm really sorry, darling. She's a high-strung girl, but she is good with them dogs!

STACY

Hm.

(MRS. HILTON enters again.)

MRS. HILTON

Tootsie? I'm really sorry, but—

TOOTSIE

What is it, Mrs. Hilton?

MRS. HILTON

It's just that Gabriella is still in the bath and Shooshoo is, well, starting to invade her space, so to speak?

TOOTSIE

We'll be right out.

MRS. HILTON

Yes, but it's only that Gabriella is supposed to have a date with a Pomeranian tomorrow. You know how important proper breeding is in a town such as this.

TOOTSIE

Of course, Mrs. Hilton.

MRS. HILTON

So if you could just make sure Shooshoo does not get too close to my baby.

STACY

I thought Shooshoo was a girl.

MRS. HILTON

No, I'm afraid he's not a girl.

TOOTSIE

Go on back to the waiting room, Mrs. Hilton. I'll take care of this.

(calling to the waiting room)

Mr. Boland, why don't you come on in here? Jenny, put his dog in salon number two.

(MRS. HILTON exits)

(to STACY)

I don't want Mr. Boland out there with the rest of them. He seems to be causing trouble amongst the customers. He can wait here with you, Stacy. Now darling, you call me in if there's any trouble. Do you feel uncomfortable with Mr. Boland's being in this room with you?

STACY

No.

TOOTSIE

You just let me know if he makes any advances on you.

STACY

I will.

TOOTSIE

You don't let him distract you neither. You just do your work like the good girl you are, hm?

STACY

Okay.

TOOTSIE

I may have to call you in to help out with the dogs, since we're short Estelle right now. Would you feel comfortable with the dogs?

STACY

Sure.

TOOTSIE

I'll give a call to Becky first though and see if she wants to come in and cover.

STACY

Okay.

(MR. BOLAND enters.)

TOOTSIE

There now, Mr. Boland. We'll be right with you, but for now, we're keeping your dog in Salon Two where he won't be disturbing anyone, and you can stay here where you won't be disturbing anyone. Now, did Jenny give you something to eat?

BOLAND

No.

TOOTSIE

Oh, well, Stacy can grab you a package of crackers. Stacy, dear, run out back and get this man some crackers.

(STACY exits to the storage room.)

BOLAND

I'm sorry about the trouble I'm causing.

TOOTSIE

Nonsense. Don't be.

BOLAND

I've never been to a dog grooming hut before and it seems so complicated. I feel a little nervous.

TOOTSIE

Certainly. Certainly. I'm sure you'll feel much better once you read this brochure.

BOLAND

Okay.

TOOTSIE

Stacy will be right back with the crackers.

BOLAND

Okay.

(TOOTSIE exits. MR. BOLAND sits looking at the brochure.
MRS. HILTON enters through the waiting room door. Her face is
crunched up and her lips are tight.)

MRS. HILTON

Don't think I didn't see it, because I did!

BOLAND

What?

MRS. HILTON

I saw what happened out there and I'll make sure you pay for it, Mr. Boland!

BOLAND

I—what do you mean?

MRS. HILTON

Oh, you act as though you didn't have it planned. You've had your eye on her for quite
some time now.

BOLAND

That girl in the waiting room?

MRS. HILTON

That "girl" happens to be my property.

BOLAND

But I didn't do anything, Mrs. Hilton. I honestly didn't touch her.

MRS. HILTON

Well, I should hope not. That doesn't excuse you for your dog's actions though.

BOLAND

My dog?

MRS. HILTON

Yes! Who else would I be talking about! You sanctioned it, Mr. Boland! You sanctioned it!

BOLAND

Mrs. Hilton—

MRS. HILTON

My precious Gabriella has been waiting to be bred with only the finest Pomeranian in the county and now your hoodlum dog comes marching into her bath and does the deed to mess everything up!

BOLAND

I hadn't realized—

MRS. HILTON

There are a lot of things you haven't realized, Mr. Boland, but rest assured that I will make you pay for what your dog did. Then you'll realize.

BOLAND

I honestly didn't know—

MRS. HILTON

I don't believe your naive little act. The rest of them may be fooled by you, but I'm onto you, Mister. I'm onto you like hot butter on corn.

BOLAND

Mrs. Hilton—

MRS. HILTON

I may be a little psychotic, Mr. Boland, but I am not blind. I saw his advances. I saw how he lured her in, did the deed, then took off. All the while, you watched and smiled. I saw this, Mr. Boland.

BOLAND

I did not. And if you saw all of this, why didn't you do something, Mrs. Hilton?

MRS. HILTON

Your audacity appalls me, but I shant let it thwart me this time. No, no. Not this time.

BOLAND

This is the first time I've ever been here.

MRS. HILTON

You'll get yours, Mr. Boland. I shall see to it.

(STACY enters right with a package of crackers.)

STACY

Oh, hello, Mrs. Hilton. Can I help you with something?

MRS. HILTON

Why, yes. I was told you had some extra brochures. I seem to have misplaced mine.

STACY

Oh, of course. Here.

(SHE hands her one)

Do you want a separate order form?

MRS. HILTON

This is fine. Thank you, dear.

STACY

Sure.

(MRS. HILTON exits. MR. BOLAND sits nervously and shakes slightly.)

STACY

Are you okay, Mr. Boland? You look a little peekish.

BOLAND

I just wanted Shooshoo groomed.

STACY

Oh, well, you came to the right place then.

(she laughs a little)

BOLAND

Hm.

STACY

I'm sorry. Someone should be with you soon.

(she hands him the crackers)

Estelle had to leave, so we'll be a little behind for a few minutes, but Tootsie will take care of it.

BOLAND

Oh.

(pause)

STACY

Do you want another cup of water?

BOLAND

I don't know.

STACY

Here.

(She gets him one and hand it to him)

This might make you feel better.

(MR. BOLAND drinks the whole glass.)

BOLAND

I feel like there is a lot for me to learn about dog grooming huts.

STACY

We call it a facility, not a hut.

BOLAND

Oh.

STACY

Today is a hectic day.

BOLAND

Yes. I suppose it is.

(pause)

STACY

Well, I'm over here if you need anything.

(STACY returns to the filing cabinet)

(pause)

BOLAND

Stacy? That's your name, right?

STACY

Yes.

BOLAND

Did you know my wife died last Thursday?

STACY

Oh, my goodness. I did not know that. Are you okay?

BOLAND

No.

STACY

I'm sorry.

(pause)

BOLAND

At least I think she died.

STACY

Hm.

BOLAND

Yes, it is quite odd. She looks the same, but I really fear she is dead.

STACY

That must be quite disturbing.

BOLAND

Yes, it is. I would rather you not repeat any of this, Stacy.

STACY

Of course.

BOLAND

I have a reputation to uphold as the town pharmacist.

STACY

I understand.

BOLAND

That is why this morning has been so upsetting to me. My reputation has been challenged twice.

STACY

Oh.

BOLAND

It is not easy to uphold the pharmacist's good name in a town such as this.

STACY

I can imagine.

(pause)

Maybe you should have someone come out and look at your wife.

BOLAND

I'm afraid there wouldn't be much to see.

STACY

I mean to see if she's dead or not.

BOLAND

May you please not speak of my wife in that manner?

STACY

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend you.

BOLAND

No, no. You seem the least offensive of anyone I've met today. I'm not frightened of you as I am of the other ones. When I'm truly frightened or offended, I can't speak very properly.

STACY

Yeah.

BOLAND

But I am actually kind of smart.

STACY

Really?

BOLAND

Well, not really, but sometimes I know things.

STACY

Me too.

BOLAND

What do you know?

STACY

Um, I don't know.

BOLAND

You don't know what you know?

STACY

No, I do. I mean, it's just hard to think of. I guess, um, I know about plants. I took a Botany class at the community college and I started planting my own little garden. I'm not too big on pretty flowers—I guess I don't think they're that pretty. Well, some of them are. But they frighten me. Flowers always mean something. They mean 'I'm sorry' or 'I love you' . . .

BOLAND

Or you died.

STACY

Or you died. I do like dandelions though. They don't mean anything. No one cares about dandelions. They're a pain, and they make your hands turn brown, and they don't smell or even look that pretty. But I like them. Because if you get enough of them, you have to squint your eyes to look at them—they're so bright. And no one gives dandelions to another person so they don't have any value. And when they get old, they don't just wither away; they get grey hair like us and then fall apart all over the grass and the air. But I don't even care that much about dandelions. I like them, but I don't care about them. I really care about carrots and potatoes. I like planting them because no one sees them. Most people don't even know what's hidden under the ground. It's like—a different reality, but it's the same world. You know what I mean? And no one takes pride in carrots or potatoes. Now tomatoes—people care about them. People show off their tomato gardens, but no one says, 'come over and see my carrot garden.' And when I pluck the carrots out, no one really cares. But I do. I have almost fifteen books on raising carrots and different things to make with them. I know a lot about carrots.

BOLAND

Hm. I like carrot cake.

STACY

A lot of people do.

BOLAND

I tried making carrot cake once, but I didn't have a recipe, so it turned out pretty bad. It was my wife's birthday and I wanted to surprise her, but she ended up having to clean the whole mess up for me. It wasn't very nice of me.

(pause)

You're a very nice girl, Stacy.

STACY

Thank you. You're nice too.

BOLAND

You're very patient to work with them all day.

STACY

Who?

That girl who left, and Tootsie.

BOLAND

Oh, I just work.

STACY

Do you feel comfortable here?

BOLAND

Yes. You don't?

STACY

I don't mean to criticize your hut—or, facility—here, and I would never say this to the other girls, but—

BOLAND

Then why would you say it to me?

STACY

Because, as I said before, you don't frighten me. I can talk to you. It's amazing how we change when we're around people who frighten us. Sometimes I feel like two different people. I can't talk to them.

BOLAND

Yes, I can see that.

STACY

Isn't it easier talking with people who aren't criticizing you and yelling at you?

BOLAND

Yes, I suppose it is. I did tell you about my carrot garden. No one here even knows I took a class at the Community College.

STACY

Exactly.

BOLAND

Huh. What were you going to say?

STACY

When?

BOLAND

You said you were going to tell me something but you wouldn't tell the other ones it?

STACY

BOLAND

Oh, yes, just that I've felt quite uncomfortable here today, and I'm impressed that you remain so kind and patient.

STACY

Why do you say I'm kind? You don't even know me.

BOLAND

That's true. But you gave me some water in a kind way.

STACY

Hm.

BOLAND

And I feel like I know you. We're similar in a lot of ways, Stacy.

STACY

Really?

BOLAND

Yes. We're both really smart—well, we both know things, and people say mean things to us.

STACY

How do you know people say mean things to me?

BOLAND

Stacy, I heard what that girl was saying to you. And I've seen you when you come into my pharmacy. I've seen the way people talk to you.

STACY

Oh.

BOLAND

But that's okay—they talk to me that way too—probably worse. But look, we can talk to each other.

STACY

Yes, we can.

BOLAND

It's almost as though we have some sort of connection.

STACY

Maybe we're related.

Maybe so.

BOLAND

Maybe you're my father.

STACY

How's that?

BOLAND

STACY

My father left my mother when she was pregnant. I never met him. My mother never even told me his name. Maybe that's you.

BOLAND

Hm. Around eighteen years ago, I did leave a woman who was pregnant with my child. It's possible.

STACY

That wasn't very nice of you to leave your child.

BOLAND

No, it wasn't. I wasn't always as nice as I am right now. And I have paid for that all my life. Now my wife is dead.

STACY

Hm. I'm not so happy that you may have left my mother while she was pregnant with me.

BOLAND

I can certainly understand that.

STACY

I'm feeling a little angry about it.

BOLAND

That's good that you're expressing your emotions.

STACY

I learned how in school.

BOLAND

That's good.

STACY

Yes.

BOLAND

I'm sorry, Stacy. You've turned out to be such a sweet girl.

STACY

I'm still quite angry.

BOLAND

I know. And I'm quite sorry.

STACY

I don't think I want to talk with you anymore.

BOLAND

Oh, okay.

STACY

Can you please leave?

BOLAND

I'm not allowed to go back in the waiting room.

STACY

Then I'll leave.

(she picks up a file folder)

I'm giving this to Tootsie. Please, don't follow me.

BOLAND

I am sorry, Stacy.

STACY

(stands still and looks at him for a beat)

I might be very angry right now.

(she exits)

BOLAND

Oh, dear.

(He sits nervously at the table tapping his fingers. He then gets up and moves toward the water jug. As he sees the water swishing around, he suddenly realizes he needs to use the bathroom.)

Where'd she say the bathroom was?

(he takes a step toward the waiting room, then thinks better of it.

He moves toward the storage room)

I'm such a fool.

(he exits to the storage room)

(pause. Then suddenly, there is a loud gunshot. STACY and TOOTSIE enter from one direction, then ESTELLE and MR. BOLAND enter from another.)

ALL

What was that? What's going on? Etc.

(MRS. HILTON enters immediately after and peers through the doorway.)

MRS. HILTON

Tootsie. Tootsie.

(no one hears her)

TOOTSIE!

(pause. It is quiet.)

Um, Tootise, I think that was a gunshot.

(pause)

I—I'll just wait in here.

(she smiles and exits to the waiting room)

ACT II

(It is approximately an hour later the same day. ESTELLE, TOOTSIE, STACY, and MR. BOLAND are sitting and standing nervously around the office room. POLICE OFFICER has a notepad in his hand and a pen in the other. He is a very serious man, confident of his skills and position.)

POLICE OFFICER

So you were retrieving your purse from the storage area—

ESTELLE

Yes, you see, I was wrongfully suspended today because that pervert there copped a cheap feel. I was so angry when I left, I forgot my purse in the storage room. Tootsie made me leave there because she was afraid I would do something to the customers if I exited through the normal doorway. The civil doorway. The doorway even the dogs are allowed to exit through. Even the dogs that bite people.

POLICE OFFICER

Okay, that's enough, Ms. Barbano. And you sir, were headed toward the bathroom.

BOLAND

I didn't quite make it though. On account of the gunshot.

POLICE OFFICER

I don't need your life story, Mr. Boland.

BOLAND

I'm sorry.

POLICE OFFICER

And the two of you were with customers in the waiting room.

TOOTSIE

I was actually in the first salon grooming one of our dogs. Stacy had just gone into the waiting room to find me.

(MRS. HILTON peeks in.)

MRS. HILTON

Excuse me, officer. Do you need me? My darling little dog has been in the tub for over an hour now and I kind of need to know what's going on.

POLICE OFFICER

Kindly return to another room or exit the building, Ma'am. We don't need your kind here.

MRS. HILTON

What kind?

POLICE OFFICER

Your kind. We don't need it.

MRS. HILTON

But what 'kind' am I?

POLICE OFFICER

The kind you are. Now please leave or I will have to escort you out.

MRS. HILTON

Oh, dear.

(she exits)

POLICE OFFICER

Well, from what we can tell, there doesn't appear to be a body or a gun anywhere, so I would suggest closing down for the rest of the day and keeping quiet about the incident. We don't need this sort of murder/mystery in a town such as this. Rest assured, we'll be on top of it, Ma'am.

TOOTSIE

But who would have a gun, officer?

POLICE OFFICER

Well, ma'am, I don't quite know.

ESTELLE

Probably Stacy. Because she's a freak.

POLICE OFFICER

Speculation is unnecessary, Miss. Kindly keep your opinions to yourself or I will have to escort you out of here.

ESTELLE

Shit, what's his problem?

POLICE OFFICER

Kindly refrain from foul language, Miss.

TOOTSIE

I told you that would get you into trouble sooner or later, Estelle.

POLICE OFFICER

Would you please let me do my job, Ma'am? Reprimanding the girl is unnecessary. That's what these cuffs are for, Ma'am. Kindly let me do my job.

(MRS. HILTON enters from the storage room with a large cardboard box.)

MRS. HILTON

I hate to bother you, but—

POLICE OFFICER

I believe I just told you to leave the room, Ma'am.

MRS. HILTON

But look what I found!

POLICE OFFICER

(looks inside box)

What's this? A dead dog?

TOOTSIE

Whose dog is it?

POLICE OFFICER

The collar says, "My name is Shooshoo."

BOLAND

That's my dog! That's my Shooshoo!

TOOTSIE

Oh, dear, Jenny was supposed to keep him in Salon Two.

BOLAND

Shooshoo!!!

(he runs toward the box)

POLICE OFFICER

Now, back away, sir. Back away.

BOLAND

But that's my dog.

POLICE OFFICER

What's left of your dog.

(to Mrs. Hilton)

Where did you find this, Ma'am?

MRS. HILTON

It was in the freezer, in the storage room.

ESTELLE

Why were you in the freezer? You better have not touched my ice cream sandwich!

TOOTSIE

That's why you plugged it in.

MRS. HILTON

I admit, an ice cream sandwich sounds appealing. But not with a dead dog in a box!

POLICE OFFICER

Well, it appears that this pooch took the brunt of the bullet. Looks like someone had it in for this worthless creature.

BOLAND

That's my Shooshoo!

TOOTSIE

It is his.

POLICE OFFICER

You may keep the body, sir. Ma'am, you need to return to the other room.

MRS. HILTON

Even after I just brought you this evidence?

POLICE OFFICER

I explained this already, about your kind. I have no desire to leave myself exasperated explaining it once more. A piece of evidence changes nothing.

MRS. HILTON

I think that it does.

POLICE OFFICER

Do you need to be escorted to the door?

MRS. HILTON

Well, I never!

(walks to exit)

You won't get much help from this officer, Tootsie. I'll tell you that much!

(she exits)

TOOTSIE

Oh, my.

POLICE OFFICER

With that woman gone, I can tell you now that my work is done.

ESTELLE

You're just going to leave? Now that you have a body and a bullet hole, you're just going to leave? Mrs. Hilton was right!

(The POLICE OFFICER grabs ESTELLE's arms and escorts her into the storage room)

Hey! What are you doing? Let go!

POLICE OFFICER

Please remain in this room until I have exited the building. I'm glad the rest of you know how to handle yourselves in front of a police officer. Good day to you all. Here's the address in case you wish to have a copy of the police report. There's a small fee, of course.

(he hands TOOTSIE a piece of paper)

Now, I have other matters to attend to. Good day, ma'ams. Sir.

(he exits)

TOOTSIE

Well! They certainly were thorough. Estelle! You can come out now. He left.

(ESTELLE enters)

ESTELLE

Did I just hear you say they were thorough?

TOOTSIE

Now, Estelle, just because you were put in a time-out doesn't mean he wasn't a good officer.

ESTELLE

I wasn't put in a time-out!

(STACY giggles)

Don't laugh, bitch!

TOOTSIE

Estelle! That language is the very reason you were put in that room!

ESTELLE

Give me a break. There is a gun shot in this building, they find a bullet through a dog, but no other body, no suspect, and the police just leave us here with no guidance or security or anything!

TOOTSIE

They're very busy people, Estelle. They have more customers than we do, I'm sure.

ESTELLE

The point is, someone shot a gun in here and they left us.

(MR. BOLAND cries quietly, staring at the box.)

TOOTSIE

Mr. Boland, are you alright? There's no need to look at the body right now. You've been through enough.

BOLAND

I'm—a little sad.

ESTELLE

Well, maybe you should have kept your dog with you and this wouldn't have happened.

STACY

Maybe you shouldn't be so mean to him, Estelle.

ESTELLE

Maybe you should keep your mouth shut, bitch.

TOOTSIE

Estelle, you don't need to be here now, so please leave. You have your purse, what you came back for. Now please leave the rest of us.

ESTELLE

Fine. But don't you want to know who killed that mutt?

BOLAND

She's a purebred!

TOOTSIE

You know who killed her?

ESTELLE

I have a guess.

BOLAND

Who?

ESTELLE

(points to STACY)

That bitch right there!

What?

TOOTSIE

I did not.

STACY

I heard your whole conversation with Mr. Boland about his leaving you when your mom was pregnant. I heard you run away and threaten to kill his dog to get even with him.

ESTELLE

I did not!

STACY

I heard you!

ESTELLE

I didn't hear that.

BOLAND

You heard her say she was angry, right?

ESTELLE

Yes, that I heard.

BOLAND

I said I might be angry.

STACY

And she said right after she was going to kill your dog and get even with you.

ESTELLE

Stop lying, Estelle.

STACY

Is that true, Stacy?

BOLAND

No! She lied that you touched her butt, she lied about that. She just lies all the time.

STACY

You think I lie, Stacy, but maybe you just don't recognize the truth!

ESTELLE

This is getting out of hand.

TOOTSIE

STACY

No, I think Estelle killed the dog—the only other witness to her immorality and selfishness! She told me she hated Mr. Boland.

ESTELLE

You're the one that called him an alien!

STACY

I did not! I said he wasn't an alien!

ESTELLE

Oh, change your story now, bitch!

TOOTSIE

Girls!

(SHE sits Estelle and Stacy both down away from each other)

I will not have this here. I simply will not. If either of you wishes to keep her job here, she ought to sit quietly and wait for my next instructions.

(pause)

When I was a hairdresser, this sort of mayhem never occurred. Well, there was the one time Bubbles got high off of our finishing spray and gave Officer Trassen twelve little orange mohawks on his wrinkled head. We had quite a few unpleasant visits from the police after that, but once we switched to pump sprays, we never had any other issues. We certainly never called each other such inappropriate names and raised our voices unnecessarily. We were ladies. When I transitioned to grooming dogs instead of people, I figured there might be some sort of regression amongst my employees, but I never could have imagined such childish behavior. Before today, I have never regretted my upward move to Brush Them Fleas. A woman has to go where the business is, and in a town such as this, there can be no dispute the future is with our dogs. I have always been proud of my accomplishments and success in the industry. But today, after witnessing such disrespect, I am truly disappointed in the employees of my fine grooming establishment.

(pause)

Now, we are not detectives. We are not police, and we are not here to figure out who killed Mr. Boland's poor little Shooshoo. I'm sure this is not what Mr. Boland needs to hear right now.

STACY

I'm sorry, Mr. Boland. I'm sorry, Tootsie. Sorry, Estelle.

TOOTSIE

Estelle?

ESTELLE

What?

TOOTSIE

Don't you think you owe someone an apology?

(pause)

ESTELLE

(rolling her eyes)

Sorry.

(MRS. HILTON enters.)

MRS. HILTON

Tootsie, I saw the police officers leave? May I come in?

TOOTSIE

We're in the middle of—

MRS. HILTON

Oh, good. I only wanted to point out that my darling little Gabriella's toe pads have begun to wrinkle. I know you know what you're doing, but I'm slightly concerned—what with all the excitement and all.

TOOTSIE

I understand your concern, Mrs. Hilton, and we'll be with you shortly. Mr. Boland has just lost his dog and needs a bit of our attention right now. Please be patient.

MRS. HILTON

It's only I've been waiting for almost—

TOOTSIE

(gives her another brochure and pushes MRS. HILTON out into the waiting room)

I haven't seen your order form yet, Mrs. Hilton. How can we do our part when you haven't done yours?

(TOOTSIE closes the door. She turns to MR. BOLAND, who is now looking very suspiciously toward the door where MRS. HILTON exited)

I am so sorry for that, Mr. Boland. I know you don't need any more—

BOLAND

If anyone did it, she did it.

TOOTSIE

Excuse me, Mr. Boland?

BOLAND

Mrs. Hilton. She killed my dog. I know it. I can feel it.

ESTELLE

Why would that old hag want to kill your dog? I doubt she even has the finger power to pull a trigger.

BOLAND

She threatened me already. She said she'd get back at me because Shooshoo was courting her dog.

TOOTSIE

Ooooooh. Well, there we have it then.

STACY

What are you going to do?

BOLAND

I don't know.

STACY

Maybe she'll buy you a new one.

TOOTSIE

That is quite unfortunate, Mr. Boland. I do apologize that she killed your dog in our fine grooming facility establishment.

ESTELLE

I still say Stacy did it.

TOOTSIE

Do you want me to charge her double the price, Mr. Boland? I'd do that for you.

BOLAND

No, I just—

ESTELLE

Don't even think about touching my butt again, pervert. If that's what you want, you can forget it because it ain't gonna happen. No way.

BOLAND

No, that's not what I—

TOOTSIE

Mr. Boland, I think you need to look through our brochure. We have some fine funeral assortments for “just dead” pups and full-growns. A lot of owners like to dress their dogs with a tie.

BOLAND

That won't be necessary, Tootsie. I really don't—

TOOTSIE

Oh, Mr. Boland. Don't be so hasty to decide. Let me show you our special bereavement addition.

BOLAND

No, I—

ESTELLE

I said, it ain't gonna happen, perv. Don't even think about it.

BOLAND

I'm not. I'm—

TOOTSIE

Here we go.

BOLAND

But I—

STACY

Let him speak!

(pause)

Why don't you just let him say what he wants to for once instead of always interrupting and yelling at him?

TOOTSIE

Why, I wasn't yelling at him.

ESTELLE

I was, and you know what? I don't care. I'll yell at him again if he starts undressing me in his mind again.

BOLAND

I—

STACY

Estelle, would you give him a rest? Whether he abandoned me as a baby or not, his dog was just murdered, so you should be nicer to him. He's very sensitive right now.

ESTELLE

Oh, well, maybe you should have thought about his feelings before you killed the pesky little thing.

(MRS. HILTON opens the door and peeks in again.)

MRS. HILTON

Not to be a bother bee, but I have another appointment at 3, and I'm starting to worry we won't be done here in time.

ESTELLE

Jenny has a phone out there. Call up and cancel.

MRS. HILTON

Oh, yes, I suppose I could, but it's just that—

TOOTSIE

Of course, of course, Mrs. Hilton. Why don't you step inside all the way for a moment? We need to talk with you anyway.

MRS. HILTON

Oh, good. I hope that you're giving me a discount for all this waiting. Perhaps 'on the house?'

TOOTSIE

I'm afraid not. I'm afraid I have to double the fee on account of your murdering Mr. Boland's dog and all.

BOLAND

That's not what I asked for.

MRS. HILTON

Murder?

TOOTSIE

Yes. Now, don't get up—unless of course, you're ready to go back into the waiting room quietly.

MRS. HILTON

I don't understand where this is coming from.

ESTELLE

I don't think she killed the dog. Stacy did.

MRS. HILTON

Yes, that's right. Stacy did!

TOOTSIE

Now, now, Mrs. Hilton. We already know you did it. Mr. Boland told us all about your threat to kill.

BOLAND

She didn't say that exactly.

TOOTSIE

(To MRS. HILTON)

If you'd like to speak on your behalf, you may, otherwise, we really need to start wrapping this up.

MRS. HILTON

I agree with Estelle. I vote for Stacy.

STACY

We're not voting.

TOOTSIE

No, maybe we should. We'll make this quick and then end this nuisance of a day. What are the nominations?

ESTELLE

Stacy.

STACY

Estelle.

BOLAND

Mrs. Hilton.

TOOTSIE

Is that all? No one is nominating me or Mr. Boland?

(pause)

Maybe I did it because I didn't want to wash the pooch's hair?

(pause)

Mr. Boland may have done it for attention?

(pause)

STACY

What did you say?

TOOTSIE

Very well then. Who votes for Stacy?

STACY

Wait a minute. Shouldn't we do a secret ballot?

ESTELLE

Why? Are you scared of me?

STACY

Please, stop being so mean

(ESTELLE pushes her.)

ESTELLE

Let's just vote.

TOOTSIE

I think we should do it secretly. I'll just use this paper.
(picks up a sheet and tears it into pieces)

MRS. HILTON

Let's just use people's initials. Just the first initial actually. I don't want to write out the whole name.

TOOTSIE

But there are two "M"s—you, Mrs. Hilton and Mr. Boland.

ESTELLE

We can write out the whole name. Don't listen to that old biddy.

TOOTSIE

Estelle!

ESTELLE

Don't say your vote out loud. Write it on the paper.

STACY

I just want to express that I do have my doubts about this process. I've never been too fond of the government. What's going to happen to the person we elect?

TOOTSIE

Let's cross that bridge when we come to it.
(hands out the pieces of paper along with pencils or pens)

BOLAND

My lead is broken.

STACY

You can use mine.

ESTELLE

Oh, no you don't. Don't fall for that one, Mr. Boland. Your vote just won't count. You broke the lead, you can't vote.

TOOTSIE

Now, Estelle, that's not fair.

ESTELLE

Was it fair that he grabbed my butt, Tootsie? Was that fair?

TOOTSIE

Here is another pencil, Mr. Boland. Don't mind Estelle. She's just being a sour puss.

ESTELLE

The only reason I'm not walking out of here right now is because I want to see Stacy burn! You're going down, Stacy. You're going down!

(STACY sticks her tongue out at ESTELLE. ESTELLE grabs STACY's shirt collar and pulls her close)

Don't mess with me, Stacy. You don't know what you're doing.
(she lets her go)

STACY

I took Capeoira.

MRS. HILTON

I don't think their arguing is good for your business, Tootsie. It's really rather unpleasant.

TOOTSIE

I do apologize, Mrs. Hilton. Girls! Enough! Stacy, sit there. Estelle, sit over there. Do I need to give you another speech?

(they shake their heads)

Then you two leave each other alone and vote in silence. Is everyone ready?

(they nod in agreement)

Very well then. You may vote now, then fold up your paper and place it—um, place it right here in this mug.

ESTELLE

But that still has coffee in it.

TOOTSIE

(dumps the mug out on the floor. There are only a few drips.)
It had hardly anything left in it, Estelle. Let's not hold up the process any longer. Place your votes in this mug. Ready? Vote.

(There is a silence amongst the voters for a moment. ESTELLE and STACY stare angrily at one another as they write down their names. ESTELLE pushes STACY out of the way to get to the coffee mug first. MR. BOLAND seems to be having a difficult time writing the name down and struggles with the pencil and probably the spelling. MRS. HILTON doodles on her paper, then writes a name suddenly and lays it neatly in the mug. TOOTSIE seems very calm and content as she writes a name neatly and precisely, folds it too many times, then places it in the mug. The rest sit waiting for MR. BOLAND.)

ESTELLE

Are you done already?

BOLAND

Hm? What? Are you talking to me?

ESTELLE

Yeah, you've been sitting there for ten minutes and the rest of us were done like a year ago.

STACY

You can take your time, Mr. Boland.

TOOTSIE

Maybe he needs help with something.

STACY

Is that true? Do you need help with who it is?

BOLAND

No, no. I've got it, thank you.

ESTELLE

I know you're going down, Stacy. Going down.

(STACY ignores her.)

TOOTSIE

Shh. Let him think.

ESTELLE

If we really let him think, it will take all year, Tootsie!

BOLAND

Alright, I'm finished.

ESTELLE

Thank the Lord!

(MR. BOLAND puts the paper in the mug. TOOTSIE picks up the mug and looks at the papers and starts to separate them into piles.)

TOOTSIE

Everyone please be seated. Alright, let's be respectful of whoever is chosen as the murderer. Agreed?

(people shrug or give noncommittal affirmatives)

Now, then, we have one for Mrs. Hilton, two for Estelle, one for Stacy, and looks like maybe another for Stacy. It's hard to read though.

ESTELLE

Let me see that!

(she snatches it out of Tootsie's hand)

It's definitely Stacy!

TOOTSIE

Now, Estelle, remember our chat about being respectful.

(takes the paper back)

There appears to be some coffee on the ballot. I'm not sure we can count this vote.

STACY

Maybe you should just throw it out then. Looks like Estelle killed the dog.

ESTELLE

No way! You can't throw that out! That's not fair!

STACY

Well, that's what the votes say. We can't change it now.

ESTELLE

I demand a recount!

TOOTSIE

Now, Estelle.

BOLAND

Won't that take too long?

ESTELLE

It'll take less than a minute, sicko. Let's do a recount. Let me see the ballots.

STACY

Wait! You can't let her count them! She'll cheat!

TOOTSIE

Girls! We haven't even decided if we shall do a recount.

ESTELLE

The people's voice needs to be heard.

STACY

The people's voice already was heard.

TOOTSIE

How do you feel about it, Mrs. Hilton?

MRS. HILTON

Oh, well, you know. I go with the majority.

TOOTSIE

I see. Mr. Boland, what do you think? It is your dog's murderer we're voting for.

BOLAND

Yes, as long as it won't take too long.

TOOTSIE

Very well. We'll afford you the recount, Estelle.

ESTELLE

Yes! You're going down, Stacy!

STACY

Well, then I object to the recount!

ESTELLE

What? You can't object to that.

(she pushes her across the room and hovers near TOOTSIE)

TOOTSIE

I'll just put them all in the coffee mug again and recount the ballots. Estelle, you need to give me some space. Oh, dear. Now they all have coffee stains on them. I think I can manage though. Here we have one for Mrs. Hilton, one for Estelle, one for Stacy, and, oh, my—looks like two for Mr. Boland!

BOLAND

How's that?

ESTELLE

He wasn't on there before.

STACY

He wasn't even nominated. How can he be it?

TOOTSIE

I'm just telling you like it is. If you request a recount, Mr. Boland, we'd afford you that, on account of your not being a nomination and all.

BOLAND

I guess I was a write-in.

TOOTSIE

I guess so.

BOLAND

A re-count isn't necessary, I suppose.

ESTELLE

I'd like another recount. I can't believe there aren't more votes for Stacy. You want to let a murderer roam free?

TOOTSIE

You already had your one recount, Estelle. Just accept this. The people have spoken.

ESTELLE

Well, the people will speak again and they will say Stacy is a bitch and a murderer and a complete idiot who ought to be locked in a padded room with no sunlight and left to rot in her own vomit!

(STACEY storms over to Estelle and slaps her across the face)

STACY

I'm a person of worth and you don't have the right to treat me like that!

(ESTELLE is stunned. She says nothing for a moment, as everyone else is also quiet. She has slight tears in her eyes.)

Well, what do you know?
MRS. HILTON

She said I touched her behind...
BOLAND

The little one finally fought back.
MRS. HILTON

She said my dog was making advances on her dog...
BOLAND

Are you girls both alright?
TOOTSIE

And now they say I killed my own pet...
BOLAND

I—I guess I'm okay.
STACY

Estelle?
TOOTSIE

My pharmacist's good name...
BOLAND

ESTELLE
(her demeanor has changed. She is now even-tempered and
displays a warm smile from time to time)
He didn't touch my butt.

Estelle!
TOOTSIE

What?
BOLAND

I said, you didn't touch my butt, Mr. Boland.
ESTELLE

I didn't?
BOLAND

ESTELLE

You never touched my butt. Why would you think that?

TOOTSIE

You said he did, Estelle.

ESTELLE

No, I didn't.

STACY

I told you!

MRS. HILTON

Lying isn't good, dear. I once lied I was a senior citizen when I wasn't—I wanted to get a ten percent discount at Heebies—you know, the donut store. I went right up to the register and spoke in my elderlyist voice I could find, "I'd like a half a dozen jelly filled donuts with my senior citizen discount, please." Oh, I fooled that girl alright. She just rung it up with no questions asked. Well, she asked if I wanted coffee, but you see, I get real bad bathroom problems when I drink coffee, if you know what I mean. I see you smiling, you know what I mean. So, I told her no thank you, of course. I was tempted to get it anyway, just because I could get it ten percent off, and that's not a savings you see every day. Most days you can find something for ten percent off, but not every day can you find everything ten percent off. Which is what it was like at Heebies. On Tuesdays--senior citizen's day--it's twenty percent. But I was there on a Monday or maybe a Wednesday, but it wasn't a Tuesday. Well, I got that discount alright. She brought me my donuts and I only paid \$2.13 for those jelly filled d-nuts. But you know, the next day, I found ten more grey hairs and seven more wrinkle lines. All of a sudden, they were just there. Nature said if I was going to try to reap the benefits of an old woman, I may as well look like one. So if you don't want to look like an old woman, you better stop lying!

ESTELLE

(she hugs MRS. HILTON)

Your story is very touching, Mrs. Hilton. However, I didn't lie about that. Mr. Boland never touched my butt. Why would I accuse him of such a thing?

MRS. HILTON

Hm, that's a good question.

(pause)

BOLAND

Your face is red.

ESTELLE

I know. That's probably because Stacy slapped me and called me the b-word.

TOOTSIE

Well, I admit, Estelle, you have been a bit of a trial today.

ESTELLE

Have I, Tootsie? I didn't think so. I'm sorry you feel that way.

TOOTSIE

Well, I suppose you could have been worse.

ESTELLE

I should think so. It still hurts me to think you view me as a trial, Tootsie.

TOOTSIE

Oh, now, I guess I didn't mean that quite so strongly.

STACY

You have been mean to me all day, Estelle!

ESTELLE

Stacy, you know that's not true. Why are you making things up like that?

STACY

But you've been cursing at me and yelling at me and pushing me. I think that's mean.

ESTELLE

Stacy, maybe you thought I did those things, and I'm really sorry I can't verify your story, but I'm afraid you were mistaken. I don't even swear, remember?

TOOTSIE

(to MRS. HILTON)

I do remember her saying that at her interview.

STACY

But you really did do all those things. Mrs. Hilton, tell her how appalled you were to see her treating me like that.

MRS. HILTON

Hmm, I'm not the best person to ask those kinds of questions to. Ever since I have started getting old, my memory isn't quite what it used to be.

ESTELLE

That's okay, Mrs. Hilton. You know, eating steamed carrots may help to improve your memory.

MRS. HILTON

Is that so?

ESTELLE

Yes.

STACY

No, it's not. That's not true. I know a lot about carrots and that's never even been said about them.

ESTELLE

Well, maybe you don't know as much about carrots as you think you do.

STACY

But I—

TOOTSIE

Now, now, Stacy. Estelle is being perfectly sociable right now. It's quite possible she's been like this all day. What mood we're in ourselves often makes us think differently about the people around us. Why, I just remembered! This morning, I stubbed my toe on a chair leg and maybe that set me off in a negative mood. We never know how something affects us and what we think we see.

STACY

Really?

BOLAND

Maybe my wife isn't dead.

ESTELLE

Don't feel bad, Stacy. I'm not mad at you for slapping me. I forgive you.

STACY

Well, maybe I didn't do that.

ESTELLE

(laughing good-naturedly with TOOTSIE and MRS. HILTON)

Oh, you did, Stacy. That would concern me a little if you didn't remember that.

STACY

Oh, I'm sorry.

ESTELLE

I already forgave you, Stace.
(hugs her)

TOOTSIE

Well, that's nice to see.

STACY

Thanks, Estelle...

BOLAND

Um, excuse me, but what's going to happen to me now?

TOOTSIE

What's that?

MRS. HILTON

Should we call the cops on him?

TOOTSIE

I'm not sure the cops will have time to assist us.

MRS. HILTON

Since my good name has been cleared anyway, and you really don't have anything to do, may you kindly take care of my dog now, Tootsie?

TOOTSIE

Well, Mrs. Hilton, I suppose we're going to have to close down now.

MRS. HILTON

Well, you can surely fit my dog in first, can't you?

TOOTSIE

Now, Mrs. Hilton, if I did that for you, I'd have to do that for everyone and that wouldn't quite be closing down, now would it?

MRS. HILTON

But everyone else has already left. I'm the only customer here.

TOOTSIE

Now that's not true, Mrs. Hilton. Mr. Boland is here too, and he's our customer, as well.

MRS. HILTON

But his dog is dead!

BOLAND

Maybe it's down to two times today now...

STACY

That is true, Tootsie. We're pretty sure Shooshoo was murdered. At least, I think he was.

BOLAND

My reputation has been challenged only two times now—if we take away the behind fib.

TOOTSIE

Oh, Mrs. Hilton, I think you ought to take this opportunity to thank God that you weren't found guilty of murdering another dog. So how's about you quit the complaining and bring your little Gabriella back here tomorrow, hm?

MRS. HILTON

Now, Tootsie, we've always had a good relationship before, and I think your girls are darling creatures, but this really is getting to be quite frustrating.

TOOTSIE

Well, that's the way of the world, Mrs. Hilton. You best be on your way.

MRS. HILTON

But Tootsie--

TOOTSIE

The time is now.

MRS. HILTON

This is an outrage, Tootsie!

TOOTSIE

It certainly is, Mrs. Hilton. It certainly is. Now please make sure you keep your dog on her leash outside. There's quite a bit of traffic this time of day.

MRS. HILTON

I am not pleased.

TOOTSIE

Well, neither am I, but I must respect the police officer who came to us. He ordered that I shut down the business today or my license might be revoked.

MRS. HILTON

He did?

TOOTSIE

He did.

MRS. HILTON

My goodness. What a terrible man!

TOOTSIE

He certainly was, wasn't he?

MRS. HILTON

Well, I had better take my dog out of here before the police come back. I would hate for Brush Them Fleas to be closed down. And in a town such as this! That would be a true outrage.

TOOTSIE

That it would, Mrs. Hilton. That it would. Now you have a nice afternoon.

MRS. HILTON

Why thank you. And you do the same.

(she walks toward door, then stumbles on the box where Shooshoo was placed.)

What's this?

TOOTSIE

Oh, don't look! That's Mr. Boland's dead dog.

BOLAND

Shooshoo. . .

MRS. HILTON

(Picks up dog from the box)

This little thing? This is Shooshoo?

TOOTSIE

Don't look, Mr. Boland. Now put him away, Mrs. Hilton, you'll just add salt to the wound.

MRS. HILTON

Why, this isn't the dog that was making advances to my little Gabriella.

BOLAND

He's not?

MRS. HILTON

Not at all.

STACY

You're getting your pharmacist's good name back, Mr. Boland!

ESTELLE

Cleared of another accusation.

MRS. HILTON

No, the dog that was coming on to my Gabriella was a real dog. This is just a stuffed animal.

BOLAND

What?

MRS. HILTON

Yes, this is just a stuffed animal. See?

(pulls up the tag)

Made in Taiwan.

STACY

So what does this mean?

ESTELLE

Well, stuffed animals can't die.

TOOTSIE

That's true.

STACY

So Shooshoo isn't dead?

ESTELLE

I guess not! If he's not real to begin with, he can't die.

STACY

Look, Mr. Boland! You're cleared of the last accusation too! You couldn't have killed Shooshoo because Shooshoo can't die. He's not even a dog!

BOLAND

Not a dog?

TOOTSIE

The girls are right, Mr. Boland. Give him the toy, Mrs. Hilton.

MRS. HILTON

See? There's a silly ole bullet hole through the dog, but nothing a little stitching couldn't patch up.

(MR. BOLAND handles the dog)

BOLAND

You mean, he's never been real?

ESTELLE

Apparently not.

BOLAND

But I thought he was real.

ESTELLE

I guess you were wrong.

STACY

Don't feel bad though. I thought he was real too.

TOOTSIE

Me too. How were we to know what was real and what wasn't?

STACY

It is getting really hard to tell these days.

MRS. HILTON

I knew. I knew it wasn't real. Stuffed animals aren't real.

BOLAND

Oh...

TOOTSIE

And we thought he was dead all this time. What good news this is!

STACY

How silly we've been!

BOLAND

But he was my friend.

ESTELLE

I wonder why I didn't notice this sooner.

TOOTSIE

A stuffed animal! We had the police here and everything! What a wasted day.

BOLAND

What a wasted—[life]

TOOTSIE

All this over a stuffed animal! A stuffed animal, can you imagine?

(TOOTSIE, ESTELLE, STACY and MRS. HILTON all laugh good-naturedly and say such remarks as, "how could this be", "imagine that", and "a stuffed animal!" etc.. They gather around MR. BOLAND and the stuffed dog. MR. BOLAND freezes while holding the dog and does not move for the remainder of the play.)

MRS. HILTON

Well, what an afternoon. I guess I'd best be getting Gabriella home. I'll be in at nine tomorrow, Tootsie.

TOOTSIE

We'll be ready for you, Mrs. Hilton.

MRS. HILTON

I think I'll stop by Heebies and get me an avocado jelly filled d-nut. I'll bring some in tomorrow for you. Oh, I better bring some in for Jenny too. You were right, Tootsie. She loved the idea of such a donut!

TOOTSIE

Yes, well, that's very considerate of you, Mrs. Hilton.

MRS. HILTON

Have a good day, girls.

ESTELLE and STACY

Bye, Mrs. Hilton.

(MRS. HILTON exits.)

TOOTSIE

Alright, Mr. Boland. You ought to be heading home, too.

(he does not move)

Mr. Boland?

(he still does not move)

Hm.

STACY

I really don't think he is my father after all.

ESTELLE

No?

STACY

(pokes MR. BOLAND as though he were a sculpture she were forbidden to touch)

Nah, he's definitely not my father.

Common mistake. ESTELLE

It's been a long day, girls. TOOTSIE

Yeah. ESTELLE

Let's start fresh tomorrow, hm? I already turned the sign off. TOOTSIE

Sounds good. ESTELLE

Thanks. I can't believe that was a stuffed animal.
(gathers belongings)
I'll see you tomorrow, Tootsie. STACY

Alright. Take care, darling. TOOTSIE

I'm going for a smoke. STACY

That's really bad for you, Stacy. You should quit. ESTELLE

I thought you—I mean, you always...I don't think I do smoke. STACY

Well, I'm glad you just quit. Wanna see a movie with me with, Stace? ESTELLE

Wow, sure. Thanks, Estelle. STACY

You girls have fun. TOOTSIE

Bye. ESTELLE and STACY

I hear there's a new funny movie out. This actor plays, like, ten characters all himself. ESTELLE

STACY

Really?

(ESTELLE and STACY exit)

(TOOTSIE stares at MR. BOLAND's body in his chair. She tries to push the chair in and MR. BOLAND topples over onto the floor. He remains in the same position, however. TOOTSIE seems a bit concerned at first by this response and stands next to him wondering what to do next. She picks up a push broom and tries to move the body over a little. It does not budge.)

TOOTSIE

A stuffed animal. All this time.

(she smiles and shakes her head)

What fools we've been.

(TOOTSIE continues to smile peacefully and puts the broom away. She picks up her purse and walks toward the door. She turns off a light and exits without looking back.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



Tara is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University's MFA program in Dramatic Writing. Her work has been presented by Fusion Theatre, The Directors Company, Le Petit Theatre de Terrebonne, Theatre One, Westchester Collaborative Theater, One Armed Man, Oracle Theatre, Inc, the Bobik Theatre Ensemble, The Acme Theatre Company, The Harlequin Players, Woman Seeking..., and numerous schools, universities and colleges including Gardner-Webb, Prince Williams, and Colgate. Her work has also showcased at the Artists of Tomorrow Festival in NYC, The Bangkok Community Theatre Fringe Festival, the Pittsburgh New Works Series and the Last Frontier Theatre Conference in Alaska. Students, teachers and actors world-wide have utilized her plays and monologues for competitions, Directing, Acting and Dramatic Literature courses and workshops in schools, colleges and theatres. Serial monologues she wrote were performed for two years by the internationally recognized receptionist-robot, Valerie. She has taught Playwriting and Screenwriting at Carnegie Mellon, the Pittsburgh Public Theatre, and for The Westport Country Playhouse, and she has led Creative Dramatics Workshops for children in underserved areas throughout New York and New Jersey. Additionally, she toured in a Children's Theatre Troupe, which she wrote for, co-directed, and performed in. Tara's work has been published by YouthPLAYS, Oxford Press South Africa, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA), The Hunger Journal, Meriweather Publishing and Applause Theatre & Cinema. She is a two-time recipient of the Shubert Fellowship in Dramatic Writing, the Sloan Screenwriting Fellowship, the New Works for Young Women [Actors] Award and is a member of the Dramatist's Guild. Tara has written children's books, short stories, a novel, and writes and records music in the chick-core rap band, [Girl Crusade](#). She lives in Westchester County with her husband and two dramatic children.

**For more information about Tara Meddaugh or her work,
visit her website at www.tameddaugh.com.**