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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

Speckled Birds

by Shirley Lauro

SAMUEL FRENCH

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SPECKLED BIRDS was first produced by Amie Brockway with the Open Eye Theater in Margaretville, New York on May 17, 2003. It was directed by Sharone Stacy. The cast was as follows:

ANGIE (EVANGELINE) . . . . . Alisa Fersch
THEO . . . . . Max Sapinsky
GRANDMA . . . . . Agnes Laub
CLARICE . . . . . Enda Nolan
DAD . . . . . Richard DeGenero
MISS DUVAL . . . . . Patricia Van Tassel

SPECKLED BIRDS was presented in part by grants from the A. Lindsay and Olive B. O'Conner Foundation.

CHARACTERS

ANGIE (EVANGELINE) – A country girl. Somewhat naïve. 14. Freshman in high school. Tall, lanky, athletic build but with long, lovely hair, a soulful, beautiful face and a courageous soul. She wears make-shift athletic, then too big jeans and shirt, with her shirt-tail hanging out and later, good athletic clothes. White *(see Author's Note).*

THEO – A little older than Angie. Awkward, clumsy, ungainly in some way. Can be very tall, thin, or heavy. Teasing nicknames can be "TEDDY BEAR" or "TEDDY TWIG," etc., depending on his physical demeanor. Brilliant computer "nerd." Great heart and sense of humor but painfully shy and needy. White.

GRANDMA – 70ish. Strong featured, Appalachian woman descended from generations of coal miners. A woman who's come through hard times and survived. Likeable, wise, tough and strong as bespeaks her heritage – but aging now. White.

DAD – 30ish. His spirit appears in play as Angie remembers him when he went to War : a strong, warm hearted father and a genuine Appalachian man in a camouflage War uniform. White.

CLARICE – Late 30s. Wears what she thinks are extremely attractive clothes that show her off, although she's a little too plump, and they don't. Hostess of the Crystal Café, where she wears black short dress, frilly which apron, very high heels. Angie's aunt by marriage. Calls it as she sees it, but doesn't see it. Or calls it – because she is a kind of a "Knoxville Mrs. Malaprop" – misusing and mispronouncing words. But thinks her syntax and vocabulary're great. Clarice is also lonely and stuck in her life and needy of love. She is trying to overcome this. Somehow. White

MISS DUVAL – Middle-aged woman *(No male substitution, if possible).* Suit, glasses. Projects a sweet, naiveté, coupled with a prissy, "I'm only here to help and I am right, good, wonderful" quality. Underneath, she wants to hang onto her job and turf above all, and is desperate that there be no cause trouble, scandal, or suspicion anywhere near her. White.

SETTING

A small, rural American town somewhere in the Appalachians. There is a sharp split in the community between the "haves-and-have-nots."

TIME

Now.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Play is not realistic. Sense of fluidity throughout. An other-worldly quality to piece that should sift through the play beneath its surface.

It is possible that the character of Angie could be played by an actress of an ethnicity other than White.

To Joshua, and the world of Angies and Theos in which he lives.

ACT I

(Lights up. A corner of high school stadium. A boy, **THEO** *sits on bleacher back to audience.)*

LOUDSPEAKER. *(V.O.)* …And…the qualifying runners for the varsity girl's relay team are: number 19, Lindsay Saybrook; number 42, Jennifer Caldwell; number 11, Margaret Swift; number 90, Anna Jo Brooks; number 48, Liza Durand.

Report to Coach's office following completion of try-outs, please. Next category: girls' 50 yard dash. Entrants report to start line please. Entrants competing for places in the varsity 50 yard dash come to start line please: Sudie Peppercorn, number 57; Juliet Spooner, number 59; Elizabeth Shay, number 92; Angie Trueblood, number 53 –

*(***ANGIE** *appears, band around forearm marked "53." Large boys boxer shorts, large boy's T-shirt, old canvas sneakers.)*

Joleen Smith, number 12, Mary Lou Hunter, 56; Susannah Fairly, 7, Gwynda Johns –

(As names drone on, **ANGIE** *rips off armband. She moves down aisle and away from field as* **THEO***, the boy, rises, looking after her.)*

Numbers 57, 59, 92, 66, 56, 7, present. Number 53 absent. 53?? Angie Trublood??. Absent. Not accounted for. Report start line immediately 53!

*(***ANGIE** *pauses, looking back.)*

Start line. ANGIE TRUEBLOOD, 53. REPORT!

*(***ANGIE** *moves farther, faster away.)*

53?? 53??

(She discards armband.)

LOUDSPEAKER. *(cont.)* DISQUALIFIED!! Report to coaches office #53. Disqualified from try-out competition. ANGIE TRUEBLOOD! REPORT!

*(***THEO** *exits as* **ANGIE** *moves from area faster, running to new area: lights up. Old style aluminum trailer. Rickety rail porch attached catwalk ladder to roof.* **ANGIE** *looks around warily, skins up ladder to trailer roof, goes to old trunk, takes out athlete's trophies, guitar, militarily folded American flag, votive candles and matches. She puts statues, candles in circle, lights candles and sits in center clutching flag. Trailer door opens.* **CLARICE** *appears in waitress' hostess outfit, and hat.)*

CLARICE. Angie?

ANGIE. *(startled)* Aunt Clarice?

CLARICE. Thought I heard you banging around up there. Get down!

*(***ANGIE** *blows out candles, comes to roof edge.)*

ANGIE. But it's not first of the month.

CLARICE. I am not gonna bust my lung brayin like a mule! Get down!

*(***ANGIE** *starts down.)*

Now, listen up! Right in the middle of my most important hostessing shift – at the Crystal Cafe – when all them tips of substantiation come rolling in? The clinic from *here* calls me to come up here from all the way down to *Knoxville*! *Immediately!* On account of what your Grandma did.

ANGIE. CLINIC?

(She skins hurriedly down the rest of the way.)

CLARICE. I'm the responsible relative they say and have to drive clear up here to her bring her home.

ANGIE. She's here?

*(***ANGIE** *starts into trailer.)*

CLARICE. Asleep! And leave her be!

ANGIE. What happened?

CLARICE. Took the wrong medicine. Got dizzy 'n fell! Then she gets up – which she shouldn't have moved of course – calls 911 and ends up at the clinic. Where they locate me. You give out the phone number of the Crystal Cafe to that Miss Dimwit Duval Social Worker over there?

ANGIE. Grandma's all right?

(She makes a start again to trailer.)

CLARICE. Leave her be! Like I said she is sleepin it off. Could've chewed the whole bottle here alone of course Why she could've broke her neck with them bones of osteoporosis she's growin and that Brain State Predicament's that's about to settle in.

ANGIE. Last check-up the doctor said older people all have brittle bones.

CLARICE. *(studying* **ANGIE***)* Angie?

ANGIE. What?

CLARICE. I am gonna tell you something, Angie – there is not a normal situation in her instance…

ANGIE. Huh?

CLARICE. At the clinic conference – where I just was – I have had privately confirmed by the doctor – there is an osteoporosis diagnosis for her. And a peculiar Brain State of Confusion settlin in.

ANGIE. It's not what he told me last month at her check-up.

CLARICE. *(still studying her)* Also – that Miss Dimwit Duval Social Worker? She stipulated – before she cut out – this not a fit place for her to live. Especially when I imparted how the heat here is on the bum.

*(***GRANDMA** *appears in trailer door,* **ANGIE** *running to her. Embrace, and kiss.)*

ANGIE. Grandma, Grandma! You okay?

GRANDMA. Old Grandma's fine, sweetheart – but, look it here – what're you doin home so early?

ANGIE. They – they let out early – teachers' conference! Sure you're okay?

GRANDMA. Have to watch them pills is all.

CLARICE. Pill's is only the start of the trouble that's been borrowed here. How long you think before something else rears its ugly head and really cracks her neck? When she forgets and commits a more dangerous act on account of her Brain State? Clearly this situation has come to a rolling boil.

GRANDMA. Clarice, I'm gonna tell you something: Angie and me can solve whatever problems go on here.

CLARICE. Well, that was then and this is now. And where you are is what you've done!

GRANDMA. *(glancing at twilight, suppressing a smile)* Well, where we are is about night, Clarice. And we just know how you don't like to drive that truck of Brewster's on the highway nights.

CLARICE. Rattle trap that it is. And all that son of yours has managed to provide these many years. Includin *no steady job.*

GRANDMA. *(chuckling softly)* Well now, Brewster? Probably better if he'd've stayed country, Clarice.

CLARICE. *(stunned)* And miss the lights of Knoxville?

GRANDMA. Well –

*(***GRANDMA***, chuckling, imitating Brewster: slow, lilting voice, ambling gait of a large, patient, man:)*

We all know he's like his Daddy 'n his Daddy's Daddy 'n his Daddy's Daddy's Daddy! All of 'em sweet slow goin coal minin men.

*(***ANGIE** *laughs.* **CLARICE** *is not amused.)*

CLARICE. Minin days is yesterday's mail. But "slow" sure hits him on the head!

*(***CLARICE** *starts off.)*

GRANDMA. Take care now –

CLARICE. *(rambling to herself as she goes:)* Two of 'em livin like wack-a-doo gypsies – perched on the throughway – and who knows what comes roarin off that exit on their motorcycle with tattooed muscles and rings through their nose!

(She exits.)

*(***ANGIE** *and* **GRANDMA** *burst out laughing.)*

ANGIE. She's a piece a work, Grandma – I don't like her much –

GRANDMA. *(still chuckling)* Don't pay her any mind, honey – Clarice is twenty minutes once a month to us, 25 dollars cash, and two pieces of her restaurant coconut pie.

(pause)

ANGIE. Maybe. I don't trust her. Wish they'd called *me* from the clinic instead.

GRANDMA. Told 'em not to on account of your try-outs. I –

(She looks at her.)

Lord, darlin, you make it to that varsity team? I forgot to ask…

(beat)

ANGIE. *(not looking at her)* Uh – um-hmm…I did…but I –

GRANDMA. *(interrupting, tremendously excited)* Prayed my heart out to God for it, Angie!

(She hugs her.)

Gonna get first, like your daddy: school athletic trophies – name called right out at them assemblies – before he went to War…

*(***ANGIE** *looks at her, trying to tell her something:)*

ANGIE. Mmm – Grandma- I –

GRANDMA. *(interrupting, not hearing)* Now *you're* gonna make our dream come true! Win us some a them trophies! Get you one a them athletic scholarships to college. Be a coach or teacher sometime! Give Ole Grandma somethin to live for. Oh, Lord, let that Dream happen one day!

(From pocket of sweater on rocker, she pulls bill, gives it to **ANGIE**.*)*

GRANDMA. *(cont.)* Buy somethin pretty for your hair? Combs with them sparklies? A barrette? To celebrate what you done today.

*(***GRANDMA** *kisses* **ANGIE**, *puts sweater on.)*

Chill's in the air.

*(***GRANDMA** *goes in.* **ANGIE** *runs to roof, sobbing. Lights out, then up: shadowy corner of stainless steel and black marble kitchen. Counter, fridge, stool.* **THEO** *enters, flips on pendulum light that swings, throwing ominous shadows. Stainless steel fridge and black marble counter gleam. Laptop sits on counter. And birdcage with bird. He turns on laptop, talks to bird:)*

THEO. Time for dinner at the Mansion
Gated houses on the hill!
With birdseed for my Speckles.
So eat girl! Get your fill!

(He pours seed into trough, chuckling.)

My Speckles gets Hartz Mountain.
Poured as fast as Theo's able –

(Now puts frozen food from fridge in microwave.)

Then Theo zaps his Healthy Choice
One, two, three, four

(Microwave rings.)

And it's ready
For the table!

(He sits at counter with food.)

Hey, Speckles? "No T.S. Eliot, no Robert Frost, Huh? Huh? But not too bad for your Big Bleep Boss!"

(He laughs at this rhyme too.)

Huh, girl, huh? Pretty good rhymester, punster, Joke of all Trades?

(He laughs, remembers something:)

Oh! Speckles? The M&M's! I have forgot!
And we know how Theo needs a lot!!"

(He pulls two pound bag of candy from drawer, eating some. Computer bell sound then voice from laptop.)

VOICE. *(V.O)* You've got mail!

THEO. *(jumping from counter, ecstatic)* Hey, hey, hey! *THEO HAS MAIL?*

(He jams M&M's in mouth, punches key on computer, talking to it:)

'OPEN!'

(reading)

"Rik from Reykjavik!"

(to bird, ecstatic)

Oh God, Speckles? The teen from Iceland? Remember when Theo went on THE CHAT ROOM? Yesterday? Dinnertime, old girl? And found a message: "Rik of Reykjavik, high school sophomore, seeks same with American teen"? Remember I answered? Now *he's* answered me! From Iceland!

*(***THEO** *reading laptop.)*

"What's up with you? Theo?"

*(***THEO** *turns to Speckles.)*

"What's up with you? Theo?" He's rhyming! Speckles? He rhymes too!

(continues reading:)

"In answer to your question: Yes, it *is* midnight in Reykjavik when it's dinner time in the good old U.S.A. It's midnight now!"

(to Speckles)

Oh my God, Speckles? Night's turned to day, day's turned to night! He's taken the trouble to write *me* at midnight! Awesome to even *think* about, huh, old girl?

(reads more)

THEO. *(cont.)* "So who are you, Theo Green?"

(to Speckles:)

Oh Jesus Christ in heaven! He wants to know about Theo?

(typing, reading)

"This – is – Theo – and – this is – about – Theo – he has Speckles, his bird – and – in the yard he's got – five – cats – three dogs – from – Bide-a-wee–"

Send!

(Punches "Send" key. A beat, then computer bell sounds goes off, he clicks key. Reading:)

"What is Bide-a-wee"?

(laughing:)

Oh, that is very rich, isn't it, Speckles, old girl – that is very, very rich: he keeps on wanting to know!

*(***THEO** *typing, reading:)*

"A – place for abandoned strays – the cats and dogs. Speckles was in yard with broken wing. Pushed from nest by others. THAT DRIVES THEO NUTS!"

(Punches "Send" key. A beat. Computer bell sounds. **THEO***, reading:)*

"Who helps? Brother? Sister? Mom or Pop?"

*(***THEO** *pauses, then types.)*

I nurture animals. Only child with so-called "Mom and Pop." "Dentists is the better name! They're never home."

(Clicks "Send" key. A beat. Computer bell sounds.)

THEO. *(cont.) (reading:)* "What the hell's nurture mean?

(typing, reading:)

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary – nurturer: "one – who supplies food – protection – and promotes growth."

(Clicks "Send" key. Beat. Computer bell sounds. **THEO** *Reading:)*

"Hello? Stray animals and words all you're into? You into Shaq? NFL? My favorites maybe: The Braves?

*(***THEO** *wolfs down candy, starts typing.)*

"Not into sports – don't follow them – "

(Punches "Send" key. Beat. Bell sounds.)

*(***THEO***'s stunned as scans message. Silence. Then, barely able to read:)*

"Sorry. Signing off – Peace out – "

(Types, reads. Very desperate:)

Peace – out – Rik –

(Punches "send" key, turns off computer, gobbles candy bar from pocket, picks up the cage, starts pacing around with it, turning lights out, one after another.)

So – well – Speckles – that was something, huh girl? Little interlude anyhow? But now what, old girl? Now what? Now what? Now what?

(All lights out. Lights up on roof. **ANGIE** *sitting, tightly clutches American flag. Guitar is beside her. She gets up, lights candles, sits in middle of the circle. She looks around slowly, as if expecting something.)*

ANGIE. Down in the valley
The valley so low.
Hang you head over –
Hear the wind blow.

*(***ANGIE** *stops singing. Whispering:)*

Daddy? Our song? Hear it? I haven't called you for so long! But hear it now and come! Please come!

(Looking around, then sings again, very softly:)

Roses are red dear,
Violets are blue –
Angels in heaven,
Know I love you.

(Now whispers softly:)

ANGIE. *(cont.)* Please!

(She starts singing again:)

Roses are red dear,
Violets are blue –

(In distance we hear **DAD***'s voice:)*

DAD. Angels in heaven
Know I love you…

(Now she sees him on roof in diffuse, surreal, whitish light. He wears a camouflage uniform, as he wore when He went to War. He always says what she remembers him saying when he was alive. And he relates to her only from what she remembers of him in the past when he was alive. As she calls him into the present world, it is a world he no longer inhabits or knows about.)

DAD. And I do love you, Evangeline…always…no matter what happens…remember that…

ANGIE. Daddy?

DAD. Evangeline?

ANGIE. Listen – I have no one else to tell this to –

DAD. Now while I'm gone to war – be a good girl, hear? Go to church. Pray to God – who's gonna help you through. And listen to your Grandma. She's gonna take care of you fine –

ANGIE. She hasn't felt right for a long time to tell the truth. And I can't let Clarice know one thing. You know how you hated her and she was so selfish and you never trusted her? Well, nothing's changed! And I can't let Grandma know anything either on account of she can't take it anymore Daddy.

DADDY. Now Grandma's not so young anymore, so mind her real good and help her out.

ANGIE. I just lied to her – and I hate to lie to her! But I – I don't want to break her heart. I'm afraid to hurt her – she's getting frail Daddy – it's scaring me and –

DAD. *(interrupting)* Grandma's gonna be strong for you, Evangeline 'til I get back from War. She'll be your rock. But don't lean too hard –

EVANGELINE. I shouldn't even be at that dumb "preppie" school except I got zoned in because she wouldn't sell our place when that throughway got a contract to –

DAD. *(interrupting)* Why – at that school – when you're a big girl? You're gonna be a runner like your Daddy – in the satin uniform they'll put you in – blue and gold! You're gonna "run like the wind."

ANGIE. Can you understand something? They don't give out satin uniforms anymore! YOU HAVE TO BUY THEM YOURSELF! I'm the poorest kid, Daddy. It's rich guy's school now. Everybody buys their own gear – but me. And I don't know –

(Phone rings.)

GRANDMA. *(V.O.)* Angie?

ANGIE. *(calling down:)* I'll get it, Grandma! Stay in bed!

(She turns to **DADDY**.*)*

ANGIE. I have to go…

(He is gone. She goes down ladder, phone rings.)

GRANDMA. *(V.O.)* Angie?

ANGIE. I'm getting it!

(She runs into trailer, returns to porch with phone, not wanting to be overheard.)

Yes – this is Angie – well – I – I wasn't feeling well – I – the – the school nurse wasn't around when I left. My Grandma? Well – she – she's at a church meeting tonight…Me? Tomorrow? Principal's office – 9 a.m. –

(She clicks off.)

ANGIE. *(cont.)* Oh-mi-God!

GRANDMA. *(V.O.)* Who was it, honey?

ANGIE. Wrong number. Go back to sleep –

(Blackout. Lights up school office. Next day. **THEO** *'s copying, pulling sheets from copier, stacking them in piles. He stacks elaborately, twisting and flipping pages. as he goes.* **ANGIE** *enters, watching.)*

THEO. Now "A"'s on top and "B"'s next down
And then there's "C" and you flip 'em all around.

(He flips pile on desk.)

Then "D" is fourth, and "E" is next
And that's one-eighth of the 9th grade class.
Now –

(Seeing **ANGIE***, he turns to desk, embarrassed, busies himself.)*

ANGIE. I – I'm Angie Trublood?

*(***THEO** *doesn't turn around.)*

Principal just told me you were in charge here – volunteering time –

(Silence. Then:)

"Computer Whiz," he said.

*(***THEO** *keeps stacking papers.)*

I'm – I'm in here to work rest of the week…this last period…so – whatever you want me to do –

(He keeps stacking, restacking paper.)

(trying to ease the situation) I'm – on detention – skipping school…principal must've told you that…?

(He keeps shuffling papers.)

I – I can use a computer – but not too well. I could file though – only like not that way – I mean like flipping pages – rhyming – is that some trick to make it go fast?

THEO. *(not turning around)* Just a stupid way of amusing myself.

(an awkward silence)

ANGIE. *(seeing he can't cope with her in the office; handling the situation:)* You must be Teddy? That's what the principal said.

THEO. "Teddy Bear"?

*(***THEO** *whirls around now.)*

That's what the man probably said, isn't that the case? That's usually the name that he employs.

ANGIE. Actually "Good Old Teddy Bear " is what he said.

THEO. A person could hate being called that!

(She looks at him, he at her.)

ANGIE. I'm sorry –

(beat)

THEO. Why? It's what *he* said. *They* said actually.

ANGIE. Who?

THEO. Jocks laid it on "Teddy Bear"! Gym class? Because I'm clumsy. Can't ordinate – slam dunk – anything! The coach let them name me that. "Hey! Here comes 'Teddy Bear' fumphun down the Court!" Coach laughed. Name stuck! A person could hate Jocks! Coaches!

(She laughs a little.)

ANGIE. They sure could…

(They connect again, looking at each other. He looks at her, thoughtfully, remembering something.)

THEO. You've negative experiences with athletics too… right?

(silence)

Here – you want a chuckle?

ANGIE. Tell me a joke you mean?

*(***THEO** *pulls out package of candy. She takes one, he eats fistful.)*

I didn't know you meant candy…

THEO. Understandable. Because they give candy names on purpose that have *double entendres.*

ANGIE. Double what?

THEO. French. Means two meanings – one word. Advertizing gimmick. Promotes a product. They are Chuckles. You eat them, they'll make you happy and you'll "chuckle." And who doesn't want to be happy? Want another one? Try this flavor – the best. Makes you happy for sure.

(They both laugh, chew candy.)

Right?

(He pulls out another candy bag. they both take candy.)

THEO. Roll this around with your tongue. "Goo-ber." African for peanuts. Tastes – and feels like it sounds, doesn't it?

(He rolls candy in mouth:)

Cho-co-late and pea-nuts – "Goo-ber."

ANGIE. Sort of.

(She laughs a little. So does he.)

THEO. Onomatopoeia's the name for that. Know it?

ANGIE. Teacher talked about it - – I wasn't listening really –

THEO. "Skittles" is onomatopoeia too. Means bones – sounds like skeleton! "Skittles – Skeleton!"

(produces box of Skittles)

Looks like little bones

(He eats some.)

And "Gummy Bears"? Sounds mushy-chewy – like "gummmm"?

(He takes pack of gummies from pocket, eats one.)

ANGIE. You have so much candy!

THEO. They call me that: "The Gummy Geek."

(silence)

ANGIE. *(studying him, eyes linking:)* Anyone ever call you a name you like?

(beat)

Theodore?

THEO. Hate it. My father's name!

(Beat. She looks at him:)

ANGIE. What name then?

(silence)

THEO. *(looking down)* Theo. Never have been called it though…oh well – not true – not true. Brief encounter. Recently a guy from Iceland emailed me as: "Theo."

ANGIE. Theo. Its an unusual name.

(beat)

THEO. *(embarrassed)* Vincent Van Gogh's brother was Theo. Always liked him and his name

ANGIE. Vincent Van Gogh was a painter. I know that. But Theo Van Gogh?

THEO. He helped his brother, Vincent, get along…because – can you believe this – in his whole life Vincent Van Gogh sold only *one* painting! Theo got supported him, helped him through *everything!*

(Silence. She studies him, he looks up and they search each other's eyes again.)

Something wrong?

ANGIE. I don't like Angie either – sounds like a heart disease –

(They keep looking at each other. Connecting.)

THEO. *(Still looking at her, their eyes connecting. Then:)* Angela then?

ANGIE. Evangeline…my real name. My Daddy named me – found it in a book. But nobody calls me that except my Daddy does – did…

THEO. Did?

(beat)

ANGIE. He died…

(A silence. They are gazing at each other again. Something deeply connecting between them.)

THEO. Evangeline's a Greek name. Know what it means?

ANGIE. No.

THEO. "Little angel who brings good times and tidings to everyone."

ANGIE. *(affected, looking away)* Oh?

(looking back again)

What's Theo mean?

THEO. *(bursting into laugh)* Stupid meaning.

ANGIE. What?

THEO. *(cynically)* "A gift of God."

ANGIE. But that's a wonderful meaning!

THEO. To whom? In hot pursuit of that answer from day one!

(They search each others eyes.)

"Gift of God" to whom???

ANGIE. *(searching his eyes)* Your family?

(He starts stacking papers in elaborate manner.)

THEO. Let's file, let's file.
We'll make a pile!
And twirl the papers for awhile.

ANGIE. *(continuing to watch him)* You rhyme for different reasons, huh? Not just to amuse yourself and keep from getting bored. Right?

(He's silent, still turned away.)

I'm sorry – I didn't mean to pry. Not my business what you do or how – or even why you're here…

(Silence as **ANGIE** *picks up large pile of folders, puts them in drawers. Then trying to ease things for him and the awkward tension, and his embarrassment.)*

ANGIE. Well – in case you're wondering – I was supposed to try out for varsity – the 50 yard dash? Like I wanted to do it for my Grandma's sake. But I never even went to one practice…I don't look right…my gear – shoes – is what I mean. I just couldn't handle practice or the try-outs. I cut right out when it was my turn.

(She keeps filing.)

THEO. I saw you.

(She whirls around.)

ANGIE. ME?

THEO. School try-outs are open – everybody welcome on those bleachers. Theo goes. Lunch period? Nice day. Sun shining. Theo keeps informed –

ANGIE. *(embarrassed, turning away)* Oh-mi-God! You were there?

(beat)

THEO. *(quietly)* You looked all right…nice in fact – graceful – whatever you were wearing in the warm-up.

(She's turns away, embarrassed but pleased as he looks down, saying softly:)

If you went into training – practiced? I – I bet you could make varsity…and run like the wind –

(She looks at him startled.)

I say something wrong?

(Silence. Then:)

ANGIE. *(softly)* Someone else said that about me is all –

(beat)

THEO. Well, you could, I bet –

ANGIE. The girl's coach doesn't really want me in varsity anyhow. I'm like invisible in that gym.

THEO. INVISIBLE?

ANGIE. She sucks up to the rich girls. And seems like everybody's rich! It's like they're the ones make varsity. She coaches golf at Grassy Knoll Country Club – where all their folks belong.

THEO. Like my parents. They hang out there – after work – week-ends – golf – swimming – drinking –

(Bell rings.)

ANGIE. It went so fast. I'm sorry – I haven't helped you with anything –

THEO. *(looking at her)* Yes…you have…

(She starts out.)

ANGIE. *(looking back as they both smile a little:)* Well, peace out…Theo –

(He looks away.)

Something wrong?

(He looks at her, their eyes linking.)

THEO. Nothing –

(She exits. He is excited. He stuffs candy in his mouth, hurries from school area to his kitchen. Lights up. He tweeks birdcage.)

Now listen, Speckles? She is brave! Spunky! She came back to school on her own! For a detention she didn't even deserve!

(starts pacing, stuffs candy)

WHO WOULDN'T LEAVE THAT STADIUM UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF THINKING THEY DON'T LOOK RIGHT? WOULD BE MADE FUN OF?

(pacing faster)

And who says she doesn't look right? I noticed her! In warm-ups! Lots of girls running, jumping – but she's the only one with long hair flying. Long slender arms – legs – like she was almost flying, Speckles! Know what I mean? Huh? Huh? She's the one caught the eye

(stops looking at bird)

Know what else? It's like we know each other already – like we've talked personally about stuff before – gone through things together before when we haven't actually – we understand each other somehow, Speckles – in some deep, spiritual way…

(He feeds seed to Speckles, eats candy, paces:)

THEO. *(cont.)* It's a spiritual name actually – Evangeline. She liked –

(pause)

Hey, hey, hey! GOOGLE!

(He goes to laptop, flips it open, punching keys.)

"Evangeline"! Henry – Wordsworth – Longfellow" – it's a Prehistoric poem practically – a classic, Speckles, so it has to be here – public domain – free download – Yup! "EVANGELINE"! It's there! Now which font? Which font? Fancy! Fancy Olde English font! And away we go!

(looks over at Speckles)

Gonna make a nice cover with colored graphics for it too, Speckles! Use all this know-how Teddy Bear's stored up for something for a change!

(BLACKOUT. LIGHTS UP on trailer. **ANGIE** *on roof in center of the circle of trophies, holding flag. Candles lit.)*

ANGIE. *(singing in upbeat, happy way)*

Roses are red, my dear,
Violets are blue –

(Silence as she looks around.)

Daddy? Come! I have something special to tell! VERY SPECIAL! PLEASE COME HERE!

(silence)

Roses are red, my dear,
Violets are blue –

DAD. *(from far away)*

Angels in heaven
Know I love you!

*(***DAD** *appears.)*

ANGIE. *(bursting with excitement)* Oh Daddy! Listen? There's a boy at school – a certain boy –

(beat)

DAD. Always remember, Evangeline – when my girl grows up, she'll meet a boy that's very fine

ANGIE. Now – you have to understand: he's way weird – like I mean not *weird* exactly. Strange – well, maybe not *strange* exactly – but not like other boys – he talks funny – not like "ha-ha" funny. Peculiar – well, not *peculiar* exactly – different –

DADDY. And he'll be a kind and gentle boy –

ANGIE. He knows so much! Like genius! Awesome actually. Computer, poems, art – definitions – everything there is to know about words actually.

DAD. He'll be a wonderful boy – the boy my girl will meet –

ANGIE. He doesn't know it, but – well, I have noticed him before. The bus? He won't sit down. Afraid he won't look right in the seat or the person next to him will say something rotten. I bet. He's way scared of lots of things, I think. But he's cool…

DAD. But most of all – he'll appreciate and accept and understand my girl! He'll see how beautiful she is…

(A silence. **ANGIE** *gazes thoughtfully at him. Then:)*

ANGIE. Daddy?

DAD. Evangeline?

ANGIE. Was my Mama beautiful to you? In her person? In her heart?

(pause)

DAD. Your Mama was the most beautiful girl I ever saw. In her person…in her heart. Had the voice of a nightingale too when she played her sweet guitar…

(silence)

ANGIE. *(looking thoughtfully at him a moment)* Maybe – maybe if I could find her now – if…

DAD. She turned on us and left, Evangeline. You were a baby. She ran out on you.

ANGIE. There's a TV show every day, Daddy – *The Finder*? They help people – sometimes they do a segment where they help teens find lost parents – if you write your story in and they pick you…I even got a form in the mail to write in –

DAD. She's gone forever!

(Silence. She looks hard at him.)

ANGIE. But if I got on that show they'd help me find her – I saw them find some boy's Dad once, and they got reunited. *Right on the show!*

DAD. She changed!

ANGIE. She might've changed back again by now –

DAD. She betrayed us, Evangeline!

ANGIE. Maybe she wouldn't betray me now I'm big. They have a missing person's center on the show, helping –

(She moves away, thinking.)

If they could find her now – I could tell her all about this boy! *She'd* help me figure out what to wear, I bet. And what to say…how to behave…

DAD. Forget her, Evangeline! She's never coming back! Remember that –

(Blackout. Lights up. **CLARICE***'s bedroom. Knoxville. Phone rings.* **CLARICE** *hurries in. She's just come home and wears waitress uniform, carries pastry box which she quickly sets down. She punches the speakerphone on.)*

CLARICE. The Brewster Trublood residence. Am I audio?

(Lights up, corner of an office. **MISS DUVAL** *sits at desk on phone.)*

MISS DUVAL. *(smiling:)* Mrs. Trublood, this is Miss Duval? Social Services? We met at the clinic conference regarding Angie's Grandma?

(Beat. **CLARICE** *opens pastry box, takes bite of pastry.)*

CLARICE. When I came all the way up there one hundred and fifteen miles each way middle of my professional business day, you mean?

MISS DUVAL. Yes.

CLARICE. Well, it is the end of my professional business day at the present time, Miss Duval.

(She takes off high-heels. She has swollen feet and they hurt. She slides into her fluffy mules, takes another bite of pastry.)

MISS DUVAL. And don't think I'm not sorry to trouble you again, Mrs. Trublood. But – well – Grandma has been found walking close to the throughway –

CLARICE. SHE GOT HIT?

*(***MISS DUVAL** *stands, carrying phone receiver with her.)*

MISS DUVAL. No, a motorist picked her up and brought her to headquarters. They notified us. And I wanted to call you.

CLARICE. *(starts removing make-up with cold-cream)* Isn't there anybody *there* can drive a car to get her home?

MISS DUVAL. Oh, they've taken her home already.

*(***CLARICE** *takes off uniform, massaging her aching back.)*

CLARICE. Then to exactly what is this after hours call pertaining?

*(***CLARICE** *puts on "lounging robe" faux mirabeau trim, tying it one way, then another. It's slightly tight.)*

MISS DUVAL. Well – she seemed so shaken up – and – well – confused? At the police station? So, our supervisor – well, she's recommending "Assisted Living" – for this family unit – at this time –

(Beat. **CLARICE***'s wrapping turban around her head.)*

CLARICE. What's that mean?

MISS DUVAL. That she and your niece come live with you.

(Silence. **CLARICE** *glaring at phone, consuming rest of pastry in one gulp.)*

CLARICE. I'm up there first of every month on the nose with $25 cash! And 2 restaurant dinners – with *two* desserts

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