

TRAPSONGS



three plays

SHANNON BRAMER

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Introduction by Sara Tilley

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PART ONE: SHE'S JUST TAKEN OVER

Rita enters with a skip and a bit of swagger. She's wearing vibrant makeup and designer shoes. Her skirt is short and she has shiny, long, loose hair. She sits down and stares off into space for a moment until her cellphone rings inside her bag. She quickly locates it and checks the caller ID before ignoring it.

Mona enters cautiously, with a large bag and a box she is hiding behind her back. Rita senses her approach and turns away. She has a small mirror in her bag and checks her makeup. Mona quietly puts the box behind the garbage can. She acknowledges the audience, but just barely. Mona is mostly sweet and nervous, with a slightly hysterical, dark energy. She wears glasses and has wavy hair pulled back into a tight, practical ponytail. She is wearing sandals and a worn-looking cardigan and a blue dress that is too tight on her, especially around her stomach. She carries a bulky bag full of books and snacks.

There is a pause as Mona thinks of what to say and Rita continues to adjust her appearance.

MONA: Do you have a good hairdresser?

RITA: I have a stylist.

MONA: I think mine has been overcharging me.

RITA: Really? How much are you paying her?

MONA: She charges \$105 for a cut and colour. I also give her a substantial tip.

RITA: One hundred and five dollars isn't bad, Mona.

MONA: Well, she started off charging \$80, then it went up to \$95, then the next time I went in it was \$100. Now it's \$105. Doesn't that seem strange to you—that number? *One-oh-five*, she said, to her colleague at the counter when I paid. There was something almost hostile about it. She turned her back on me and went to sweep up someone else's hair while her *associate* took my money!

RITA: Prices go up.

MONA: Yes, they do. And I've had a full head of grey hair since I was fourteen years old, since I started high school. Getting my hair coloured should be covered by OHIP as far as I'm concerned. My hairdresser is a, what do you call one of those people, oh yes, she's a fucking bitch. Well, fuck her.

RITA: Yes, fuck her, very good. Or else find another bitch to cut your hair.

MONA: I wonder, Rita. I wonder why I feel guilty about going to another hairdresser?

RITA: God, Mona, stop using that term, "hairdresser." It's like calling someone retarded.

MONA: Is it? I didn't even know. (*pause*) You should tell me what to do.

RITA: About what?

MONARITA

MONA: About her! The woman who cuts my hair. The bitch who overcharges me. Can I leave her?

RITA: You can, Mona. Is she bossy?

MONA: Yes. Sort of, I mean, I think she is. She doesn't really listen to me. I keep asking her not to use those razor scissors that make my hair look all jagged at the ends, but she does anyway. It's as if she doesn't hear what I'm saying.

RITA: Maybe she doesn't.

MONA: Doesn't what?

RITA: Doesn't hear you.

MONA: No way. That's bull, sister.

RITA: You've got a soft voice, Mona. Maybe when you asked her not to use the razor scissors you were speaking too quietly. Maybe it's all a misunderstanding between the two of you.

MONA: No. No. I'm sure she heard me. She just didn't listen. She thinks I'm wrong; she thinks those edges suit me because they help frame my face. Well, what if I don't want it framed?

RITA: Do you bring in a picture? A picture always helps.

MONA: I did. Once. I cut it out of a magazine. She giggled at me. It was so condescending. That was the end of bringing in pictures or of having any idea what to do with my hair. She's just taken over.

RITA: Oh, Mona. You goose.

MONA: Do you bring pictures in to your stylist?

RITA: No. He does what he wants.

MONA: It's a man? You let a man style your hair? A man?

RITA: Of course I do! A man!? Are you insane? It feels good. He always gives me a massage too, when he washes my hair. For some reason he doesn't let anyone else wash my hair. Here, let me show you. *(Rita gets up and stands behind Mona; she starts massaging her temples and scalp. Mona is transformed by Rita's massage and some of her nervous energy evaporates.)*

RITA: I trust him. I always feel so beautiful afterward, too. Beautiful. I feel better and think better too. Once the colour is in, he brings me fresh coffee in a real mug and I just sit there sipping coffee and staring off into space, inhaling the chemicals. I love the smell of hair colour. I wish I could just sit there with the dye in my hair forever. *(Rita stops abruptly and cleans her hands with the small bottle of hand sanitizer she keeps in her purse.)*

RITA: There. Do you feel better now? Do you feel beautiful?

MONA: How much?

RITA: *(confused)* What?

MONA: For the coffee and making you feel beautiful and warming up your brain and making you think better and feel better and look better? How much?

MONARITA

RITA: I don't remember. He charges me a different price every time. It depends on what he does, how much time he spends with me. But he's fair. And he's always in a good mood; he always pays me some sweet compliment—

MONA: Does he tell you that you look like you've lost weight?

RITA: Of course, they all do that!

MONA: They all do that. I thought so.

RITA: He's a darling, Mona. I think he absolutely loves what he does. It makes a big difference. Sometimes he's got a few of us going at once and then the price comes down a bit. On Saturdays. Saturdays it's cheaper.

MONA: Is he gay?

RITA: No. Not that I know of. I guess he could be.

MONA: Do you love him?

RITA: No.

MONA: No?

RITA: He's just my stylist, Mona. I'm not in love with him.

MONA: But you're attached. You'd be sad if he died.

RITA: Yes. Yes, I would be sad if he died. My hair would look like shit.

MONA: Would he be sad if you died?

RITA: Who would tell him?

MONA: I'll tell him for you.

RITA: Well, if he knew, he might be sad.

Lights fade to black.

PART TWO: THE PIGEONS

Lights come up on Rita sitting on a chair, Mona on the floor. Rita gets her lipstick out. Mona digs through her bag, looking for something.

MONA: Are you hungry? I've got food here: apples, goldfish crackers, raisins, fruit bars, *(sighing)* Oaty-Os.

RITA: Oaty-Os?

MONA: Like Cheerios. But not. *(Rita looks confused)* Healthier Os. *(Rita looks disinterested/distracted)* You know? The better ones? *(Rita's cellphone rings)* The ones that seem better! *(Mona gives up)*

RITA: *(shakes her head no and pulls her ringing cellphone from her purse)* Hold on, hold on, Mona. Jesus. It's him again. He's driving me insane; he'd like me on a leash. *(Rita gets up and clickety-clacks offstage to take the call)*

MONA: *(to the audience)* I've got books from the library in my bag. Some of them are for my son; he's still just a little guy, a baby really—but you've got to start early with reading. He loves it! He already loves reading. *(takes out a few selected storybooks and reads a few lines)* *The sheep and the donkey, the geese and the goats, were making funny noises, down in their throats.* Isn't that good? I mean, isn't that great writing! Margaret Wise Brown—I love her, and not just *Goodnight Moon* either. Some, some of these books here are for me. Sex books! Advice. *(sweetly)* Self-help. It is a little gross, isn't it? Ordering sex books from the library?! Oh, they don't have anything too racy—but I like the old ones. The ones

from the 70s, 80s—early 90s! (*Mona takes the books from her bag and arranges them on the floor in front of her, gleefully showing the audience each one and whispering its title*) You just never know what you're going to find—

RITA: (*enters*) Mona, who are you talking to?

MONA: Myself, Rita. Little ol' me!

RITA: Did you take out more sex books?

MONA: Yes. A few. To peruse at our meeting—to study! I've even got a few new ones, and a couple from a garage sale I—

RITA: Let's see them, girly.

Rita sits down on the floor, close to Mona.

MONA: This one has good pictures. Wow. Look at him.

RITA: Oh my. These books are all at least thirty years old. I wonder what these people look like now?!

MONA: The same, only a bit wrinkly, a little bent—

RITA: Stooped. Grey. Dilapidated—

MONA: Hey, look at her—now she looks good. Look at her bone structure. She'll age well. I wish I had cheekbones like that.

RITA: I wish I had tits like that! (*they giggle*)

MONA: Boobs. I like the word *boobs* better now that I have a child.

RITA: Okay, boobs. Whatever. Boobies. I wish I had a pair of those to take downtown!

MONA: No. No way, Rita—your boobs are just right—the perfect size and the perfect shape. Two handfuls—no more, no less—that’s all you need.

RITA: (*amused*) Thanks, Mona. I’m happy you approve.

MONA: Does *he* still appreciate them?

RITA: I’m not sure, but at least he knows they’re there.

MONA: Do they each have their own nickname?

RITA: No, but the pair of them are called the pigeons.

MONA: I always wanted my husband to call my breasts (*pointing to each breast*) Bud and Bob.

RITA: You really are a nut, my dear.

MONA: Bud is smaller than Bob.

RITA: I know, I know, Mona—you’ve always bitched about that—your tiny left tit! But you can hardly notice it.

MONA: No?

RITA: No. Not at all.

MONA: They say that women with small boobs tend to be a bit more anxious and moody.

RITA: Makes sense.

MONA: They say that attractive people are happier, but that ugly people have a more authentic experience of happiness.

RITA: They probably do.

MONA: Why do you think that is?

RITA: Beauty protects us, Mona.

MONA: Does it?

RITA: Well, it does me, anyway. Whenever I feel particularly beautiful I don't notice things on the outside as much. I feel calm and contained—like a pearl in a shell.

MONA: I don't know what that's like.

RITA: In fact, I turn away from ugliness, from ugly people—I do—I turn away from painful—

MONA: (*somewhat impatiently*) Well, I already know about pain and ugliness, Rita. But happiness? Let's get back to that, I'd like to talk about happiness—

RITA: Happiness is not a potato.

MONA: A potato?

RITA: Charlotte Brontë said that. Happiness is not a potato.

MONA: Rita? Since when did you start—

MONARITA

RITA: It's not something you can cultivate; it is a glory shining far down upon us out of heaven—

MONA: Wait. Charlotte Brontë?

RITA: Heaven, Mona. Heaven. Isn't that lovely?

MONA: (*concerned*) I didn't know you were reading Charlotte Brontë.

RITA: Don't panic. It's for a course.

MONA: A course. Now you're taking a course?

RITA: Yes.

MONA: The kind you take in the evening? With other adults?

RITA: Yes, Mona.

MONA: I didn't know you were taking a course. This is confusing. I don't mean to be difficult here, but I thought reading was more my thing.

RITA: It's for work, Mona. Work. So it doesn't really count. It's nothing, honey! It's dumb.

MONA: What's the name of the course? Tell me, please.

RITA: Alright, but don't make a big thing about it. It's called "Inspiring Women in the Money Market."

MONA: Oh. That is a course. My god. Why now, Rita? What's the point of it?

RITA: Hmm. Let me see if I can remember. Oh yes: it's supposed to help expand my poetic corporate vocabulary, you know, help *females* engage other *female* clientele with more creative, inspired ways of seeing—buying, spending, blah, blah, whatever. The books are good but it's a bit of scam, really.

MONA: Reading Charlotte Brontë is a scam? I don't understand—

RITA: Listen, Mona: How can I make my client happy? How can I make her feel smart and safe with me? It's simple. Speak to her. Touch her. Converse, honey. Get nice and cosy before we start moving the cash. You get it, sweetie? They don't want us talking hair and shoes anymore.

MONA: (*uncertainly*) Well, I like the potato part, anyway.

RITA: Good. Let's forget it. All I know is you can't force yourself to be happy. You can't force it.

MONA: No.

RITA: It's not something you can pretend to be for very long.

MONA: You can't pretend to be a potato.

RITA: But I'm a potato, Mona! Look—my skin is so old and rough.

MONA: No, Rita—you're pretending! You're always pretending.

RITA: To be happy?

MONA: A happy potato.