

THIS IS AN ONLINE SAMPLE  
OF THE FIRST TEN PAGES OF  
THE TRAGEDY OF MARY LOU SKATONDA  
By Callie Kimball

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There is nothing one man will not do to another.  
*Carolyn Forché*

## **PRODUCTION HISTORY**

THE TRAGEDY OF MARY LOU SKATONDA is currently unproduced. It was read as part of the 2007 Page to Stage Festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and was directed by Allison Stockman for Constellation Theatre. Performing in the reading were Stephanie Burden, Renee Calarco, Matt McGloin, Donna Migliaccio, Tori Miller, Francisco Reinoso, Joseph Thornhill, Kim Tuvin, and Anastasia Wilson.

## **FULL SYNOPSIS**

In the year 2067, it will have been established that conservative political beliefs are linked to the recessive blonde gene.

THE TRAGEDY OF MARY LOU SKATONDA opens in a church basement, where Mary Lou and her sullen teenage daughter are preparing for a meeting of the Special Forces Brigades of the Eradicating Blond/e Militia. The meeting unfolds badly—Mary Lou is demoted for padding her quarterly recruitment numbers, and then fired after she physically attacks her boss.

In her devastation, Mary Lou begins devouring doughnuts and drinking from a flask. Clarence, a mentally challenged janitor at the church, cheers up Mary Lou by getting her to talk gibberish to his pet bird, but the spell transforms the parakeet into a giant beast of hell. Turns out Clarence is the devil's lackey and isn't slow at all. He seduces Mary Lou by saying he can help her get her job back, make her family love her again, and eliminate all blondes from the planet. She just has to play a little video game to help him gather some final data for a presentation he's giving at a conference on Identity Theft.

Mary Lou dons the game-wear, and one by one, with the aid of lifeline-replenishing flying doughnuts, defeats her former co-workers. Three opponents in, she's horrified to realize that it's *set up* like a game, but the deaths are actually happening. She's been killing off entire segments of the human population. Even though besting her final opponent will destroy all the evil blondes, Mary Lou refuses to play on. Clarence sweetens the pot by offering her the chance to both rescue and reconcile with her daughter. Mary Lou makes one final decision that will change the face of the planet forever.

## **SETTING**

October 2067.

The basement of a tired Methodist church in a suburb  
of the greater Washington metropolitan area.

## **CHARACTERS**

**MARY LOU SKATONDA**

42, white, redhead. Preferably a large woman.  
Mid-Atlantic Field Marshal, Redhead Special Forces Brigade  
for the Eradicating Blond/e Militia.  
Wants to be promoted to Executive Officer of Special Forces.

**CLARENCE**

Ageless, any race. Preferably fit.  
Mentally challenged maintenance man who turns out to be the Devil's lackey.  
Wants to be promoted to Chief of Existential Despair.

**FREYA**

20s or 30s, Black.  
West Coast Field Marshal, African-American Special Forces Brigade for the EBM.

**GUNNAR**

20s-40s, white with dark hair. Preferably fit.  
Midwest Field Marshal, Homosexual Special Forces Brigade for the EBM.

**HILDA**

40s, white with dark hair.  
Southeast Field Marshal, Jewish Special Forces Brigade for the EBM.

**MISTY**

20s-30s, white with blonde hair.  
Northeast Field Marshal, Blond/e Special Forces Brigade for the EBM.

**PEX**

Male, any age, race. Preferably a large man.  
A beast of hell and Clarence's familiar. Takes the form of a pet parakeet.  
Is burdened with a conscience.

**WANDA**

16, white with dark hair.  
Mary Lou's daughter.

## **NOTE**

A virgule (/) indicates the point at which the next line should begin.  
An ellipsis (...) indicates a pause or a trailing off of an unfinished thought.  
A dash (—) indicates an interruption.

THE TRAGEDY OF MARY LOU SKATONDA

*Pitch black. Eight tiny quick flashes of orange light in random succession from high on the sides of the stage accompanied by sounds of hellfire and what could be human laughter or animal screams. This takes about three seconds, just long enough to not understand what's going on. Lights up full on a clean, modest, quiet church basement with a tired linoleum floor. A late afternoon light streams through high windows. A church bazaar is winding up outside, with sounds of singing, laughing, and the occasional scream of a child. There is a dinky proscenium stage at one end. CLARENCE is on stage hanging a banner that says, "2002-2067: Celebrating 65 Years of B.E." WANDA is helping. Brown crepe paper is elaborately draped everywhere.*

Too high...	WANDA
Here?	CLARENCE
Too low...	WANDA
Here?	CLARENCE
Just right.	WANDA
Okay.	CLARENCE
Good job, Clarence. ( <i>She tries to text message.</i> ) God-damn basement.	WANDA
Wanda.	CLARENCE
Sorry. Gosh-darn basement.	WANDA

*She leaves in search of better reception. CLARENCE whistles as he works. He climbs down the ladder and starts sweeping the stage, his back to the audience. MARY LOU enters with an enormous pile of file folders.*

MARY LOU  
*(Shouting offstage to WANDA as she enters.)* Wanda!

CLARENCE  
*(To himself. MARY LOU doesn't hear.)* Wanda.

MARY LOU  
 Wanda!

CLARENCE  
 Wanda.

MARY LOU  
 Wanda!

WANDA  
 What!

MARY LOU  
 Honk when you get back'n Clarence here'll help you carry 'em in, don't try to do it all yourself. Those Krispy Kreme cakes are expensive and I don't want you droppin' 'em none.

CLARENCE  
 Krispy Kreme.

MARY LOU  
 Keys are in my pocketbook!

WANDA  
 Duh.

MARY LOU  
 And get a receipt!

WANDA  
 I *know* Mom!

MARY LOU  
 And no talkin' on that cell while you're driving! *(No response.)* Huh she's in a mood today. Right right let's get this thing started. Only so much you can do with crepe paper but it looks pretty nice I think. Clarence stop that whistling you're getting on my nerves. Can you clear off this here table so's I can set down these files... Clarence leave the parakeet alone for second I can't hold this much longer.

CLARENCE

*(To his pet parakeet.)* Pexie Pex likes Krispy Kreme.

MARY LOU

Great we'll put one around him like a little birdie innertube and float him in the baptismal font.

CLARENCE

Nnnnooooo!!!

MARY LOU

I'm just kidding Clarence. All right there we go. God those were heavy.

CLARENCE

Ahhhhhh! Don't say that.

MARY LOU

Say what.

CLARENCE

Dog backwards.

MARY LOU

Clarence...nevermind. You're right, I should at least respect the lovely Methodist people for letting us use this dinky shithole for free. This place's served us well for our training seminars.

MISTY

*(From off.)* Hello?

MARY LOU

Hello!

CLARENCE

Hello.

MISTY

Hello?

MARY LOU

Hello!

CLARENCE

Hello.

MISTY

*(Enters.)* I thought I heard voices.

MARY LOU

Misty! You found us! You're early.

MISTY

A veritable maze to get through. Landed at Dulles early.

MARY LOU

Oh, great! Yeah we're down in the bowels here but it's free and inconspicuous.

MISTY

Well you've seen where we hold our meetings in Albany— Wow... look at all the crepe paper!

MARY LOU

Yeah.

MISTY

I always say crepe paper adds a nice touch, even if it is just the thought that someone cares enough to get up on a ladder. One time I went to a party at this fundraiser right up next to the Governor's mansion and I kid you not they had crepe paper and Styrofoam® cups in their million-dollar home.

MARY LOU

Only thing makes up for being rich is acting like you're poor.

MISTY

So true. You know that just smacks of I don't know what, but isn't that the way rich people do, pretend they don't have what they've got. Now don't get me wrong, I've done pretty well for myself, Peter's now second vice president at the savings and / loan—

MARY LOU

Is he / now?

MISTY

Uh-huh—and you would be right in thinking these are \$200 highlights on my head but there's just something unseemly about pretending to be something you're not.

MARY LOU

Amen. How'd it get so late. People should be getting here soon. Wanda—you remember my daughter?—she went off to pick up the Krispy Kreme cakes. She'll be back soon.

MISTY

Krispy Kreme cakes! Streamers AND Krispy Kreme cakes! Mary Lou you're goin' all out for this.

MARY LOU

I know I could eat my weight in those things. *I have* eaten my weight in those / things.

MISTY

So Wanda can drive now?

MARY LOU

God help us all. Sixteen, can you believe?

MISTY

I remember she was cute as a button. For a big girl.

MARY LOU

Yeah she lost the weight and grew an attitude. Only to me, though. Daddy's little girl and John just encourages it. Times I feel it's them against me. Even the cat ignores me. Wish those doughnuts'd get here. She better not be on that cell phone—she hit the garbage can in the driveway the other day yammerin' on that thing. Know what she told me? It was my fault for leaving the garbage can out!

MISTY

Oh, that's every teenager. I'm sure when my boys are in high school they'll be ten times worse.

MARY LOU

How many you have now?

MISTY

Five can you believe? All under the age of nine.

MARY LOU

And yet you're such a little thing.

MISTY

A little nip-tuck after the last one. Don't tell.

MARY LOU

Really?

MISTY

I told Peter was the least he could do was buy me a new stomach after ruining my body so.

MARY LOU

Not me, I'd be too scared.

MISTY

You should try it. Take care of that neck, too...you know, the crepey...

MARY LOU

Huh.

MISTY

Can I do anything to help out here?

MARY LOU

I think I've got everything but I keep feeling like I'm forgetting something. I'm a little nervous for some reason.

MISTY

Oh it'll go fine. I know what you mean, though, hosting the quarterly adds some pressure.

MARY LOU

Yeah, it's not really the hosting so much as...

MISTY

So much as what?

MARY LOU

All right. If'n I tell you something—

MISTY

It goes in the vault. Unburden yourself.

MARY LOU

It's eatin' me up inside, this waiting. I don't have anyone to talk to.

MISTY

Mm-hm?

MARY LOU

Well, I put my application in last quarter for the Executive Officer of Special Forces / position—

MISTY

Did you really?

MARY LOU

I know! And they said they'd decide based on my recruiting numbers from this quarter...well, I gotta figure Hilda's my only real competition. Freya's numbers keep her in the bottom, and Gunnar's just not leadership material. And, I mean, well, you just got promoted to Northeast Field Marshal and all, so...

MISTY

And do you think your numbers higher than Hilda's?

MARY LOU

Just shy of nine thousand.

MISTY

Wow.

MARY LOU

I know.

MISTY

I mean.

MARY LOU

I know.

MISTY

Mary Lou, that's impossible.

MARY LOU

Twenny percent over target.

MISTY

How'd you do that?

MARY LOU

This is just between us, right—

MISTY

Of course!

MARY LOU

Okay. Well, I held back the paperwork from the spring quarter recruits...

MISTY

I see.

MARY LOU

Then, as extra insurance, I dropped off Wanda at every Food Court at every mall around DC and she signed up all the high school kids. Got 'em to fib about their age.

MISTY

Wow.

MARY LOU

I know! Aren't I smart?!

MISTY

You sure are. Didn't know you had it in you.

MARY LOU

Thanks! And of course I'll donate all the commissions back so it's ethical and all. But I'm nervous, you know, I gotta get the trust of everyone if I'm gonna lead 'em. Gunnar's in my back pocket, but I don't know about Freya and Hilda. And hey, when I get promoted I'll be lookin' out for you just like always. My little protege!

CLARENCE

Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me.

MISTY

Oh, excuse *me*, I didn't see you there.

MARY LOU

Oh, Misty this is Clarence, maintenance man here at the church.

MISTY

How do you do?

CLARENCE

Do.

MARY LOU

Clarence is a little different. Isn't that right, Clarence. (*Aside.*) Slow as cold molasses going uphill in January.

MISTY

Oh. *Oh*. Nice To Meet You Clarence. That's A Nice Broom. Is That A Push Broom?

CLARENCE

I push things good. Pretty parakeet. Sing a song. (*Whistles.*) Okay. Okay. Okay. Yes, ma'am. I used the dustpan yesterday. "Don't step on a crack break your mother's back." Crickety crack blickety black. Tweet tweet tweet. I see you. Okay.

MISTY

(*Aside.*) My brother-in-law's like that. Where's the rest room?

MARY LOU

Your best bet's to go back upstairs past the sanctuary on the left but if'n you're in a hurry you can go right down the hall past the kitchen if you don't need a handicap stall, which it looks like you don't.

MISTY

Down the left..?

MARY LOU

Here lemme show you. (*They leave.*) I like that French manicure.

MISTY

Thanks. Did it myself.

MARY LOU

Really? The line is so straight.

CLARENCE

Plug the hole.

Take the body lose the soul.

Take the soul lose the body.

Make it perfect. Make it, take it take it take it.

Rub my eyes rub them burn the light out.

Not too fast. Go away. Bitch.

Don't forget. Don't be late.

Make a bet. We won't wait.

Donuts here donuts there donuts donuts everywhere.

Sprinkled, powdered, sugared, glazed,

chocolate, jelly Rabelais (*hesitates, then pronounces the final "s" even though it's incorrect just to make the rhyme fit.*)

Boston Kreme spurts out white,

Krispy Kreme, hot delight.

Burn them burn them burn the light.

Take them all. Bitch.

Bitch.

Bitch bitch bitch.

Itchety witchety bitchety boo.

Step on a crack.

Break her back.

Jab her. Stab her.

Stab stab stab.

(*Car horn honks several times.*)

Cold molasses.

MARY LOU

(*From off.*) Clarence! CLAARENCE!

*CLARENCE puts down his push broom and exits. A pause. Then CLARENCE and WANDA, and MARY LOU and GUNNAR come in carrying two Krispy Kreme cakes.*

Good timing Gunnar! Thanks, / Clarence.

GUNNAR

That's what they tell me. What are you tryin' to do, get us all fat, Mary Lou?

MARY LOU

It's a special occasion. Besides, you're in such great shape a doughnut or three won't even make a difference. Look at that butt. So / tight.

GUNNAR

Hands off the merchandise, Mary Lou.

MARY LOU

I swear if you weren't / gay—

GUNNAR

Hi, I don't believe we've met. I'm Gunnar.

WANDA

Gunnar, it's me, Wanda.

GUNNAR

Wanda? Wanda Skatonda? Weeble-wobble Wanda? I guess I haven't seen you in two—

WANDA

—three—

GUNNAR

—three years.

WANDA

I got my braces off last year.

GUNNAR

Yes, you did.

WANDA

And I lost 40 pounds.