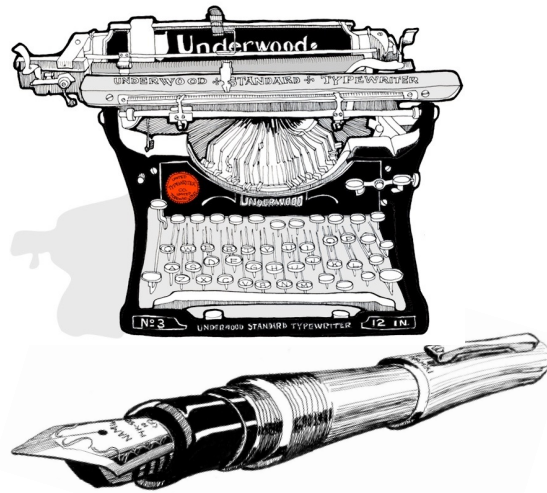


Yours In Words,



WRITTEN BY LAURA THOMA



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SETTINGS - New York City 1895-1896

Arveson Library - Back Entrance, Exterior

Bernie's office - Badger Yates Publishing

Lily and Dot's Room - Noonan Boarding House

Annabelle's Study

NOTES

WORLD: Though this work is set in 1895 and explores much of what was going on historically at that time: innovation, invention, women's rights. It is also its own world where homophobia, misogyny, and discrimination may exist but do not triumph. The intercom, elevator, and typewriter give lots of insight to the changing world around Lily, Dot, and Annabelle.

SETS & COSTUMES: Simple/Representational/Flexible. There doesn't need to be elaborate set or costume changes. Be creative and allow changes to be a part of the storytelling.

SOUNDS: A soundscape could be quite effective for helping to show the clash of old and new. Sounds of horse hooves and carriages mixed with the occasional motors, different bells from trolleys, and push carts all mixing with nature sounds from the park: frogs, crickets perhaps music as well.

ACT [1]

SCENE [1]

1895 IN NEW YORK CITY -- OUTSIDE
THE *BACK ENTRANCE OF THE ARVESON
LIBRARY. THERE IS AS SMALL BENCH
AND A GAS LAMP ABOVE THE DOOR.*

LILIAN LAMONT, A FIERCELY SMART,
AND HEADSTRONG YOUNG WRITER,
RUSHES ON. DOROTHY MURPHY, LILY'S
ROOMMATE, A FLIRTATIOUS YOUNG
WOMAN ESCORTED BY HER ADMIRER,
THOMAS MILLER, STROLL ON.

DOT

Lil! Lily, wait. (*Lily stops begrudgingly. Waits.*)

LILY

I don't have all night.

TOM

Come on Lamont, if you'd waited instead of storming
out the restaurant, you could have left with us,
through the front door.

LILY

I didn't storm out, I have somewhere to be ... and I
am perfectly capable of exiting a building without
your arm -- Thank you very much.

TOM

You do know going to the library to read doesn't count
as somewhere to be ... right?

LILY

It does when you're a writer. Besides, I'm not reading
I'm studying A.B. Jones's work.

TOM

Jones, eh? I don't care for his books, but my sister
loves them. I hear he's adapting one of his novel's
for the stage?

LILY

I doubt that.

TOM

It's true. Read it in the Times...business section.
Don't read that do you, Lamont?

LILY

I'm leaving.

DOT

Lily, wait! Goodnight, Tom.

(Dot leans in to kiss Tom on both cheeks, an act she finds international. Just as she nears his cheek he turns and kisses her briefly on the lips. She giggles.)

TOM

Goodnight, Dorothy. I thoroughly enjoyed our talk this evening.

(They have a moment of whispers and another brief kiss. Tom exits. Lily and Dot cross to the bench.)

DOT

You're never going to believe what Tom just told me.

LILY

That he doesn't know how to read.

DOT

No, that it's Hunger in the Depths of Love that's being adapted.

LILY

That can't be true.

DOT

It is. Not only that but they are looking for a collaborator for A.B. Jones

LILY

A collaborator?

DOT

Yes. Tom said it was in the Bab's Babble column.

LILY

(Laughs) The gossip column of course. Business section my eye. He doesn't even know that A.B. Jones is a woman.

DOT

Most people don't. That's why she's been so successful. And Tom isn't so bad.

LILY

You mustn't call him that ... *(Imitates Tom)* "I no longer go by Tom. All of my employees call me Thomas." What a rube! He has one poor fellow who has to report to him and now he thinks he's R.H. Macy!

DOT

He's just trying to be professional. Besides, he doesn't mind if I call him Tom.

LILY

I'm sure he doesn't. Shall I assume that means you got information about the typewriter giveaway?

DOT

I tried my best.

LILY

(Sourly) I'll say you did.

DOT

What's that supposed to mean?

LILY

Nothing ... I just think our plan was stupid. It's pretty obvious that Tom really likes you ... and from where I was sitting it sure looked like you have a thing for him.

DOT

I was flirting with Tom for you. To get information on the typewriter that YOU want and can't afford.

LILY

It's not that I can't afford// it ...

DOT

Tom is rather endearing once you get to know him. He's funny, kind and a real// go-getter

LILY

Pompous ass, that's what he is!

DOT

Lil!

LILY

What? He is. And you deserve better than Thomas.

DOT

(Flirtatious.) Oh, do I?

(Lily turns to Dot and takes her hands.)

LILY

Yes! You deserve someone who understands and appreciates you. Someone who will encourage your creativity and political interests. Someone, who will treat you like an equal.

DOT

My, that sounds wonderful. *(Lily locks eyes with Dot.)*
Be sure to introduce me when you meet them...

LILY

(Lily yearns to tell Dot her feelings.) I will ...
(Beat) Tom didn't have *anything* else to say about the giveaway?

DOT

He was rather protective about the details -
"especially because I'm a woman". *(Dot laughs.)*

LILY

(Angry) Did he say that to you?

DOT

He also mentioned something about a discount for family members. I thought perhaps you could//

LILY

Doesn't he see that women are changing the world?

DOT

No, I don't believe he does.

LILY

I'll have to remind *Thomas* that he's working for a company that has promoted a woman to an executive position.

DOT

Have they really?

LILY

Yes! Why if it wasn't for Margaret Getchell, and her mantra: "Be everywhere, do everything, and never forget to astonish the customer," no one would even know about Macy's!

DOT

That's amazing! Though, I have a feeling *Thomas* wouldn't be interested.

LILY

I have a feeling you're right. Are you sure you don't want me to walk you home?

DOT

No, I'm fine. It's just a few blocks and I have my hat pin.

LILY

If you're sure. I won't be late I only have a few pages left in Whispers in Time. But since I don't have my fee ... (*Lily unbuttons her coat.*) we'll see what this green dress can do!

DOT

Lil!

LILY

Isn't that what you were just doing with Tom?

DOT

Yes, for you. And isn't that why you stormed out?

LILY

I did no such thing. And I'm merely working in the current system. When men evolve I won't take advantage of their ... limitations.

(The kiss on each cheek.)

DOT

Ta!

LILY

Ta!

(Lily watches Dot leave. LENNY AYERS a library clerk, friendly and good hearted like a brother to Lily steps out of the back door and lights a cigarette.)

LENNY

Good Evening, Miss Lily!

LILY

Good Evening, Lenny! On a break, eh?

LENNY

Just snuck out for a cigarette and to look at the stars. Beautiful night.

LILY

Certainly is ... reminds me of home.

(Lily grabs Lenny's cigarette and takes a puff. He laughs)

LENNY

Miss Lily, if you don't mind me saying, that's an awfully pretty dress you're wearing.

(Remembering she doesn't have her entrance fee--Lily mimics Dot's flirtatiousness.)

LILY

Oh this old thing? It's just something I threw on.
(She immediately regrets trying this tactic.)

LENNY

Not many girls could wear that color the way you do.

LILY

(Sincerely) Thank you, Lenny, that's terribly sweet of you to say. Let me step into the light so you can really see the color.

(Lenny steps away from the door as Lily steps into the light. She feels like a prize cow but tries not to show it.)

LENNY

Wow, that sure is green and ruffly.

LILY

(Laughs) Do you like it? *(Posing)* What about the sleeves?

LENNY

(Egging her on.) Oh, yeah, those are real nice. I bet they're something when you're twirling.

LILY

(Accepting his challenge.) I dare say you're right, Mr. Ayers.

(Lily starts to turn.)

How do they look?

LENNY

Not bad, but I suspect they'd look even better if you went a bit faster!

(Lily tries to turn faster but loses her balance -- at the same moment Annabelle Jones comes barreling out of the library door they crash into each other. They both drop their belongings and Annabelle's note cards spill into the street.)

ANNABELLE

For heaven's sake, I just organized those.

(Lenny is horrified.)

LENNY

My apologies, ma'am.

(Both Lenny and Lily drop to their knees to pick up the cards.)

LILY

I'm terribly sorry, I didn't see you. I was ... spinning, well not spinning exactly ... maybe turning or ... Twirling ... I ...

ANNABELLE

Young lady, I dare say it isn't polite to linger in front of doors. Didn't your mother raise you better than that?

LILY

I wasn't lingering and my ...

ANNABELLE

I haven't the time to explain the subtleties of the word linger to you. I'll thank you to hand me my belongings.

(A bit stunned Lily hands them to her.)

Good Evening!

(Annabelle exits quickly and with purpose.)

LENNY

Goodnight, Mrs. Jones! I'm terribly sorry we were blocking the door Ma'am! Won't happen again!

LILY

Mrs. Jones?

LENNY

Yeah, Annabelle Jones, the writer!

LILY

You mean to tell me Annabelle Jones is a member of the library?!

LENNY

Not just a member but a patron as well. She and her late husband that is.

LILY

But, I've never seen her here before.

LENNY

She mostly does her work in the patron's lounge. Though lately, she's been in the stacks doing some research for the stage adaptation of her novel Hung//

LILY

Hunger in the Depths of Love. I heard she was adapting it.

LENNY

Sure is. And rumor has it that Mr. Wilkinson's going to be her collaborator.

LILY

Who's he?

LENNY

You know, the famous vaudeville sketch writer.

LILY

He doesn't sound like a good fit.

(A clock strikes.)

LENNY

Sorry Miss Lily, I have to go. See you soon.

(Lenny ducks into the library before Lily can't grab the door.)

LILY

I bumped in to Annabelle Jones!

(Laughs with glee.)

Dot is never going to believe this!

(Lily runs off.)

ACT [1]

SCENE [2]

MORNING IN THE PRESTIGIOUS AND MALE-CENTRIC OFFICES OF BADGER YATES PUBLISHING. MR. BADGER'S OFFICE IS LINED WITH MAHOGANY BOOKCASES, FINE LEATHER FURNISHINGS, POLISHED BRASS ACCENTS, LARGE WINDOWS, A BAR CART, AND SEVERAL RATHER EXUBERANT PLANTS.

(Bernie makes a motor boat putt-putt sound with his lips as he slowly reads ... he stops and whistles, then goes back to putt-putt. Annabelle taps her pen on his desk.)

BERNIE

Hmmm. Mmmmm. Annabelle, stop tapping that confounded pen of yours I'm reading! ... Putt-putt
(Annabelle taps her pen louder, when this doesn't work she barks--)

ANNABELLE

BERNIE!

BERNIE

Don't interrupt me ... don't do it AJ.

ANNABELLE

For heaven's sake, you've already read this chapter ten times! I am hardly interrupt//

BERNIE

AJ, hush!

ANNABELLE

I am not some school girl that you can scold // as if

BERNIE

Jones! I mean it!

(Annabelle sips her coffee.)

ANNABELLE

I don't know how you expect me to drink this coffee, it's terrible. It tastes like old socks and cigarette butts. *(She sniffs it again.)* And it smells like yesterday's garbage.

BERNIE

How did you guess my secret recipe?

(Grins and closes the manuscript.)

Well, the rewrite isn't bad. Not bad at all, Jones. Here's the rub. It needs more conflict.

ANNABELLE

Really? You don't think the war is enough of a conflict?

BERNIE

No.

ANNABELLE

Clearly, you don't get paid by the word. Do you think you could be a bit more specific? I mean obviously you think something is missing. This is the third rewrite you've requested for this chapter and I// just don't know

BERNIE

You writers, you're ALL so sensitive. It's Harlan. He's coming along but he's still a bit cold and flat. Do you see what I'm saying?

ANNABELLE

Maybe.

BERNIE

We need to bear witness to Harlan's battle as he fights to become the man *he* wants to be.

ANNABELLE

I hate to admit it to myself, let alone to you. But, I think you're right. Boy, I hate it when you're right. It really gets my goat!

BERNIE

(Teasing) Well, when you're right, you're right.

ANNABELLE

Ah, yes modesty ... another one of your delightful qualities.

THERE'S A KNOCK ON THE OFFICE
DOOR

BERNIE

Come in.

(Claire-efficient, thorough, impeccably dressed enters carrying a silver tray with a coffee service.)

CLAIRE

Sorry to interrupt Mr. Badger but I thought Mrs. Jones might like a fresh cup of coffee.

ANNABELLE

How did you know?

CLAIRE

Mr. Badger forgot to turn off his intercom again.

BERNIE

Dagnabbit ... I thought I had it this time.

(Claire crosses to his desk and adjusts the lever on the intercom for him.)

CLAIRE

See Sir, you just have to make sure the lever is in the middle.

BERNIE

I thought I did that. Did anyone else hear our conversation?

CLAIRE

Oh, no, sir. No one is in the lobby. I was just passing my desk on the way to the conference room when I heard the coffee wasn't up to snuff.

ANNABELE

Terribly thoughtful of you, Claire.

CLAIRE

My pleasure, Mrs. Jones. Just buzz me if you need anything else.

BERNIE

I'd appreciate it if you'd leave the contracts for Hanson in the conference room.

CLAIRE

Yes, sir.

CLAIRE EXITS

(Annabelle pours herself a cup of coffee.)

ANNABELLE

So, have you found anyone to work on the adaptation of Hunger in the Depths of Love yet?

BERNIE

Well, When it comes to a collaborator I would// like to go in the direction of ...

ANNABELLE

(Pronouncement) I would like to work with an emerging writer. Preferably a young woman ... you know how I've always wanted to mentor and shape a new voice.

BERNIE

Yes, I know you say that but your actions say otherwise//you seem to

ANNABELLE

Though she must be serious. I will make no exception to this. She cannot be a silly or frivolous girl!

BERNIE

Must I remind you that you're often impatient with those that don't understand things as quickly as you do.

ANNABELLE

Is that your way of saying you haven't found anyone suitable?

BERNIE

Not suitable for you, my dear Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

What's that supposed to mean?

BERNIE

It means it's going to take a very specific person to collaborate on this project with you.

ANNABELLE

I suppose that's true. There are great expectations.

BERNIE

Yes. So far I've only found playwrights who are willing to work with you if you're a man. Now, on book covers that's one thing but in person ... I'd say it's a no go.

ANNABELLE

(Sarcastically) Why, Bernie, I think that's the sweetest thing you've ever said to me.

BERNIE

It's always good to throw you a bone. *(beat)* Quite the pickle, yes, indeed. Though, there is one writer. One fellow who is willing to take the chance to work with a woman.

ANNABELLE

And who might this mystery man be?

BERNIE

Someone who has lots of experience writing for the stage. Someone who will bring a different perspective.

ANNABELLE

It better not be ...

BERNIE

Gilbert Wilkinson!

ANNABELLE

Absolutely not! There must be someone else.

BERNIE

I found two other writers but//they are not...

ANNABELLE

Wonderful!

BERNIE

However they all want final draft approval--except for one. Except for Gilbert//

ANNABELLE

No. And let me clarify -- I will not work with silly girls or silly men. Do I make myself clear?

BERNIE

Jones, you're being unreasonable.

ANNABELLE

Bernie, my mind is made up.

BERNIE

And so is mine, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

It seems we are at an impasse.

BERNIE

Since you think finding a collaborator is so easy I will make you a deal. I will give you one month to find your own suitable collaborator.

ANNABELE

Fine. I'm sure I can find someone who//will be happy to...

BERNIE

But, if you fail ... we sign Gilbert.

ANNABELLE

I don't think one month is enough time.

BERNIE

We're in talks with producers and theaters if we dawdle much longer you may lose the opportunity to adapt.

ANNABELLE

There's no need to be dramatic Bernie. I accept your challenge. If I had a pair of gloves I'd slap you across the face.

(They both laugh. Annabelle stands to leave. Bernie walks her to the door.)

BERNIE

Always a pleasure, Jones. Good hunting to you.

(Bernie's intercom rings. He turns and practically skips back to his desk.)