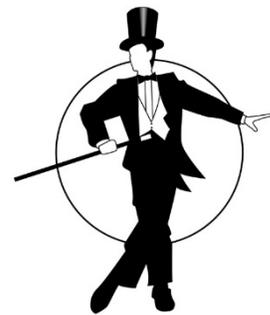


Muriel's Mission

Joyce Schwartz



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MURIEL'S MISSION

By Joyce Schwartz

CAST

MURIEL HARRIS: Eighty-one-year-old, attractive free spirit, full of life, confident, and upbeat. She sets her sights on something and goes for it. Mother of Chantabella and Jayne.

CHANTABELLA HARRIS: Sixty years old. Tends to worry and overreact to whatever is thrown in her path. Called Bella by everyone except her mother. A devoted daughter, sometimes to a fault.

JAYNE LIPSHITZ: Flighty, well-meaning, feels like she doesn't get the respect she deserves. The younger daughter of Muriel, her efforts are overshadowed by her older sister's strong personality.

MAURICE MEYERS: Eighty-eight-year-old physical therapist. Looks much younger than his years. Distinguished looking, with white hair and mustache, he resembles old time actor Caesar Romero. Energetic and charismatic, seems to cast a spell over his female patients.

PALM GARDENS MANAGER: His voice is heard off stage.

Place

Palm Gardens Rehabilitation Center.

Time

The present. Late morning.

MURIEL'S MISSION

Setting: The lobby of Palm Gardens Rehabilitation Center. The entrance door is Stage Left. There is a large sign Up Stage with the name of the facility. On either side of the sign are large potted plants. Down Stage is a long bench. A small table sits on each side of the bench, stacked with magazines.

At Rise: Chantabella walks through the entrance door Stage Left. Just as she enters, her cellphone rings. She reaches into her handbag for her cellphone.

BELLA: Hello?

MANAGER: *(voice heard off stage)* Mrs. Harris?

BELLA: Yes.

MANAGER: This is Palm Gardens. I'm afraid I have some bad news.

BELLA: *(looks around the Palm Garden lobby to see if she can spot the caller.)* Oh no. What's wrong?

MANAGER: I apologize in advance if this ruins your day. I hope you understand. When things get old, they just go without warning. There seems to be an epidemic around here. We've lost two in a week. I guess nothing lasts forever.

BELLA: 'Nothing lasts forever'? And you're apologizing because you may have ruined my day? Isn't that a bit of an understatement? How can you be so callous? Where's your humanity? This is how you deliver such devastating news? As for ruining my day, what about my Mother's day? That's about as ruined as you can get.

MANAGER: Was your mother planning to go?

BELLA: Does anyone plan to go? It's beyond our control. One day you just wake up dead. My mother was vital and on a mission. She was not planning on leaving this earth.

MANAGER: I'm sorry Mrs. Harris, I'm confused. I didn't mean to upset you. I just didn't think canceling your boat rental would mean that much to you.

BELLA: Did you say boat rental?

MANAGER: Yes. According to my records you reserved a boat for tomorrow. It broke down. As I said, we lost two in a week.

BELLA: The boat broke down. All this time you were talking about a boat? Didn't you say you were calling from Palm Gardens?

MANAGER: Yes. Palm Gardens Boat Rental. Who did you think I was?

BELLA: I thought you were Palm Gardens Rehabilitation, where my mother is being treated. What a relief. I'm very sorry about your boats.

MANAGER: I'm sorry for the misunderstanding. I do hope your mother makes a speedy recovery. And when she does, why don't you bring her down here for a boat ride, my treat.

BELLA: Thank you. That's really kind of you. I think she'd like that.

MANAGER: It's my pleasure. You have a great day now.

BELLA: I definitely will. *(just as she hangs up, she spots her mother coming down the hall Stage Right, she throws her arms around her)*

MURIEL: My goodness. Such a greeting. You'd think I just returned from the dead!

BELLA: Why would you say such a thing? I'm just glad to see you.

MURIEL: But you just saw me yesterday, and you weren't this happy to see me then.

BELLA: So, what's the update?

MURIEL: Since yesterday? What can I say? There's no choice but to improve. They run this place like galoshes camp.

BELLA: I think you mean boot camp.

MURIEL: Is that what they call it now?

BELLA: That's what they've always called it. (*looking at her watch*) I wonder where Jayne is? She was supposed to meet us here at 11.

MURIEL: You know your sister. Some catastrophe always pops up. I can't remember the last time she was on time. Oh, speak of the devil. She's about to fly through the door.

JAYNE: (*entering stage left, breathless*) I'm so sorry I'm late. You won't believe what happened.

BELLA: I'll bet we will.

JAYNE: I was stopped by a cop for not signaling. Now you know that's not possible, I do it instinctively. I even signal when I pull into my driveway. Fortunately, he was just going to give me a warning.

BELLA: Well, that's a relief.

JAYNE: Not really. He was so nice, and I had just finished my Meals on Wheels run, so I offered him an extra meal.

BELLA: You did what? Are you crazy? You bribed an officer.

JAYNE: I was just trying to show my appreciation. I didn't mean to break the law.

BELLA: You should have known better. So, what happened?

JAYNE: Punishment happened. I got a ticket for bribing an officer. Honestly, since when is it a crime to be nice?

MURIEL: Well you're here, and that's what counts. Come sit down, and I'll bring you up to date. (*they walk over to the bench. Muriel sits between her daughters.*) You know I don't like the food here. It's my biggest incentive for a quick exit.

JAYNE: I thought you liked it? They offer so much variety. What could be bad?

MURIEL: When all the variety is in one dish, it can't be good. Last night they served Lemon Chicken Picata Marsala.

BELLA: Which one did you have?

MURIEL: All of the above. I got a chicken with multiple personalities.

JAYNE: Think of it as a tour of Italy on a plate. What kind of chef makes a dish like that?

MURIEL: A conflicted one.

BELLA: Maybe we should skip lunch here.

MURIEL: Speaking of food, I was hoping I could get Apple and Cherry here.

JAYNE: Why don't you ask the nutritionist?

MURIEL: What would she know about getting my granddaughters here for a visit?

JAYNE: I never know if you're talking about fruit or people? Bella, why would you choose such ridiculous names for your daughters?

BELLA: Is it any more ridiculous than Chantabella?

MURIEL: I just had a horrible thought. We may be the only people who actually have fruit on our family tree. I told you not to do it. But would you listen? Besides, what's wrong with Chantabella? I think it sounds very exotic.

BELLA: Chantabella Lipshitz? Are you kidding me? I couldn't wait to get married and take my husband's name. At least it helps to soften the blow.

JAYNE: So tell me Mom, did your exotic well run dry when I came along? I mean Jayne? Just plain Jayne?

MURIEL: It is not just plain Jayne. It's Jayne with a 'y'.

JAYNE: I'll try to remember that next time I introduce myself. Hello, I'm Jayne with a 'y' (*she forms the letter 'y' with her fingers*) And you are? Nice to meet you Sara with a 'c' (*forms the letter 'c' with her fingers*) Another poor soul doomed to finding nothing printed with her name on it.

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!