

ANGEL TRACKS

By Pat Morgan

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This piece is designed as a contest duet with multiple voices. On stage, it can be played with a cast of three or more, as there are actually three separate characters, as well as some flashback scenes that include additional characters. For duet contest purposes, however, the same performer will play both Viola and Jessie's part.

CAST: MYRA and VIOLA (VIOLA'S character plays JESSE as well)

AT RISE: MYRA is asleep on the floor of her prison cell. There is a supper tray on the floor, which should be mimed for contest.

VIOLA: *(speaks in a gruff, but kind voice to MYRA, who appears to be asleep on the floor)* Myra Sue, you awake?

MYRA: Yes, Viola. *(sits up)*

VIOLA: Just came to tell you, not a word from the governor. Not yet, anyway. But, there's still some time. Nothing to worry about.

MYRA: *(rises from the floor)* I'm not worried. Viola?

VIOLA: Yes?

MYRA: You wanna take my tray right now?

VIOLA: No hurry, darlin'. Why, you just might want some of that blueberry pie you took such a fit for. Look there, you never touched a bite.

MYRA: You kin have it if you want.

VIOLA: Can't hardly believe it with you tellin' me most everyday how the two things you miss most is your family and home cookin'. But, thanks anyway, honey. I'll be back in awhile. *(looks at watch)* It's less than an hour 'til midnight. You okay? Need anything?

MYRA: *(cheerfully)* Yeah, a drink.

VIOLA: Me too. Anything else?

MYRA: *(laughing)* That just about covers it.

VIOLA: Nothing gets you down, does it, Myra Sue? Always cheerful. I'll take the tray when the Reverend Thomas gets here. Be real soon, now.

MYRA: Sure, anytime. I ain't exactly goin' to town, Viola.

VIOLA: Girl, you're something else. I'll always say that about Myra Sue Pickett. (**walks toward the edge of the stage and turns her back**)

MYRA: (**calls after her**) Yep, that's me, the sweetheart of Mountain View. (**MYRA'S eyes linger on VIOLA as SHE leaves**) Depending on who you ask, of course.

JESSE: (**VIOLA'S character returns to play JESSE. SHE sits beside MYRA and speaks in a light, childish voice.**) You goin' to eat that there pie? (**MYRA is shocked to hear someone talking in her private prison cell**)

MYRA: Gracious, you just about scared me out of my skin. Who are you, anyway?

JESSE: Jesse Jean Mizer. (**MYRA slides to floor**)

MYRA: How'd you get in here? They don't allow no visitors in here.

(**JESSE'S elbows rise to her shoulders—like wings**)

JESSE: I ain't no visitor.

MYRA: The guard is comin' right back.

JESSE: She don't even know I'm here.

MYRA: Well, it won't take her long to figure it out when she sees you sitting there like some kinda' cat on a pillow. They got a camera in here, you know. Right up there.

JESSE: Camera won't see me, either. No one can see me, 'ceptin' you. (**MYRA rises**)

MYRA: Well, that tears it. It's all over now.

JESSE: Naw, you got lots of time.

MYRA: Ha, lots of time...right. That's it. It's over. They've done gone and put dope in my food.

JESSE: Oh, now, I don't think—

MYRA: You don't have to think. I have to think and I really thought my lawyer, Henry, was going to pull it out of the bag. But, no sirree, they've gone and put dope in my food. I can't believe it. And I fell for all that "Just order what you want, darlin" crap. "It's your last meal and we want it to be a good one." (**Beat—turns her back to JESSE**)

JESSE: You goin' to eat that there pie? (**MYRA whirls around**)

MYRA: Is that all you can think about is that stupid pie? Look at me – here I am – talking to you – just like you was here or something and really, it's just some dope they put in my food. (**Beat**) They do that, you know. Say on the line it's easier when you're drugged. (**crossing to the bars**) Well, I don't want it easier. (**Speaks loudly, toward offstage**) Hear me, Viola, I'll just take mine up front and running. Like always.

JESSE: She's down in the office checkin' on messages from that there Appeals Board.

MYRA: How do you know that? Who are you, anyway? What do you want? **(Turns attention toward offstage, waiting for Viola)**

JESSE: Nothin', really. Just that there pie.

MYRA: **(mimes handing pie to JESSE)** Here, for cryin' out loud. Now go away and leave me alone. I got to think. I've got to get a-hold of Henry, my lawyer. **(JESSE starts eating the pie)** They've never put anything in my food before. Man, I've got this really creepy feeling...

JESSE: **(elbows rise)** This pie is good.

MYRA: Look, I don't know who you are or what's happening here, but you can bet that I'm not staying here. You can just hang around ol' death row bothering people all you want, but I'm going on back to Gatesville.

JESSE: That depends on the vote and you know it as well as I do.

MYRA: What do you know about the vote?

JESSE: I know all about it. The Appeals Board, the vote, and you, Myra Sue Pickett. You see, I'm your guardian angel.

MYRA: **(JESSE rises and walks several steps to the left and turns her back to the audience. When MYRA calls out to VIOLA, JESSE will turn and assume VIOLA'S character.)** You're a bad trip on some crazy dope they stuck in my food. And I want you out of here. Can't nobody be with me. I'm here alone. Viola! Viola! **(turns and looks toward the spot that JESSE, now VIOLA, is standing)** Thank goodness you're here, Viola. **(MYRA begins to pace)** Viola, I need to ask you something real important. I...I feel kinda' funny. I have to know, did they put something in my food? I mean, like a tranquilizer or something? You can tell me. I mean, I understand about what's going to happen here if Henry don't—

VIOLA: **(At this point, the actor should make partial turns when SHE speaks to designate between the characters of VIOLA and JESSE. Remember to keep distinct and separate voices.)** Myra, what on earth you talkin' about, honey? Ain't nobody put nothin' in your supper. You hear? Now, don't be foolish, girl.

MYRA: Well, something funny's going on.

JESSE: She's right. Nothin' in that food but calories, fats and carbs.

Chicken fried steak, french fries, gravy, a chocolate shake and blueberry pie. Can't believe you ate all that! You're gonna have a tummy ache, girl. In the morning, YOU MIGHT WISH they'd come for you.

MYRA: Oh, shut up. (**VIOLA thinks MYRA is talking to her, looks quizzical**) I didn't mean you. (**Viola looks around uneasily, sees nothing**) I'm sorry, Viola. Don't mean to be a bother. Did you hear anything from my attorney yet?

VIOLA: Nothin' at the office, Myra. I was just there checking for you. And you ain't no bother. (**MYRA mimes sliding the tray out to VIOLA and SHE picks it up**) I see you changed your mind about the pie. Want more?

MYRA: No thanks. I've had enough.

JESSE: Well, I ain't had enough! And Myra, she ain't changed her mind about nothin'. Just as hard-headed as when she was a kid.

MYRA: (**to JESSE**) Just who are you, anyway?

VIOLA: You know right well who I am. Now, don't you start to carryin' on, you hear. Look, I'll be back and check on you later. I'm gonna check on things and then go on to the ladies room. (**starts off, then returns as JESSE**)

MYRA: Fine. (**sarcastically**) I'll just wait here.

JESSE: I done told you, I'm your guardian angel.

MYRA: Guardian angel, my foot. (**Beat**) If that's the truth, where's your wings?

JESSE: Inside.

MYRA: Oh, sure. And no one can see you but me?

JESSE: Right. If you don't believe me, just ask Viola. And there don't seem to be nothin' showin' up on that camera you was tellin' me about. They'd be tearin' the door down by now if that wasn't the truth. (**Beat**) Can you play cards?

MYRA: I don't got no cards.

JESSE: I do. Right here in my pocket. (**mimes getting out cards**) How about a little game of Rummy. I love Rummy. We play it all the time. (**Elbows rise to shoulders**)

MYRA: Who plays it all the time?

JESSE: Why, we do. Angels are very down to earth. Come on, this will do. (**JESSE sits on the cot and shuffles the cards in a clumsy manner, dropping some – almost as if the deck of cards was too big for her hands**)

MYRA: Why are you here, anyway? Why now? (**JESSE deals out two hands as MYRA sits down. This can easily be mimed.**)

JESSE: I've always been here, Myra Sue. Right from the first. You just never needed me before. Your daddy always said— (**MYRA picks up her cards**)

BOTH: "Make your own way and don't depend on nobody else."

JESSE: Exactly. 'Cept he seemed to depend on you – a lot. Remember that time up at the lake house when the water—

MYRA: You know about when me and Daddy put in that water line? That was a long time ago. **(JESSE sorts her cards and indicates MYRA should pick up)**

JESSE: **(MYRA slowly doing so)** Like I say, I was there.

MYRA: Man, it was colder than a well digger's butt that day. A real Northerner. End of January – first of February.

JESSE: February and as cold as – what you said.

MYRA: **(MYRA plays her cards, but drifts—becoming lost in thought)** I remember Daddy telling me the water line was out. We was goin' to have to go up to that pond and see what the trouble was.

JESSE: Yeah. And he dearly loved that old lake house. Out of Riverview on 19; turn left at the old barn—

MYRA: We was going to have to climb all the way up there to that pond. Not a drop of water in the house. Man, there we were, both huffing and puffing like two old dogs.

JESSE: And you talked about the porch.

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