

# SAVING SUSAN

Ten-Minute Dramatic Duet

by  
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**AT RISE:** *We are in an alleyway of a Broadway Theatre. SUSAN has just left an audition and is eager to get as far away as possible from the “place of humiliation.” SHE is stuffing high heels in a large gym bag as SHE hurries away. Preoccupied, SHE does not notice CARISSA eagerly rushing towards the theatre and they bump headlong into each other. SUSAN seems an average, non-descript young woman in early 30’s; CARISSA, in her early 20’s is the personification of youthful exuberance. As SUSAN and CARISSA collide, the gym bag and its contents go flying.*

SUSAN: Oh! Wouldn't you know it! A perfect ending to a less than stellar morning!

CARISSA: I'm so sorry. Here – let me. I didn't see you. This is horrid. My first audition and I'm knocking people over to get in. Wow! I'm almost a bona fide New Yorker! I really didn't mean to – **(CARISSA suddenly sees SUSAN for the first time)** You! Oh my! Oh no! You're not –

SUSAN: No.

CARISSA: But you are! Aren't you?

SUSAN: I don't know. Maybe. Sometimes. If I'm in the mood.

CARISSA: Jessica Turner! You're Jessica Turner! I just knocked over Jessica Turner! Oh, won't the theatre gods be angry! I can never do a good audition now! You're – my idol! My personification of all that is right in the theatre world! I'm here to be you in the National Tour. I saw *Sunrises* three times already and I've only been in New York a week!

SUSAN: You're an actress? What am I saying? Of course you're an actress. Who else would be in this alleyway with a bag filled with every supply known to humankind?

CARISSA: I'm privileged that you would even speak to me.

SUSAN: You know – I'm not going to play. I can't anymore. Look at you! All wide-eyed and bushy-tailed. You're – incandescent. I'm not going to let that be taken away from you. Do you believe in fate?

CARISSA: Sometimes. If it's convenient and works out in my favor. Mainly, I think you make your own fate. But look – here we are! Me and Jessica Turner! Maybe fate did bring us together. I mean, I positively worship you. You work on Broadway!

SUSAN: No, I don't.

CARISSA: But –

SUSAN: Look at me. Really look at me.

CARISSA: **(After a slight pause)** Oh. You're not her. I'm sorry – for gushing all over you.

SUSAN: It's all right. People do it all the time. Sometimes I play along – you know, a little positive reinforcement never hurt anyone. I get to play that I'm a Broadway star and my fan gets to think Jessica Turner is actually paying attention to her. A win-win situation. I hope Jessica Turner appreciates how nice I am to her worshippers.

CARISSA: I would think you'd be a shoo-in as an understudy for her.

SUSAN: Unfortunately, the world does not need a carbon-copy of Jessica Turner. One seems to be enough. So, she works and I shlep.

CARISSA: But you're here doing it! You're in this alley and you've just had an audition. How great is that? And now I get my turn. My turn to step inside a Broadway theatre and show these people what I can do. I love this business! Around every bend is a golden opportunity. Inside are all these people hoping for new talent; praying that they will discover the next star – and who knows? It might be me. At my first open audition.

SUSAN: You have a lot to learn about open auditions. Like – they're not open.

CARISSA: They're not?

SUSAN: No. It's a union requirement that producers hold auditions, so the producers comply and do so. Now, it's not a union requirement that they cast anybody from these auditions. Catch 22. Open auditions are held. But no casting is going on. If you ask me, these Broadway hotshots hire someone to impersonate a director. I'd give you 10-1 odds that the person you are auditioning for is an out-of-work actor playing “the director.”

CARISSA: Oh no!

SUSAN: Oh yes!

CARISSA: But that is too wonderful!

SUSAN: What?

CARISSA: I mean, make-believe directors and auditions with no casting! How theatrical! I love it!

SUSAN: Listen, you seem like you're really nice. I mean really nice – you know – the real thing. I have to help you. I need to - save you - from this business. How long did you say you've been here? A week?

CARISSA: Yes. I'm Carissa Langley. If you are going to save me, we should be properly introduced. What do you think? Do you think I need a new name?

SUSAN: Actually, Carissa Langley's not bad. Now take me – Susan Black – how ordinary is that? I'm the one who should be looking for a catchier name. Listen to me, Carissa Langley – you need to go back from whence you came. Keep your essence – your spirit. Return home and create a life. A life that's not grounded in stardust.

CARISSA: Oh, I can't return to Gary, Indiana, until I'm a Broadway star. I made a pledge.

SUSAN: There's really a place called Gary, Indiana? I thought it was a song.

CARISSA: Oh no. It's real. A real, nice place. Everyone there is – you know – nice. You can have a nice life in Gary, Indiana – if that's what you want. I want more – I want magic! Nice was good for my formative years, but now it's time for me to spin a web of magic.

SUSAN: Are you for real? This town is going to take all of your "magic" and twist it around and spit it back at you as that ol' black magic. But you know what? I'm not going to let that happen.

CARISSA: It's all right. I don't mind a little black magic – really. I'm jumping off a cliff and I want to see where I land.

SUSAN: I'll tell you where you've landed. On top of a giant roach.

CARISSA: I've never seen a roach.

SUSAN: Welcome to the roach capital of the world! This island was built on the back of one enormous roach. And at night, Mr. Gargantuan Roach sends all of his little messenger roaches to creep out of their crevices and snatch you away. Little by little. They take just a miniscule piece of you each night, so you don't really know what's happening. First, they take your heart. So slowly and deliberately that when it's gone you won't notice your heart is missing because the change was so gradual. Then, they come after your spirit. With the heart gone, the spirit goes swiftly and quietly.

CARISSA: **(Spooked)** Yes. Well, I don't want to sound unappreciative but I think maybe these are things I will have to learn for myself.

***(CARISSA turns to go into the theatre. SUSAN jumps in front of her to block her.)***

SUSAN: Stop! You can't go in there! I won't allow it! You need to stay. You need to listen.

CARISSA: I'm just fine. I'm sure there are lots of people in the street that need help. Why don't you attend to them?

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