

PAULA'S VISIT

by Tami Canaday

At Rise: A couch is in the middle of the stage.
PAULA is sitting on the couch. DR. WORRAL
sits in a comfortable chair next to PAULA and takes notes.

DR. WORRAL

So?

Pause.

DR. WORRAL

So?

PAULA

Got me a child's bicycle once. I rode it down a street...a street of paved hills. People gave chase and then I realized the bike...the bike wasn't mine. Quick. An imperceivable flight and then I jumped. I ran by foot...down the hill. Some gave chase and yelled profane bits. It didn't matter 'cause I was mortified for what I'd done. And only realized it...after the repose of churning legs, wind slapping hair, and weeping, streaming eyes.

Beat.

PAULA

I am grown now.

DR. WORRAL

I see. And then?

DR. WORRAL looks at watch.

PAULA

Well---

DR. WORRAL

I'm sorry. Your time's up.

DR. WORRAL snaps her notebook shut.

PAULA rubs her eyes.

PAULA

The hour went so quickly.

DR. WORRAL

Yes, it does for the patient.

PAULA

Dr. Worrall, ah...would you mind...well, could I extend my time?

DR. WORRAL

Hmmmm.

DR. WORRAL looks at her watch.

DR. WORRAL

I do have some time. Another ten minutes?

PAULA

Yes. Yes, that would be great.

DR. WORRAL

Your insurance won't cover the ten minutes. It'll have to come out of your own pocket.

PAULA

Of course.

PAULA curls up on the couch.

DR. WORRAL

So?

PAULA

Ah...well... Here, I thought I knew what I wanted to say.

DR. WORRAL

Why don't we do some role playing? Its been a while, hasn't it?

PAULA

Ah well, I---

DR. WORRAL

What about your grandmother? Yes, your grandmother. That would be good.

PAULA

My grandmother?

DR. WORRAL

Are you comfortable with the idea?

PAULA

Well...I guess, I am.

DR. WORRAL

(As a threat)

Would you rather play...say...your mother?

PAULA

No! No!

DR. WORRAL

Good.

PAULA takes a deep breath.

PAULA

Okay. Now, my grandma, she liked to---

DR. WORRAL

Role play, Paula. Role play.

PAULA

She loved to---I mean, I love to dance.

PAULA sits up and wiggles her legs.

PAULA

Why it's fabulous to have legs again, even if these are my granddaughter's. My spectacular death...

PAULA stands up and starts
to waltz around the room.
DR. WORRAL sighs and takes
notes.

PAULA

Well...it's a long time ago. Birdie Social Club, Sweet Breath, Nebraska. Oh, darling. La, la, la. I was no longer hiding out with the nuns. I had me a baby. A little girl. Couldn't keep her. I was sad, but happy I wasn't with those nuns. Drank too many Blue Angles.

PAULA dances over to DR. WORRAL.
SHE tries to pull her up from her
chair. DR. WORRAL will not budge.
PAULA continues dancing without her.

PAULA

I was dancing with everyone. All the locals, the farmers with their shiny noses, the high school boys no bigger than a thumb. Dance, dance, dance, la, la, la. I also danced alone. Everyone was clapping.

PAULA looks over at DR. WORRAL.

PAULA

Clap!

DR. WORRAL ignores PAULA.

PAULA

And whistling. Whirling and twirling. There were so many smiles. I could smell all the men. I loved their smell. Bar door was wide open and I did a lindy, lindy hop out the door into the snow. After that marvelous exit, how could I return? For I was wearing my dancing shoes. The snow was deep and I had to cross me a hanging bridge. Ice so clear, I could see the wood planks. I did me a twirl. Like this.

PAULA twirls.

PAULA

And slid on the ice into the Platte River. The water soft-soaped me into oblivion.

PAULA stops dancing.

PAULA

And all they ever found...oh...oh...

SHE sits on the couch.

PAULA

Oh, my...I am so sorry, Dr. Worrall...I...I don't know what came over me.

DR. WORRAL

I see. We will discuss it at your next visit.

DR. WORRAL starts to stand.

PAULA

But...but you said ten minutes. My time isn't up.

DR. WORRAL Looks at watch.

SHE reluctantly sits down.

DR. WORRAL

Yes, we have a few more minutes.

SHE sighs.

(continued . . .)