

Praise for Fricatives

“Don’t be deceived by what may appear to be delightful, soft spoken ‘playlets’ which could easily be developed into full length plays. The Fricatives anthology. dives deep and extends wide into complex dilemmas of race, class, gender, and spirituality. Cesi Davidson crafts this inquiry with characters ranging from inanimate objects, to food, to animals. When her characters are human, their authentic dialogue is flavored with magical realism that entrances the reader and spirits them to the end of the tale. Actors are challenged to live the truth of a Green Pea. Directors must create an ensemble which can ferret in and out of time, transporting the audience beyond their wildest imaginings. Designers are invited to build worlds both minimalist, or whimsical, and every way in between. Don’t be afraid to surrender your soul, naked to the depth in these plays. Whether read or performed, it’s an unforgettable trip.”

—Tonya Pinkins, Tony Award Winning Actor and
Award winning filmmaker of *RED PILL*

“Cesi Davidson’s creativity knows no bounds. Wildly imaginative in style, hilarious, moving, and often disturbing, her plays illuminate a wide range of real-life experiences—human, vegetable, and beyond. Whether seen in production “or read in the privacy of your home, Davidson’s plays will introduce you to voices you’ve never heard, make you think about the world in ways you’ve never considered, and stir up emotions you never knew you had. What more can you ask of this wonderful writer?”

—Zachary Sklar, Oscar-nominated screenwriter
for *JFK* (with Oliver Stone)

“Cesi Davidson’s words are musical notes on paper. She creates stories with a composer’s tools: rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, dynamics, texture, and form. Some plays in her anthology *Fricatives*, have the emotional feel of a familiar ballad. Others are complex symphonies. Still others jump off the page with the energy of boogie woogie. Cesi has found a way to be guided in her writing by the universality of music and language, and the marriage is beautiful.”

—John ‘JT’ Thomas, musician and composer

“The words come through me,” says a character in one of Cesi Davidson’s marvelous new plays. “I don’t own them... or do I?” This character is channeling the spirit of artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, and, in turn, being channeled by the author. Such moments abound here, moments of wonder and wondering. The human voice—that most rich and varied of instruments—breaks through again and again, riffing on our shared reservoir of bliss and heartache and hilarity. These little plays are big.”

—John Gould, author of *The End of Me*

“Cesi Davidson’s compelling plays in the anthology *Fricatives* are grounded in forgiveness and resilience, permitting emancipation and the freedom to be one’s true authentic self. As always, Davidson’s work asks us to examine and transform the “nonhuman” aspects of our humanity, liberating ourselves from the poison in our hearts and allowing us to see the full extent of human joy, excellence, and magic.”

—Tobie S. Stein, author, of *Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce*

“Cesi Davidson’s short plays will intrigue, delight, move, and shock you. You might be drawn to her whimsical creatures residing in the animal kingdom or the country of fruits and vegetables. You might be drawn to her human characters, the real-world issues of lack of opportunities, discrimination and racism. Whatever your preference, you will be entertained, you will learn from these plays and you will think about them long after you have finished reading/watching them.”

—Anna Steegmann, bilingual writer and translator

“The plays in Cesi Davidson’s anthology *Fricatives* are small bites that satisfy a five course gourmet literary palate.”

—Celeste Rita Baker, author of *Glass Bottle Dancer*,
De MotherJumpers, and the short story collection
Back, Belly and Side

“In this kaleidoscope of plays, you’ll meet many characters, human and non-human, that collectively shine a light on humanity with honesty, heartache, and humor. Cesi’s imaginative, playful and courageous words are golden for a performer. I especially appreciate the diverse casting that offers fresh perspectives on our shared human experience. These unique voices remind us that the world is full of wonder, and I’ll never look at pasta the same way ever again.”

—Rachel Lu, actress, *Chingish* and *Front Cover*

“From a pair of frozen peas who take themselves too seriously to an activist cow to an old friend of Jean Michel Basquiat, Cesi Davidson spotlights people and things that may never have otherwise seen the light. You can think you understand a character’s motivation, but in an instant they will transform and astound you, leaving

you breathless. In this latest collection of Cesi's plays, a reader will find in every piece the "audible friction" that is the title of the book. Many of the darker plays have an incredible lightness, and her lighter pieces offer deeper glimpses into subjects like grief, abuse and greed. She can broach these topics with ease because she knows how to encase them in love. Her cows are righteous, her peas are hard-working, and her words point us towards a more truthful version of ourselves."

—Kim Chinh, actor, screenwriter, playwright, author
of *Reclaiming Vietnam*

Fricatives

Conversation Pieces



A Small Paperback Series from Aqueduct Press
Subscriptions available: www.aqueductpress.com

1. The Grand Conversation
Essays by L. Timmel Duchamp
2. With Her Body
Short Fiction by Nicola Griffith
3. Changeling
A Novella by Nancy Jane Moore
4. Counting on Wildflowers
An Entanglement by Kim Antieau
5. The Traveling Tide
Short Fiction by Rosaleen Love
6. The Adventures of the Faithful Counselor
A Narrative Poem by Anne Sheldon
7. Ordinary People
A Collection by Eleanor Arnason
8. Writing the Other
A Practical Approach
by Nisi Shawl & Cynthia Ward
9. Alien Bootlegger
A Novella by Rebecca Ore
10. The Red Rose Rages (Bleeding)
A Short Novel by L. Timmel Duchamp
11. Talking Back: Epistolary Fantasies
edited by L. Timmel Duchamp
12. Absolute Uncertainty
Short Fiction by Lucy Sussex
13. Candle in a Bottle
A Novella by Carolyn Ives Gilman
14. Knots
Short Fiction by Wendy Walker

15. Naomi Mitchison: A Profile of Her Life and Work
A Monograph by Lesley A. Hall
16. We, Robots
A Novella by Sue Lange
17. Making Love in Madrid
A Novella by Kimberly Todd Wade
18. Of Love and Other Monsters
A Novella by Vandana Singh
19. Aliens of the Heart
Short Fiction by Carolyn Ives Gilman
20. Voices From Fairyland:
The Fantastical Poems of Mary Coleridge, Charlotte
Mew, and Sylvia Townsend Warner
Edited and With Poems by Theodora Goss
21. My Death
A Novella by Lisa Tuttle
22. De Secretis Mulierum
A Novella by L. Timmel Duchamp
23. Distances
A Novella by Vandana Singh
24. Three Observations and a Dialogue:
Round and About SF
Essays by Sylvia Kelso and a correspondence
with Lois McMaster Bujold
25. The Buonarotti Quartet
Short Fiction by Gwyneth Jones
26. Slightly Behind and to the Left
Four Stories & Three Drabbles by Claire Light
27. Through the Drowsy Dark
Short Fiction and Poetry by Rachel Swirsky
28. Shotgun Lullabies
Stories and Poems by Sheree Renée Thomas
29. A Brood of Foxes
A Novella by Kristin Livdahl
30. The Bone Spindle
Poems and Short Fiction by Anne Sheldon
31. The Last Letter
A Novella by Fiona Lehn

32. We Wuz Pushed
On Joanna Russ and Radical Truth-Telling
by Lee Mandelo
33. The Receptionist and Other Tales
Poems by Lesley Wheeler
34. Birds and Birthdays
Stories by Christopher Barzak
35. The Queen, the Cambion, and Seven Others
Stories by Richard Bowes
36. Spring in Geneva
A Novella by Sylvia Kelso
37. The XY Conspiracy
A Novella by Lori Selke
38. Numa
An Epic Poem by Katrinka Moore
39. Myths, Metaphors, and Science Fiction:
Ancient Roots of the Literature of the Future
Essays by Sheila Finch
40. NoFood
Short Fiction by Sarah Tolmie
41. The Haunted Girl
Poems and Short Stories by Lisa M. Bradley
42. Three Songs for Roxy
A Novella by Caren Gussoff
43. Ghost Signs
Poems and a Short Story by Sonya Taaffe
44. The Prince of the Aquamarines & The Invisible
Prince: Two Fairy Tales
by Louise Cavelier Levesque
45. Back, Belly, and Side: True Lies and False Tales
Short Fiction by Celeste Rita Baker
46. A Day in Deep Freeze
A Novella by Lisa Shapter
47. A Field Guide to the Spirits
Poems by Jean LeBlanc
48. Marginalia to Stone Bird
Poems by R.B. Lemberg

49. Unpronounceable
A Novella by Susan diRende
50. Sleeping Under the Tree of Life
Poetry and Short Fiction by Sheree Renée Thomas
51. Other Places
Short Fiction by Karen Heuler
52. Monteverde: Memoirs of an Interstellar Linguist
A Novella by Lola Robles,
translated by Lawrence Schimel
53. The Adventure of the Incognita Countess
A Novella by Cynthia Ward
54. Boundaries, Border Crossings,
and Reinventing the Future
Essays and Short Fiction by Beth Plutchak
55. Liberating the Astronauts
Poems by Christina Rau
56. In Search of Lost Time
A Novella by Karen Heuler
57. Cosmovore
Poems by Kristi Carter
58. Helen's Story
A Novella by Rosanne Rabinowitz
59. Liminal Spaces
Short Fiction by Beth Plutchak
60. Feed Me the Bones of Our Saints
Short Fiction by Alex Dally MacFarlane
61. If Not Skin: Collected Transformations
Poems and Short Fiction by Toby MacNutt
62. The Adventure of the Dux Bellorum
A Novella by Cynthia Ward
63. People Change
Short Fiction and Poems by Gwynne Garfinkle
64. Invocabulary
Poems by Gemma Files
65. The Green and Growing
A Novella by Erin K. Wagner
66. Everything is Made of Letters
Short Fiction by Sofia Rhei

67. Midnight at the Organporium
Short Fiction by Tara Campbell
68. Algorithmic Shapeshifting
Poems by Bogi Takács
69. The Rampant
A Novella by Julie C. Day
70. Mary Shelley Makes a Monster
Poems by Octavia Cade
71. Articulation
Short Plays to Nourish the Mind & Soul
by Cesi Davidson
72. City of a Thousand Feelings
A Novella by Anya Johanna DeNiro
73. Ancient Songs of Us
Poems by Jean LeBlanc
74. The Adventure of the Naked Guide
A Novella by Cynthia Ward
75. Sacred Summer
Poems by Cassandra Clarke
76. Disease
Short Fiction by Sarah Tolmie
77. Goddess Bandit of the Thousand Arms
Poems by Hal Y. Zhang
78. Resistance and Transformation: On Fairy Tales
Essays by Mari Ness
79. The Silences of Ararat
A Novella by L. Timmel Duchamp
80. Cabinet of Wrath: A Doll Collection
Short Fiction by Tara Campbell
81. The Adventure of the Golden Woman
A Novella by Cynthia Ward
82. Fricatives
Short Plays to Nourish the Mind & Soul
by Cesi Davidson

About the Aqueduct Press Conversation Pieces Series

The feminist engaged with sf is passionately interested in challenging the way things are, passionately determined to understand how everything works. It is my constant sense of our feminist-sf present as a grand conversation that enables me to trace its existence into the past and from there see its trajectory extending into our future. A genealogy for feminist sf would not constitute a chart depicting direct lineages but would offer us an ever-shifting, fluid mosaic, the individual tiles of which we will probably only ever partially access. What could be more in the spirit of feminist sf than to conceptualize a genealogy that explicitly manifests our own communities across not only space but also time?

Aqueduct's small paperback series, Conversation Pieces, aims to both document and facilitate the "grand conversation." The Conversation Pieces series presents a wide variety of texts, including short fiction (which may not always be sf and may not necessarily even be feminist), essays, speeches, manifestoes, poetry, interviews, correspondence, and group discussions. Many of the texts are reprinted material, but some are new. The grand conversation reaches at least as far back as Mary Shelley and extends, in our speculations and visions, into the continually created future. In Jonathan Goldberg's words, "To look forward to the history that will be, one must look at and retell the history that has been told." And that is what Conversation Pieces is all about.

L. Timmel Duchamp

Jonathan Goldberg, "The History That Will Be" in Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero, eds., *Premodern Sexualities* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996)

Conversation Pieces
Volume 82

Fricatives

Short Plays to Nourish
the Mind & Soul

by
Cesi Davidson





Published by Aqueduct Press
PO Box 95787
Seattle, WA 98145-2787
www.aqueductpress.com

Copyright © 2021 by Cesi Davidson
All rights reserved. First Edition, October 2021

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission in writing from the author.

For information on licensing rights for production of a play in this collection contact the author directly:
cesidavidson@gmail.com

ISBN: 978-1-61976-214-5

Cover and all illustrations courtesy Michal Ammar
Cover background, © Can Stock Photo / realcg;

Original Block Print of Mary Shelley by Justin Kempton:
www.writersmugs.com

Printed in the USA by Applied Digital Imaging

For my grandmothers,

Mattie Bushnell and Inez Davidson

Thank you for loving me.

*Fricatives force change
through a narrow channel*

Contents

Foreword	1
Introduction	3
Pasta Mob.....	5
Scars to Remember	21
Doll Madness	29
Entonces Vivamos	37
Style by Design	49
Frozen Stiffs.....	63
My Mother My Wife	77
Baby Doll.....	89
Moo Better Blues	97
Samo Isn't Dead	115
Epilogue.....	145
Missing Andi.....	147

Foreword

Daniel Judah Sklar

Daniel is the author of PLAYMAKING: Children Writing and Performing Their Own Plays. Currently he leads classes for the Harlem Dramatic Writing Workshop and is a teaching artist for the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

In the penultimate play of this moving and amusing collection, a character named Cesi calls John Prine, the revered idiosyncratic singer/song writer, in heaven and explains that a person can have 20/20 vision in his or her eyes and still be blind. In order to truly see, one needs a moral heart, she explains. If our hearts are stuffed with hurt and selfishness, the eyes can't do their job properly; the lack of moral vision distorts and thereby blocks reality.

Fortunately for readers of these short dramas and comedies, Cesi Davidson has a pure moral heart. She sees us as we are. And she has the talent to imagine characters who reveal that vision in unexpected and illuminating situations. In some instances they are realistic, like the couple who have been enraged at one another since the death of their son but finally confess their hidden agendas and can go on. In others they are surreal, like a talking cow who is saved from corporate greed by West Indian Frozen Yogurt entrepreneurs. They also can break your heart, like the grandma who did everything right as a student but was denied recognition by nakedly abusive racism—only to be misunderstood years later by her own grandchildren. And still others, who

are genuinely frightening, like a carnivorous anthropoid who gives birth and kills with equal vigor.

Davidson's earlier book, *Articulations*, had a similar range of surprising and sympathetic characters in situations that remind us of human aspirations and conflicts, but *Fricatives* goes deeper. The couple whose son dies and the grandma whose grandkids fail to see her are portrayed so vividly that I was not just touched but also deeply moved. The talking cow and her bizarre destiny gave me an understanding of the corporate world that volumes of analysis never could. Seeing the anthropoid in action brought home the danger of uncontrolled technology so vividly that I was shocked.

Conflict is the key to Davidson's dialogue. Her protagonists want something from their antagonists, and they try to get it. The antagonists resist. Action occurs when there is change; one side gets what he/she/it wants or there is a compromise. In these plays the conflicts and subsequent actions also build to climaxes where the characters understand one another and we, the audience, realize what that means.

I believe these plays are joyful and enlightening reading and are the basis for scintillating evenings in the theatre.

Introduction

My father, Charles Davidson was a gifted musician. As a young man, he was offered a scholarship to a prestigious music school. Obligations to the family business prevented his attendance. His family and music were his joy. While working at the C&D Cement Block Company, he continued mastery of all the stringed instruments. The bass violin was his preferred bliss. I remember hearing his tunes from the living room fill our home. He could play it all, from abstract jazz stanzas to Broadway show tunes.

As I watched my siblings become musicians, I wondered why I wasn't blessed with the "music gene." Later in my adult life, I found musical expression through written language: phonetic tones, word stress, and sentence intonation. The dialogue between characters in my plays often mimicked improvisational conversation. I found myself in the company of musicians more. I eventually partnered with one.

In this second anthology of plays, I've assembled an eclectic mix of characters. Each one moves through a life's journey with a rhythm, and a purpose. Each one wants something while exuding a personal style, and a swag. As you read each play, I encourage you to find each character's perspective. Don't walk in their shoes. Move in their stride. Enjoy the strolls.

Cesi Davidson
July 2021

Pasta Mob

To Be Continued

Characters

Detective Escarola Bean Manicotti: Female officer of the law

Checky Ravioli: Sexy female thug/mobster, Cheeky's cousin

Cheeky Ravioli: Sexy female thug/mobster, Cheeky's cousin

Setting

New York City

Circa today, tomorrow, yesterday

Lights Rise

(The curtains on the stage are drawn closed. Downstage, Detective Escarola Bean Manicotti stands under a streetlight. She wears a trench coat and hat. Her pockets are filled with garlic knots and bread sticks. In front of the curtain, there are two chairs. Checky and Cheeky Ravioli sit on the chairs holding bouquets of flowers. An enormous white bridal veil covers their faces and torsos.)

ESCAROLA: My name is Detective Escarola Manicotti. This is my city. I work for the NYPDHDLMNOP, New York City's finest. And this is my story. (Reaching

into pocket) Can I offer you a bread stick? (Walking as she munches, looking into the audience) You... What do you mean, "What's my middle name? What's it to you? You got a middle name? (Pause) Farina Wheatina? Oh...that's ordinarily so pathetic. (Sniffs a garlic knot) The garlic...gets the edge off. A woman in my position is under an extraordinarily sex and stress. Sex, that's another story. (Pause) Look you's...I'll tell you my middle name only for your dictionary encyclopedia like reference purposes. You're never to repeat my middle name. And I won't appreciate you breaking, smashing, and mesmerizing my wishes. You understand what I'm saying? (Taking a deep breath then speaking quietly) Bean. (Pause) What do you mean you didn't hear me? (Speaking quietly) Bean. (Pause) Alright. Alright.

Bean. My full, officiated, personal name—given to me by my mother originated from Queens, and my father originated from Brooklyn born and raised God bless—is Escarola Bean. You got it. Detective Escarola Bean Manicotti. Now forget about it. (Pause) One more thing. So, when I was of a certain age, when I was identifying and discovering my inner spiritual like self, I ask my mother, "Ma, Why should you have to names me Bean? You ruined my whole life." And she says, "I could have been specificated with the bean and named you chick pea. Then you should be greater upset with me and your father because guys would be of the opinion to call you "Chick" for short. You think you got problems now? What if you was to be called, "Chick" for your entire feminine life?" (Pointing to Checky and Cheeky) Oh, them? They's an intimate and very important like part of my intricate story. Say hello, bimbos.

CHECKY & CHEEKY: Hello Bimbos.

ESCAROLA: Hey. Hey. There's some fellas and some whatever's out there.

CHECKY & CHEEKY: Whatever's.

ESCAROLA: Checky and Cheeky Ravioli, cousins ten times removed. Inseparable since they shared a crib as young babes. And now, the most feared thugs in New York City, known professionally collectively as the "Pasta Mob." (Inhaling the garlic from garlic knots) Don't you judge me. I'm not snorting oregano or stuffing my nose with panna cotta.

CHEEKY: Get to the point Escarola.

CHECKY: Yeah, tell them about the weddings.

ESCAROLA: Pipe down your pastarini. (Speaking to audience) They was both left at the altars for reasons I don't know, on the days of their weddings.

(Checky and Cheeky stand and pull off their veils. They're dressed in trench coats, dark sunglasses, and fashionable hats. They throw their flowers into the audience and pick up their designer handbags.)

ESCAROLA: Don't take those flowers. They're cursed.

(Checky and Cheeky move the chairs. Cheeky places a telephone on a telephone stand center stage. Checky collects boxes of pasta and places them in a wheel barrel. Checky exits.)

ESCAROLA: From that pitiful day of their disrupted nuptials they turned to a life of crime. Now, I'm hot on the trail of the Ravioli cousins, whom I suspect are controlling the flow of pasta in the Big Apple. As supplies of pasta are diminishing, violence is rampant in four of the five boroughs: Manhattan, Brooklyn,

Queens, and the Bronx. My first clue...Staten Island.
They were hit first.

(Exit Escarola to a stake out. She observes the activities on Staten Island.)

CHEEKY: (Takes off her trench coat, dark glasses, and hat, revealing very sexy lingerie. She holds the handset of the telephone.)
Hello Auntie Pasto. It's your niece Cheeky Ravioli.
Yeah, Cheeky is okay.

CHECKY: (Enters with the wheel barrel filled with pasta. She removes her trench coat, dark glasses, and hat, revealing her very sexy lingerie) How ya doing Auntie?

CHEEKY: Cheeky sends her love and her convalescents to you simultaneously.

CHECKY: Tell her I need to borrow some of her blemish concealer.

CHEEKY: Hey. I'm trying to do business here.

CHECKY: Looking like a beauty is a very important part of our business.

CHEEKY: I needs for you to do me a favor. And for this favor, I should be in debt to you for my life. And my children and their children and their children and their children should be in debt to you the same. Perhaps that debts you multiple grand nieces and nephews for millions of years. I'm not sure. I lost count.

CHECKY: (Arranging the boxes and hiding them back stage) This is the last of the Staten Island pasta.

CHEEKY: We'll move them to the safe house later. Go take a powder.

CHECKY: (Exiting) Tell Auntie she should call Patty Peppers and Sausages for some muscle.

ESCAROLA: (Waking herself up from a garlic knot high) I would know Checky Ravioli's fragrant parfume anywhere. (Pause) It's nothing. I can't smell any pasta. (Looking at Staten Island) From my vantage point, near Lady Liberty, the Statue of Liberty herself, I sees massive exodus of multigenerational types driving, running, skateboarding, fast walking, which is better for your health by the way, across the Verrazano Bridge. No, now they've stopped. There's something preventing them from getting into Brooklyn. Now, everyone is running the other direction, across the Goethals Bridge into Jersey. (Taking notes)

CHEEKY: Me and Checky. We've taken the pasta from Staten Island, and we've incapacitated the bridge. No worries, no civilians have been hurt. They've all gone to Jersey. What I needs for you to do is assemble a meeting of the New York City Gravy Association at the dock of the Staten Island ferry. Call Patty Peppers and Sausages. I need her and her football team to frisk everyone. Make sure no one is carrying heat... hot plates, fry pans, or hair dryers. I need the heads of the families there. All of them. And when me and Checky is finished with this heist, I'll keep my promise that you should remember I made so long ago when I was a kid and you gave me a Suzie Bake Toy Oven. I'm gonna liberate Uncle Ben and Aunt Jemima. (Hangs up the phone) Powder time is over, Checky. Let's get to the ferry.

(Exit Cheeky and Checky)

ESCAROLA: I see a border wall has been erected at the end of the Verrazano Bridge. No Staten Island immigrants can enter Brooklyn where my father was born and raised God bless. And as I'm watching the wall

that's there but never been there before...I'm seeing Staten Island sink into the ocean.

(Cheeky and Checking stand on the Staten Island Ferry with members of the New York City Gravy Association.)

CHEEKY: Me and my cousin Cheeky...

CHECKY: Yeah. Me and my cousin Cheeky...

CHEEKY & CHECKY: We want to welcome you to this impromptu but not so impromptu meeting of the New York City Gravy Association. (Applause)

CHECKY: Anybody got concealer?

CHEEKY: Thank you for coming. We see so many familiar faces.

CHECKY: And so many new to the industry.

CHEEKY: But one thing we all have in common is our love for pasta.

CHECKY: Mazella Mozzarella and her mother Minnie Minestrone. We welcome you.

CHEEKY: Carmela Catch 'Tori, How ya doin'?

CHECKY: Penny Pancetta. Can always depend on you.

CHEEKY: Haven't seen you in a long time Stella Stuffed Peppers.

CHECKY: Terry Tiramisu. Always a sweetheart.

CHEEKY: My dear friends, the Cannoli.

CHECKY: Seppole Zeppole.

CHEEKY: Patsy Panettone.

CHECKY: Struffoli Marfoli Mascarpone

CHEEKY: Nice of you to show up in support us, Bruschetta.

CHECKY: And our Auntie Pasto sent the Pepperoni twins from her family just to make sure everything goes the way it should today.

CHEEKY: Betty Bread Crumb and her family wanted to come, but me and Checky didn't think it was necessary. We rely on yous that is here to tell those that is not here our message.

CHEEKY & CHECKY: We're taking over the Pasta.

CHEEKY: As we speak, all that existed of pasta on Staten Island is vanished.

CHECKY: All the home cooks who processed the fine art of making homemade pasta have emigrated to New Jersey and will never return. And that's because in about (looking at watch) seven to thirteen minutes Staten Island will be no more.

CHEEKY: No more. Sunk into the ocean from the five hundred thousand pounds of melting Italian ice and gelato that we placed in Freshkills Park. Causing a tsunami of enormous proportions never before seen in this part of New York State.

ESCAROLA: It was there. Now it's gone. Staten Island, may you rest in peace. (Sniffing garlic knots)

CHEEKY: It saddens me that we found ourselves forced to take these drastic steps. We ain't thugs. We're just business women. But you refused to share your profits from the gravies: vodka, puttanesca, marinara, bolognese, and alfredo. And you rationed our shipments causing great distress for our Manhattan clients in particular.

CHECKY: Yeah. Butter alone on pasta is not always satisfying.

CHEEKY: Pasta and gravy were meant to be married.

CHECKY: Married. Like me and my Vito.

CHEEKY: (Consoling Checky) This what we gonna do. Out of respect for my father born and raised in Brooklyn God bless, and my mother with her heritage from Queens, you'll get a piece of the action in both boroughs but only with tortellini. You'll pay us for a ration of gravy, which my cousin Checky will decide.

CHECKY: Yeah, tortellini is better with butter anyways. For every half pan of tortellini, you'll get a pound of butter. And you'll get one cup of marinara a month.

ESCAROLA: Only one family has the meatballs to carry off a heist, a siege, and alteration of public property all in less than twenty-four hours. The Ravioli cousins. It seems to me that they're gonna make a move into every borough. They started with the least important first. But what is their master plan? Sanitation strikes, blackouts, hurricanes, and economic recession. Nothing will devastate the Big Apple more than no pasta. From this, I don't think New York City can recover. My next step, follow the ferry. Will it go to Manhattan or Brooklyn?

CHEEKY: This ferry will give you safe passage into Bay Ridge bypassing the border wall. As long as we're in agreement, you have nothing to fear from the Raviolis. (Speaking to Checky) We need to split up Checky. The NYPDHDLMNOP is gonna come after us fast and hard.

CHECKY: They got nothing on us.

CHEEKY: Escarola will trace this ingenious work to the Raviolis. We need to be ready.

CHECKY: I'll fix my face.

CHEEKY: You go to the warehouse at the Bruce in Harlem. I'll go to Queens. I'm gonna convince the plum tomato farmers that they should sell only to us. We'll start a tomato famine. We'll capture the tomato paste market.

CHECKY: How you gonna convince them Cheeky?

CHEEKY: Beef stake and grape tomatoes. I'm bringing illegals from the Bronx. Keep the phone line open. Take an inventory of the goods. And Checky, if Escarola busts into our joint, zip your lips.

CHECKY: Sure. But what if I need to replenish my luscious lipgloss?

CHEEKY: Fix it now so you can be ready.

(Exit Cheeky and Checky)

ESCAROLA: I need to infiltrate the gravy association. That means traveling in disguise. (She takes off her trench coat and hat, revealing sexy lingerie.)

(Lights up on Checky on the telephone.)

CHECKY: Yeah?

CHEEKY: Did you calculate the inventory?

CHECKY: Sure.

CHEEKY: What is it?

CHECKY: Sure. (Reading from a clipboard) We got bows, cavatelli, conchiglie, bow ties, fusilli, mezzani the big ones and the little ones, penne, rigatoni, shells, ziti.

CHEEKY: What about the elbows?

CHECKY: Yeah, we got the elbows. But what we need the elbows for?

CHEEKY: Never you so mind about that.

CHECKY: And Cheeky, why haven't you told me where you hiding the spaghetti.

CHEEKY: Don't worry about it. Nobody, I mean nobody will ever get their hands on the spaghetti. (Hangs up phone)

ESCAROLA: I have a delicate choice to make. I need to capture the thugs on the ferry and make them talk and chew at the same time. I need to capture the Raviolis before they do any more damages. I could follow the ferry to Brooklyn, but I could expect every feminine type mob person to have her trap shut in more ways than one. There's another solution. Many years of garlic snorting have resulted in my very delicate nasal palate. (Sniffing) I smell the signature perfume of Checky Ravioli, "Eau de pasta water toilette." If I follow the scent, I'll find Checky. I'll find Checky. And if I find Checky, I'll find the goods or visa versa. If I find Checky with Checky, the goods will be with the two of them. I'm a little dizzy. (Walking around tracing the scent) You get my meaning?

(Lights up on Checky trying on different pairs of shoes. Then she stands next to the telephone stand and picks up the phone.)

CHECKY: Yeah?

CHEEKY: Is that you Checky? You sound different like.

CHECKY: Yeah, I think it's me.

CHEEKY: Well, how do I know it's you?

CHECKY: I don't know. How do I know it's you?

CHEEKY: Ask me something only me, myself, and I would know. (Pause) Ask me.

CHECKY: I'm thinking. Oh yeah. On what location on my face is my most beautified beauty mark?

CHEEKY: It's a trick question. Your whole face is a beauty mark. You're so gorgeous. (Pause)

CHECKY: What question should you be asking or should I be asking to self-identify your person?

CHEEKY: Tell me about one of my personal garment sizes that I should never want revealed because it's personal.

CHECKY: Your waistline is triple minus double zero.

CHEEKY: Correct. I love you. I may be a little detained if the tomatoes on the vine in Queens are tangled.

CHECKY: I can handle it. (Hangs up phone) She's so sensitive.

(Enter Escarola)

ESCAROLA: Checky Ravioli, the one person of the two-person pasta mob in the flesh.

(Checky holds up her hands) Your fermented pasta water fragrance never dissipates.

CHECKY: Wait just a minute Escarola.

(Checky puts on lip-gloss and then sits on a chair with her hands behind her back.)

ESCAROLA: Where are the goods Checky?

CHECKY: I'll never tell you rubber heels.

ESCAROLA: Well you're gonna tell me this. What's that shade of lip-gloss?

CHECKY: Heavenly-Hell Red.

ESCAROLA: If you weren't so bad, that shade of lip-gloss would be so good for you. I'll ask you for the last time. Where are the goods?

CHECKY: I'll never tell you Escarola...Bean.

ESCAROLA: Who told you my middle name?

CHECKY: Our Auntie Pasto and your mother went to Queens Boulevard High School together. Only your mother never finished.

ESCAROLA: Now I'm really gonna give it to you.

(Escarola punches Checky from side to side. Checky makes joyful sounds.)

ESCAROLA: What's wrong with you? You on aspirin or something?

CHECKY: Don't stop, Escarola. It helps my accu-punch points. Stimulates the muscles in my check tissue.

ESCAROLA: (Picking up a strainer) I'm not fooling around with you, Checky.

CHECKY: What are you doing with the strainer?

ESCAROLA: I'm going to boil some linguine. I took a box out of the evidence room at headquarters.

CHECKY: Cooking linguine is against the law, and you is the law.

ESCAROLA: Sometimes even the law has to break the pasta law for the greater good.

CHECKY: There's only one reason you would bring linguine...for torture.

ESCAROLA: That's right. I'm gonna cook the pasta in front of you. Throw the pasta water down the drain...and then

CHECKY: No.

ESCAROLA: And then...

CHECKY: Please Escarola...even you can't be that cruel.

ESCAROLA: I'm gonna water board the linguine with cold water. I'm gonna rinse it until there's no starch left. Then I'm gonna sit the noodles in a bucket of ice.

CHECKY: (Screaming) I'll tell you what you want to know.

ESCAROLA: Do you have the spaghetti?

CHECKY: We would never touch the spaghetti. It's sacred. It has angel hair. Cheeky shipped it overseas to the Vatican.

ESCAROLA: Then where's the other pasta? Tell me. Give up the goods Cheeky.

CHECKY: Promise me. Promise me. You won't rinse the linguine.

ESCAROLA: Give up the goods.

CHECKY: It's in the Bruce vault.

ESCAROLA: Unlock the vault.

CHECKY: You'll have to untie me.

ESCAROLA: Cheeky, you never been tied.

(Cheeky gets up from the chair and goes behind the stage curtain. She draws the drapes, revealing hundreds of boxes of pasta.)

CHECKY: It's all here. Every box, from every borough except the Bronx. We was doing that last because of some negotiations we was making with the rice and beans. (Sitting down weeping) You're cruel Escarola. Pasta should never be rinsed. Without starch, pasta can never marry gravy. Just like Vito Scarapini Scarpariello Scarparo and me.

ESCAROLA: Who did you say?

CHECKY: Vito Scarapini Scarpariello Scarparo Parmesan was my one true love. And on the day of our planned nuptials he didn't show up at City Hall. I don't understand it. He loved me. I loved him.

ESCAROLA: Vito Scarapini Scarpariello Scarparo Parmesan was my brother.

CHECKY: Your brother?

ESCAROLA: He told me he was gonna secretly marry a girl who was in a lot of trouble. His plan was to move with her to a gated community in Nassau County Long Island. He called her his "Baby Arugula."

CHECKY: That's me. Arugula Arogula Argencha Ravioli. Checky is my business name.

ESCAROLA: That means that you...

CHECKY: That means that you...

ESCAROLA & CHECKY: Sister in laws...in the law...

ESCAROLA: Vito overdosed on olive bread. We found him on Arthur Avenue in the Bronx, before the nuptials.

(Enter Cheeky)

CHEEKY: Not so fast. Both of your hands up. Then sit down. Then hands on your laps. Cross your legs. Escarola, garlic knot addict detective. And Cheeky, wanna be mob boss but you ain't got the smarts. I pretended to be in love with Vito so I could destroy you and Bean. We met on Arthur Avenue for meals twenty-five times a week. He never ate the food. He filled up on bread until he overdosed. Easy. I knew

addiction ran in your family. Vito was gonna marry me at City Hall.

CHECKY: Auntie Pasto isn't gonna go for this.

CHEEKY: She's in on it with me. This is about enormous scale liberation.

CHECKY: But we're family. Cousins ten times removed.

CHEEKY: That means your people were colonizers to my people. And now we're taking everything back.

ESCAROLA: You'll never get pasta sold on the Black market.

CHEEKY: I'm not gonna sell it. I'm going to give it away to the people, like Robina Hood. Steal from the rich colonizers and give to the disenfranchised in city housing. It's always been about the elbows. Now I control the elbows. And controlling the elbows means my people and me control the macaroni and cheese. And then we're taking control over the collar greens and black-eyed peas.

ESCAROLA: Wait. That's not where my story ends. Vito was found naked walking across 125th Street at 5 AM, the morning of ... What date is it? He had bulging belly bulimia. Eating, regurgitating, eating, regurgitating. You know the drill. Checky was arrested and given time served due to her broken heart. She moved overseas and became a bodyguard for spaghetti. Cheeky formed a new mob, Mac Mob. I'm Detective Escarola Bean Manicotti. My work never ends. Yes, Escarola Bean, and proud of it.

(Lights Out)

End of Play

About the Author

Cesi (Cecelia) Davidson holds a doctorate degree in Speech Language Hearing Sciences from the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. After providing therapeutic services for children with communication and learning challenges for over thirty years she reimagined her life as a writer and producing artist. Aqueduct Press published the first anthology of plays with compelling stories for the stage giving voice to her witness of human suffering and triumphs, *Articulation* in 2019. She's founder and curator of Short Plays to Nourish the Mind & Soul, free public theatre in New York City. Cesi is a mother, sister, aunt, partner, friend, and colleague. Without reservation, she believes in human rights and equality. She believes in the power of art to transform and improve our personal and global existence. Her wish is that her words will live beyond her life and stimulate understanding and thoughtful conversation of our one human family.

www.cesiwrites.com/

www.instagram.com/cesiwrites/