

alone with Mary. "Mary," I said. "My mom had that same bathrobe in blue." "Oh," she said. And that robe disappeared. Gone. Sent away to the same place my mother's clothes went, I assume. (*Bear*) To this day that bathrobe is the only piece of clothing I can actually see in my mind. I have no visuals of prom dresses or favorite sweater or shoes I couldn't live without. Clothes are just something I use for cover, leaving room for one electric blue memory.

SCENE 5

Holly's Story

HOLLY. If I could draw, I would draw you the dress my mother gave me when I was five years old. It was my favorite dress ever. It had long sleeves, and it was charcoal gray wool with a big lace pilgrim collar and a black satin bow in the center and lace cuffs. A few months after my mother gave it to me, my father, who was a doctor, sent my mother away to a mental hospital, moved his nurse into our house, divorced my mother, and married the nurse. We had a cleaning lady who came in once a week who had a daughter a little younger than me, and my stepmother used to give her my hand-me-downs. One day I couldn't find my beautiful dress. I asked my stepmother if she'd seen it. "It will turn up," she said. A week later, I went to school, and during recess I found my dress, on the cleaning lady's daughter. I could not believe it. I ran up to her and grabbed her by the collar screaming, "That's MY dress, MY dress, MY dress" again and again until the recess monitor pulled us apart. The little girl stood there, shaking and crying. And I stood there shaking and crying, holding my satin bow in my fist. I wasn't punished because the school "understood." But I remember wishing that they had punished me. Shame on me. And my stepmother too.

The Bathrobe

SCENE 4

ROSIE. The truth is, I have no fashion sense — never did. For many years I blamed this on my mom's death. Then again, I blame pretty much everything on that — my weight, my addiction to television, my inability to spell. In my fantasy world, had my mother lived, I would be extremely well-dressed. I would know what I went with what, and everything I tried on would fit. Mom and I would shop together at the places that moms and daughters go — a department store, an outlet mall, the flea market. I would wear a lot of tasteful makeup too. We would lunch someplace while shopping. It would be at a café where we would have salad and like it. We'd laugh about how great our lives turned out and make plans for all the things we were still going to do. But that's all a dream, because my mother did not live. She died when she was 39 years old. (*Bear*) The fact is that no item of clothing has ever moved me in any way — except one. After my mom died, my dad took his five motherless children to Belfast, Northern Ireland. I guess he thought we could best recover from the trauma of her death by living in a war zone. The IRA was nowhere near as scary as what had just happened to our lives. When we returned, we found her side of the closet empty. All her clothes were gone. (*Bear*) A few years later my dad got remarried to a lovely woman. She was a school-teacher named Mary May. After the wedding she moved in. That first morning she was there, I was eating breakfast with a few of my siblings when my new stepmom walked down the stairs and into the kitchen. She was wearing a long burgundy velvet three-quarter sleeve zip bathrobe with a thick vertical white stripe down the center, surrounding the zipper. No one said a word. We all looked at each other then back at Mary as she happily made her way to the stove to put on the kettle. My mother had had the same exact bathrobe — in blue. Electric blue. What are the chances of that really? The unspoken rule in my house was that my mom's name was never mentioned after her death. But that morning, I knew that rule was about to be broken. My siblings left the kitchen. I was