

# **BEHIND THE SHADOW**

- a timeless, one-act rescue

By Liz Amadio

# BEHIND THE SHADOW

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## BEHIND THE SHADOW

### CHARACTERS

HARMONY    A black woman in her 40's.  
DESTINY     Her significantly younger sister.

Time        The Present/1930.

Place        A hiking trail/A 19th century warehouse.

Production notes: The building can be designed as a set element or represented by an image projected on the US wall. Lighting shifts are notated to accentuate its *other worldly* quality. An oddly shaped tree, preset USR along the path, *disappears* just prior to/concurrent with the first lighting shift and can be accomplished by the stage crew in full view of the audience (as fairies, hooded forest dwellers, etc.)

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This play was developed in Cosmic Orchid's *The Voire Dire Project 5.0: Images in Sepia*, with the collective creativity of the cast, inspired by an art photograph, entitled: *The Window* by Mark Fernkas. It premiered at Theater for the New City on November 4, 2021 and was directed by Liz Amadio. The cast was as follows:

HARMONY	Carmela Davis
DESTINY	Courtney Vinson

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*Two sisters, DESTINY and HARMONY, are hiking on a wooded trail. Both carry backpacks.*

**DESTINY.** That guy. He couldn't wait until she was dead?

**HARMONY.** Mommy said she approved of it.

**DESTINY.** She - who? Who approved of it?

**HARMONY.** Miss Williams.

**DESTINY.** She's got Alzheimer's! How can she approve of him bringing in a live-in lover?

**HARMONY.** Mommy said that she wants him to be happy.

**DESTINY.** That poor woman thinks his young plaything is her nurse.

**HARMONY.** *(Silence for a moment, as if contemplating where to walk, not what to say.)* Maybe you're right.

**DESTINY.** I am right. You can't possibly think -

**HARMONY.** - He was always a little... *(Gestures a hand shrug.)* ...when I was growing up.

**DESTINY.** What, leechy? He didn't do anything to you -

**HARMONY.** - No. Nothing like that.

**DESTINY.** Then what? I always thought he was a nice, old man.

**HARMONY.** He was much younger when I was a teenager.

**DESTINY.** So, what did he do to you?

**HARMONY.** Nothing. He just always seemed a little too friendly with Tasha's friends.

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**DESTINY.** Tasha was already long gone when I was a teenager.

**HARMONY.** Destiny, you don't remember that?

**DESTINY.** Would you stop? Just because we grew up in the same house doesn't mean we had the same experiences.

**HARMONY.** Must you always throw that age gap in my face?

**DESTINY.** I don't. You're just touchy. We're friends now, aren't we? *(Pause.)* All I'm saying is he was already showing his age when I was coming up.

**HARMONY.** He was quite the charmer when I was a kid.

**DESTINY.** Still is. He's got some retirement gig now, driving a truck for the parks department. You still friends with Tasha?

**HARMONY.** Only up until she went away to college. When she came back, she went all debutante on us.

**DESTINY.** So, what did he do?

**HARMONY.** Nothing really. He was just always hanging around with the girls when we were there. Never Miss Williams. Always him. He'd fix snacks for us, wearing this frilly, little apron.

**DESTINY.** Well, she had her business to tend to. Wait! You're not saying he's gay.

**HARMONY.** Daddy never hung out when I brought my friends over to the house.

**DESTINY.** *(Laughs.)* Daddy couldn't run fast enough when my girlfriends came over. He used to say: "Maxine,

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Destiny's expecting her girl posse. It's best I get the car detailed." How many times can you detail a car?

**HARMONY.** That was code for going over to the club to hang with his buddies. But that's what I'm saying. Daddy didn't stick around. That guy made it a point to be in the middle of us girls. *(Lighting shift. Odd tree disappears. Harmony and Destiny suddenly find themselves in front of a building - all brick - with one window that casts a long, diagonal shadow.)*

**DESTINY.** Whoa! What is this place?

**HARMONY.** I don't know.

**DESTINY.** Let me see that trail map.

*(Harmony digs out the map and gives it to Destiny who studies it.)*

**HARMONY.** Be my guest. I can't even read this thing, let alone figure out where we are on it.

**DESTINY.** Seriously?

**HARMONY.** Blueprints I can read. Architect's drawings, no problem. But these little trail maps...

**DESTINY.** We're right about here...but I don't see -

**HARMONY.** *(Hovers over map.)* - Where?

**DESTINY.** *(Points.)* Here.

**HARMONY.** We can't be here. There's no building.

**DESTINY.** *(Looks harder at the map. Looks at the building, up and down the trail.)* Hey, wait a minute. That building isn't on this map.

**HARMONY.** See? You can't read it either.

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**DESTINY.** No. I mean this building isn't on the map anywhere!

**HARMONY.** What do you mean? *(Grabs the map from her.)* That's impossible.

**DESTINY.** So weird. Come with me...

*(Lighting shift. Destiny & Harmony start to walk away from the building down the path from where they came.)*

**DESTINY.** Maybe he was just being a nice dad. That doesn't make him leechy or gay.

**HARMONY.** Who?

**DESTINY.** Tasha's father. Mr. Williams.

**HARMONY.** You're the one that's complaining about him bringing in his young thing.

**DESTINY.** That's different. You can be a womanizer and not be a leech.

**HARMONY.** I never said leech - you did.

**DESTINY.** You made it sound like he was gay with that apron.

**HARMONY.** He's West Indian! A lot of those old, West Indian men are real eccentric. *(Destiny circles around, seems to be looking for something.)*

**HARMONY.** Pay attention! I'm agreeing with you.

**DESTINY.** I'm confused now. Let's turn back around. I thought I saw a tree. I know I saw a tree.

**HARMONY.** We're walking on a path with nothing but trees!

**DESTINY.** No, I meant - never mind. *(Takes a snack from her backpack and shares it with Harmony, as they walk.)*



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**HARMONY.** Wait a minute. Wasn't there a gift shop at the entrance?

**DESTINY.** I don't know about a gift shop. But there was that building with the bathrooms in it. *(Lighting shift. Harmony and Destiny arrive at the brick building again.)*

**HARMONY.** Can this be the back of that building? Because that building *is* on the map.

**DESTINY.** That's a good twenty minutes from here. Are you telling me we walked all this way and got nowhere?

**HARMONY.** You know how these winding roads are. Maybe we curved around and ended up right behind the hospitality.

**DESTINY.** And what happened to all the people?

**HARMONY.** What people?

**DESTINY.** Well, that old couple walking behind us.

**HARMONY.** That guy with the goofy hat? They probably got tired and turned around.

**DESTINY.** What about those two women wrangling that toddler?

**HARMONY.** Maybe they gave up and went to the snack bar.

**DESTINY.** Listen! Complete silence. We're alone here. That doesn't freak you out? It's freaking me out. Let's get the fuck out of here!

**HARMONY.** Relax. It's fine. We're fine.

**DESTINY.** Look at this place!

**HARMONY.** There's no lintel.

**DESTINY.** There's no what?

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**HARMONY.** Lintel. Header. At the top of that window. There's barely a sill at the bottom.

**DESTINY.** It looks like that window was painted on the place. Maybe it was built before they used them.

**HARMONY.** They've been using lintels since the Greeks in the first century BC. It might have a recessed support but still, this wasn't built anytime in the last century.

*(Harmony & Destiny walk upstage and interact with the building.)*

**DESTINY.** I've never been on a path like this - with things appearing and disappearing like some magic show. Where did you get this map? I mean, who told you about this place?

**HARMONY.** *(Pause.)* Well, I...I've had it.

**DESTINY.** You said your friend, Nellie, from your job, gave it to you.

**HARMONY.** Did I? Well, I had it.

**DESTINY.** You said that already. What do you mean, you had it?

**HARMONY.** I found it.

**DESTINY.** You had it or you found it. And, if you had it because you found it, how long have you had it and where did you find it?

**HARMONY.** *(Pauses then blurts abruptly.)* I found it on the floor, in the back of Grace's closet.

**DESTINY.** What? Did you show it to the cops?

**HARMONY.** No. I didn't show it to the cops because I hadn't found it until just last week.

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**DESTINY.** Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you contact the detective?

**HARMONY.** That's exactly why I didn't tell you because I knew you'd want to bring the cops into this.

**DESTINY.** You're damn right I want to bring the cops into this. How could you not tell me?

**HARMONY.** I thought we could just come here -

**DESTINY.** - And what, play I-Spy? I'm calling the cops right now. I've still got Lovelace's cell saved. *(Pulls out her phone to make a call.)*

**HARMONY.** Don't!

**DESTINY.** Look. I get it. She's your daughter. But she's my niece and that's the closest thing I have to a daughter. If this place has something to do with her disappearance -

**HARMONY.** - I don't know that it does. I just thought it was worth coming here.

**DESTINY.** But not worth telling me that this might be the place Grace went missing?

**HARMONY.** Sorry. I should have told you.

**DESTINY.** *(Fiddles with cell.)* You don't have to worry because I don't have any service.

**HARMONY.** Can't we just look around?

**DESTINY.** This place is eerie. I guarantee you that if this map has anything to do with Grace's going missing, this place has something to do with it.

**HARMONY.** How can you be so sure?

**DESTINY.** I swear we've been down this path at least once before and this building wasn't here.

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**HARMONY.** That's crazy. How can that be?

**DESTINY.** All I know is that tree - that weird tree down there. *(Points.)* Well, I don't see it now...I saw it when we were first walking the path. And there was a pond at this spot here. Now there's a meadow.

**HARMONY.** You're saying this building just appeared out of thin air?

**DESTINY.** Yes!...Maybe.

**HARMONY.** You realize that sounds insane.

**DESTINY.** Well, this thing looks like it's from the olden days. You said so yourself. It's like something out of -

**HARMONY.** - The Gilded Age. *(No response.)* It's another name for the industrial revolution.

**DESTINY.** How do they build a park with a walking path right around it and it's not on the map?

**HARMONY.** Maybe we're missing a piece of the map.

**DESTINY.** You're reaching. Look at this thing. It's not some pirate's treasure map with a piece missing. *(Looks at it. Pauses.)* I'll tell you what I think it is. *(Says nothing.)*

**HARMONY.** Well, what do you think it is?

**DESTINY.** You're going to think I'm crazy.

**HARMONY.** I already think you're crazy.

**DESTINY.** I think this is a...

**HARMONY.** Spit it out.

**DESTINY.** I think we're in a time warp.

**HARMONY.** A time warp! What the -

**DESTINY.** - I think we jumped back in time.

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**HARMONY.** You've got to stop watching those old sci-fi shows on Hulu.

**DESTINY.** I mean it. Listen. It makes sense. We walk by here once and nothing. We walk by again and here's this building.

**HARMONY.** You say we walked by here once. I'm not convinced we did.

**DESTINY.** See? You always complain that I call you old and yet you always treat me like a child.

**HARMONY.** Ok, let's say you're right. Let's say we did pass this way before. Why didn't the time warp happen the first time?

**DESTINY.** I don't know. Maybe it has to do with the direction we approached it from. Or with an exact spot we stepped on.

**HARMONY.** I think you've completely lost it.

**DESTINY.** What were you thinking we'd find here today? *(Silence.)* Do you know if Grace ever even came here?

**HARMONY.** I have no idea.

**DESTINY.** Did you actually think we'd find her here two years later?

**HARMONY.** I don't know what we'd find. I just know that something compelled me to come - even just to eliminate the possibility. That if I don't explore it, I let her down again.

**DESTINY.** You didn't let her down, Harmony.

**HARMONY.** And I knew if I told you, you'd insist on calling that Detective Lovelace.

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**DESTINY.** I think we should go back to the beginning of the path - where that hospitality place is - so we can get a signal and call him right now.

**HARMONY.** Detective Lovelace. If I were going to call the cops, he's the last person I'd call. You know how those white cops are. "Are you sure she didn't just run away?" "Does she have a boyfriend?" "Was she on drugs?" "Into prostitution?"

**DESTINY.** We can call the precinct and get that woman detective.

**HARMONY.** You mean Benson? They pulled her off, soon as they saw she was taking the case seriously.

**DESTINY.** Benson! She's in my contacts. I'll just text...  
(*Texts.*) It's not going through. Come on. I know there's a signal back there. I had four bars in the parking lot.

**HARMONY.** Wait! How will we get back through the portal? (*Pause.*) The portal, the direction, the spot. I don't even know what I'm talking about - however we got here in the first place!

**DESTINY.** So, you believe me now.

**HARMONY.** All I know is that...this place does not look like it belongs here. Not in the present time. I'm willing to go with your crazy theory if it gives us any clues.

**DESTINY.** (*Pauses, then cautiously.*) I never said this before, but I know that Grace is alive.

**HARMONY.** How do you know that?

**DESTINY.** A gut feeling I've had from the beginning.

**HARMONY.** I did, too. I still do.

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**DESTINY.** I know the experts say after 72 hours that a missing person is likely dead. But I just never believed it. I used to... Well, I still do...

**HARMONY.** What?

**DESTINY.** Text her. I text her phone. *(Doesn't want to get her hopes up.)* I never get a response. But still...

**HARMONY.** ...I go in her closet to meditate. I don't know how it started. I used to go in there and look through her stuff - for clues, you know. Then one day, I decided to sit. *(Sits, as if reenacting, slow reflection.)* Next thing I know, I'm chanting. And I've been doing it ever since. I... communicate with her. I sense her spirit. She's alive.

**DESTINY.** The only other explanation is that she was abducted. But I -

**HARMONY.** *(Jolted out of her reflection. Jumps up.)* - She's too smart for that. I taught her better than that.

**DESTINY.** I know how hard you trained her when she started high school. You went with her those first two weeks, just to make sure she got some street smarts.

**HARMONY.** Three. Three weeks. And I got her mace. And plugged my number in under ICE on her cell phone. And I gave her a long lecture about the white van.

**DESTINY.** She's not dead and if she wasn't abducted, it's possible -

**HARMONY.** - She slipped through the time warp?  
*(Harmony and Destiny stay silent, as they try to digest the plausibility of this.)*

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**DESTINY.** If we're willing to believe we stepped into a time warp, maybe she did, too.

**HARMONY.** I found this old New York Times article back there, too. In the bottom of the closet. *(Goes in her backpack, pulls out the article, hands it to Destiny.)* It's about a girl who was abducted.

**DESTINY.** It's from 1930.

**HARMONY.** One day, just before she went missing, Grace came to me asking questions about our family.

**DESTINY.** *(Stops reading. Distracted, puts article in her backpack.)* Like what?

**HARMONY.** About our names - where Mommy came up with our names. And how I came up with hers.

**DESTINY.** Did you tell her that Mommy was a hippie? And that they were big pot smokers back in the day?

**HARMONY.** I gave her Mommy's mantra: A message to the universe - *(Harmony and Destiny extend their arms, float them down in unison, as they speak.)*

**HARMONY & DESTINY.** - about being in harmony with our destiny.

**DESTINY.** Still makes no sense to me - if we were twins, maybe. But she names you Harmony, then names me Destiny twenty years later?

**HARMONY.** Eighteen! Why do you do that? You always make me older.

**DESTINY.** I'm just saying that's some long-ass message to the universe. *(Pause.)* What did Grace say? Why did she ask about our names?



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**HARMONY.** She wanted to know why I gave her such an old-fashioned name.

**DESTINY.** Grace is beautiful. I don't think it's old-fashioned.

**HARMONY.** You're not a teenager.

**DESTINY.** Do you think that had something to do with the article?

**HARMONY.** When I saw the article, I just grabbed it. I must have been in that closet a million times. I swear it wasn't in there before. How could I not have seen it? I scoured through all her stuff. It's like it just appeared out of nowhere. That and the map. Then I remembered her asking about her name. That abducted girl was also named Grace.

**DESTINY.** But what does it have to do with this trail?

**HARMONY.** I didn't think it had anything to do with it. I just thought it was research for one of her short stories.

**DESTINY.** She does love to write about news articles.

**HARMONY.** But we can't rule anything out.

**DESTINY.** If we could just find out what this place is...

**HARMONY.** Look at that window. See the shadow it creates? *(Harmony walks in front of the building - looking up from different angles. Destiny does the same.)*

**DESTINY.** It's weird.

**HARMONY.** No matter what angle you look at it from, that shadow never changes.

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