



BETHANY

BY LAURA MARKS



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BETHANY
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The World Premiere of BETHANY was in New York City by Women's Project Theater,
Julie Crosby, Producing Artistic Director.

Developed at the Lark Play Development Center, New York City.

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For Eleanor and Clarissa, always.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Julie Crosby and everyone at the Women's Project.

The phenomenal cast, crew and creative team of the original production, especially the brilliant Gaye Taylor Upchurch.

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Davis McCallum. It's his fault I started writing plays.

My parents, for their love and encouragement.

Most of all, Ken Marks. What a joy it was to do this with you.

BETHANY was produced by the Women's Project Theater (Julie Crosby, Producing Artistic Director; Lisa Fane, Managing Director) in New York City, opening on January 20, 2013. It was directed by Gaye Taylor Upchurch; the set design was by Lauren Helpert; the costume design was by Sarah Holden; the lighting design was by Mark Barton; the sound design was by Leon Rothenberg; the fight direction was by J. David Brimmer; and the production stage manager was Jess Johnston. The cast was as follows:

SHANNON	Emily Ackerman
CRYSTAL	America Ferrera
PATRICIA	Kristin Griffith
CHARLIE	Ken Marks
GARY	Tobias Segal
TONI	Myra Lucretia Taylor

CHARACTERS

CHARLIE

CRYSTAL

GARY

SHANNON

TONI

PATRICIA

TIME

Early 2009.

PLACE

The exurbs of a small city in America.

*“Do you know the definition of charisma? Believing
in your own bullshit!”*

—Lukas Foss

BETHANY

Prologue

A middle-aged man stands facing out, giving a speech. His style is presentational, yet intimate and folksy — think Rick Warren at Saddleback.

CHARLIE. There's a reason you're here today. You might not believe that, but I do. You see, there's a higher power that guides our destiny. I don't care if you call it God or Yahweh or Uncle Fred, doesn't matter. And I'll tell you one thing about this higher power: He wants you to be rich. Rich beyond your wildest dreams. He doesn't want you to lie awake all night, wondering how you're gonna make that mortgage payment when your kid's college tuition is due, and your credit cards are already maxed to the limit. You know, last year, in the town where I live, over thirty-five thousand people lost their homes to foreclosure. Thirty-five thousand! There are some neighborhoods where you can go for a walk and you won't hardly see *anyone*. And do you know what's the saddest part about all that? Those people could have saved their homes ... if they'd known the secrets that I'm about to share with you today. These secrets are as old as the hills, and more powerful than a thunderstorm. They're the reason that I live in a beautiful five-bedroom home with a hot tub, and a flat-screen TV, and everything else a man could ever want. If you've been living a life based on hard work, and anxiety, or even fear, your life is about to change forever. So if you haven't already, open up your notebooks; and while you're at it, open up your minds. (*He pauses for a moment and peers straight ahead — straightens his tie, picks food out of his teeth. It's clear now that he's actually been giving this speech to himself, in a mirror.*) That's when I should do that thing with the kazoos.

Scene 1

Night. The empty, eat-in kitchen of a small house in the suburbs. Built-in cabinets but no furniture. The counters are bare except for a pile of mail. After some lengthy fumbling with the sliding-glass door, a woman enters from outside. She has a small wheeled suitcase, purse and garment bag. She's conservatively dressed, in a suit jacket, skirt and heels, and attractive.

She puts down her things. She's cautious, listening. Turns on the small light over the stove. Quickly looks through the pile of mail. She opens the refrigerator and realizes it's not running. As she kneels down to check the plug, she suddenly stops.

CRYSTAL. Hello? *(No answer. She plugs in the fridge. There's an audible hum as it starts to run. She opens the refrigerator again, and this time the light comes on. It takes a few seconds for her to notice the man who has silently entered the room.)*

CRYSTAL.

GARY.

Oh my God —

It's okay —

Oh, I'm so sorry —

Shh. It's okay, I'm going —

CRYSTAL. You know? I think — I, I, I must have just wandered into the wrong house by mistake, I'm so terribly sorry, I'll just be on my — *(A long moment while they stare at each other. Grabbing something from her purse.)* I have pepper spray.

GARY. I won't hurt you.

CRYSTAL. I'll just get my things here —

GARY. You don't have to go. I'm leaving right now.

CRYSTAL. What are you saying?

GARY. It's okay. You don't have to call the police.

CRYSTAL. I'm sorry, what's the deal? Do you live here?

GARY. No. Do you?

CRYSTAL. ... Yes. I mean — Not exactly, but my friend. It belongs to my friend.

GARY. What's his name?

BETHANY

by Laura Marks

2M, 4W

At the height of the foreclosure crisis, single mother Crystal loses more than her house. She struggles to stay positive, though — with plenty of help from a roommate with conspiracy theories, a motivational speaker with a secret and her colleagues at the local Saturn dealership. But optimism is no match for a bad economy, and before long Crystal's desperate quest to regain what she's lost turns into the fight of her life. This darkly comic thriller explores just how far we'll go to get back what's ours.

"... with a supremely balanced sense of storytelling and an economic gift for language, [Marks] announces herself here as a real talent to watch." —**The New Yorker**

"... rare among new American plays in the clear, compassionate attention it pays ... Ms. Marks' disturbing, incisive drama suggests that the bruising exigencies of our depressed economy are scraping away at the surface civilities of American life." —**The New York Times**

"... hard-boiled and timely." —**Time Out New York**

"... a brisk Hobbesian thriller ... Marks dances the razor's edge." —**New York Magazine**

"... tough, disturbing and delightfully unsentimental." —**New York Newsday**

"... palpitates evenly with a nearly sadistic flow between moments of lightness and darkness." —**Washington Square News**

"In Hebrew, the word 'Bethany' means 'house of misery' or 'poor house.' But don't let that etymology fool you. There are dramatic riches here." —**The Village Voice**

"Crystal is a new kind of heroine for the stage ... [BETHANY] gives you an unsettling feeling that the lead character could be anyone, including you." —**New York Amsterdam News**

"[BETHANY] happens to put the lie to the American Dream ... wonderfully provocative."
—**NY1**

Also by Laura Marks

MINE

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