

A SHOT

~A ONE ACT DRAMA FROM THE TRILOGY~

#LOVESTORIES INSPIRED BY BLACK LIVES MATTER

by Gloria Bond Clunie
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**Gloria Bond Clunie**  
~ [gbclunie@gmail.com](mailto:gbclunie@gmail.com) ~

# ***A SHOT***

*~a one act drama from the trilogy~*  
*#LOVESTORIES inspired by BLACK LIVES MATTER*

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## **CHARACTERS**

MRS. NETTIE MORRIS-mother, grandmother, long time neighborhood resident;  
wise, worried, and wanting, African-American, late 50's.

JEFFREY TALBOTT – lawyer, smart, bright, young, ambitious, White, late 30's.  
candidate for Illinois State Representative

## **SETTING**

PLACE: Jeffrey Talbott's Campaign Office in a West Side Chicago storefront

TIME: The present, 7:30 PM, Spring of a local Election Year

## **A SHOT**

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*Jeffrey Talbott's Campaign Office in a West Side  
Chicago storefront, 7:30 PM.*

*MRS. MORRIS enters TALBOTT's storefront office.  
She clutches her purse and peeks inside a grocery  
bag she has brought.*

MRS. MORRIS

*(quietly sings snatches of "Worth" by Anthony Brown)*

YOU THOUGHT I WAS WORTH SAVING—SO . . .

YOU CAME IN . . . CHANGED MY LIFE . . .

YOU THOUGHT I WAS . . . SO—

*(MRS. MORRIS surveys the humble office – examines a campaign posters, a "Black  
Lives Matter" sign, sniffs the brewing coffee, checks lipstick, then peeks out of the door.  
When no one is there— she tugs hard on an unruly undergarment.)*

TALBOTT

*(shouting off stage)*

Angie! Angie!

*(dashes into his office juggling a briefcase, a child's birthday gift, roses and a new  
campaign poster. He crashes into MRS. MORRIS.)*

Ohhh!

MRS. MORRIS

Ohhh!

TALBOTT

Ahhhh! Sorry! So, so sorry! I—

MRS. MORRIS

Ahhh . . . No worries.

*(smiles and gestures toward roses)*

For me?

TALBOTT

My wife. Special occasion. And . . . sorry. Running late. *And it's getting later . . . Soooo .*

*(sets briefcase, gift, roses and poster down and removes jacket)*

Ms.? Ahhh?

MRS. MORRIS

Morris. *Mrs.* Morris.

TALBOTT

Yes. Good. Well. . . Oh! Excuse me for a— Be right with you.

*(shouting down hallway)*

Angie! Go ahead. I'll lock up. No! Wait!

*(TALBOTT dashes back to desk, grabs the beautifully wrapped child's birthday gift.*

*To MRS. MORRIS)*

Be right back.

*(TALBOTT exits. MRS. MORRIS examines roses and the new campaign poster.*

*TALBOTT backs into the office, laughing as he shouts to Angie.)*

Really bummed we can't make it. Kysha said, big kiss for Tyshawn. Next time, for sure.

And yes, coffeemaker! Off. Before I go. Got it –

*(to Mrs. Morris)*

Ahhh, Mrs. Morris.

MRS. MORRIS

Mr. Talbott.

TALBOTT

Please, Jeffrey.

MRS. MORRIS

Well . . . Jeffery. Thank you for meeting me here. Your downtown office? From Garfield?

Two buses and a train. Then metal detectors, guards— Make you feel like you're in jail.

TALBOTT

What can we say? America.

MRS. MORRIS

Here is – much better.

TALBOTT

It's important to keep the campaign stuff separate from my work for the state's attorney, but in your case—

MRS. MORRIS

You're a busy man.

TALBOTT

You are a persistent woman. *And* when Father Pflieger calls, smart folks pay attention.

MRS. MORRIS

He's paying real close attention to your campaign.

TALBOTT

An ally I respect.

MRS. MORRIS

And loves my peach cobbler! Said I should bring you one.

*(MORRIS takes a peach cobbler from the grocery bag)*

TALBOTT

Oh. Thank you.

MRS. MORRIS

*(pulls back foil on cobbler)*

He calls it "*Peace Cobbler.*" 'Cause you can't get mad and fight while you're eating it!" Not that we're going to get mad and fight. Said he'd do just about anything for one of my "*Peace Cobblers.*" Said the world should just sit down to a table piled high with my—

TALBOTT

Must be some '*mighty fine*' cobbler.

MRS. MORRIS

Yes, but don't patronize.

TALBOTT

Ahhh?

MRS. MORRIS

I'm Chicago, by way of Mississippi—  
But we all know you ain't no southern boy. No Chicago West side boy. Maine, right?

TALBOTT

Bangor.

MRS. MORRIS

Not many blacks up there.

TALBOTT

Some.

MRS. MORRIS

So came out here for our fine Chicago weather?

TALBOTT

Northwestern. Met my wife while I was in law school. Stayed.

MRS. MORRIS

*(picking up a photo from desk)*

You're daughter's a real cutie.

TALBOTT

Lily? She's a three-year old mess! But our mess.

MRS. MORRIS

*(looking at posters)*  
Not part of your campaign?

TALBOTT

A little young.

MRS. MORRIS

*(points to poster of him, his African-American wife and a black boy.)*  
And your son?

TALBOTT

Scott's— a neighbor child. Friend of Lily's.  
*(returns photo to desk)*  
And you're here because— ?

MRS. MORRIS

*(studying poster)*  
Wife's – a pretty brown skin girl. Not too light, not too dark – “Just right,” said Goldilocks—  
with auburn hair. Makes a changing community want to vote.

TALBOTT

*(pointing to campaign sign)*  
Voting! My kind of Progress!

MRS. MORRIS

*(holding campaign poster with “Progress! Possibility! Peace!”)*  
I see! But I'm sure Father Pflieger's call made it clear, despite my cobbler— these times are full  
of desperation.

TALBOTT

*(replacing campaign sign)*  
And possibility! I choose to believe – “Possibility.”

MRS. MORRIS

And maybe “Peace” and “Progress” north of the park where you live –but my neck of the woods  
– We are desperate.

TALBOTT

How may I help, Mrs. Morris?

MRS. MORRIS

I came about my grandson.

TALBOTT

Your grandson?

MRS. MORRIS

David. David Anthony Morris, III.

*(opens folder, sets picture of David on the desk as if it's trial evidence.)*

That picture? Just turned five.

TALBOTT

Handsome young man.

MRS. MORRIS

Might have looked real nice on a campaign poster. 'Stead of some little actor boy—

TALBOTT

Like I said, a neighbor's child.

*(beat)*

But you're here about — ?

MRS. MORRIS

David.

TALBOTT

Yes, David. He's . . . ? Well . . . ? He's— alright? Yes?

MRS. MORRIS

You trying to ask — “Is he dead?”

TALBOTT

I didn't mean —

MRS. MORRIS

Coming from my block— fair question.

TALBOTT

It's just— I've done a lot of pro bono work around your area. Then there're the police restitution cases I'm handling downtown—

MRS. MORRIS

Rene Watkins said you were real helpful when her boy got into some trouble.

TALBOTT

Ah, yes, Ms. Watkins. . .

MRS. MORRIS

Figured you'd be up to speed on our little community— 'specially since you hope to represent us.

TALBOTT

A complex area.

*(checks watch)*

Now, about your David?

MRS. MORRIS

Praise God—he's alive and well. And exactly how I want to keep him. My David— an original. Smart! Funny! Loves computer games.

*(refers to campaign poster)*

Does not play basketball. Swims! My David is – is special.

TALBOTT

I'm sure he is. We need to make every child between Jackson and Lake special.

MRS. MORRIS

"Make every child special!" Not a bad campaign slogan. But we know that's not the case. Some kids *are* special. Your Lily's special. Gonna get a great education – maybe go to Northwestern.

TALBOTT

Maybe. If she wants to. And works hard. But haven't even picked a kindergarten yet, so— I know this is important, but it is getting late and—

*(MRS. MORRIS tugs at something under her clothes.)*

Is everything alright?

MRS. MORRIS

Fine. Just— Dag. Can we be frank?

TALBOTT

Please.

MRS. MORRIS

Spanx. My Spanx! Brand new— and not broken in. Excuse me.

*(jumps up, her back to TALBOTT, and adjusts SPANX in an elaborate shimmy)*

My niece sent them. Dammit. Means well, but don't care what Oprah says – take a girdle any day.

TALBOTT

*(quickly checks his phone)*

Are we really here to talk about girdles?

MRS. MORRIS:

*(points to campaign sign)*  
 “Bring your concerns to me!”

TALBOTT

*(checks phone again)*  
 So girdles and—

MRS. MORRIS

Michelle Obama ditched pantyhose and the whole country followed suit. Didn’t all start eating vegetables, but tossed itchy hot, panty hose in the middle of August – and a nation cheered. The power of an idea! Girdle, pantyhose – Spanx! Truth to tell—my Mom invented Spanx. Way before that little twenty-something made her first million, she was cutting off the feet of her pantyhose. Said didn’t make sense to throw out a whole pair of pantyhose ‘cause you got a run in one toe. I still do it. My niece – calls them ‘ghetto Spanx’. Mom told me, during World War II? Not enough Nylon for stockings. They needed parachutes. So she and her girlfriends would take an eye-brow pencil – draw a seam down the back of their legs. A thin black line – just so. Folks do find a way!

TALBOTT

Girdles, pantyhose—? Not sure how I can really help—?

MRS. MORRIS

Makes you think. Everything jiggling and shakin’. Loosey goosey. Don’t like loosey goosey. Friends say, “Nettie, you so old fashion.” “Need to let go! Be free!” My neighborhood— can’t be free. Every mama on my block hollering, “Get out that damn street and come on in here before somebody shoot you.” Children locked up like pandas in a cage, playing video games all day, cause they can’t run the streets and play. Does something to your mind, body, your spirit. Makes ‘em fat. *Your* little girl don’t look fat. Won’t need a girdle or Spanx or--

TALBOTT

*(glances at cell message)*  
 Did you and Father Pflieger talk Spanx and girdles and—?

MRS. MORRIS

Cobbler.

TALBOTT

*(texting)*  
 Ahh . . . Excuse me. Sorry. Just need to . . . Won’t be a sec. Ahhh

MRS. MORRIS

You look hungry.

*(as TALBOTT texts, MORRIS finds a plate, napkin, fork from coffee station)*  
 Father Pflieger said you worked hard and didn’t half eat. Are you hungry? Ripping and running – bet you haven’t eaten today.

TALBOTT

*(texting)*

Kysha's waiting dinner, so if we could—

MRS. MORRIS

*(puts napkin under TALBOTT's chin)*

Can't think when you're hungry. And David's business will take some thought.

*(serves cobbler)*

Now, Miz Obama would have you eating fresh peaches off some tree, but a little sweet-high might help. Get our brains working. Can't hurt. Less you got a touch of the sugar?

*(TALBOTT shakes his head. MORRIS pushes cobbler toward TALBOTT)*

Then go 'head. Didn't poison it. And Father Michael Pfleger does not lie.

*(TALBOTT hesitates).*

TALBOTT

*(tastes a bit of cobbler—stops. Tastes again. Savors.)*

Father Pfleger does not lie!

*(shovels more in, and swallows.)*

Mighty— Savage! This peach cobbler? In Bangor - we'd say 'savage.'

MRS. MORRIS

'Cause not many black folks live there.

TALBOTT

*(coughing)*

I didn't mean— I . . .

MRS. MORRIS

Don't be choking. Not on my watch.

TALBOTT

*(coughing)*

Didn't realize I was starving. Left six this morning and it's almost—

*(MRS. MORRIS pours coffee for TALBOTT.)*

Thank you. Hunger can sneak up on you.

MRS. MORRIS

Hunger sneaks up on busy white folks. My neighborhood, six blocks down, Hunger say, "Yo! I'm headed your way!" — then dares you to find an apple in a food desert.

*(TALBOTT scoops out another slice)*

Best save some for Kysha! Peach cobbler—better than roses, 'specially if she's —*a sistuh?* Not stereotyping, mind you. Hoped—but you never know. Could be a *foie de gras* girl who looks good on a poster, but won't eat watermelon in public.

TALBOTT

She loves peach cobbler and watermelon. Or didn't Father Pfleger tell you?

*(pushing plate forward)*

Wow. That was good. Really good. You have my full attention. So. David?

MRS. MORRIS

I'm here for his money.

TALBOTT

I beg your pardon?

MRS. MORRIS

I'm here for my grandson's money.

*(MRS. MORRIS pulls paper from her purse, unfolds it, irons it flat, then slides it across the table)*

TALBOTT

This is—?

MRS. MORRIS

Guess you'd call it—an invoice. A bill?

TALBOTT

For . . . ?

MRS. MORRIS

It's all there. Itemized and everything.

TALBOTT

\$382,000? *(Three hundred eighty-two thousand dollars?)*

MRS. MORRIS

I rounded down.

TALBOTT

*(surveying document)*

Thank, God.

MRS. MORRIS

Now if Chicago was really going to educate my grandson - it would be considerably less. In a good year, they spend \$9,778 per student, times 12 years, that's \$117,336.

Now, I would take that money and run, but with a 66% *(sixty six percent)* CPS graduation rate – and they just might be fudging again, plus considering the schools in my hood aren't any where close to that graduation rate— Well! Him getting a diploma, much less a diploma that means something – an iffy thing. So – *given one in three* black men in this country end up in jail

MRS. MORRIS (*cont*)

*sometimes* in their life – and even more in Illinois – plus factoring in a good hard look at *our* neighborhood – with Chester next door in the army, and Miz Cox’s grandboy a sophomore at that Truman Jr. College, least he was, I figured – look to your left –not in jail, look to your right –not in jail, my poor baby—what are the odds? School? Prison? Prison was a better bet, so I used that for my figures.

TALBOTT

You said David was smart, funny, *special*—

MRS. MORRIS

You really think that matters? Last week, twenty-two *special* folks got shot in Chicago. Now some were gang bangers – but collateral damage is a bitch – excuse my language. Twenty-two. Bet you know that, huh. Headline news. Bet it wasn’t your block. Last year, all of that Middle East mess? Only twenty-eight soldiers died the whole year. Given Chicago and Afghanistan? I’m just saying – Chi-Raq? Spike Lee got a point.

TALBOTT

But with a grandmother like you – and I can tell *you* are *something*—

MRS. MORRIS

—*Special*?

TALBOTT

Well . . .Yes. You are! And it takes special women like you to—

MRS. MORRIS

*Don’t* patronize. Heard it before. “*With a grandmother like—*” “*With “a mother like. . .”* David’s father was smart, funny, and I thought “*with a mother like me and a father like Big David,*” – “*hard working,*” “*God on our side. . .”* “*Special. . .*”— we’d be one of the lucky ones. One day, see our boy highlighted on some local TV morning show. You know, one of those feel-good human interest stories? Scholarship in hand, off to college. Getting out. Had the grades. We were just waiting. Instead, we got the ten o’clock news. Chilly night in November. Chilly, but not too cold for shooting. Was raining and Matt Carter come banging down our door. Big David tried to hold me back, but I took off running. No coat – hair a-flying. Ambulance. . . police. . . sirens . . . crowd gathering at the end of the block. Reporters. Yellow tape.

(*silence*)

He went to get a bag of chips. *Just chips.*

(*silence*)

TALBOTT

I’m so sorry.

MRS. MORRIS

Our grandson, *Baby David* . . . Was a surprise. We thought we'd raised *our David* better— His Dad always, “If you think she's spunky, better cover that monkey.” But God sometimes knows best. ‘Cause Big David and me would have just laid down and died if that baby hadn't given us reason to get up in the morning. Something about grandchildren. Your own children—you work so hard trying to mold, shape them, hoping they'll be ‘a this’ or a ‘that’. Trying not to make mistakes – it's hard. Especially with black boys.

TALBOTT

Especially . . . (*option: Especially - with black boys*)

MRS. MORRIS

But grandchildren! Hmmm. You just love. Love their fingers, their toes, the mess they make. And as long as they're grabbing for something halfway good, you don't care what it is. Peaches or peach cobbler. Shoot, add ice cream. Honestly, don't care what they do – just as long as they keep doing it. Not saying it's not hard – just . . .

(*silence*)

TALBOTT

Mrs. Morris?

MRS. MORRIS

So 382,000. State spends \$38,224 per prisoner. Times 10 years – that's 382, 000. I rounded down.

TALBOTT

I heard.

MRS. MORRIS

Now, I could project out, say 15 years, but even with a wrong conviction, can't imagine Little David in for 15 years. Shoot, they'd cut 5 years off ‘cause his dimples are so cute. He's a good boy. Then too, given that Illinois is almost broke – we better get what we can, when we can.

TALBOTT

You can't assume every black boy will end up in prison.

MRS. MORRIS

I didn't say *every* black boy. *One in three!* And I don't care who we parade around during black history month - Morgan and his stop sign, Mae Jemison in space, Bill Pinkney sailing around the world - *one in three*. The system has it rigged for one in three. And in *my* neighborhood, odds are—  
“Special?” Yeah. Not gonna make that mistake twice.

TALBOTT

We have to believe –

MRS. MORRIS

In ‘Possibility?’ With money, we can run. Move north, maybe out of the city. Somehow, increase the odds. So Mr. Government Official how can you help me secure my David’s future? His share?

TALBOTT

*(examines the invoice.)*

You are serious.

MRS. MORRIS

Dead serious.

TALBOTT

Did Father Pflieger know the nature of your business?

MRS. MORRIS

Told him it was about Little David. Said you were smart. Knew where the bodies lie.

TALBOTT

You tell a compelling story, but unfortunately—

MRS. MORRIS

What? I should wait for some cop to shoot him? Better odds then?

Oh, I looked into that. Cause like you said, your downtown office is dealing with some headline making restitution cases. Well maybe not headline making. More like – slip it on the back page and hope we don’t think you’re crazy for running a system that in the last ten years paid out *\$600,000,000* in police misconduct settlements. *Six hundred million*. Got me thinking. Lot of money.

TALBOTT

Money doesn’t solve everything.

MRS. MORRIS

But it helps. Ask the 1%. Win this shindig – even more will come your way. Or at least some. Little bit. Enough, I hope. And I’ve come for my share. Our share. Before some back room deal gobbles it all away.

TALBOTT

I really don’t like what you’re implying.

MRS. MORRIS

I’m implying that you’re a politician in Chicago. Don’t have to wear red and ride an elephant to understand “the art of the deal?”

TALBOTT

Everybody's not Trump.

MRS. MORRIS

But Trump wears stupid like a cheap tie; Windsor knot – noosed for my neck. Need to wake up or folks like him will hang us all! 'Cause in this cave called America—he may be off-key, but he's a truth telling canary! We want to believe we are “good!” and “decent,” – but the truth is, there is a mean streak in this country. Always has been. A mean streak that, red or blue —don't think my David is special.

TALBOTT

*(waving invoice)*

This is *not* how democracy works.

MRS. MORRIS

Wake up! We're living in – *de-mo-cra-zy!* And this dance? Over and over again— is insane! Forget red, forget blue - I'm voting green! For me and my grandson.

TALBOTT

The state is not going to hand you \$382,000. They are not going to give every black kid that *might* go to jail \$382,000! It would go broke!

MRS. MORRIS

Read the papers? Illinois? Broke, broken- *and how long with no budget!* How could a whole state not have a budget? Pay my taxes— but the nursing home where I work said “Lay-offs. No state money!” So-before it's *all* gone--pay me now. Isn't that what Wall Street, and Ford, and all those rich banks said. The fast and the smart jumped up, worked a deal, and got bailed out, while the rest of us were foreclosed to hell. I want to work my deal. Now!

TALBOTT

*(waving invoice)*

You must know this is not going to really happen.

MRS. MORRIS

What would it take to make it happen? Lily laying in the street? Kysha standing in the rain, hair crazy, mic shoved in her face, some fool reporter asking, “How does it feel?”

TALBOTT

What are you saying? Are you threatening me?

MRS. MORRIS

Girdle, pantyhose, Spanx! A thin black line! There's always a way!

TALBOTT

Dammit!

MRS. MORRIS

What!?!

TALBOTT

Just quit shooting each other in the god-damn street like dogs!!!

*(silence)*

MRS. MORRIS

Now, that would be a tasty sound bite.

TALBOTT

I didn't mean —

MRS. MORRIS

You just Trumped yourself.

TALBOTT

No. No. I didn't mean— I'm just— Long day. A very, very long day. I'm sympathetic. I can't imagine losing a son, but this . . . ? It's late. Time for both of us to go home.

MRS. MORRIS

You're tired? Honey, I'm tired.

TALBOTT

Me, of all people, know that it's a hell of a lot more complicated than—

MRS. MORRIS

Why? Because you like cobbler and watermelon— with your brown skin girls? "*Dogs in the street.*" You don't think I've thought that? Stood in my living room floor and screamed? *Shoot-em-up-dogs running our streets!* Boys trying to be men. Daddy in jail, so who's gonna teach 'em? So maybe they get a gun. Once upon a time in my life, felt bound to fight for all those boys. Figured Big David, and Father Pflieger, and me would find a way. Draw a thick black line of love around them. But can't bake enough cobblers. Wore out. Got to save just one—my David. Who knows? Might be the next Obama. Or, hell, teach swimmin' for a livin' – I don't give a damn— just want to see him live.

TALBOTT

I want to help.

MRS. MORRIS

*(hands back invoice)*

Then do.

TALBOTT

Things don't work—

MRS. MORRIS

Full prisons mean somebody's making millions. Now I'm a good Christian woman or was – but got a crick in my neck from cheek-turning and bruised knees from praying.

*(snatches up invoice)*

Oughtta add physical therapy to this thing. Do you have any notion of what my life is like?

TALBOTT

Kysha and I don't live up in Kenilworth.

MRS. MORRIS

But you could.

TALBOTT

But we don't.

MRS. MORRIS

But you could.

TALBOTT

I know what this district is like.

MRS. MORRIS

Ever been shot at?

TALBOTT

I know it gets crazy –

MRS. MORRIS

And you, and Lily, and Kysha — can pack up your Northwestern diplomas – and run from crazy! That's all I want! Can't stroll west of Garfield and not feel crazy. Need a place to not feel crazy. Use to escape to *The Conservatory. In Garfield Park?* Ever been? With Lily?

TALBOTT

Had a – a fundraiser there.

MRS. MORRIS

Took my David all the time. Steps away from hell – lush gardens, two acres of botanical wonders under glass. Reminded me, him - there was more. Boy loved plants! Could've been a botanist. Stopped in yesterday. Just to sit - Cool, calm. Sun. Light. No crazy. Exotic plants! Beautifully cared for. And a block away – children dead in the streets. They've got this – "*Welt-wit-schia?*" Plant lives 2,000 years. But blocks away, can't keep my David alive long enough to bloom. Struggling to see my grandbaby flower. Can conserve that Weltwitschia - so why can't we save—?

TALBOTT

I know you're upset —

MRS. MORRIS

I love my grandson. After David's funeral, Big David was sitting at the kitchen table. He was holding—this.

*(takes a revolver out of her purse)*

I finally eased it out of his hand. Hid it.

TALBOTT

That's not loaded is it?

MRS. MORRIS

Getting shot. Happens all the time where I live.

TALBOTT

Let's take a breath. Not do anything —

MRS. MORRIS

Crazy? My life? Wondering how many bullets left in somebody's chamber.

*(TALBOTT slowly reaches for the gun, but she pulls back)*

Bullets. Any meant for me? You? I love my grandson.

TALBOTT

Oh, God.

MRS. MORRIS

What are the odds today? Will I — Will you— Make it home?

TALBOTT

Please?

MRS. MORRIS

“Kiss Kysha? Hold Lily?” How long can luck last? That's all I want to know.

I love my grandson.

*(MORRIS pulls release, bullet drops in the chamber; gestures gun toward TALBOTT)*

TALBOTT

No.

MRS. MORRIS

My wake up call? Not Big David... But a week ago. Bullet through my window. Fool me once, shame on... Fool me twice— Bullet through my window. Little David playing trucks on the floor.

TALBOTT

I'm not to blame.

MRS. MORRIS

I love my grandson.

TALBOTT

Change. That's what all this is about! You don't have to do it alone. Black lives do matter.

MRS. MORRIS

A slogan!

TALBOTT

People are marching in the streets—.

MRS. MORRIS

Done marched before!

TALBOTT

I promise, I will do everything—

MRS. MORRIS

Not asking for the moon!

TALBOTT

We got there! The moon . . . we got—

MRS. MORRIS

*Took a decade!* My grandson needs a shot at life *now!* Hell! Go on to Mars! But first, I want my \$382,000! Maybe David goes to MIT, becomes an astronaut – or just lives to water plants.

TALBOTT

Give me the gun. Please . . . give me . . .

MRS. MORRIS

Miz Cox, next door, has scratched out something green from that no-count piece of dirt in front of her house every year for as long as I have lived on that street. When others let their grass go to seed, she pulled dandelions— and planted. This morning, saw her walk out, spade-in-hand – and red begonias. (*touches red rose*) Red begonias. She got down on her knees. Was there a long time. Then she turned. She looked up our street, then back at that ground. Up our street, and down at the ground. She held that spade out – like a sword ready to defend her kingdom. Her hands trembled . . . Then she shook her head, dropped it all in a heap – and went inside. Her grandson – the sophomore at Truman? The bullet through my window was meant for him.

TALBOTT

“Peace Cobbler,” Mrs. Morris. How do we give up on “Peace Cobbler?”

MRS. MORRIS

God bless him, Rev. Michael wants to save the whole damn world. I hope he can. Fact is— couldn’t save his own son. But he’s a man of God, so he gets up every mornin’ and puts one foot in front of the other. But me? I’m a woman of shattered faith. A busted pane.

*(looks at floor)*

Scattered all over the floor in bits and pieces. Who that old lady down there picking up glass? Shots in the street, shots thru my window – shots thru my baby—making me old, and crazy, and bloody, and broken.

*(SILENCE.)*

TALBOTT

What can I say?

What did *you* say, that day? To Big David?

MRS. MORRIS

To make *him* put down this gun?

*(SILENCE)*

I told him – “*If you use it – they win.*”

*(SILENCE)*

They win. They win. Fine.

*(Lowers the gun; puts the gun in her purse. She hugs purse.)*

But help me find a way to quit loosing.

*(beat)*

TALBOTT

Kysha loves flowers. So – *Lily!* You think you’re old fashioned? When Kysha was pregnant with Lily, she wanted us to wait, to find out. You know, like boy, girl? Now, she’d let her great aunt dangle a wedding ring over her belly and call it, but told me if I asked at the sonogram – she’d divorce me. She wanted to be surprised. It’s what I love about her. No matter what crap this world tosses – she still looks forward to life surprising her – in the best way. I begged, cajoled, tried to bribe her—but she stuck firm. Me? I like a plan. Pink paint or blue paint. Pink or blue. I was pins and needles. And when Lily was born—God, she was beautiful. My daughter! So beautiful. And I cried. I cried, and cried and cried.

I was so *glad*. *She was a girl*. So glad. A girl. *Relieved*.

*(Silence. Touches roses. Whispers.)*

See, I couldn’t tell Kysha— Haven’t told her. . . How could I tell her? Tell her, “I don’t want to raise a black boy— not in America.”

*(beat)*

The roses? She called this morning. So excited.

*(beat)*

She’s pregnant again.

*(TALBOTT sobs.*

*MRS. MORRIS and TALBOTT stare at each other.*

*Silence.*

*MRS. MORRIS picks up a napkin, and in comfort, hands the napkin to TALBOTT.  
TALBOTT takes it and wipes his eyes.)*

MRS. MORRIS

Cryin'— don't help.

*(beat*

*TALBOTT blows his nose.*

*TALBOTT stares at MRS. MORRIS.)*

Now, about my \$382,000 . . . ?

*LIGHTS FADE OUT*

*(END OF PLAY)*



# GLORIA BOND CLUNIE

[gloriabondclunie@gmail.com](mailto:gloriabondclunie@gmail.com) 847.772.8191

Gloria Bond Clunie is an award-winning playwright, director and educator.

Ms. Clunie is a founding member of the Playwriting Ensemble at Chicago's Regional Tony Award winning Victory Gardens Theater where her plays *North Star*, *Living Green* and *Shoes* premiered. She is also the founding Artistic Director of Evanston's Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre where she directed scores of productions including *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men*, *Home* and *Raisin*.

Other plays include *Sweet Water Taste*, *SMOKE*, *Sing, Malindy, Sing!*, *BLU*, *Buck Naked*, *DRIP*, Patricia McKissack's *Mirandy* and *Brother Wind*, *Bankruptcy*, *Merry Kwanzaa*, *Mercy Rising* and *QUARK*. She is published by Dramatic Publishing and in the anthologies *Seven Black Plays*, *Reimagining A Raisin In the Sun* and *The Bully Plays*. Her plays have been produced and workshopped in a variety of theaters including Victory Gardens Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre, ETA, Alliance Theatre, Triad Stage, Her Story Theatre, MPAACT, Chicago Children's Theatre, American Blues Theatre, Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre, Penobscot Theatre and Orlando Shakespeare Theater.

Ms. Clunie has been recognized for her work in theater and education by the NAACP, AKA and DST Sororities, American Alliance for Theatre and Education and the Vision Keepers. Awards include a Chicago Jeff, a Children's Theater Foundation of America Orlin Corey Medallion, a Scott McPherson, a Dramatists Guild Fellowship, Theodore Ward African-American Playwriting Prizes, New York's New Professional Theater Award, Chicago Black Theatre Alliance Awards, NEA and Illinois Arts Council Fellowships, the Evanston Mayor's Award for the Arts and most recently the 2018 YWCA YWomen Leadership Award.

This Northwestern graduate (*B.A. Theater, MFA-Directing*) is honored her drama *Shoes* was included in the 2015 Women Playwrights International Conference in Cape Town, South Africa; that *SMOKE* was featured in Chicago's Her Story Theater Writers Series, Dayton Playhouse's 2015 FutureFest, 2015 New Works at Playhouse On The Square in Memphis, 2016 Barter Theatre's Appalachian Festival of Playwrights in Virginia, and a part of 2017 New Play Lab at Florida Rep. In July 2016, with the goal to explore violence in America, Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre commissioned and premiered *A Shot-#Love Stories inspired by Black Lives Matter*.

In 2014, Ms. Clunie was an Artist-In-Residence at Byrdcliffe Arts Colony in Woodstock New York and at 360 Xochi Quetzal Arts Residency, Chapala, Jalisco, Mexico where she completed *BLU*- as both a two act drama and a new musical exploring bullying. *BLU* was read at The Growing Stage Children's Theater of New Jersey New Play Festival, was the featured play in the AATE Utah Playwrights In Our Schools Program and workshopped in Arizona at 2017 *WRITE NOW*, a TYA collaboration between Childsplay Theatre and Indiana Rep. Thanks to a grant from the Children's Theatre Foundation of America, *BLU-The Musical* was workshopped in September 2017. Her comedy *Buck Naked* was featured in the inaugural 2017 Women Playwrights Initiative at Ivoryton Playhouse in Connecticut.

In January 2018, she served as both playwright and director for *My Wonderful Birthday Suit* commissioned by Chicago Children's Theatre, while her adaptation of *The Last Stop on Market Street* (2016 Caldecott/ 2016 Newbery/ 2016 Coretta Scott King Book Awards) premiered in November at Children's Theatre of Charlotte and will be part of the upcoming 2019-20 seasons at both Dallas Children's Theatre and Bay Area Children's Theatre. She is excited her comedy *Sweet Water Taste* enjoyed nightly standing ovations this summer at Atlanta's Horizon Theatre Company. Currently, she is working on the musical *SKY*, begun at California's Djerassi Resident Artists Program and inspired by her love of Chicago architecture, and *Tall Enough*, a 2019-20 DePaul University Cunningham Commission.

Originally from Henderson, North Carolina, she and her husband Basil live in Evanston, Illinois and are the proud parents of daughter Aurelia.