

THE TALL GIRLS  
by Meg Miroshnik

*About the play (from the playwright):*

Welcome to Poor Prairie, the dusty, desolate town where fifteen-and-a-half-year-old Jean has been exiled as caretaker for her wild-child cousin, Almeda. It's a grim, dangerous place to eke out an existence as a teenage girl—until a handsome man with a past arrives, a brand-new basketball in tow. As the town's girls come together to form a team set on making it out of Poor Prairie, a murky committee of townspeople threatens to stamp out girls' sports altogether. Inspired by the flourishing and decline of high school girls' basketball teams in the 1930s rural Midwest, *The Tall Girls* asks: Who can afford the luxury of play? And what is the cost of childhood?

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LURLENE—Female, teens

*About the scene:*

This speech early in the play introduces LURLENE, the very tallest girl in town. In it, she talks to her best friend—the offstage PUPPY, who is, as always, doing LURLENE’s bidding—about her dreams of transcending their bleak surroundings. As she talks, she plays around with the unlit cigarette, mimicking glamorous poses.

LURLENE

And the thing I see is: Hazel Shoots was given a *tiara*. Hazel Shoots was *crowned* Queen of the Tournament. [...] Well, this leads me to the other bit I noticed in my study of Hazel Shoots’ features, which is: *She isn’t no better looking than me*.

For one, she has an inferior Cupid’s bow. And still! She was given a tiara. Only think on what could’ve happened to me if I’d been old enough to go downstate with my superior Cupid’s bow three years back. It was then I pulled out my old copy of *The Red Book*—you know the one with the photo of the Babe’s Ballers inside. (I don’t spend time on that picture, Babe Dublin looks like a sweaty wrestler in a wig.) No, I flip through the close-ups of starlets and socialites in satin and, again, do you know what I found?

There are plenty of starlets and socialites who don’t look all that much better than Hazel Shoots, meaning that there are plenty who don’t look half as good as me. So now I’m thinking, Could be I should be in satin. To do that, I’d need to leave Poor Prairie. They’re all wearing white in those photos and you know as well as me it’s near unthinkable to keep white bleached and clean here. But what if I could leave Poor Prairie? (And not for trouble of the nine-month variety neither. Lord knows the girls who get sent away for a little less than a year . . . those girls certainly ain’t wearing white.) No, I gotta go somewhere where I could wear nail paint every day.

And donchaknow it was with that thought in my head that I answered the door this morning and saw Cyril Cosgrove standing there with his hat in his hand. I said: “Cyril, I don’t mean to bust up your heart—I never wanted it to end this way—but I come to see that I am a better looker than not only former Tournament Queen Hazel Shoots—” (I showed him the photograph at that point, since I had it, like I been saying, handy.) “—but also a good number of the starlets and socialites in *The Red Book*, which leads me to say that I am not long for Poor Prairie. Which leads me to say that we are not long for our love. Please, go quietly, I don’t think I could survive a scene!”

And with that, I lit up the cigarette I been holding and took a long drag—  
(*she mimes the action*)—and blew the smoke in his face like in a photograph from  
*The Red Book* and said again: “Just go, I don’t think I could survive a scene!”

[2:30]

THE CLIMB  
by C.A. Johnson

*About the play (from the playwright):*

Marge is a photographer, and her wife Tiffany has been her sole photographic subject for seven years. When Tiffany goes on a month-long hiking trip to get away from it all, both women are forced to question everything from their professional and personal past to the true meaning of a moment captured in time.

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*TIFFANY—Female, 30s, Black*

*About the scene:*

In a flashback, TIFFANY is presenting a photography award to her wife, MARGE, accompanied by a slideshow of their work together. Before this moment, she and MARGE had a serious fight about their collaboration and TIFFANY feeling invisible.

TIFFANY

The first time my wife photographed me was seven years ago. I was sitting Indian style in her New York studio looking over a stack of negatives. I was 22 and madly in love. I looked up because she said my name. And there was the camera . . .

I've spent so much time in rooms like these. With lovely people like all of you. And you all show me such respect, sometimes adoration, and sometimes a level of such focused inquiry that I squirm a bit. But I guess what I'm trying to say, is that I understand you. Because it's not me you see in photos like these. It's the psychological blank space I offer you. I'm a canvas and you can paint me with whatever suits you. Desire. Youth. Innocence. Deviance. One size fits all, really. And my wife . . . she saw this potential in me all those years ago, and she harnessed it for good. Maybe even for greatness.

But what I've never told her, and what I've decided to share with all of you tonight, is that I see a blank space too. I look at a photo like this and I see so much possibility. So many me's. And I'm in love with that question mark. I'm in love with the idea that her camera imagines so much for me and demands so much at the same time.

It's a scary thing, seeing yourself like this. Open. Unassuming. Hungry. But I loved it almost instantly. Because it gave me a narrative. And I think that maybe, I never had one of those before.

[1:35]

CAPITAL CRIME  
by Carson Kreitzer

*About the play (from the playwright):*

*Capital Crime!* is set in New York in the Gilded Age, the time of highest levels of income inequality in this country... until now. This is a tale of lust, murder, greed, unfettered capitalism, and the consumption of young girls. A play with songs, in Brecht-meets-Riot-Grrl fashion.

Please choose one of the following selections.

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STANFORD WHITE—Male, 40-60s

*About the scene:*

Famous architect STANFORD WHITE—of exquisite taste and questionable morals—gives a lecture at three different points in the play.

1.

STANFORD WHITE, on architecture

Architecture.

Is the structure in which we live our lives.  
It makes all things possible.

Without structure, everything collapses.  
This holds true for a ceiling or a social order.

Structure and support are key. But so is elegance. The structure should appear only as strict as renders confidence in the observer.

The wonderful thing about America is our *class mobility*.  
Anyone can do as I have done  
all it takes is hard work  
very very hard work

And apprenticeships with just the right people  
why I haven't even a degree from a prestigious university

I've got my hands. My ingenuity. My understanding  
of the needs of those who  
commission great works of architecture.

I understand how important it is to have a separate staircase  
for the servants

You can't be running into the upstairs maid your son has gotten into an  
embarrassing condition  
not because it would cause embarrassment  
not really

but because it shapes *her* frame of reference

If she runs into him on the stair  
Basket with the sweated sheets held to one side of her  
swelling belly  
she might think a ring is all she'd need  
to join this family

when in fact this is not a leap  
that can be made.

There is a whole separate staircase  
for the likes of her

It's important for her to remember this.

In the end, it saves everyone  
from embarrassment.

[1:30]

2.

STANFORD WHITE, on beauty

These people have money but NO TASTE. I can help them. I can help them with  
this. Problem.

I have taste. exquisite. taste. honed by education and experience . . .

it's like having perfect pitch. everything else is pain. but when it soars—when it is  
RIGHT. oh, the joy. the sweet, flowing joy

of beauty

which is why I am so particularly adept in identifying

the most beautiful girls. Even if she's got some flaw, say a little discoloration in her  
front tooth

why I send her over to my dentist, right away. And when she is returned to me—  
*there—*

*Perfection.*

Pursued, attained, pursued again . . .

do you think this beauty comes FOR FREE?

sometimes you need cocaine to stay awake for 36 hours to hang the orange  
Japanese lanterns all down the street for the unveiling of your new shining white  
arch in Washington Square Park  
Japanese lanterns all down fifth avenue  
and yes, you have to do it yourself, because THEY WILL GET IT WRONG.  
I learned. Early on.  
Some tasks you can assign. Some you need to do on your own.  
The hanging of Japanese lanterns requires a deft touch.

[1:20]

3.

STANFORD WHITE, on having half your head blown off

It's hard to think. When your head's been blown off. Hard to keep it all, moving.  
But you must. Work doesn't stop. Work can never stop. If you stop, well, they'll just  
start knocking you down the next thing will come along and it'll be DYNAMITE  
suddenly, ash and shards where you had built PALACES. For ordinary people to  
receive their mail. Or step aboard a locomotive. Ordinary people, too, could be  
surrounded by smooth white marble as they go about their day to day to day to day  
to day to day lives. Their lives. Which go on.

*(catches himself)*

If you let the sleepiness overtake you, if you let the blood run out and down  
rushing, rushing from the great cracked melon  
at the end of your bending neck  
IT WILL ALL BE GONE, THIS WILL ALL BE GONE

They will knock down your beautiful Madison Square Garden with its sensuous  
rooftop greenery, it's oriental-style stage, its fairy lights  
the graceful arms and ankles you have adored, so many times so many times  
the beautiful orange lanterns

they will knock it down, and give another building its name  
though it is no longer in Madison Square  
AND THERE IS NO GARDEN

they will knock it down and replace it with a lump of mud and rock, a mute horror  
in the name of progress and modernity  
FUCK PROGRESS AND MODERNITY  
what a thing to lose your head over

[1:35]

