



FALLING OFF THE EDGE

by Paul Donnelly

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Falling Off the Edge

A play in two acts

by

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Cast of Characters

Belinda Morris, mid-30's, a recovering alcoholic with a veneer of confidence over a fragile core. A once and future realtor.

Carly Howe, mid-30's, Good-hearted, with a deeply ingrained frugality. Also a recovering alcoholic. She would be the first to refer to Belinda as "the pretty one."

Matt Ballard, mid-30's, a swimmer who is afraid of the ocean. Mormon. If Matt heard most people's inner monologues as they first meet him, he would think his name was "Oh my god!" He is aware of, but neither embarrassed by nor vain about his looks.

Setting

A beach resort in Costa Rica. Recently.

Synopsis

A Mormon swimmer who is afraid of the ocean meets two recovering alcoholics taking their first sober vacation at a beach resort in Costa Rica. One of the women falls for him, while he falls for the other. No one gets what they want, but at least one gets what she needs. The script establishes the conventions of a traditional rom-com and then moves to an unexpected and yet satisfying conclusion.

Women have been taught that, for us, the earth is flat, and that if we venture out, we will fall off the edge. -- Andrea Dworkin

FALLING OFF THE EDGE

ACT I

Scene 1

Setting: Tuesday. The poolside at a resort in Costa Rica. At least four comfortable chaise lounges are visible facing downstage. Other tropical décor as budgets permit.

At rise: Early morning. Bright sun. The play of lights downstage suggests a pool running the length of the playing area with a lone swimmer completing regular laps. A single towel sits on chaise longue farthest R.

The peace is broken by the unmistakable thwack-thwack-thwack of flip-flops against bare feet.

BELINDA enters. She is not wearing flip-flops. She wears smart and silent little sandals and a flattering but not showy swimsuit with a matching beach cover. She is carrying a darling little summer bag. BELINDA is reasonably nice-looking, but she carries herself with a confidence that makes her seem more attractive.

BELINDA stands and waits, but does not look behind her.

After a beat CARLY is heard from off.

CARLY

I'm coming. ... I'm coming ...

CARLY bursts on, flip-flops thwacking. She is wearing cut-offs over her bikini. She's struggling with a beach satchel of epic proportions and doesn't seem willing to use her hands. She is also wearing, most incongruously, a pair of huge round "Jackie O" sunglasses.

CARLY

I have to tell you; this is not how I dreamt of starting this vacation.

BELINDA

You have mentioned that. In passing.

CARLY

Nothing on a vacation should start before 10.

BELINDA (proceeding to a chaise)

I told you, three hours of sun before ten is less damaging than half an hour of sun between ten and two.

CARLY

Is that true?

BELINDA

Have you ever seen me with a burn?

CARLY

It's just not natural. We're up before the coffee shop is even open!

BELINDA has been giving CARLY an appraising look.

CARLY

What?

BELINDA

You know ...

CARLY

What?

BELINDA

You know I would put out my own eyes with a ballpoint pen before I'd say a word in judgment...

CARLY

I have several ballpoint pens right here.

BELINDA

No doubt.

BELINDA takes a few steps. CARLY doesn't move.

BELINDA

What?

CARLY

I am not budging until you spit it out.

BELINDA

Are you sure?

CARLY

Belinda ...

BELINDA

Well, if you insist ...

CARLY waits.

BELINDA

It's two things, really.

CARLY waits.

BELINDA

There's a mirror in our room.

CARLY

One of our "four-star amenities."

BELINDA

So you must be able to see that the Daisy Mae thing was old before you finished high school.

CARLY

I told you I was not going to go out and spend ... whatever you spent ... on a new swimsuit ... when I have one that fits just fine.

BELINDA

That was probably debatable ten years ago.

CARLY

And what was number two?

BELINDA

It doesn't matter ... really...

CARLY

It matters more than you will ever know.

BELINDA

You swore to me you'd leave those damn glasses at home.

CARLY

I didn't swear.

BELINDA

You promised...

CARLY

I don't think so...

BELINDA

You lead me to believe...

CARLY

I may have done that.

BELINDA

Then why?

CARLY

I tried ... I wanted to ... for you. But I just couldn't face the waste. These are a perfectly good pair of sunglasses. I don't need a second pair. And I paid \$40 for these. Forty dollars.

BELINDA

And I know it must have killed you, but it was also a dozen years ago. If you amortize, it means they cost you \$3.34 a year. Inexpensive even to you!

CARLY

Do I begrudge you your extravagance?

BELINDA

I don't see living in comfort I can afford as extravagance.

CARLY

Could anyone possibly need \$800 sheets?

BELINDA

They were on sale. I saved \$1200 on the set. How could that be extravagant?

CARLY

Shall we proceed?

How about right here?

BELINDA (spotting the towel)

Here?

CARLY

Here?

BELINDA nods.

We're not going to the beach?

CARLY

The beach isn't open yet.

BELINDA

It's a beach. It never closes.

CARLY

They don't start giving out chairs until nine.

BELINDA

And god forbid you should lie on a towel on the sand.

CARLY

BELINDA looks at CARLY as though her statement had been in Esperanto.

CARLY

Right. How about, why couldn't we wait until 9? Wouldn't want an extra ninety minutes of sleep to keep these alluring bags from developing under our eyes? Wasn't that in last month's Cosmo? How to Get Those Dark and Swollen Eyes Men Are Mad For!

BELINDA

Have you ever even held a Cosmo?

CARLY

Of course not. It's a point of honor.

CARLY struggles awkwardly trying to carry her bag without using her hands.

BELINDA

What are you do ... oh for god's sake! It's a manicure. Your hands weren't suddenly transformed into glass yesterday.

CARLY

For \$80 – plus tip! – this is going to last until Christmas.

BELINDA

It was my \$80.

CARLY

It was still \$80.

BELINDA

People go every week, y'know.

CARLY

Not this person! It would give me hives to throw away money like that.

BELINDA

"I'm worth it." "I'm worth it." "I'm worth it."

CARLY

Sometimes good common sense isn't a self-esteem issue!

BELINDA laughs and settles in a chaise, funnily enough nearest the one with a towel.

CARLY

Sixty chairs and you had to pick the one ... (the coin drops) ... oh. (she looks toward the pool) Three hours of sun before ten?

BELINDA

Tipping well has it rewards. Those girls in the spa know everyone and everything that happens here.

CARLY

Down to when he'd be swimming?

BELINDA

Angela said you could set your clock by him.

CARLY

How much did this fount of information cost you?

BELINDA

You really must get beyond this obsession with my spending.

CARLY

20%?

BELINDA shakes her head.

25%?
CARLY

Big up?
BELINDA gestures up.
CARLY

Not 50...
BELINDA nods.
CARLY

Of course not.
BELINDA

Oh good...
CARLY

Double it.
BELINDA

What? ... You're kidding? ... 100% ... You tipped ... There's just no way ... 100%?
CARLY

I didn't want gossip, I wanted the truth.
BELINDA

I hope you get your money's worth.
CARLY

You make it sound like I'm paying for him.
BELINDA

A gigolo might have been cheaper. And a sure thing.
CARLY

We are supposed to be putting our histories behind us.
BELINDA

I trust you'll cough demurely when it's time for me to go book a day tour to the volcano.
CARLY (after a beat)

I'm not planning to sleep with him this morning.
BELINDA

CARLY

Your restraint is heroic. You should be addressing Christian Youth groups.

BELINDA

Are you familiar with the parable of the glass house and the stones?

CARLY

This trip is not about histories, remember? It's about moving forward...

BELINDA

This from a woman wearing a 10-year-old bikini and 12-year-old sunglasses.

CARLY

Think of them as vintage. Like Scotch.

BELINDA

Neither one of us needs to be thinking of Scotch.

CARLY

True dat.

BELINDA

Do you have the sunscreen?

CARLY

Like it was going to fit in your little evening bag. (rifling through her tote) Do you want 30 or 45?

BELINDA

Do you have any of the 15?

CARLY

You are not ready for 15.

BELINDA

We're not going to be here long and it smells so much better.

CARLY

Right. (handing her the 15) The Shalimar of tanning products. Want me to get your back?

BELINDA (posing ala Rita Hayworth)

I'm not planning to lie on my stomach this morning.

CARLY

Do you know him? Have you even met him?

BELINDA

If I had met him we wouldn't need to be out here at 7:30 in the morning.

CARLY

In your extensive research, did his name come up?

BELINDA

Matt. So there.

CARLY

Can you do my back?

BELINDA

Sure. Do you mind 15? I don't want to get the other smells on my hands.

CARLY

Perish the thought. (looking toward the water). He's steady.

BELINDA

You know there's no reason on this earth you can't meet someone for yourself.

CARLY

Oh, I could never do that. Now that I've cleaned up my act, I'm saving myself for Lil' Abner.

BELINDA

Do you have my magazine?

CARLY tosses it disdainfully to BELINDA.

BELINDA

Hey, it's not Cosmo!

CARLY

The New York Review of Books, I presume.

BELINDA

Of course not. It's a point of honor.

BELINDA begins glancing lightly through her magazine.

CARLY surreptitiously extracts a hardbound copy of John Gardner's *Grendel* from her canvas sack.