

Dumpster Divers

Barbara Nouvel





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THE DUMPSTER DIVERS

By Barbara Nouvel

CAST

MARTHA: Woman in her early to mid-sixties.

DORIS: Martha's bridge-playing friend. Mid to late sixties.

AGNES: Martha's friend. Late sixties, early seventies.

JANITOR: Works for the apartment building.

HILDA: Elderly lady who appears briefly dressed in a robe & slippers.

CREW PERSON: Unseen. No speaking. Stabilizes the dumpster and can do sound effects.

Place:

The back of an apartment building.

Time:

The present. A Monday morning in early fall.

Setting: The back of an apartment building. There's a door in the building and a walkway along the side. A sign on the building shows an arrow pointing to 'Tenant Parking only.' There are some empty boxes on the ground. A large commercial dumpster dominates the stage. The dumpster is a large refrigerator box painted grey. It has only three sides.

At Rise: MARTHA is standing near the dumpster talking on her cell phone.

MARTHA: Doris! Doris, pick up the phone. *(listens)* Oh geez, Doris. Please pick up the phone. This is an emergency. Oh sh...crap. What am I gonna do? *(Hangs up and dials another number. She brightens when the phone is answered).* Agnes, oh thank God. I need your help. It's an emergency. I tried calling Doris but...*(listens)* She's with you? Oh great. I need you both to meet me at Hilda's now. Never mind why, I'll explain when you get here. But you've got to hurry. *(listens)* I told you Agnes, this is an emergency—you need to come now. No, NOW!

(She hangs up and dials another number) Thelma, this is Martha. I'm going to be late for bridge *(listens)* I know I'm supposed to bring the boards and bidding boxes. That's why I'll be late. *(listens)* It's a long story. We don't have to go into it now. I'll get there as soon as I can. *(listens)* I am NOT holding everyone up. *(listens)* Because Agnes and Doris aren't there either. *(listens irritably)* Because they're on their way to help me that's how I

know. *(listens)* I said I'd get there as soon as I can. Bye. *(she paces back and forth, alternating between looking at her watch and at the walkway next to the building)*

(enter DORIS and AGNES, talking and laughing together)

MARTHA: Oh there you are. It took you long enough!

AGNES: What the heck you talking about? We were on our way to play bridge when you called so we turned right around.

DORIS: Yeah. This better be important. We wanted to stop at Starbucks, but came here instead. I haven't had my morning caffeine fix, so be careful about getting on my nerves.

AGNES: What's this huge emergency anyway?

MARTHA: Hilda can't come to bridge today, so she asked me to stop by her place and pick up the boards and bidding boxes. I said sure. It's on my way.

DORIS: This is the emergency?

AGNES: How heavy are they that it takes three of us?

MARTHA: *(exasperated)* I don't need your help to carry them. I need you to help me figure out how to get them out of the dumpster.

DORIS and AGNES: WHAT?

DORIS: Oh my God. You're kidding. You are kidding, right?

(MARTHA grimaces)

AGNES: What the heck are they doing in the dumpster?

MARTHA: It doesn't matter how they got in there. We just have to get them out.

(AGNES and DORIS, hands on hips, wait for a better explanation)

MARTHA: Okay, okay. Hilda wanted me to throw out some garbage for her...and I accidentally threw them in too. Satisfied? Now let's just concentrate on getting them out.

AGNES: *(laughing)* Thelma's probably having a hissy fit.

DORIS: This is proof that even at our age, every day can be an adventure. I don't think this requires a genius to figure out. Just stack those boxes, climb up and pull them out.

MARTHA: Don't you think I didn't think of that! But in order to get on the boxes, they'll have to be staggered. We need to stabilize them so one of us can climb up and reach in.

DORIS: What do you mean one of us? I'm not crawling through garbage. It's your problem. You're the designated dumpster diver.

MARTHA: This is my new sweater. I don't want to ruin it.

DORIS *(to AGNES)* Oh, did you hear that? She doesn't want to get her sweater dirty.

AGNES: *(taking off MARTHA's sweater)* Okay, that's solved. Now get the heck up there and let's get this road on the show.

(They start stacking boxes, leaving a little room for a foothold. After the third one, MARTHA steps on the first box but is too heavy and falls through it.)

AGNES: So much for that idea. We need wooden crates. Unless you can lose a few pounds in the next few minutes, these cardboard things aren't going to support you.

MARTHA: *(wiping herself off)* Well, that's not gonna happen. Doris, you're the chess genius. What's our next move?

DORIS: Speaking of chess, what do you call a couple of chess players in a hotel lobby who are bragging about their game?

AGNES: I give up.

DORIS: Chess nuts boasting in an open foyer.

AGNES: *(laughing and high-fiving DORIS)* Good one Doris, but don't get too big for your britches or you'll be exposed in the end. Get it? Baggy pants leave your behind exposed.

DORIS: Oh, that's awful. But; I guess I deserve it. My joke was a little corny.

AGNES: A little?

MARTHA: All right, already. That's enough. We need to focus.

DORIS: What we need is a ladder. They've probably got a janitor in this place. Go see if you can find him, Martha. He's bound to have one.

MARTHA: That's not a bad idea. I saw his office on the first floor. I'll be right back.
(heads for the apartment door)

DORIS: I sure could use a cup of coffee. Didn't we pass a Tasty Donut on the corner?

AGNES: Yes we did. Let's go get some while we're waiting. *(they go around the side of the building, laughing and talking)*

(MARTHA and JANITOR enter. He's carrying a short ladder.)

JANITOR: I don't know what you're up to, but you're not leaving the premises with this ladder. I use it all the time.

MARTHA: Don't sweat it. This should only take a minute. *(looks around)* Hey, what happened to Doris and Agnes?

JANITOR: Let's get this over with. What do you want me to do?

MARTHA: I accidentally threw a bag inside the dumpster. I need you to hold the ladder steady for me while I climb up and reach in to pull it out. *(She leans the ladder against the ladder and starts to climb up. CREW PERSON inside box pushes against the box to stabilize it)*

JANITOR: Good luck with that idea.

MARTHA: What'd you say?

JANITOR: I said, good luck with that. They emptied it a couple days ago. There's probably not much in it now.

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!