

# Finding Gladys

**Dave Silverbrand**





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***We help older performers fulfill their theatrical dreams!***

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FINDING GLADYS

by Dave Silverbrand

CAST

GLADYS: Senior Resident.  
MILDRED: Senior Resident.  
MORTON: Senior Resident.  
CUBBY: Yoga Instructor.  
MILES: Scam Artist.  
DEVLIN: Scam Artist.  
CONNIE: Young Woman.  
MARVIN: Senior Patrol.

ACT I  
SCENE 1

*Setting: Room of a senior residence. A woman in a housecoat sits watching television. It's a soap opera and GLADYS is spellbound as she listens to the dramatic dialogue. She is wearing a home battery-operated blood pressure machine. Occasionally, she wipes her eye with a tissue and shakes her head.*

TELEVISION SOUND IN BACKGROUND: I told you, I want to run away with you! You're the only one I ever loved. Can't you see that? Sure, you romanced my mother and every other floozy in town. Just because you're the chief physician at this hospital doesn't mean I can't love you. And I don't care about your sex-change operation, Suzette or Sam or whatever your name is. Love me you fool!! *(dramatic music rises)*

GLADYS: *(gasps)* I knew it!! I thought he'd look good in an evening gown!!

TELEVISION SOUND IN BACKGROUND: We'll return to "Secret Passion" in a moment. But first--cough got you feeling cranky? Try the deep natural heat of Vicks Formula Forty-four. Two teaspoons will loosen that chest and let you breath again...

GLADYS: *(shuts off television and looks outside)* Enough. The man you love turns out to be Doris Day. And what do you do? Have some cough syrup. Oh, if life were that lively. *(pushes the button on the machine and watches the numbers)* Doctor's

orders. Seventy-years old. Blood pressure, 120 over 80. Pulse 60. (*takes off strap and writes down numbers*) That's as exciting as my life gets. Numbers. Numbers. Numbers. Medicare number. Social security number. Bank number. That's what I am now. Nothing but numbers. I wish it didn't have to be that way. I wish I could go somewhere else...be somebody else...just once in a while. And I'll bet I'm not alone. I'll bet anyone who's ever turned 70 has wondered where the years went...wondered what the future holds. (*picks up magazine and flips through pages*) *Senior Moment Magazine*. Spring edition. (*Flips page as something catches her eye. She reads it out loud.*) Your story is worth big money. (*sarcastically*) Sure, it is. (*continues to read*) Ever thought of a career in movies, theatre, television? You've got the story. We've got opportunity. Send your original ideas to Paragon Productions...New York. (*looks up and expression brightens*) New York. Wow! (*catches herself*) Oh, I don't know. I wouldn't be any good at it. Somebody would make fun of it and say it wasn't any good. (*upbeat*) But what would it matter? Once it's done, it's done. (*snickers*) What are they gonna do to an old lady? Maybe I should try. See what happens. What do I have to lose? Let's see. I can't write about a cross-dressing surgeon. That's already been taken. Hmmmm. Maybe I should just write down last night's dream. That little affair gave me the sweats.

(*GLADYS looks at computer keyboard and studies the screen. Excitedly, she punches keys, smiles and prods her chin. Then she slips back into deep thought. She mouths the words as she types them.*)

GLADYS: (*reads aloud to herself*) She slips into the Lazy-Boy chair, her silk nightgown draped over the armrest. She reaches for the cocktail glass and delicately sips the dark and mysterious liquid. She feels its warmth touch her lips and caress her chest. It's as if the gentle fingers of a lusty man were grasping the depth of her soul. And she feels alive again. Vicks Formula Forty-four always makes her feel that way.

MILDRED: (*enters and looks over her shoulder. Then she grasps her cheeks and gasps softly*) Oh my god, Gladys. Are you trying to pick up some guy on the computer?

GLADYS: (*looks up exasperated*) Mildred. Stop reading over my shoulder. I'm trying to concentrate. How am I supposed to write if you keep bugging me?

MILDRED: Honey...I can't help it.

GLADYS: (*impatiently*) It won't sound real.

MILDRED: What is it?

GLADYS: It's just a story. (*motions to TV*) Can't you watch "Secret Passion" for a while? You'll never guess who the doctor is.

MILDRED: It's that slut Suzette. I know. They were talking about it on the sun deck. I thought he looked kind of swishy.

GLADYS: Mildred, please. I'm trying to concentrate.

MILDRED: What turned you into Miss Cranky-pants?

GLADYS: I'm not being cranky. I'm trying to write.

MILDRED: What's it about?

GLADYS: It's about... (*becomes exasperated*) I don't know!

MILDRED: I thought you had to know what you're writing about before you wrote it, not after.

GLADYS: No. Sometimes it's good just to write for the sake of it. Let your heart follow the pen.

MILDRED: Then what? Send it in as a letter to the editor? People read it once, then put it in the cat's litter box. End of story.

GLADYS: You have a better idea?

MILDRED: Why don't you write a play? At least you could share it with someone.

GLADYS: (*muses*) A play...

MILDRED: You know. A play lets other people tell the story for you. We could do it right here in the sunroom. Just us.

GLADYS: That's not a bad idea.

MILDRED: Yeah, a play. Maybe there will be a part for me.

GLADYS: *(smiles knowingly)* Oh, now I see where this is going.

MILDRED: Well, can I be in it?

GLADYS: I dunno. Maybe. All depends. Can you remember your lines?

MILDRED: *(defensively)* Remember my lines.

GLADYS: Yeah...right. Remember when you tried to pick up the P.G. and E. man? You approached him in the back yard. You said..."Do I come here often?"

MILDRED: I got his attention...didn't I?

GLADYS: Sure did. He never came back.

MILDRED: I was just flirting.

GLADYS: *(typing again)* Just the same...I've got work to do. *(lost in thought again while MILDRED looks over her shoulder. Reads as she writes.)* As she lies back in the recliner...a tall slender man in a trench coat steps from behind the curtain.

MILDRED: *(reading script)* You go girl!

GLADYS: *"She didn't look up. She knew who it was. She could tell by his seductive wheezing."*

MILDRED: *(puzzled)* Seductive wheezing?

GLADYS: *(annoyed)* Hush. I'm trying to think. *(to herself again, she purrs her own words as she reads the script)* "I knew you would come darling. I've been waiting."

MILDRED: And he says: "I'd have been here sooner but I got stuck in traffic."

GLADYS: *(mouths words quizzically)* Traffic?

MILDRED: *(in man's voice)* "And I had a flat."

GLADYS: And she says: "Take off your things. This could take a while."

MILDRED: And he says: "Should I have brought my toothbrush?"

GLADYS: And she says: "Just put your lips on mine."

MILDRED: Wow! Talk about temptation! What I wouldn't give for forty days and forty nights with that man.

GLADYS: (*catching herself*) Mildred...hush. You're breaking my concentration. How the heck do you expect me to finish this?

MILDRED: What kind of play is it?

GLADYS: I don't know. (*pause*) Hey, don't rush me. You're the one who said I should write a play.

MILDRED: Just speak from the heart. Be honest. (*pause*) And make sure there's a part for *me*.

GLADYS: (*looks up impatiently*) Okay. Okay.

MILDRED: Do it honey. Remember what you always tell me.

GLADYS: (*sighs*) I know. I know. There are two roads in life, the things you're supposed to do and the things you want to do.

MILDRED: That's right. And now it's time for the things you want.

GLADYS: Maybe so.

MILDRED: That's it. Oh, I wish I could be like you.

GLADYS: What do you mean? You get me all psyched up and then you say "I wish I could be like you."

MILDRED: I just figured I'd see how you made out. Then I could try it.

GLADYS: What's stopping you, the senior patrol? Want to go naked dancing in the moonlight? Do it, dammit.

MILDRED: That's it? Oh gracious, Gladys. You scare me. I just want to do a little play in the sunroom. I can bake cookies. Wouldn't that make you happy?

GLADYS: No, the people who are afraid to reach beyond the sunroom...they're the ones we should worry about.

MILDRED: Really?

GLADYS: Sure. I knew a couple once. They dreamed all their lives of going to Ireland. They scraped and saved for years. As soon as he retired from the mill, he said, they'd have the time. Then one day he got sick. He died. No Ireland. No nothing.

MILDRED: Only God knows how long we're here. But we're the ones who control the time we have. I guess.

GLADYS: Sure. You might say life is like the tuna casserole they serve here. It may be hard to swallow...but it's all you're gonna get. *(both laugh)*

## SCENE 2

*Setting: A small cluttered business office in New York City. Two men are working at their desks, one, DEVLIN, reading Variety Magazine. The other, MILES, is looking through a stack of envelopes.*

DEVLIN: *(looks up)* Anything?

MILES: Yeah. Check this out. Five movies a month delivered to your door for only ten bucks.

DEVLIN: *(incredulous)* What?

MILES: Hard to believe, isn't it? That Netflix is really something.

DEVLIN: *(exasperated)* I mean...anything for us?

MILES: Let's see. *(reads envelopes)* Occupant. Occupant. Occupant. *(Pauses)* Oh, here's something. It's from Consolidated Edison.

DEVLIN: *(sarcastically)* What is it? Our stock dividend?

MILES: *(reads)* Hmmmm. Fourteen days.

DEVLIN: Fourteen days, what?

MILES: Before they shut off our electricity.

DEVLIN: Well, we've been there before, haven't we, Bro?

MILES: I asked you not to call me "Bro."

DEVLIN: Don't worry about it.

MILES: Well, maybe I just don't like reading in the dark and having my tongue frozen to my coffee cup.

DEVLIN: Oh, don't let your panty-hose get all bound up. I'll get you through it. Don't I always?

MILES: How?

DEVLIN: The same way we always do. The Henry Ford method. Find a need and fill it.

MILES: Here we go again. Thanks to your Henry Ford method, we've got outstanding warrants in three states.

DEVLIN: It's all a misunderstanding.

MILES: Yeah, always a misunderstanding. That real estate development you were selling over the phone.

DEVLIN: Vista Del Sole? Do you know how valuable property is in Florida?

MILES: It was swampland!

DEVLIN: The developer said it was overlooking a wildlife preserve.

MILES: Alligators and snakes.

DEVLIN: How was I supposed to know? I'd never been there.

MILES: That's just the problem. You don't know. You just go for the quick kill.

DEVLIN: Now that...that's kind of cold.

MILES: Exactly my point. Since our days in the projects, it's always been about sales. Five years old and you had me selling tricycle parts.

DEVLIN: It was all about saving energy.

MILES: Parts from other kids' tricycles...?

Devlin: ...That they weren't using.

MILES: Junior high school. The sock hops. You were booking dances with the cheerleaders. (*pretends to shout*) Step right up. Five bucks will get you a slow dance with the one with big knockers!

DEVLIN: Supply and demand. Whose got big knockers in junior high?

MILES: Flesh-peddling!

DEVLIN: Another cold word.

MILES: Okay. High School. The gambling operation under the football bleachers.

DEVLIN: They were gonna do it anyway. Besides, do you know how hard it is to figure odds for a high school game?

MILES: It was gambling...illegal!!

DEVLIN: It was math.

MILES: Well, here's a little subtraction for you. Count *me* out.

DEVLIN: You can't.

MILES: Can't I? I'm tired of running. Tired of fake I.D.'s, flea-bag hotels, cons, lies, lies, and more lies.

DEVLIN: (*mocking*) So what are you going to do, Mister Smarty? What's your big plan? Shift boss at McDonald's? Fries with those McNuggets?

MILES: Shut up.

DEVLIN: Sure. Walk out that door. See how far you get without me.

MILES: I can and I will.

DEVLIN: Great. I wish you well. Can I loan you bus fare? Make any phone calls for you? Need to know the way to the homeless shelter?

MILES: (*moves to door*) Don't try to stop me.

DEVLIN: Go ahead. That's what you want. (*emphatically announces*) America waits. Write when you get work.

MILES: I'm gone.

DEVLIN: I believe it. See you on Wall Street.

MILES: I'm going. No fooling.

DEVLIN: I'm sure you are.

MILES: Okay.

DEVLIN: Okay.

MILES: By dawn tomorrow, I'll be outta here.

DEVLIN: Great.

MILES: Yup. One more big score and I'm history.

DEVLIN: Uh huh.

MILES: One more. And I'm gone.

**END OF FREEVIEW**

***You'll want to read and perform this show!***