

Monologues for the UGAs
From *Time, MT* by Audra Lord

DONNA, female, 60s or older. Her best friend Sue is suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

DONNA

The other night, I dreamt I saw Sue at the supermarket. I waved, she waved, and we moved towards each other like friends do when they're real glad to see each other. I opened my arms for a hug, and her head kind of nestled against my collarbone. She's pretty short, Sue. A second later, I felt this...sharp pain below where her chin was resting. An angry fire sank deep into my chest, but I kept on hugging her—in the dream, I just couldn't let go—and my whole body was shaking, shaking like a leaf in a storm. I don't remember anything else, except the coppery smell of blood and the sound of my own voice, begging, "Please don't take it out, please don't take it out" over and over and over again as Sue just stood there looking up at me, smiling the most awful smile you ever saw.

JOE LEE, male, 60s or older. His wife Sue is suffering from Alzheimer's disease. They live in rural Montana, and he is her primary caregiver.

JOE LEE

So, I went fishing with the boys one day, and I told her not to go anywhere while I was gone. I hid the car keys real good, and I set her up with her favorite old movies--a John Wayne box set. Sue loves John Wayne. I left out some food too, and I turned off the coffeemaker and anything else that could burn the house down. I thought we were OK. I'd left her home before. About 4 hours later, just as I was thinking about packing up my gear to head home, I get a call. From the hospital. "Your wife is here," they say, and "Can you come now?" I threw everything in the back of my truck and drove like hell. When I got to Hamilton, there she was in the ER, looking perfectly fine. She was in this huge bed, propped up with a million pillows, surrounded by nurses, everybody laughing and smiling. She looked like she was--what's the saying? Holding court. Right. I mean, she was telling stories and cracking jokes, making those nurses laugh like anything. The doctor sat me down and said, "I don't know what to tell you. We can't find anything wrong." Apparently, this police car had picked her up for driving funny, and when she couldn't answer their questions, they thought maybe she'd had a stroke or something, so they took her to the hospital, where they gave her every goddamn test under the sun. When they discharged her, she was kind of glowing and floaty, like she'd just spent a week at the spa. Come to find out, the whole time she was there, she was convinced she was at a spa. Canyon Ranch, to be exact. Well, let me tell you--when I finally got the bill...? That seemed about right.

CYNTHIA, female, late 30s-early 40s. Her mother Sue is suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Cynthia's life and work has taken her to a city that is not close to her rural Montana home.

Monologue 1:

Cynthia's mother has recently been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and does not want to have a serious conversation about it.

CYNTHIA

In my dream, there was this open hole. In the top of her head. Not just empty, but cavernous—no blood gushing, no glistening brains spilling out. It looked...gray and desiccated, like the inside of a Halloween pumpkin in late November. And it was filled, her head was absolutely filled with dust and cobwebs, but nothing else—just empty, gray space. And so deep! It seemed to go on forever. I couldn't even see the bottom. Just darkness. And when I expressed worry, she seemed completely untroubled. "Everything's fine," she kept saying, over and over again. "There's no problem." Everything's fine.

Monologue 2:

Cynthia's mother is declining due to Alzheimer's, and she worries about the toll that caregiving will take on her father.

CYNTHIA

There was this lady who lived in my old apartment building. Everybody called her "Miz Lucy." She had this wispy, cotton-fluff hair and always wore the same old house dress. In Chicago. On the north side. Remember? It was like the United Nations. Lots of African immigrants, and they were so sweet to her. Anyway, she lived alone, but she spent most of her time standing in the lobby of the building, over by the elevators so you couldn't miss her. Every time someone passed by, she'd ask "What day is it?" I never saw her go outside or really look out the window, ever. Over and over again, she'd ask "What day is it?" I used to think she was just lonely—she just wanted to hear another human voice a few times a day. But now...I think maybe she was like Mom. And maybe she was stuck inside her disease, or maybe she was just lonely and old, I'll never know, but—every time there was a fire alarm, I'd hear a flutter of voices asking "Where Miz Lucy? Go on, git Miz Lucy!" And a search party would be dispatched, and eventually Miz Lucy would appear, guided to safety by this gentle village of kind, brown hands.