

## FS FICTION

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# ZAHRA'S CHRISTMAS

A LOCAL EMPLOYEE'S ENTHUSIASM AND HOPE THROW A STARK LIGHT ON THE UNCERTAINTY  
AND TURMOIL OF THE AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN IRAQ.

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BY RACHEL SCHNELLER

**I**t was December in Iraq, but it didn't feel like the Middle East. It was Seattle-cold and drizzly, not like in the movies where the Arabian Peninsula is sand dunes and blistering sun. Mud, gravel and thick, dark dust caked my shoes, my hair and the floors of my office and the trailer where I slept. There was no Middle Eastern hummus or shawarma or strong, sugary tea. Our dining facility, staffed by a Texas contracting company, served Southern specialties like ham hocks and collard greens and fried potatoes, fried steaks, fried everything. The only other vegetable served seemed to be boiled broccoli. There wasn't an eggplant or a stuffed grape leaf in sight.

This was my third month in Iraq on a volunteer Foreign Service assignment in one of the southern provinces. Our small State Department office was situated in a military enclave and surrounded with security and logistics contrac-

tors. My duties included meeting with provincial government officials, community leaders and reconstruction experts. I listened to them and wrote reports. I tried to help make our efforts better coordinated and less confusing for everyone involved.

"Do you know where I could find red ribbons?" Zahra cut into my thoughts with her question. She was one of our Iraqi political assistants.

I knew she wanted ribbons because the contractors on the compound were holding a contest for Christmas door-decorating as a morale-boosting project. There were even prizes for the best ones. The contest had motivated Zahra to mind-boggling levels. She had crafted a life-size snowman out of cotton balls on her office door, even though she had never seen real snow. Its eyes were dates she had brought in from the city.

"Red ribbon? Zahra, your door is already the best one here. What else can you possibly put on it?"

"It's a surprise," she said. Her dark eyes gleamed. Zahra's headscarf and conservative clothing covered up her body, focusing the light on her expressive eyes.

As far as I could see, Zahra was enjoying the Christmas door contest more than anyone else on the compound. I realized that as a Shiite Muslim living most of her life under Saddam, she probably had not had much chance to have fun. Plus, she had not grown up in America, where Christmas had become a materialistic shopping marathon that started in November and ended in a debt-induced stupor in January.

I shared my office with two other reporting officers. We

*Rachel Schneller joined the Foreign Service in 2001, serving in Skopje, USUN, Conakry, Basrah and the Office of Multilateral Trade Affairs in the Bureau of Economic Energy and Business Affairs. She received AFSA's William R. Rivkin Award for Constructive Dissent in 2008 for speaking out about the occurrence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Foreign Service personnel returning from war zones.*

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had decorated our door half-heartedly with colored paper and red ribbon in a sort of abstract collage in Christmas colors. We still had some ribbon left and I gave it to Zahra.

Later that day I went to look at Zahra's door to see what she had done with the ribbon. She had cut out squares of green and white paper to create a pile of gifts on her door and used the ribbon to decorate them. The paper gifts lay underneath a Christmas tree crafted from plastic pine boughs — God knew where she had found them in Iraq, where pine trees didn't exist. Red balls — real Christmas decorations — hung from the tree's branches.

All of us were taking a bit of a breather from work. The election the previous week had gone well, with no major security issues and a high voter turnout. We had worked around the clock in the weeks leading up to the election, tracking the delivery of ballots to polling stations, following the training of monitors, and getting updates from the local police on security plans. Now that the election was over and we had sent our last report up to Baghdad, we were all relaxing a bit. A national government had been elected, and the situation in Iraq would improve.

Back at my office, my office mates Bill and Parker were looking skeptically at our door.

"This is pathetic. Where's our Christmas spirit?" Parker criticized. His eyes darted around the room, looking for anything that could spruce up our door.

"This door sucks. Zahra is putting us all to shame. And she's not even Christian," Bill said.

Parker grabbed a stack of white paper coffee filters from our cabinet coffee station and started ruffling them up. They fluffed out into a sort of corsage, and he tacked it to the middle of our door. It did look sort of festive, like a small pom-pom.

"We need something else," Bill said. "We need a Christmas tree or something."

"All we have is this potted palm," I said. There was a three-foot-high droopy palm tree in our office. I suspected the palm looked sick because people kept emptying their coffee cups into its soil.

"That'll work." Bill grabbed some paper stars and began taping them to the palm's leaves. Parker grabbed a hideous plastic flower arrangement from the office, pulled some plastic roses out of it, and began stabbing the stems into the palm's dirt like fertilizer sticks. The whole thing looked

awful, but at least we had made an effort.

The next day I went by Zahra's office to go over the day's scheduling. The door-judging would take place in three days, so everyone had pretty much finished with decorating. When I got to her door, I stopped to take in the scene. Zahra was carefully tacking up blinking colored lights to outline the Christmas tree on her door. Zahra had a degree in civil engineering, so I was not surprised to see that she had found a way to attach several extension cords to the lights and plug them in down the hallway.

"Zahra, you're going to win this contest anyway. You can take it easy now."

"Do you really think I could win?" Zahra asked. In her eyes, I saw her worry was genuine. I was taking it for granted that the best door would win. The way Zahra looked at it, the door judges were all American male contractors — and in her experience, winners of contests were the friends and relatives of the judges. No one ever won anything because they deserved to win. I could tell she wanted to believe the door-decorating contest would be a meritocracy. She just was not convinced.

Friday and Saturday were days off for the Iraqi employees. For us Americans, work continued. Days blended into each other so much that I had started keeping track of what day it was by what was served in the dining facility. Friday was steak night. As tasty as the grilled beef was, I couldn't help but think how good some baba ghanouj would be. After three months in Iraq, the only Middle Eastern food I had eaten were the dates and sweets Zahra brought in from the outside. She started feeding me bits of flaky, pistachio-filled baklava with pity in her eyes after our first lunch together in the dining facility. Sometime the food served in the dining hall, ham hocks that looked like leather dog toys, seemed more foreign to me than the rice pilaf and yogurt sauces I knew were being eaten by Iraqi families outside the compound walls. Some nights, I could swear I could smell roasted lamb wafting up over the walls.



The Saturday before Christmas, a chilly day, began as always with the call to prayer. It came from a mosque located immediately outside our compound walls, a mosque I never saw once during my whole year in Iraq. But today, inside the compound walls, it was Christmas. The contrac-

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tors were playing carols over the security loudspeakers.

I had volunteered for the assignment in Iraq out of curiosity more than anything else. In 2005, two years after the initial invasion, we were still there. I wanted to know why. I wanted to help push things along so life could go back to the way it was before.

So here I was, one of 13 women in a compound of 400 men. One of 10 State Department personnel in a sea of contractors for logistics and security. Vastly outnumbered, and surrounded by people who seemed friendly and hostile at the same time.

“What do you think this is?”

It was one of the judges for the door-decorating contest. He was talking to his buddy, another contractor. Two large men in cargo pants and long-sleeved jerseys with lots of facial hair. They were looking at our potted palm, which had acquired a fluffy paper boa, making the poor plant look like an old lady out on a shopping trip. I suspected Parker was behind this last-ditch effort.

“This is our Christmas tree,” I said, as if it were obvious.

“Hmm. Interesting.” The two judges marked something down on their clipboards. They turned to me, looked me up and down.

“Hey, missy, what do you do here?” one of them asked. I was used to this kind of flirtation by now. As one of the few women on the compound, I knew I was an item of interest.

“I work for the State Department. This is my office.” I pointed to the open door where I worked with Bill and Parker.

“Never been up here before,” the first guy said, peering into the office. “What do you guys do?”

“We work with the local government, try to get the reconstruction efforts coordinated. That sort of thing.”

“Really. I didn’t know we were doing that.”

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***“Didn’t know we had  
State Department folks  
on this compound,”  
the two contractors  
said as they left.***

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I was getting uncomfortable with the way they were staring at me, like they hadn’t seen a woman in months. Come to think of it, they probably hadn’t.

“What do you do?” I asked them, backing up against the wall. Suddenly, I wished I were wearing a headscarf.

“Forklift.”

“Dog handler.”

Every other week or so, our compound received shipments of food and water and mail that arrived on heavy pallets. The pallets could only be moved by forklift. We also had five or six dogs on compound that sniffed for explosives in cars and trucks coming into the compound.

“Didn’t know we had State Department folks on this compound,” they said as they left.

When I think of Zahra now I remember her in purple, as she was the day she won the door contest. Flowing lavender tunic over dark, loose trousers. A white head sock covering her hair, wrapped in a purple hijab. Gold jewelry at her neck and on her wrists. A tiny diamond sparkling in her nose.

In our minds, there was no way she could not have won. Even though it was Saturday and her day off, she

came to work that morning, earlier than usual. Parker had seen her putting finishing touches on her door and plugging in the blinking lights.

“She said she was worried someone else might ruin her door,” Bill said. “Sabotage.”

“Really?” I said. “For a Christmas door-decorating contest? What was the prize, anyway?”

“Zahra won a CD player. She seems really happy.”

It was true. When I saw Zahra later that day, she was glowing. Purple was a good color for her, and I noticed her jewelry. She had dressed up for the occasion.



It was a Sunday in June when I learned that assassins on motorbikes had followed Zahra and her husband home from the compound that day and shot them each in the head while they waited at a traffic signal.

This is how we learned of her death: at the morgue, the Iraqi morticians went through Zahra’s pockets. When they found the cell phone they were looking for, they looked through the last numbers dialed from Zahra’s phone. Assuming that she would have been in close contact with her family, the morticians called the last registered number, thinking they would get a family member who could come collect her body. What the morticians didn’t know was that Zahra never called her family on her work phone because she would never put her family at such risk of being identified in association with the Americans. So when the morticians called the last registered number on her work phone, they got me.

When I pieced together what they were telling me, between my tiny bits of Arabic and their broken English, the first entirely clear thought that came to me was how efficient their system for locating family members

was. My first entirely clear feeling was guilt, because I realized that after working with Zahra for the past nine months, I did not know how to contact her family, either. I had never asked.

In the end, the task of contacting her family to collect her body from the morgue fell to another one of our employees. By this time in June, there were so many roadside bombs that we rarely left the compound and we were unable to travel about the city ourselves. The other Iraqi employee quit as soon as he had located the family and informed them of Zahra's death. He fled to Dubai the following week.

Without Zahra's help as political assistant, we were unable to set up meetings with local officials. When the security situation deteriorated further, as it did throughout the rest of the country, we were at an even

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*When I recall Zahra now, I think of her in purple, standing next to her Christmas door, as excited as a child opening presents.*

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greater loss to explain why. When I read through headlines on the Internet in my office, I could not blame the reporters for getting it wrong. Those of us on the receiving end of nightly mortar and rocket

attacks could not identify our attackers or explain their motivation, either.



When I recall Zahra now I think of her in purple, standing next to her Christmas door, as excited as a child opening presents, emanating hope. I think how much she wanted to believe it all was true, that peace and stability had returned to her country after decades of repression under Saddam Hussein. How much she wanted to believe that she now lived in a world where the best door would win the Christmas prize.

This is how I will remember Iraq. How it was cold, not hot. How I ate pork in a Muslim country. How I heard the call to prayer mingling with Christmas carols the day of the door-judging. How hard I wanted to believe I was working for peace. ■



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## FS FICTION

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# P & ME

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ONE NEWLY MINTED FSO LEARNS MORE THAN  
SHE BARGAINED FOR IN AN UNUSUAL A-100 EXPERIENCE.

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BY MARY GRACE MCGEEHAN

Whatever else anyone might say about me, it's a safe bet that no one ever learned more from their Foreign Service mentor than I did. I wrote down some of these lessons in my diary before my mentor told me never to keep a diary in Washington. That was one lesson. Here's another: To get to the top, you have to be kind of a jerk, but not too much of one. Another one: 95 percent of the seventh floor's attention is devoted to 5 percent of the world.

One unusual thing about these lessons is that they were delivered not over watery, overpriced turkey sandwiches in the State Department cafeteria but at my mentor's house near the National Cathedral. Another unusual thing: this

*Mary Grace McGeehan joined the Foreign Service in 1986, and has served in Mexico, Cambodia, Haiti and, twice, in South Africa. In Washington, she has worked on the South Africa and Vietnam desks and in the Office of the Inspector General. Her most recent assignment was as deputy chief of mission in Vientiane. She is currently on a yearlong leave of absence in Cape Town, South Africa.*

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take on the department leadership came not from, say, a burned-out consular officer but from the under secretary of State for political affairs. Or, as everyone in the Foreign Service knew him, P.



We were assigned our mentors a few weeks into A-100. Like boys brought in for a dance at a girls' school, they filed in and stood along the sides of our classroom. Halfway into this, Gray, my only A-100 friend, leaned over and muttered, "Seventh-floor sighting at eight o'clock." I looked over my left shoulder and there was P, who had addressed our class the week before. He was in his early 40s, with brown hair, and was wearing a blue pinstriped suit. In other words, he looked like any other FSO. Except, of course, he wasn't. In the State Department, he was the Alpha Male.

As the woman from Human Resources ran through the match-ups, my classmates pretended to be pleased as they were paired with aviation specialists, post management officers and deputy office directors. Everyone was waiting to see who got the prize. The tension rose as the field of potential P mentees got smaller, like at the Miss America contest when they list the runners-up and the remaining contestants are thinking, "Am I going home wearing that tiara, or will I not even be third runner-up?" Except for me. After only a few weeks in the Foreign Service, I had

developed just one goal: to be ignored. It figured, then, that with five or six people remaining, they called my name along with P's. As a buzz arose in the room, the only voice I heard distinctly was that of Amanda, my arch-enemy, saying, "Oh, wouldn't you know."

P and I chitchatted awkwardly as we headed to the FSI cafeteria. Where was I from? Westchester. Cone? Political. College? Georgetown. I didn't have anything to ask him, since Amanda, who had finagled the responsibility of introducing him to the class, had done so at considerable length. I knew that he had joined the Foreign Service right out of college, that his overseas postings included Bonn, Cairo and Jerusalem, and that he was the youngest under secretary ever. Amanda hadn't mentioned a wife and children.

In the cafeteria, he took in the long line of people waiting to get trays and silverware and looked at his watch. "How about if we go over to the department?" he asked. Fifteen minutes in a Lincoln Town Car later, we were in the eighth-floor dining room. An hour after that, when my classmates had long since finished what in many cases turned out to be not just their first but also their last encounter with their mentors, we were still talking. The meal was not much better than the usual department cafeteria fare, but neither of us paid much attention to the food.

Over the next two weeks, we met for after-work drinks at Kinkead's, dinner at the Old Ebbitt Grill and a ballet at the Kennedy Center. All through the ballet, we kept looking at each other and smiling. As he was dropping me off at home, he looked into my eyes and said, "Would it be all right if I ..."

"Yes?" I asked.

"... If I asked the ethics office if mentor and mentee fall into the category of prohibited romantic relationships?" he asked.

It wasn't the most romantic overture I'd ever received, but at least I knew where I stood. I said yes, the lawyers gave us their blessing, P resigned officially as my mentor, and we were off and running. Or, more precisely, off and walking.



It would have taken a much more grounded person than I not to be swept away. I mean, think about it. I was 24, in A-100, living in a group house, and he was ... well,

he was P. Somehow, though, I got the idea that the way to hold onto him was to be unavailable. Or, rather, to act unavailable. In truth, I was as available as sand on the beach. But I acted like Doris Day, occasionally turning down dates because of made-up schedule conflicts and claiming every single night that I had to get up early the next morning. It was all an act, of course — I was a normal 21st-century girl, not Tess of the d'Urbervilles.

What did we talk about? Pretty much the same things I'd talked about with guys at Georgetown. The Middle East. Whether sanctions work. The idiotic editorial in that morning's *Post*. The difference was that these conversations took place not at G.U. student hangouts like the Tombs, but at Washington power-broker hangouts like Café Milano. And instead of hanging out with his fraternity brothers, we ran into people from his crowd: the *New York Times* globalization guy, the deputy national security adviser, and the head of the Senate's Asia subcommittee.



Meanwhile, back in A-100, the knives were out. They had been from day one, when I stood up along with everyone else and did my two-minute, all-about-me presentation. I'd emphasized my international relations major and my interest in Third World conflicts and glossed over my previous employment, muttering something about having done a little acting. After we all finished, Gray asked me what I'd acted in, and I told him the name of the hospital soap opera I'd had a small part on for the past year. "Oh, my God!" he yelled. "I knew you looked familiar! You're Nurse Melanie!" By the time the break was over, everyone knew.

I hate telling people I used to be on television. There are only two possible reactions. The first one is, "How could you leave?" A surprising number of my classmates took this line. It made no difference that Gray was the only one who had ever actually seen the show. No one bought my explanation about how long and exhausting the hours were, how the pay wasn't all that great, and how the work was basically meaningless. "But you were on television," they protested.

I could understand this if I'd left the soap for a job at, say, a bowling alley, but here I was working for one of the most prestigious institutions in the country, more or less

guaranteed a long, stable career doing things that, at least in theory, could make the world a better place. I was a little disturbed about what this said about our culture. In any case, Nurse Melanie had probably been just months away from getting a fatal disease or dying in a car accident. They go through nurses like Sani-Wipes at that hospital. A few people end up with permanent roles, but I was no great shakes as an actress and not pretty enough for that to be disregarded.

The other reaction I get is, “Oh, really? I’m not familiar with that show. I don’t watch much television.” This line, delivered in a fake-apologetic tone, is common in Washington. Amanda and a few of her acolytes — she was already consolidating her power base as de facto class leader — fell into this camp. So did our A-100 coordinator, Pamela Groebler, whose goal in life was to make us into serious, mature FSO types who would not embarrass her by singing the “Gilligan’s Island” theme song on the shuttle bus or wearing leopard-print miniskirts and flip-flops to the Operations Center, to name (as she often did) two of the sins of the class before us.

Luckily, I had Gray. He was our class expert on the Foreign Service, having spent two years in Vienna when his boyfriend, David, was a cultural officer there. Gray had taken the high school choir he directed to Austria over spring break, met David at an embassy reception, and never gone back to Kansas City.



A few weeks into the P thing, which in an uncharacteristic fit of discretion I hadn’t told Gray about, he and I were sitting in the FSI cafeteria a few tables away from Amanda and her coterie. I was whining, as usual, about how everyone just

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thought of me as Nurse Melanie. Gray looked around to make sure no one was listening, leaned toward me, and whispered, “If you don’t watch yourself, you’re going to *wish* everyone thought of you as Nurse Melanie.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“As opposed to, say, P’s new entry-level cookie.”

“How did you know?”

“Come on, how dumb do you think I am? I mean, the ballet. The guy works 16 hours a day. His executive assistant, who’s a friend of David’s, hasn’t seen his kids in two months. What else would he be doing at ‘The Rite of Spring?’”

“I’m sorry, I was going to tell you,” I said. “It’s just that I still can’t really believe it. I mean, why me? He could go out with anyone.”

“Yet, unfathomably, he passes up hundreds of women who think that a buttoned-up Oxford shirt with a long string of pearls is an acceptable fashion choice, in favor of a blond former actress. It does boggle the mind.”

“Oh, come on,” I said. “It’s not like the men in the State Department are any better dressed. Someone needs to tell them that ‘washable’ is not the most desirable quali-

ty in a suit.”

“Too true, but irrelevant to this discussion.”

“We’ve been discreet,” I said.

“Well, it’s out there. David heard some mid-level CDOs talking about it on the shuttle bus yesterday. If you don’t think Amanda and her evil minions are 10 seconds away from catching on, you’re nuts. You don’t understand how small the State Department is. It’s like a high school.”

“So, what, I shouldn’t see him anymore?”

“No. Do whatever you want. Just don’t complain when no one takes you seriously.”

“Why? I don’t see what my social life has to do with my career. And I’m as qualified to be an FSO as anyone else. I won an award for my thesis about ...”

“That’s another thing. Blathering on about the balance of power in the Caucasus isn’t going to win friends and influence people. Haven’t you noticed that no one else around here ever actually talks about foreign policy?”

Some classmates joined us and we hastily changed the subject to the bid list, a topic of obsessive interest to everyone. I didn’t have a chance to talk to Gray for the rest of the day and I went home feeling like I didn’t have a friend in the Foreign Service, besides P, of course, and look where that had gotten me. In any case, things seemed to have cooled down lately on that front. Between two cancellations from him because of foreign policy emergencies and one fake schedule conflict from me, we hadn’t seen each other in more than a week.

Maybe I should just give it all up and go back to the soap opera, I thought. They hadn’t killed off Nurse Melanie when I left, just sent her off to Canada to look for her birth mother. I’d heard that my successor,

Nurse Tracy, was having trouble memorizing her lines. I was about to pick up the phone to call Clayton, my best friend on the show, who had managed to hold down the small part of Orderly Tyrone for over 10 years, when the SMS signal on my cell phone beeped. The message from Gray read: "Come over and share the secrets of your girlish heart." Half an hour later, I arrived at the fancy Penn Quarter condo building where he and David lived.

Gray was sitting on the sofa with a steaming towel around his neck, drinking hot lemon tea. He waved but didn't say anything. "The Washington Chorus is doing Beethoven's 'Ninth' with the National Symphony tonight, so he's saving his voice," David said, rolling his eyes. David didn't share Gray's musical tastes. He and some Foreign Service friends had a not-very-good punk

band called the Bilateral Irritants. The voice-saving did seem like overkill, since the chorus had 200 members and Gray didn't have a solo.

Gray pointed at me, made a sign-language P, and gave a thumbs-up. "He says he thinks it's great about you two," David said. I could have figured that out. Then Gray made a pained face. "He's sorry if he acted like a jerk. It's just that he's worried that you're going to get hurt. Not by P, but by all of the people in the Foreign Service who have nothing better to do than trash people they're jealous of." That seemed like a lot to read into one grimace. Presumably, he and David had discussed this earlier.

"So, what am I supposed to do?" I asked.

"Don't worry, we have a plan," David said.

"To get people to take me seriously?" I asked.

"No. The trick is *not* to take yourself seriously. You have to embrace your inner Nurse Melanie. You have public speaking training coming up, right?"

"That's right. We're supposed to explain how to do something. My speech is on 'How to Mediate an International Conflict.'"

"Not anymore it isn't," David said. "Here's what you're going to do."




A week later, I was standing in front of 20 classmates in my soap opera costume. Unlike real-life nurses these days, who look like they're wearing children's pajamas, Nurse Melanie wore a proper uniform with a white dress and a little starched cap. I, of all people, shouldn't have been nervous in front of a camera, but I felt an unfamiliar fluttering in my

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stomach as Bill, our instructor, said, "Action!" and the red light went on.

"I'm not a nurse, but I played one on TV," I said. "And I'm here to share some lessons we learned at Suburban General about how not to run a hospital." Suddenly I was Nurse Melanie again, saying my lines, and I was fine.

"Rule No. 1," I said. "Don't attempt to administer anesthesia when you're drunk." Gray hit the PowerPoint remote and a still came up showing Dr. Robert Giles with his head in his hands as he stood in front of a lifeless patient. I continued with my advice. Don't hire people who claim to be doctors without checking their medical credentials. Don't take on your husband's secret love child as a psychiatric patient.

It worked. There was applause and laughter as I finished the last rule, "Don't get into fistfights during surgery." This was accompanied by a

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*After the class quieted down, Bill said, "Well, I clearly have nothing to teach Nurse Melanie about public speaking."*

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video of Nurse Melanie lying on the floor being pummeled by Nurse Julie, who erroneously suspected Melanie of having an affair with her fiancé, rich bad-boy Rory Hathaway.

After the class quieted down, Bill said, "Well, I clearly have nothing to

teach Nurse Melanie about public speaking."

Then Pamela Groebler, who must have walked in during my presentation, stood up in front of the class. "That is not what I had in mind for a class on public speaking in the Foreign Service," she said.

The room fell into a glum silence as Marnie Watkins, who had grown up on an organic farm in Iowa, took the floor to tell us about chemical-free ways to get rid of aphids. In the back row, Amanda was smirking.



As we lined up for the shuttle after class, I said to Gray, "Thanks for nothing. That was excruciating. I'm going back to New York."

"Are you crazy?" he answered. "You killed! You succeeded beyond my wildest dreams."

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**MARY CORNELIA GINN**

10303 Greenwood Place  
Oakton, Virginia 22124  
Phone: 703-938-0074  
[MGinn@walnutstreet.com](mailto:MGinn@walnutstreet.com)  
(Securities & Variable Annuities  
Related Business)  
[mcgfin@verizon.net](mailto:mcgfin@verizon.net)  
(for Tax and Financial Planning)

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I said, "Pamela Groebler hates me. What's so triumphant about that?"

Marnie came up to us and said, "Don't listen to what that witch says. No one can stand her." She really said "witch." I guess that's how people talk in Iowa.

Sophie Thurston, who used to work at the U.S. Trade Representative's office, got in line behind us. "I heard that they parked her over here in orientation because the Secretary didn't want to see her face after she screwed up those Latin American trade negotiations," she said.

As the bus pulled out of the parking lot, Gray started humming atonally.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"Shh, I'm finding the key." A few notes later, he started singing, "Just sit right back and hear a tale, a tale of a fateful trip..." By the time we pulled out onto Arlington Boulevard, the bus rang with the sound of 50 voices singing, "If not for the courage of the fearless crew, the *Minnnow* would be lost." Even Amanda joined in. For someone who supposedly never watched TV, she had an excellent grasp of the lyrics.



As we got off at C Street, I asked Gray if he wanted to go out and celebrate.

"No," he said. "There's one more thing you need to do." P had just returned from a weeklong trip to the Middle East. I hadn't heard from him the whole time. I'd confessed to Gray how much I missed him — P the person, not just the excitement of being swept up in his world. I was tired of playing games.

"You're right," I said. Still wearing my nurse's uniform, I went into the department, got into the elevator, and pushed seven.

That day, for the first time anyone could remember, P left work on time. ■

