

CARD MONEY  
By Cass Cochrane

NAME: Cass Cochrane

WHERE ARE YOU FROM: Woodbridge, New Jersey

BIO: I've acted and directed in community theatre for about 30 years and sing in a Sweet Adelines chorus. Have done some writing but this is my first play.

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WHAT'S KEEPING ME POSITIVE: I think it helps to be an introvert. I do lots of reading, writing, and do connect via Zoom with chorus members (virtual singing and rehearsals). Have also been involved with a group of fellow actors doing some Zoom play readings. I'm very lucky to be retired and grateful to be in a secure financial situation. Life is good.

Yes, this play can be published.

## CHARACTERS

PATSY, 11 year old daughter of Lillian and Cy, plays trumpet. Is often the ringleader in any adventure.

DENISE, 11 year old friend of Patsy. A bit in her friend's shadow.

LILLIAN, Patsy's mother. In her early 40's. Think "I Remember Mama" (but without the Danish accent).

CY, Patsy's father, in his mid-40's. Dotes on his only daughter.

ELSA, Cy's older sister, late 40's, married to Les.

LES, Elsa's husband, late 40's.

AUDREY, Cy and Elsa's younger sister, early 40's. As the only single in the group, she often tries a little harder to get some attention..

## TIME

After dinner, late July, 1959

## PLACE

Scene: The front porch of Cy and Lillian's home. On the porch is a large table with 5 chairs around. On the table, at each place setting, are drinks, bowls of snacks, and piles of coins. In the center, is a deck of playing cards. There is room underneath the table for Patsy to sit and be visible to the audience. Patsy and Denise are seated on the porch steps. A window into the home's kitchen shows folks moving around inside.

Sound: From inside, singing and the clattering of dishes and glassware.

## CARD MONEY

DENISE: So, what do I do again?

PATSY: (holding her trumpet and a 45-rpm record). When they come out here to start playing cards, you say, "Well, I gotta go now. See ya tomorrow Patsy. Thanks for dinner Mrs. Garvin!" But then you sneak around and come in the back door.

DENISE: (she's been nodding and mouthing the words as Patsy says them) Ok, then what?

PATSY: Then I'll say, "Mama, I'm going to practice my trumpet for a while." I'll start playin' a tune when I get back in the house. And then you and me'll put this record of trumpet practice on. When one record finishes, you put on another one. They're each only about 10 minutes. Then keep doin' that til I come back in the house, Ok?

DENISE: Yeah but why? I don't get it.

PATSY: Listen, they always tell dirty jokes while they're playin' cards but when I'm around they clam up and say, "Oh, Patsy's here, I'll tell ya that one later." So this way, I'll go back in the house like I'm gonna play my trumpet, but I'll really be sneaking back in here and hide under the table. That way I'll get to hear all the jokes.

DENISE: And you'll tell me all the jokes later, right?

PATSY: Sure.

DENISE: Ok.

(Grownups start coming out onto the porch, stretching, chattering, gradually finding their places at the table.)

UNCLE LES: Great dinner, Lill.

AUNT ELSA: Sure was. Your wife makes the best pot roast, Cy.

AUNT AUDREY: And Cy makes the best potato pancakes since our mother.

CY: (giving Lill a hug) We're a good team, hon.

LILLIAN: Well, thanks. And thanks everyone for helping with the clean up.

ELSA: Best part of washin' the dishes is singin' those old songs while we do. (She starts) "Dear little girl, they called you a vamp. A flapper just out of Broadway..."

AUDREY: (picks it up) “You may burn brightly, but just like a lamp, you’ll burn out one of these days.”

LES: (joins in) “Then your old fashioned sister may come into view...”

LILLIAN: “With a husband and kiddies, but what about you?...”

ALL: (in harmony) “You’re the kind of a girl that men forget, just a toy to enjoy for a while...”

(Laughter all around.)

CY: Boy, the corn is green, huh? That’ one’s a doozy.

DENISE: (getting up) “Well, I gotta go now. See ya tomorrow Patsy. Thanks for dinner Mrs. Garvin!”

(All wave and mumble “bye’s”)

LILLIAN: Bye honey, say hi to your mom for us!

PATSY: (gets up and stretches) Well, I think I’ll go in and practice a bit, mama. I’ll be back for coffee and cake, though! (goes in the house and we hear an old Harry James ballad).

LES: Hey, the kid sounds pretty good on that tune. (puts a hand out to ELSA). Whaddya say, sweetie? Care for a twirl around the porch?

ELSA: Oh, LES, go on!

(all encourage)

ELSA: Well, all right.

(They dance a while until he dips her at the end. All laugh and applaud. He bows to her as she makes a huge fake curtsy. More laughter. Next come sounds of trumpet scales and trills.)

AUDREY: (grabs the cards and starts shuffling). Well, I guess the concert’s over. Let’s play poker. Five cent ante ... 7-card stud ... first and last card in the whole ... 2s and one-eyed jacks are wild.

CY: (whistling a bit of the last song, looks at his cards) Jeez Audrey, you deal like a fish.

AUDREY: First Ace bets, that’s you Elsa.

ELSA: 5 cents.

(all put money in as cards continue to be dealt. Similar bets occur)

LES: Hey, I heard a good one the other day.

ELSA: Wait Les! (looks around) Where's Patsy?

LILLIAN: It's all right, she's in the house practicing. Hear that? Go ahead, Les.

(continued sounds of trumpet scales. Patsy is seen sneaking back onto the porch and gets under the table. We see her smiling broadly at her success.)

LES: Well, this guy walks into a bar with a duck on his head. And the bartender says, "Hey, where'd ya get that? And the..."

AUDREY: ... and the duck says, "I don't know. It started as a wart on my ass!" (all laugh)  
Buddy that one's so old it's got whiskers!

(Patsy reacts, hand over her mouth so as not to give herself away)

LES: (disgruntled a bit that his thunder was stolen) All right Mrs. Weisenheimer, whadda YOU got?

(the poker hand is over and it's ELSA's turn to deal. As she shuffles...)

AUDREY: I heard this one at the factory the other day. But it's a sight joke so I have to stand up and you have to watch me, ok?

LES: Yeah, yeah, go ahead.

AUDREY: Ok, so this takes place on a bus. A woman gets on and signals like this to the driver (wiggles 5 fingers of one hand up to her nose at the driver). Well, then he signals like this to her (does likewise but with both hands). She goes like this to him (one hand on each of her breasts) and he stands up and goes like this to her (covers genitals with both hands). Then she goes like this to him (turns and puts both hands on her bottom) and gets off the bus.

(all are rapt, especially Patsy with her chin in both hands, smiling broadly. General chuckles as they await the explanation).

AUDREY: Well, there happened to be a supervisor from the bus company onboard and he marches up to the driver and says, "Ok, that's it. Turn in your tickets and money, you're fired!" The driver says, "Why, whaddya mean?" The boss says, "I saw all those rude, disgusting hand signals you did to that woman. Shame on you!"

(all still rapt, and looking forward...)

AUDREY: So the driver says, "those weren't disgusting hand signals. That woman was deaf. When she got on she signaled (he repeats all the signals throughout), "Is the fair 5 cents?" (5

fingers to the nose). I said, “No, it’s 10 cents.” (10 fingers). “Do you go past the dairy?” (hands on breasts). “No, I go past the ball park.” (hands covering genitals). And she said (with hands on bottom) “Oh shit, I’m on the wrong bus!”

(all laugh heartily. Patsy is beside herself. Audrey sits back down)

LILLIAN: Oh Audrey, that was a beauty!

LES: I’ll say! You win the night with that one, kiddo!

ELSA: If I can just win all your money tonight, I’LL feel like the winner!

CY: (still chuckling) They tell some great ones down at the factory, don’t they Aud? (all still smiling).

AUDREY: (nodding) Yeah, that’s for sure. Some of ‘em are true though and not all that funny.

ELSA: Like what, Audrey?

AUDREY: Well, ...

CY: ... I think maybe she doesn’t know what she’s talking about (gives her a look).

AUDREY: Hey, it’s just us here, what’s the problem? ... (stage whisper) It’s about Sophie and that colored guy ...

CY: ... Audrey ...

AUDREY: ... the colored guy she claims raped her before Joey was born.

(Patsy perks up. Noticeably VERY aware of everything now)

LILLIAN: Whadda you mean “claims”?.? Some guy DID! When she was walking home after work, late one night. Some guy jumped her. C’mon Audrey, this is old news. It was some stranger and they never caught him.

AUDREY: Yeah, well, there was this colored guy at the factory back then...

CY: Audrey...

AUDREY: ... and he and Sophie were really friendly during breaks and lunch. And sometimes he’d walk her home from work. Cy, c’mon, tell the truth. You know the guy I mean. Well?

(Cy squirms, looking very uncomfortable)

LILLIAN: Cy?

CY: ... The guy... well... Joey is the spittin' image of him. It had to be him. He's gotta be the kid's father.

(stunned silence as this sinks in)

ELSA: Oh my god... so it wasn't ...

(pause)

LES: Holy crap!

(pause)

LILLIAN: Listen, we've got to keep a lid on this. Joey is Patsy's favorite cousin, she adores that little kid. She doesn't know anything about the rape... about any of this, especially that he's part colored.

AUDREY: Oh c'mon Lill, the boy's got blue eyes, yeah, but look at that hair! And his coloring! How could she NOT know?

LILLIAN: I don't know but I'm sure she doesn't. I guess she'll know someday, or figure it out for herself. But not yet... ok? Not yet.

CY: Yeah.

AUDREY: Yeah, sure Lill. Ok.

(a pall has settled over the party. Patsy is stricken.)

LES: Yeah, so, I guess I deal, huh?

(all nod)

LES: (shuffles and starts dealing). Ok, it's Baseball! 9s and 3s in the hole are wild. A 4 up you get an extra card. A 5 up everyone gives you a nickel. A 10 up everyone gives you a dime.

(And just then, we hear the trumpet record skipping. Denise either fell asleep or just went home. Patsy crawls out from under the table, unseen, and goes back inside.)

ELSA: Hey, what's that?

(Patsy stops the record, puts on another, then crawls back out, but lets them see her start to crawl under the table. )

ELSA: Hey, look!

CY: What're you doing, honey?

PATSY: Well, I ... I wanted to hear the jokes you all tell and I ... um ... (crawling under the table, starts to pick up the stray change the players have dropped).

PATSY: (sniffing, just a bit) I wanted to grab some of this change you guys always drop. You know, saving up for a new horn.

LILLIAN: ... a new horn. (catches Patsy's eye)

CURTAIN