

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

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M.B. Goffstein

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To Samantha in Beverly Hills

I heard you on the radio

On page 91 of *Intimate Strangers, The Culture of Celebrity in America*, by Richard Schickel, I read:

It is conventional not to waste too much sympathy on producers, and it is a convention that is always easy to honor, though it ought to be recorded that among these vulgar buccaneers there were men of shrewdness, energy and, in their way, vision.

I felt I could no longer wait for someone to write my father, Jake Hirsh's biography.

I would do it myself.

•

I called the author of *The Lorraines in Hollywood*.

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She had taken in hand the book I wrote about her called *Conversations with an Author*, and re-titled it *Lady Tannenbaum and Myself*.

I wanted to know what she knew about my father that wasn't in those books.

•

“Hi,” I said. “It’s Birdie.”

She was happy to hear from me, listened to my complaint, and put me right by saying that no one can judge the value of an artist before his death.

The personality obscures the work. She had written this about Van Gogh:

but was his misery like dust,
purposely kicked up
to keep all jealous eyes

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

from his brushstrokes of whirling beauty?

And this about Boudin:

But what of the poor color spotted soul,

the painter,

dead one hundred years?

Don't feel sorry for him.

He had all the fun.

“Are you saying Jake is an artist?”

“Of course,” she said. “He starred Jane Lorraine in *Love and Dust*.

He invited Lazlo Molnar to Hollywood.

“Lazlo did nothing for years. Then suddenly he wrote and directed *Jenny*.

“Jake is an artist and people are his medium.

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“His actors, directors, and cinematographer remind me of my book *Artists’ Helpers Enjoy the Evenings*.

“The artists’ helpers are pastel sticks who wear berets. I wrote it for David [her husband].

“Unfortunately, when they eat at Gris’ house, I forgot to give them silverware.

“I can’t remember what the crayons are called. I’m in the attic looking for them . . .

“Oh, here are all these unused sketchbooks for *Artists’ Helpers Visit New York*.

“Wait.” I heard her go back downstairs.

“Maybe it’s on the book flap.

“The first time Brooke Goffstein saw these famous artists crayons neatly packed in small, smooth plastic boxes, they struck her as personalities.’

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

“I didn’t want to ask permission to use the name,” she said. “That’s what it was.

“Your father’s life is the opposite of miserable, but it keeps people away.

“His beautiful suits and shoes make them feel ashamed.”

I wondered if that was how she felt about me, as I am rich and have a title.

My clothes don’t look beautiful. My married name says it all, regarding my figure.

•

I went in to London thinking I would have a look in some of the galleries.

As I walked along the street I saw a man leave a shop carrying a table lamp.

He was walking very fast and looking straight ahead.

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“Stop him!” I shouted. Two young men tackled him, breaking the lamp.

The shop owner came outside.

“We shall need your name,” a bobby told me.

“I am Lady Tannenbaum.”

“Tom Selby.” The victim introduced himself.

“Come for dinner,” I cried.

He dusted himself off and we got in my car and started driving to Coverly.

•

“One would have thought the shop owner would have stood in the doorway,” I said as my cell phone rang.

I pulled off the road. My family and Brooke were the only ones who had the number.

It was my mother. “Darling, would you come home? Miss List is asking for you.”

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

“I’ve got a dinner guest,” I told Carole, “the interior designer Tom Selby.”

“Bring him along.”

“Thank you.”

“Speaking of interior design, would you bring me those two little gilt chairs?”

In my first book, I said my husband got his baronetcy from the Queen.

Coverly is not open to the public nor do we have a gift shop.

But my grandmother, Lady Alice, grew up there, so my mother sees it differently.

We have had great fun exploring over a hundred and seventy rooms.

To make some of them habitable, I removed tons of things, designating more rooms for storage.

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As I said in my first book, we buy new furniture from Design Within Reach.

We have it sent to one of Morrie's offices in the States, and someone flies it here.

•

Getting back to Tom Selby in my passenger seat, I told him my father's head secretary was asking for me.

"Miss List is beset by physical ailments," I said, "and she is like family."

Tom had his passport and he wanted to attend an auction of Art Deco in Los Angeles.

He seemed rather young to have become a well known interior designer, but I put it down to his being homosexual and having lots of beauty tips.

•

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

He seemed quite shy when, just before I turned on to the drive, the house came into view.

In the drawing room he was confronted with five centuries of furnishings.

I left him to look around.

I found a first edition of *The Winning of Barbara Worth*, one of the first M-G-M talkies, starring Ronald Coleman, Vilma Banky, and Gary Cooper.

I had read it in paperback. A company called Pelican keeps Harold Bell Wright's books in print.

I confess I have not yet read *That Printer of Udell's*, *The Shepherd of the Hills*, or *The Calling of Dan Matthews*.

•

I knew my husband, Morrie, would say I was trying to get Brooke's attention.

My cell phone rang.

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“Did your cousin Penny bring back the black cat figurine?” Brooke asked.

I said I didn’t know.

I had sort of hovered in her doorway but not seen anything.

•

“Penny,” I said at tea, “tell us about your trip home from China through Afghanistan.”

I thought Tom would be interested, as the Afghanis made beautiful rugs.

“As you know, I went down Hua mountain to get cigarettes and couldn’t find my way back.

“Huashan? I asked the farmers.

“They kept pointing west.

“After I had walked a very long time, the people started to look different.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

“A tribal leader showed me a picture of Abraham Lincoln, and I tapped my chest.

“They thought I meant I was related to him, and they treated me with great kindness.

“I gave them a little keepsake from home, and they escorted me to Kabul.

“It was filled with English and American soldiers.

They wanted me out of there, and I didn’t have to use my Barclay’s card.”

“She was gone for forty years,” I told Tom.

“I was lucky to have a shawl I wore over my head because it was so damn cold,” Penny said.

•

“Aren’t those Grinling Gibbons?” Tom asked about the chairs.

By then he must have seen his chipped front tooth which gave him a rakish air.

M.B. Goffstein

While looking for a gift for Miss List, I had wondered if I should give him something.

But I needed to talk to Morrie, who was in Spain, and I couldn't reach him.

•

The pilot called to say our plane was ready.

I said goodbye to Penny and my dear little mother-in-law, and we left.

•

We had great fun talking about *Sister*, the Life of Legendary American Interior Decorator Mrs. Henry Parish II, by Apple Parish Bartlett and Susan Bartlett Crater.

A client wouldn't allow Mrs. Parish to bring along her dog, a Pekinese named Ricky.

Every time the client's phone rang, Mrs. Parish said, "It's Ricky."

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

She wore earrings by Kenneth Jay Lane, which had lost several stones.

He had new ones made for her, but “the practically bald originals appeared again and again.”

Another thing I loved was a sofa in one of the photos, “one of those huge Aitken sofas,” her daughter said.

•

The next day was the auction. Miss List couldn't see me until later, so I decided to go.

I bid on Lot 24, Hagenauer sculptures, three black cats.

A man was bidding against me, so I got them for four times the estimate.

He gave me his card in case I wanted to sell them. He was Marcus Billings, from Montana.

He said I reminded him of someone who turned out to be Cousin Penny.

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She had been his seatmate on a flight to Hawaii, and had taken a black cat by Hagenauer out of her bag.

A friend of hers asked her to sit with him, and she got up and changed seats.

He had tried to speak to her in the airport, but her friend wouldn't let him near her, so he went to his hotel, hoping she would be staying there.

I said, "She gave it to a tribal leader in Afghanistan."

"What tribe?" he asked, taking out a pen and opening his auction catalog.

I was sure Penny didn't know, as they had communicated in sign language.

"Very attractive woman," he said.

How lovely, I thought, if I were to take home a husband for her.

•

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

I had been reading the Design Within Reach Christmas gift catalog last November.

“Morrie,” I had said, “I’m going to collect these Bosse brass figures, circa 1950.”

“Sounds good,” he murmured.

“I shall start with the rabbit.”

“Excellent.”

“I shall put it on the mantel.”

•

When we got back from the auction, my father was talking on three phones as Miss List took notes.

The first edition of *The Winning of Barbara Worth* lay open on a coffee table.

Jake wanted to produce a sequel starring his favorite actor, Jane Lorraine.

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In front of the large window looking out on the ocean, Mummy was moving the two gilt chairs around.

“I’ll have the seats recovered in white-and-blue striped silk, darling. What do you think?”

“Sounds good,” I said.

The little plastic bag containing the three cats was in my handbag as we went out to the pool where a table was set for lunch under an umbrella.

In the middle of lunch my father got up and said he would take Tom shopping.

•

Penny’s father, Lord Airdale, had remarried after her mother was killed in the Blitz. He was an MP and soon had a new young family at Blenders.

When Penny turned eighteen, she went to live on her own at Coverly.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

She was en route to China when she stopped in L.A. and gave Coverly to my grandmother.

•

My father and Tom returned, Tom looking smashing in his new clothes.

Jake had killed time by buying diamond brooches for Carole and me.

I told Mummy my plans for Marcus Billings. I had Googled him; he owned Montana.

“I should think Penny would have had enough of mountains,” Carole said.

“Remember Heidi? She was miserable in town. She longed for the mountains!

“What is it with Miss List? I thought she was supposed to be at death’s door.”

M.B. Goffstein

I expected she wanted to tell me important things about my father for the biography I was no longer interested in writing, before she passed on.

•

I did not have to entice Marcus Billings to England. He went the next day.

He had learned Penny's name from the passenger manifest and been searching for her.

He recently gave up and fired his private detectives.

None had kept up with the case and learned that Penny returned to Coverly.

•

Jake was back on the phones, manhandling the first edition of *The Winning of Barbara Worth*.

He repeatedly cracked the spine and bent down the corners of pages.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

I said, “The so-called reclamation started in 1901. Barbara would have been Jane’s age in the seventies.”

(I was wrong; she would have been in her eighties.)

“She would wonder why she had been so eager to ruin her beloved desert.”

Jake wrote this down, using the book as a notebook.

Oh well, I told myself. My father is more important than a first edition.

“She would be filled with regret.”

I hadn’t seen *The Winning of Barbara Worth*, but the book was wonderful:

When they arrived at Barbara’s home, they found the Seer himself. The fifteen years had made no perceptible change in the general appearance of the engineer. His form was still strongly erect and vigorous, but his hair was a little

M.B. Goffstein

gray, and to a close observer, his face in repose revealed a touch of sadness—that indescribable look of one who is beginning to feel less sure of himself, or rather who, from many disappointments, is beginning to question whether he will live to see his most cherished plans carried to completion—not because he has less faith in his visions, but because he has less hope that he will be able to make them clear to others.

Also,

The young man did not think it necessary to add that the death of his father had left him penniless and that his father's friend, who had never married, had reared and educated the child of his old classmate as his own son. Neither did he explain that his rapid advancement in his

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

profession was due largely to the powerful influence of the capitalist and those associated with him, together with the strength of the proud social position to which he was born, rather than to hard work and experience. Probably Willard Holmes himself did not realize how much these things had added to his own native ability and technical training. He had never known anything else but these things and he accepted them as unconsciously as his voice was colored with the accent of the cultured East.

•

Penny, Marcus, and Morrie's mother arrived in Los Angeles.

There is something splendid about being married for the first time at seventy.

You miss the entire stage of accusing each other and getting divorced.

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Carole gave a reception for them in a beautiful white tent on the lawn.

I had heard Tom Selby giving her terrible advice in his light tenor voice.

It made me wonder what the homes he designed actually looked like.

Carole told him she had to use her own decorator, so there was no problem.

•

I have to admit I don't know the new stars and can't tell one from another.

I saw why Brooke compared them to artists' materials.

Some were pretty, as colors are pretty when you open a new box of paints.

Despite their having power as well as money and celebrity, some were smushed and dirty.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

A sort of hush fell on the party.

To my surprise, I was excited to see Jane Lorraine and Cesar Lorraine.

We stood back in awe and respect.

At last Cesar and my grandmother would meet, I thought.

But she was chatting with her sister, Pepita, who had been killed in the Blitz.

Jane had been a guest at Coverly, but that didn't mean she would know me.

Her brother, Faidoh, and his wife, Margie, were visiting Frieda in Israel.

For a moment I felt sad thinking of Frieda, lost to me now because she is orthodox.

•

Jane had met Penny at Coverly. She seemed delighted to see her again.

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“Penny, this is my father, Cesar Lorraine. Dad, this is Lady Penelope Airdale.”

“Pleased to meet you,” said Penny.

“Penny lived in a cave on a mountain in China and likes books about Lincoln.

“Dad played Abraham Lincoln in the movie *The Journey to Washington.*”

“How do you do,” Cesar said, in his uninflected slightly southern voice.

I wished Penny hadn't married Marcus. She and Cesar had more in common.

•

Jake raised his flute to toast the couple, but Carole put her hand on his arm.

I heard her say they hadn't been married at a registry office as we all thought.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

Penny had agreed to come and see Marcus' ranch and get to know him.

•

The next time I saw Cesar, he was talking to my dear little mother-in-law.

Perhaps he missed the bayou or his mountain hut as she missed Berlin.

He was reciting a poem by Po Chü-i in a translation by Arthur Waley:

DREAMING THAT I WENT WITH LU AND YU TO VISIT YÜAN
CHÊN.

[Written in Exile]

At night I dreamt I was back in Ch'ang-an;

I saw again the faces of old friends.

And in my dreams, under an April sky,

M.B. Goffstein

They led me by the hand to wander in the spring winds.

Together we came to the village of Peace and Quiet;

Yüan Chên was sitting all alone;

When he saw me coming, a smile came to his face.

He pointed back at the flowers in the western court;

Then opened wine in the northern summer-house.

He seemed to be saying that neither of us had changed;

He seemed to be regretting that joy will not stay;

That our souls had met only for a little while,

To part again with hardly time for greeting.

I woke up and thought him still at my side;

I put out my hand; there was nothing there at all.

When we went back to the house with Marcus and Penny, the little
gilt chairs were gone.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

The diamond brooches Jake had given me and Carole were gone as well.

We hadn't had time to put them in the bank, and we never wear them.

•

I put in a call to Tom Selby's studio.

"Good afternoon, Lady Tannenbaum," he said in a deep baritone, as I gazed at the moon reflected in the swimming pool, "How can I help you?"

"You aren't around five foot eight, with brown hair, brown eyes, and a chipped front tooth, are you?"

"No, that's my assistant, Tom Snelling."

•

"Jane and I had such fun as young models," Carole said.

"She liked to act out the character of the dress, as if she weren't wearing it.

M.B. Goffstein

“That was what Jake saw when he decided to star her in *Love and Dust*.

“I wish you and Frieda had a third friend. I’m so lucky I have Margie.”

•

I unwrapped the black cats on our flight back to England, and my mother-in-law’s eyes lit up.

“Choose one,” I said.

“You go first.”

I wanted the one with one blue eye that was stamped *Rena, Made in Austria*.

She chose the one standing up singing.

I stood mine on the table and moved it toward her. “What are you singing?”

She put hers down and it told mine, “I am singing ‘Unter den Linden.’”

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

“Isn’t that rock ’n roll?”

“Why not?”

Mine said, “I’m too shy to sing.”

“Er.”

“Yes?” I asked the steward.

“Dinner will be served shortly.”

“Thank you.”

“The young man who came out with you didn’t look kosher. We had him followed.”

•

My mother-in-law was wearing one of her diamond brooches, so when the steward returned mine, I pinned it to my shirt and felt very happy.

Her cat was stamped *WHW* inside a circle, as well as *Hagen, Made in Austria*.

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The third black cat, stamped *WHW, Made in Austria*, was the least stylized of the three.

When we finished eating, I had it prowl around the table, looking for scraps.

•

As soon as we landed, Brooke phoned and said, “I got a Space Ranger pin!

“It’s big enough to be a brooch!”

Carole called and said, “Jake loved your treatment for *Barbara Worth*.

“He wants you to write the script!”

•

Barbara Worth enters a boutique on Rodeo Drive. She is shocked by the clothes and the young men and women wearing them.

They look dreadful.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

She leaves, but can't remember where her horse is tethered or if she came by buckboard.

The long bright colored cars on the street seem surreal.

Her chauffeur appears at her side and escorts her to her limousine.

Riding on the freeway makes her think they are being chased by bandits.

When she gets home, her husband, Willard Holmes, has a surprise for her.

It is her old friend Abe Lee.

Tears fill her eyes. She wonders if Abe is as upset as she is.

I turned to a new page on my pad and began writing the dialog.

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BARBARA: Abe! I'm so glad to see you! What have we done!" she whispered.

Her husband, narrowly watching, thinks she wishes she had married Abe.

For years, Holmes has kept Abe out of town, surveying.

Holmes wants to kill Abe, and Abe wants to save Holmes.

Barbara is revered by young engineers who would risk their careers to flood the valley for her.

She says, "We made it possible for too many people to live here. They're degenerate!"

"One thing I learned in my travels," Abe says, "is that life is change. Do you remember the colors of the desert when night was falling?"

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

This further upsets Barbara, for in the great work of bringing water to the desert, they wrecked it.

•

I enjoyed copying the scenes from the book I wanted to flash back to:

“How interesting!” gasped a tailor-made woman tourist to her escort. “Look, George, she is wearing a divided skirt and riding a man’s saddle! And look! quick! where’s your camera? She has a revolver!”

But the tailored woman tourist did not need to urge George to look. There was something about the girl on the quick-stepping, spirited horse that challenged attention.

At the Pioneer Bank the girl checked her horse and, swinging lightly to the ground, threw the reins over the animal’s head, thus tying him in western fashion.

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I wanted Jane to be in the flashbacks. A filter would make her look young.

As long as they were doing that, I wanted Mummy in the scene with Jane.

“Oh, Barbara, how could you—how *could* you miss last Thursday afternoon at Miss Colson’s?

This type of filter would make the scenes look as young as the characters.

All along the arcade people were smiling in greeting, the men lifting their hats. Two cowboys in high-heeled boots and “chaps” paused in passing. “That new hawss of yours is

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

sure some hawss, Miss Barbara,” one said admiringly,
sombbrero in hand.

I wanted Faidoh Lorraine to play Abe Lee.

I had heard he had a halo, but digital technology would take care of
that.

I wanted Cesar Lorraine to play Barbara’s father, the banker
Jefferson Worth.

•

I was sitting at the breakfast table surrounded by yellow pads when
Morrie came home.

I ran to hug him, saying, “I’m writing a script for my father, and it’s
made me homesick!”

“Do you want to move to L.A.?”

His company had offices there, and the climate was good for his
mother.

M.B. Goffstein

“Mummy will find us a house,” I cried. “We won’t care what it looks like.”

“I’m sure it will be very nice,” Morrie said.

But I didn’t want Carole to find us a house, because my heart was set on the kind of small bungalow Brooke describes in *The Lorraines in Hollywood*.

When I was a child, my best friend, Frieda, and her family lived in one of them.

Her grandfather, Cesar Lorraine, and our aunt Jane lived in another next door.

Everyone except Frieda was still there.

•

“Carole,” I asked, “could you give me the name of an estate agent?”

“Of course, darling.”

I contacted the woman directly, and she sent me emails of three bungalows.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

I loved them all, but one had been modernized and it looked like a good job.

•

“Morrie, look at this little house. What would you think of our living there?”

“I think it would be great,” he said. “Let’s buy it.”

“I shall cancel our guests for the next six months and reschedule them.

“We can’t take the dogs, but I shall take my cats and give one to Carole.”

•

Scene opens in a fashionable California living room of the seventies. The large window looks out on the ocean. The furnishings are white with touches of blue.

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WILLARD HOLMES: Why don't you go out and get a new gown for tonight?

BARBARA: All right, darling.

Scene is a trendy seventies boutique.

SALESGIRL: Can I help you?

BARBARA: No, thank you.

She is shocked by the clothes and the people. She gets confused, thinking her horse is tethered outside.

Scene is the same street fifty years earlier.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

CAROLE: Oh, Barbara, how could you—how *could* you miss last Thursday afternoon at Miss Colson's? We had a perfectly lovely time!

MARGIE: Yes indeed, young lady; explanations are in order. Miss Colson didn't like it a bit. She had an exquisite luncheon, and you know how people depend upon your appreciation of good things to eat!

BARBARA: Well, you see, (turning to pat her horse's neck) Pilot and I were out on the Mesa and he said he didn't want to come back. Pilot doesn't care at all for afternoon parties, so what could I do? I didn't like to hurt Miss Colson's feelings, of course, but I didn't like to hurt Pilot's feelings either; and the day was so perfect and Pilot was feeling so good and we were having such fun together!

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CAROLE: could anything on earth induce you to give up your horse and your desert, Barbara?

Barbara's chauffeur sees her standing on the street and escorts her to her limousine.

Scene: the HOLMSES' living room.

HOLMES: I have a surprise for you.

BARBARA: Abe! She grasps his hand. "Oh, Abe, what have we done!"

HOLMES, narrowly watching, thinks she wishes she had married Abe.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

BARBARA: “We made it possible for too many people to live here. They’re degenerate!”

She gestures, taking in the beautiful seventies room

ABE: One thing I learned in my travels is life is change. Do you remember the colors of the desert when night was falling?

Holmes is dying. He wants Abe there to take care of Barbara.

This meant Faidoh couldn’t play Abe, because he was Jane’s brother.

M.B. Goffstein

But I still wanted Cesar to play Barbara's banker father, Jefferson Worth.

•

Jake was directing. He would shoot the Colorado scenes at Marcus Billings' ranch in Montana.

We went to look at it, and it was great fun to see Penny in that environment.

The drawing room was long and roughewn, furnished with large chairs and sofas.

Antlers hung on the walls and Navaho rugs lay on the floor.

No one announced me. I found Penny wearing a tweed suit and walking shoes, sitting on a sofa, reading.

The "help" loved having her at the ranch house and hoped she would stay.

"It's like being in a book," one of them said as she brought in a tea tray.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

“The cakes are very good, aren’t they?” Penny said, watching me eat them.

Jake went with some ranch hands to find the canyon where Abe and Willard are ambushed.

I saw a large display case of Hagenauer metal figures Marcus had collected.

•

Abe’s voice was hard. “I’m not going to take any fool chances. This may be a plain ordinary case of hold-up or it may be a job framed up by the Company simply to delay me. It’s all the same to me, but this money goes to Republic tonight. Sabe that?”

The other would have spoken but Abe interrupted.

“We’ve palavered long enough, Mr. Holmes. The horses have finished their feed and it’s time to start.”

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When they were mounted the surveyor said shortly:
“Now, sir, you just ride ahead and you ride slow until I give the word—then you go like hell. If you lift a hand to signal or make any mistakes like stopping to fix your saddle girth or checking up to speak to that bunch or turning ‘round, I get you first and you can’t afford to have any hazy notions about my not wanting to kill you because you’re from New York.

•

“You don’t need my help,” Brooke said. “I’m thrilled she’s going to be with Abe.

“Why did she marry Holmes? It was Isabel Archer and Gilbert Osmond all over again. The other flaw is Jefferson Worth’s personality. Can you fix that?”

•

I reread parts of the book and found I could exclude Barbara’s father.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

I would have Cesar play the seer in the flashbacks, and Faidoh would play Tex.

TEX: This here cayuse must have been tied somewheres 'cause the reins are busted. The canteen is gone. Jefferson Worth is too old a hand on the desert to leave it on the horse. He likely tied the pony to a bush and went to climb a hill or something. Mr. Hawss breaks loose and pulls for home. It happened a good way out, 'cause the pony's pretty well tired, which he wouldn't a-been, travelin' light, if Mr. Worth hadn't ridden some distance before it happened. An' if he was nearer the pony would have been in earlier. He'll likely show us a smoke in the morning and even if he don't it'll be easy to trail him, 'cause there ain't no wind.

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HOLMES: Do I understand, sir, that you propose to do nothing until morning?

SEER: There is nothing to do, Mr. Holmes.

HOLMES: Nothing to do? Why don't you arouse the men and send them in every direction to search? Why man, don't you realize the situation? Mr. Worth may be hurt. He may even be dying alone out there! I protest! It's monstrous! It's cowardly, inhuman to do nothing!

ABE LEE rolls another cigarette.

SEER: But Mr. Holmes, we could accomplish nothing by such a search as you suggest. The territory is too large to cover with a hundred times the number of men we have in camp.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

At daylight, when they can follow his trail, Abe and Tex will ride to him as fast as their horses can go.

HOLMES: But I protest, sir. You should make the attempt. I will not submit to idly doing nothing while a life is in danger—particularly that of a man like Mr. Worth. I shall go alone if no one will help me, and I shall report this to Mr. Greenfield and the men interested with him in this work.”

SEER: Report me? You! Report and be damned, sir. I was old at this work when you were a sucking babe. These men were learning the desert when you were attending a fashionable dancing school. Why you damned lily fingered tenderfoot, you couldn't find your way five hundred yards in this country without a guide or a compass. Now, sir, I'm running this outfit and if you have any protests against my

M.B. Goffstein

cowardly inhumanity I advise you to smother them in your manly breast, or by hell! I'll ship you out on the first wagon tomorrow morning.

Two hours later:

TEX wakes ABE: There's a light bobbin' off into nowhere and the lad's blankets are empty.

Fifteen minutes later:

ABE, three feet from HOLMES: Shall I go with you, sir?

HOLMES jumps like a nervous woman.

HOLMES: I couldn't sleep. I thought I would follow the tracks a little way out at least. He may not be so far away as you think.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

ABE rolls a cigarette.

ABE: Mr. Worth rode a horse.

HOLMES: I understand that. I saw him go this morning and I saw the horse tonight. This is the track.

ABE: This is a mule's track, Mr. Holmes.

•

I knew I had to show Holmes saving the water system and winning Barbara Worth, but those flashbacks were such fun.

•

BARBARA: But Willard, you can't give me to Abe, as if I were a—vase!

M.B. Goffstein

HOLMES: I won you unfairly. You felt sorry for me because I am not a man like Abe.

BARBARA: Abe is my brother.

HOLMES: That's not how Abe feels, is it, Abe?

ABE no longer smokes, and can't roll a cigarette.

BARBARA: Willard, please! You say you are dying! I didn't love you for your judgment, which is worse than ever. I'll say this in front of Abe because you give me no choice. I loved you from the moment I saw you at the hotel in Rubio City. As you know, Jefferson Worth found me in the desert when

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

I was four years old. I didn't know my family came from the East. I saw something in you, heard something in your voice that reminded me of my own people.

•

“Bravo!” cried Brooke. “You're a real writer! Now I see why she married Holmes!”

•

I never had any ambition, and now I am a member of the Screenwriters Guild.

My next script will be *Sister*.

Her family may not permit it. The book didn't come out in paperback.

They probably don't like movies.

I could see a Broadway musical with songs about painting the floor of the farmhouse and using mattress ticking for curtains!

M.B. Goffstein

In Act Two, she decorates the family rooms at the White House, possibly kicks Caroline Kennedy, and becomes partners with Albert Hadley.

I realized Tom Selby's assistant hadn't read the book. I had done all the talking.

•

From the internet I learned that Rena Rosenfeld had a shop at 485 Madison Avenue at 52nd Street.

Her shop was in the Waldorf in the forties and fifties.

She sold sculptures by Hagenauer, Baller and Bosse, some of which she might have designed.

RENA is in her shop opening an order, even though she has customers.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

MRS. PRESTON lives at the Waldorf. She buys herself things from Rena and has them wrapped and sent to her room.

She has her hair done in the hotel, buys her clothes there, orders dinner in her suite, and opens her purchases, imitating Rena.

She rips off the paper and admires what she has bought, but she can't sleep.

Putting her mink on over her nightgown, she goes down to the lobby.

Standing in front of Rena's shuttered shop, she sings:

Where does Rena go at night

To a box in the Bronx with a sick aunt

Or a lovely apartment on Park Avenue

With nicer things than she shows me and you

M.B. Goffstein

THE SUAREZES come in the Lexington Avenue entrance, wearing evening clothes.

They are sympathetic and good-naturedly try their English:

What does Rena do at night

Her shop is empty

The little objects are undisciplined

They do things they shouldn't

A MAN enters from Lexington, walking a DACHSHUND.

It is unclear if he and his dog live at the Waldorf or if they buy the evening paper there as part of their evening walk.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

The MAN learns the song from MRS. PRESTON and MR. AND MRS. SUAREZ and dances with them, holding his little DOG.

He sings:

What does Rena do at night
In her apartment on Lex
She gives dinners for friends
Who bring her flowers

A bell boy sings:

I think Rena is kept by a man
He wants her to keep busy

M.B. Goffstein

While he is with his family

So he financed the shop

The five new friends say goodnight.

MRS. PRESTON, looking happy, takes the elevator to her suite.

The SUAREZES go to the bar for a nightcap, and the MAN AND DACHSHUND go to the newsstand.

•

As MAIDS and BELL BOYS clean the lobby, emptying ashtrays and stamping designs in the white sand, RENA opens her shop.

The bookshop, the beauty shop, the jewelry shop, and the clothes shop on the Lexington Avenue side come to life as RENA sings:

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

There is always something going on

In my shop

Look at these rhinoceroses

carved from Mushakashula wood.

A person who looks rich

May spend a dollar

Someone who looks poor

May spend hundreds

MRS. PRESTON steps off the elevator and sees the SUAREZES, who ask how she slept.

MRS. PRESTON: I had a wonderful dream. I dreamed I had a shop called Just a Few Little Things.

•

M.B. Goffstein

I was so excited, I called Brooke. “They just appeared!” I said.

“That’s wonderful!”

“I even know what they look like!”

“Take it easy,” she cautioned. “Don’t write a lot of junk you’ll have to take out.”

She quoted from her book, *A Writer*,

. . . a writer always studies, looks, and listens.

Thoughts that grow strongly

in her heart

and weather every mood and change of mind

she will care for.

She had taught writing and illustrating at Parsons School of Design for eleven years.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

She loved it. She saw her students as works of art and cared if they were authentic.

She could tell when their work was made up and helped them find their real work.

“Isn’t writing wonderful?” she cried. “You solve all kinds of mysteries.

“I can’t explain it—not that anyone cares. I have to go,” she said, imitating her friends on the phone.

She would be sixty-seven the next day. “This is the best present I could have,” she said.

I thought she was a little over the top.

“No,” she said. “Mrs. Preston was floating in space and you found her!

“Now you are telling her story, repairing the world, making things right.”

•

M.B. Goffstein

“Hi,” I said. “Happy Birthday. Are you having a nice birthday?”

“It’s all right. I bought a lead policeman from the thirties.”

•

“Hello, darling. Have you heard from Penny? I was quite helpful to her at the ranch.

“I said, for heaven’s sake, let’s go out and get you some proper clothes.

“We went to an outlet and got her jeans, flannel shirts, a parka, and boots.

“She said she wished she had had them in China.

“Jane had a riding lesson.

“I told Penny she must start riding again, so we drove to the corral and got two horses.

“I hadn’t ridden since I was six. Neither of us could sit a trot, so we posted.”

“How did Jane’s lesson go?” I asked.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

“She does everything well.”

“Can she dismount lightly and throw the reins over the horse’s head?”

“I told you how she modeled clothes. She’s the same with the horse.”

“Mummy, writing is a marvelous experience. It’s like being out in space!

“You have these insights—”

“Talk to you later, darling.”

•

I told Jake about *Rena’s Shop at the Waldorf* and showed him what I had written.

He said it needed more dancers, so I added a policeman who comes inside to get warm.

Then I added a bank robber who comes through carrying a sack of money.

M.B. Goffstein

He sees the policeman and joins in.

At the end of the dance the policeman arrests him. I suppose I will have to get rid of them, as Brooke warned.

•

Jake has been thinking about *Rena*. He wants to know, where's the love interest?

I think it's in owning a shop.

Rena is an artist, instinctively choosing her wares and putting them on display.

She makes things right by giving people the chance to buy things they love.

If not for her, some of these people would be going around in disrepair.

She is decisive.

•

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

“I don’t have a plot,” I told Brooke. “So far, it’s only a series of sketches.”

“You have to work,” she said.

It was then I most missed our dogs. I couldn’t take a walk without them.

But I couldn’t bear the thought of them being quarantined when we returned to England.

“I wish we could stay here forever,” I said. “The food is so good and the weather’s so fine.

“And,” I continued, “there are so many houses, and they’re all so interesting.”

“Shall we give Coverly to the National Trust and stay here?” Morrie asked.

“I’d love to!”

“We can get an apartment in London.”

M.B. Goffstein

I threw my arms around him and he staggered as if a Christmas tree had fallen on him.

His mother, who had been my grandmother, Birdie's, best friend, loved L.A.

She sent Morrie to England with Jake when there was still time to get out of Berlin.

Jake worked at a movie studio on the outskirts of London, whose name I can't recall though I see it in books, and Morrie, who was much younger, went to school.

•

Jake got some of Marcus' hired hands to play Tex, Abe, and the Seer.

He asked them to read the lines and say them in their own words while the cameramen set up.

"Ignore the so-called Western dialect," he said before they started filming.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

“That crap was written in 1911.”

•

The man who played Abe came to Hollywood to do the modern scenes with Paul Newman and Jane.

He was completely out of his element, which was fine because Abe was supposed to be uncomfortable.

The girls in the flashbacks with Jane were played by Marcus' cook and a ranch hand's mother.

I told Jake I wanted to use Carole and Margie, and he yelled that I was crazy.

•

The shooting went well until the final scene. Willard said he wasn't really dying!

“After all these years, I wanted to see if you really loved me,” he confessed.

He clutched at his heart.

M.B. Goffstein

I sprang to my feet, knocking my chair over.

“Cut,” Jake yelled. “Thanks for ruining the shot, Birdie. I’ll bar you from the set.”

“He’s having a heart attack!”

“That’s right,” he agreed as Paul Newman began to prepare for Take Two.

“That’s not in the script!”

“Oh, yeah?”

He shoved it in my face.

I hadn’t been up at the crack of dawn when Miss List handed out new sides.

“What kind of nut would enjoy the cockamamie scene you wrote?” he yelled.

“You could have discussed it with me,” I said, shocked by this side of his character.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

“Why?” he shouted. “You don’t know the first thing about scriptwriting!”

•

“Don’t feel bad,” Jane said going to her dressing room. “He just likes to yell.

“I can’t bring my dog to the set because she doesn’t understand him.”

Paul Newman was also very kind, giving me a package of Fig Newmans.

Later he sent us a bag of dog food.

Brooke said her father was like Jake.

•

Jake gave me an enormous brooch that said BARBARA WORTH in diamonds and emeralds.

M.B. Goffstein

I had spent twenty dollars on a charm for Jane that had a cowgirl riding a pinto pony on one side, and a cowgirl riding a black horse on the other.

On the pinto pony side it said “Ya Hoo,” and on the other side it said “Giddy Up.”

•

We started shooting the last scene.

HOLMES: You don't regret bringing water to the desert, do you darling?

BARBARA: Of course not. People are far more important. They must have places to live, and a great many jobs were created.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

I was going to tell Jake to take my name off the credits, when Jane spoke up.

“I won’t say this.”

“What’s wrong with it?”

“Everything.”

“Try it,” he coaxed.

“No.”

He immediately backed down. “You’re right. And when you’re right, you’re right!”

“Will you forgive me, Janie? Everyone, please go back to the white sides.”

•

“Darling,” Carole said, “your bungalow is adorable, but you need more rooms and you must have a cook.”

•

M.B. Goffstein

“The façade needs work,” the house agent said, which was an understatement.

The inside also needed work, but it was like a beautiful seashell that had been banged around in the ocean.

•

“We bought an Art Moderne,” I told Brooke. “I hope you aren’t disappointed.”

“Why?”

“You’re a proponent of small homes.”

“I also care about preserving beautiful old architecture,” Brooke said.

“This house was designed by Cedric Gibbons, the head designer at M-G-M. He married Delores Del Rio. He won twelve Oscars and designed the statuette.”

She said, “I think I have a picture of it!”

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

It isn't the one in *The Dream Come True*, Great Houses of Los Angeles, by Brendan Gill and Derry Moore.

•

On the night of the awards I wore a black coat dress and the outrageous brooch Jake had given me.

My mother-in-law, wearing a gray silk gown and pearls, waited in a thirties lounge chair I had bought.

She left with the Lorraines.

Then our car came and Morrie and I left.

•

Mummy looked beautiful in a navy blue gown and sapphire and diamond necklace.

In the seats next to her and Jake were Marcus Billings and Cousin Penny.

Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward were on the aisle a few rows down.

M.B. Goffstein

The speeches were over and I turned to the stage, but someone was singing.

Finally the first presenters came on and the program moved more quickly.

Our cameraman, Martin Killman, won for Best Cinematography.

Jane, looking stunning in a vintage gown, escorted her old friend to the stage.

She wore a spectacular diamond and ruby horseshoe that said
BREAK A LEG.

Hollywood is so quixotic. I heard my name and felt like a fool lumbering up there.

•

When Jane was called, she got up without a fuss and went to the stage.

Maybe *she* should marry Marcus Billings and live on his ranch, I thought.

Lady Tannenbaum Takes Off

She was a beautiful rider.

If Cesar Lorraine married Morrie's mother, who would Penny marry?

As we rose clapping for Jane as we had for Paul Newman, I looked around.

"Dr. Killman was an eye-surgeon in Germany. He taught me how to act," Jane began.

•

"Where's the musical you were writing?" Jake asked, hitting me with his Oscar.

When we got to the party, I looked for Penny so I could see her brooch.

In giving Coverly to the National Trust, Morrie and I did not make her homeless.

She is rich.

M.B. Goffstein

What crazy brooch would Jake think up next? The numbers tattooed on my mother-in-law's arm?

It was his way of showing love because he was shy.

Penny's was pinned to a ball gown that had been worn by her mother, Pepita.

It said WELCOME HOME.