

Douglas Foresta
from *Tall Tales*

(Rock music. Strobe lights. Vanessa, 13, enters, faces the audience. She swaggers on stage with all of the confidence of a rock star. She has sunglasses on. She takes them off, begins to address the audience. The music stops.)

VANESSA

Once upon a time, there was a girl.

(beat)

That's not right.

(beat)

Once upon a time, there were two girls, and they got lost in the forest. And they met a witch. And it was cold and the witch said "come live in my house." The girls went in, and the witch locked the door. And they were locked in the house forever. The end.

(beat)

My lawyer says I'm lying, but I'm not lying. I'm supposed to tell *my* story. I'm supposed to tell the truth, truth, nothing but the truth. But I am telling the truth. My sister says I'm supposed to tell what happened. Fine. I'll tell you. But it's my story. I'm gonna tell it my way.

(beat)

Once upon a time there were two girls.

(Surreal lighting. "Sesame Street" type music. Vanessa and Isla's apartment. Isla comes in, dancing happily and carefree. Two CAST MEMBERS join onstage, holding PUPPETS. Isla dances along with the puppets. Vanessa motions for them to stop. Everyone freezes.)

VANESSA

Stop, stop, that's not gonna work.

(beat, to audience)

It's not that kind of story.

(Lighting returns to "normal." Cast members exit. Isla sits down, reads a book. Vanessa "enters" the scene, lays down on the floor. Background sounds of dangerous urban neighborhood- sirens, cars. Also sounds of loud arguing. The girls are in the living room of their mother's apartment building.)

ISLA
(to Vanessa)
You see anything?

VANESSA
My stomach hurts.

ISLA
That's your own fault. Do you see anything?

VANESSA
How's it my fault?

ISLA
You ate a whole box of Fruit Loops.

VANESSA
So? It's not my fault I like Fruit Loops.
(beat)
I can't see anything.

ISLA
I know he's out there.

VANESSA
Nobody's out there.
(More sounds of loud voices, arguing.)

ISLA
I know it's him. It sounds like him.

VANESSA
Will you shut up? Why you don't read your book?

ISLA
I already read it like three times! I can't find my
Narnia book!

VANESSA
Not so loud.

ISLA
Oh, yeah. Sorry.
(beat)
She's not coming back.

VANESSA

Of course she's coming back. Stop saying that.

ISLA

Do you know how long it takes to go to the store? Like twelve minutes?

VANESSA

She got other things to do.
(Isla holds her book, starts rocking.)

ISLA

Is the door locked?

VANESSA

Yeah, it's locked.

ISLA

You checked?

VANESSA

You saw me check. I checked like four times.
(beat)
My stomach really hurts. I think I could have a thing.

ISLA

What thing?

VANESSA

Like a bleeding thing. In my stomach.

ISLA

You mean an ulcer?

(beat. Vanessa moves a little forward, peering under a door which we do not see)

VANESSA

(not responding to Isla)
I see feet.

(Isla moves into the corner, balls up.)

ISLA

Whose?

VANESSA

I don't know. It's just feet.

ISLA

We have to call 911.

VANESSA

And tell them what? "I see feet?" It ain't a crime to have feet.

ISLA

She's not coming back.

VANESSA

She'll come back.

ISLA

I don't think so.

(Vanessa gets up, puts on a brave face for Isla.)

VANESSA

I didn't know how to say it to you, but I could tell you what mom's doin' right now. I guess it's time for you to know the secret.

ISLA

(playing along)

The secret?

(The lighting again turns surreal. Vanessa strikes a "karate" pose.)

VANESSA

I don't know how to tell you this, but we actually were like born to fight evil.

(beat)

Mom had to leave in the middle of the night after she was attacked by the evil Power Ranger, Dark Red Ranger.

(Vanessa "battles" imaginary Power Rangers as she continues.)

She was doing good, but then Octophantom showed up to put her in magic jar. Then she was like- I better yell for help, let Vanessa and Isla know, to help fight.

But you snore too loud and we couldn't hear her.

(Vanessa finishes her karate moves, exhausted, she works to catch her breath. Lighting returns to normal.)

ISLA

You are so stupid.

(beat)

You want to open the door?