



Proudly Presents

I LOVE LUCY

WRITTEN BY CELESTE LEBEAUX

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My sister, Lucy, was named after Mom and Dad's favorite show of all time, *I Love Lucy*. Bet you can't guess my name. Come on, think about it. Who was Lucy's best friend? Ethel Mertz, right? Well, lucky for me—my mom would not cave into my dad's desire to name me Ethel, so she compromised. She took Ethel Mertz's initials (E.M.) and presto—I was named Em.

Lucy and Ethel: What a pair! Those two certainly got themselves into quite a few messes, didn't they? Yes, they did. Every time you watched an episode, those two were having some sort of crisis—a situation that seemed almost impossible to escape. Our parents may not be psychic, but they certainly chose the perfect names.

One summer, Lucy and I were out of school, and our parents had to work. This was no big deal. Lucy was seventeen. I was eleven. We didn't need a baby-sitter. We would watch television, make lunch, and later, we would do our nails. Everything was fine.

Lucy and I watched television all morning, made chicken salad sandwiches for lunch, and then we retreated to our bedroom and had just picked out our favorite shade of nail polish when the doorbell rang. Mom had told us earlier that morning there was a repairman coming the next day. She was going to take half-a-day off from work to be here, while he made the repairs. Looking out through the front curtains in the living room, we could see a man in uniform standing on our front porch. We thought, either Mom got confused on the date, or he decided to come one day early. Either way, we decided to answer the door.

Lucy invited the man in to check out one of the electrical plugs in the kitchen. As soon as he stepped inside though, I felt uneasy. He wasn't wearing a uniform, as we had at first thought. The man merely had on a pair of navy coveralls. Lucy must have read my mind, because she said, "I think it would be best if you came back tomorrow when one of our parents is here." He said that's exactly why he *was* here—because he knew they *weren't* home. Then he pushed us aside and locked the door. He told us to lead him to our

bedroom. He voice wasn't loud, but I remember it was so intense.

He shoved us toward the back of the house—into our bedroom. He pushed Lucy onto the bed, and he told her that if she screamed—I would be the first. He didn't tell us what 'first' meant, but Lucy took him at his word. She just sat there—paralyzed—breathing harder than I've ever heard her breathe. She was practically out of breath. The man then took out some electrical tape from a bag and wrapped my hands behind my back and taped my ankles to the front legs of our vanity chair. I could see Lucy in the reflection of the mirror, but for some reason I turned away.

That's when I noticed it—the TV in the living room. Looking out our bedroom door and peering down the hallway, I could see our television—angled in the corner of the living room. It was still turned to the station that only showed the classics.

An episode of *I Love Lucy* had just begun. It's the one where Lucy, Ricky and the Mertz's are traveling to Italy, and Lucy is asked by a famous Italian movie director to audition for his upcoming film, *The Bitter Grapes*. She wonders which part she'll be asked to audition for. Fred tells Lucy that no matter what part she gets, she'll surely be one of the *bunch*." To ensure she gets the part, Lucy, against Ricky's advice, decides to visit a local vineyard, soak up the environment and see how the Italians make wine. I've seen this episode at least half-a-dozen times.

When she arrives at the local vineyard, Lucy, now dressed in peasant clothing, stands around, eats grapes and listens to the other women talk in Italian whispers. At the same time, I hear my sister Lucy—whimpering behind me. She's begging the man to please stop. She's whispering—as if she doesn't want me to hear her. I can tell the man has now cupped his hand over my sister's mouth to muffle her sounds.

In the living room, Lucy is one of two women chosen to stomp today's grapes. She's told to get in the wine vat and begin working.