

## NOTES

*Eye Spy* is Michaela Murphy’s humorous, coming-of-age essay about spending her summers with her family on the beach in Hyannisport, Massachusetts. This selection should be performed by a female and be entered in Prose Interpretation; however, because of the humorous nature of the story, a performer might choose to enter it in Humorous Interpretation or Storytelling. This selection is a tour-de-force for the actress adept at playing comedy. Because of its geographic location, a performer might even choose to use a Northeastern accent or dialect. Imagine the character possibilities of the four aunts within the story! Be sure to make each character clear and distinct. Michaela accidentally kicking her uncle in the head and popping out his glass eye is definitely the climax of this selection. Build the performance towards that climax. Timing is crucial when playing comedy. Play the moments. Don’t be afraid to react to the sequence of events taking place on the beach that day. If performing this in Prose Interpretation, the drama mask icons are simply visible to show the performer when to turn the pages in her manuscript.

I grew up in Providence, Rhode Island, and for my entire childhood my family was never more than 25 miles outside the core of our universe—the Kennedy Compound. They were Irish; we were Irish. They were Catholic; we were Catholic. They were like family. We were like the relatives that they never got to see. But we knew that they were busy, and if they ever got to know us, they would love us. Everything that was happening to them was also happening to us. So their tragedy plus our own tragedy was a lot. On this one Thanksgiving, we’re driving home from dinner and a family fight at Grandma’s house, and on the radio, they were playing a commemoration of JFK’s assassination. I’m sitting in the backseat, and I start to cry. My sister Erin says, “Dad, Michaela’s crying.” My father took that car and pulled it right over to the shoulder of I-95, put it in park, turned around, looked into the backseat, and with tears in his own eyes said, “Don’t you ever be ashamed to cry for that man.”



My parents got married at Saint Mary’s Church in Newport, Rhode Island—in the same exact church as Jack and Jackie. My father gave my mother jewelry—exact replications of the jewelry that Jack gave to Jackie. And every summer during the Seventies, my four aunts would take me

and my two cousins on their dream vacation—a week in Hyannisport on the beach that shared property with the Kennedy Compound. Every day for a week, my Aunt Pat would roll up her sister’s hair, and my aunts would apply sunscreen to the backs of their necks, the tops of their hands, and the tops of their feet. They would drag their beach chairs down to the beach, and they would set them up perfectly—not facing the water; not into the sun for tanning; but perfectly for spying on the Kennedy’s.



Every day for an entire week, my aunts would sit there with high-powered binoculars, and they would keep constant surveillance. And every year they would have the exact same conversations. Usually the first sighting was made around 10 o’clock. “Oh, they got Rose out—walking. Ethel looks drawn.” Then my Aunt Gert would say, “Oh, how old is Rose anyway?” Then my Aunt Momo would make the calculations. “Well, let’s see. Jack died in ’63, then Joe died in ’79 making her a widow at 81, and her birthday was two weeks last Thursday, so she’s 85.” And then we’d break for lunch! After lobster and hosing all the kids down, they’d hustle back to their posts. Every now and then, they’d spot someone they didn’t know. *Who’s that one? Who’s that one?* So they’d draw out the family tree in the sand. They’d analyze it. They’d come up with a profile and crack the code. *It’s one of Bobby’s.*

Now any mention of Bobby always brought up the inevitable, *Oh, Mary Mother of God, I hope they never tell poor senile Rose about that Bobby. It’ll break her.* And then the long afternoon stretch would be broken by the annual observation, *You know, you don’t see Jackie much around here.* My aunts would all drop their binoculars, and they’d all look at each other meaningfully.



All of this meant that no one was paying any attention to us in the water. Now had an aunt, perhaps in an effort to relieve a cramp in her prying neck, glanced over towards the water’s edge, she might have seen us find this tiny, plastic, half-inflated raft. She might have cried out in alarm at the lack of oars or life preservers. She might have had a conniption fit to watch the three of us climb inside this thing, shove off, and drift into the violent riptide that would sweep us within five minutes out to the open sea and the Nantucket-bound ferry. But an aunt didn’t, and we did. It all happened so fast, that it wasn’t until we realized that we were able to make out the specific features of the ferry passengers that we were really far from shore. We were so far out from shore that my four aunts had