

24 PROMPTS

BY KJ Sanchez

(IN WHICH 6 ACTORS TRY TO INCLUDE ALL 24 PROMPTS INTO ONE CRAZY PLAY IN ONE OF THE MOST GORGEOUS LIBRARIES ON EARTH)

WNPL December

Prompts: All of them. And in that order (in bold font)

A woman comes rushing into the Peabody Library, carrying an armful of Beanie Babies. She drops them all on the librarian's desk.

THE WOMAN

I was told that my collection of Beanie Babies would accrue value, so I kept them VERY LOVINGLY but Now what! NOW WHAT! Where's my million dollars for my beanie baby collection?!?!

THE LIBRARIAN

Mam. What are you doing? This is a-

THE WOMAN

Don't you DARE "Mam' me! You have no IDEA what I've been through. I mean, **Working at a Collection Agency over the holiday season** – do you have ANY idea how stressful that gets? Of course, you can do your best –

THE LIBRARIAN

Mam-

THE WOMAN

to surround yourself with soothing, pleasing little things you bring in from home, you know, you try your best to decorate your little CUBBY with family pictures, postcards that make you happy, **The mementos of numerous vacations** but even STILL the stress can REALLY get you, you know? Especially when the whole family's working so hard to pay the bills! Grandma's crocheting cozies for toilet paper roll, **Grandpa breaks down his stamp collection for inheritance**, I mean, we're all doing everything we can to chip in, make sure the boys are left something after we're gone-

The librarian goes to her phone and calls for help.

THE WOMAN

But do you have ANY idea how HUMILIATING it is, working in a COLLECTION agency and then **Finding out you've been sent to Collections by your local library?!!**

THE LIBRARIAN

(speaking into phone) Frank, can you come down here for a sec, Hon. And *please* make it quick. We've got a "situation" down here. Uh-huh. Thank you.

Just then two people walk by, one of them holding a book and reading the book jacket very enthusiastically.

ENTHUSIASTIC GUY

"While cleaning out her grandfather's house, a granddaughter discovers a collection she thought she'd never discover in her grandfather's belongings." Ooooooh, this book sounds great!

Another two people walk by one of whom speaks in a very wispy voice.

WHISPY PERSON

In a fire, I would save my precious Disney VHS tape collection. I would be lost without my *Fox and the Hound*, *Cinderella*, and *Lion King*.

THE WOMAN

(Still talking to/at the librarian) You know, **I once had a small collection of foreign currency from places I've never been.** I mean, talk about wishful thinking! I also had **Hundreds of CDs bought almost exclusively from Borders in the post-CD age.** PLUS all **The original Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles trilogy collectibles - movies on VHS, posters, action figures - well after the initial 1980's-90's releases.** What does THAT tell you about me? Huh? It says I'm at the end of my rope!

The Peabody security guard approaches

THE GUARD

(to librarian) Sally, everything ok here?

THE LIBRARIAN

Oh! Good! Frank. This... very nice... woman here has been telling me about her, um... well, she brought in these collectables

THE GUARD

Ah! I see. *(to woman)* And what is it, **What do you collect?**

THE WOMAN

Rubber ducks! What do you think?! I collect BEANIE BABIES or are you blind? Blind like **A collection of women all addicted to QVC** or what?

Let me tell you a little story: **A group of creative people decide to create a tiny bridge from the west coast to the east coast created with post it notes written by millions of people. These sticky notes each list something that we love or appreciate about another person. Then “something” conspires to halt the creation of this road. What is the “something” and what happens?**

THE GUARD

Well, I’m sure I don’t know. What happens?

THE WOMAN

That’s what I’m asking YOU, ya dumb cluck! (*turning away from The Guard*) Why am I even asking you – what would you know about my anxiety, have YOU every collected anything so hard it tears you up inside?

A girl on a phone passes by.

GIRL ON PHONE

(*into phone*) Oh my god, all morning long I’ve I’ve had that song in my head, what’s it called, that lost and found song? You know what I’m talking about, how does it go – (*she sings*) **I went to Lost and Found/ and saw a rare coin on the ground./ I started to collect them all/ but instead took a great fall.**

Gril on phone passes and is gone. The Guard tries his best to be suave, perhaps even flirting with The Librarian.

THE GUARD

I don’t collect things; I collect people.

The Woman picks up a nearby paper-back book, she reads the back aloud.

THE WOMAN

“A sin eater, while freeing sinners from the blemishes on their souls, ends up with a collection of all the sins of a whole town.” Ugh. I don’t know how anyone can stand all this teen vampire stuff.

She tosses the book aside.

THE GUARD

My niece, Rebecca, loves all those vampire books. Poor Rebecca. She always says **Her brain is kind of like a magnet—it collects other people’s memories and causes her some confusion...**

THE WOMAN

Who’s brain DOESN’T cause them some confusion? Mine was so bad once, I went to get help from a HYPNOTIST, can you believe it? He taught me how to hypnotize MYSELF. He taught me these words, told me how to do it: I get in front of a mirror and I say to myself,

“You are doing your old uncle a favor by filling in for him at the Sunday church service. One of his responsibilities is to take up collection during the service. After completing the round with your collection-bag you find one very odd thing in it that scares you stiff.” Over and over again, I had to say those things. Put me in a deep hypnotic state every time, I tell you. Never understood how or why, but **What are you supposed to do, what CAN you do?** You know, **My mother collects stone gargoyle statuettes. She has a couple dozen and they all have names. Of all of my mother’s possessions, they will be the most precious to me after she dies.** She’s in a coma, you know? Did I tell you that, that she’s in a coma? Been in the hospital for four weeks. She had passed out on the 134 bus and never came to again. **She was found with only these in her pockets:**

*The woman takes these items out of her bag/pockets and lays them on
The Librarian’s desk.*

THE WOMAN

chewing gum, a business card for a Chinese restaurant, five hundred dollars, and an engraved switchblade. What do you make of it? Huh?

*The woman looks around, finally realizes people have been watching
her, that perhaps she’s been acting a little nutty.*

THE WOMAN

I’m sorry, I’m having a hard time collecting my thoughts after the accident.

THE GUARD

Well that’s ok. We all get a little confused every now and again. Now why don’t I walk you out, help you get all your stuff together and I’ll walk you out and over to the bus stop on the corner, that alright?

*The Guard is picking up The Woman’s things, easing her toward the
door.*

THE WOMAN

It’s a Collection of telephones. Each allows you to communicate with people from a different time period.

THE GUARD

Is that so?

THE WOMAN

Yes, Yes it is so. I tell my mom, each day when I go visit her in the hospital, I tell her, Mom, **A museum needs to return their collection of bones to the families.** I mean, those bones aren’t gonna return themselves, right?!

The woman laughs at the idea of bones returning themselves.

THE GUARD

Now come on, let's get out over to that bus stop.

THE WOMAN

Your name is Frank, right?

THE GUARD

That's right.

THE WOMAN

Can I tell you a secret, Frank? If you promise not to tell?

They are walking toward the door.

THE GUARD

Sure. I promise.

THE WOMAN

In another dimension, old birthday, Christmas, holiday, get well soon, thinking of you, etc. cards are collected and redistributed to the public instead of new ones being made.

THE GUARD

You don't say? Well, that's something. That's something for sure.

And they're gone.