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Title of Work: "Shadow of a Song"

Sub-Category: Short Story

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## SHADOW OF A SONG

*Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not.* —Ralph Waldo Emerson

I smeared makeup on my face to hide the wrinkles. Elena colored my hair a blonde bombshell like Dolly Parton. I glued on extension eyelashes and applied cherry-red lipstick. Then I sprayed Miss Dior Eau De Parfum behind my ears and, of course; rolled Secret Deodorant under my arms.

What should I wear? I dressed like a country-pop star with sky-high heels, a cowgirl hat, studded belt, and mini-skirt. I donned an electric-pink blouse with fringes flowing. My mama would turn over in her grave if she knew her daughter appeared in such a flashy costume.

No matter. I lied about my age and got on “American Idol.” I was the oldest person to ever appear on the show. The young snippersnappers pointed at my bulky thighs. They laughed when I blinked and the false eyelashes landed on the floor. An expletive slipped from my lips.

As I waited my turn to perform, my palms perspired and heart thumped like a drum. I silently prayed, *Lord, help! Keep me from making a fool of myself. What if they find out that I deceived them?*

I was the last contestant to appear on “American Idol.” When they called my name, I almost took off like greased lightning out the backdoor. I stumbled and Ryan Seacrest had to catch me.

When I made it to the stage, Carrie Underwood arched her eyebrows and Lionel Richie stared at me. "Tell me about yourself," he said.

"I'm 30-years-old and had an impoverished childhood in the Blue Ridge Mountains. My family got-together on the front porch during warm weather and made music. Big brother strummed the guitar, Uncle Rob sawed the fiddle, Daddy played a harmonica, and Grandma played the spoons. Mama entertained us buck dancing. I belted out "Barbara Allen," and dreamed of becoming a singer someday."

Luke Bryan grinned and asked with his countryfied slang, "What ya got?"

"I want to sing..."my mind went blank. I started to cry.

"Take your time," said Carrie and smiled.

"I want to sing, "I Will Always Love You," by Dolly Parton. "I don't have a band and want to sing a cappella."

Carrie hesitated, then whispered, "Okay."

I don't know how I made it through the performance. My head spun like a top and I started to hyperventilate. It seemed like an eternity before the judges made a decision. They told me my performance was awesome and would make Dolly Parton proud.

"You're in!" they said.

I jumped up and screamed. It was a miracle I made it to Hollywood Week. I performed at the Disney Resort in Hawaii, and made the cut for the top 30 performers. At last, I really believed that I could sing, but didn't feel right about deceiving the judges about my age. After

several sleepless nights, tossing and turning in bed, I made a difficult decision. I withdrew from the competition and a ton of guilt lifted from my chest.

I'll always cherish the experience of appearing on "American Idol," but being an honest person means more to me than becoming a superstar. Afterall, I have to look at myself in the mirror.

The End