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## CHARACTERS

### FRANK/CELLMATE

Male, 60's, undiagnosed manic depressive bi-polar, never at a loss for words. Has been in a relationship with Ray for over twenty years. The relationship exists in letters only. In this play, he gets to say very little. The CELLMATE is a ghost. RAY's former cellmate who exists only in RAY's memory. He will always be a lump on the upper bunk with his face turned to the wall, unseen.

### RAY

Male, 40's-70s, lives in denial of who he is and what he's done. Remembers every movie he's ever seen. Currently serving a life sentence. FRANK is his only connection to the outside world. No one visits.

### BILLIE

Female, 30's, daughter of FRANK. Everything's funny. Including funerals and dying.

### FATHEAD

Male, 30's, best friend of BILLIE. Kind, caring and uncomfortable in his own skin yet strangely confident. Has a nervous tick. Sings or hums when uncomfortable. He's not a good singer.

### MARIBELLE

Female, 50s-60s, cousin of FRANK. Family is always first. Type A care taker. Equal parts bossy and vulnerable. Talks as though she might be hard-of-hearing. Doesn't always listen.

## TIMING/LOCATION

Present day. Southside of Chicago. Funeral parlor, prison, studio apartment.

1.

Lights up. Small studio apartment. One window upstage left. The floor is covered in small boxes marked: "BILLIE", "RAY" and "MARIBELLE." Against the wall, a painted back drop (butcher paper on a large sewing pattern cutting board) four feet long by three feet high painted by a child to resemble shelves in a laboratory. Used for a play performed in a garage. The room is cluttered with memorabilia. Various calendars throughout the years: MR. LEATHER. 1979. 1980. 1974. Hot guys with body hair and outrageous mustaches. A small tv tray table at which FRANK sits typing on an old Olivetti Underwood typewriter. Sixties. Shaved head. Tattooed forearms. Wears flip flops, jeans and a t-shirt. Black goatee. A large pile of crumbled papers at his feet. With a quick glance to the child's painted backdrop, FRANK types.

FRANK  
(typing)  
*Attend.*

Back space. Back space. White out. More white out.

FRANK (CONT.)  
(typing)  
*Attend.*

Rips out the page; begins again.

FRANK (CONT.)  
(typing)  
*Attend.*

Rips out the page; begins again. Stares at the page. Begins again.

FRANK (CONT.)  
(typing)  
*Attend to the story of...(thinking)*

Beat.

FRANK (CONT.)  
(typing)  
*Victor...Frankenstein...a man of uncommon skill...a man of great reknown...a man who lived.  
And died. Held a pocket of himself. Stashed at the top of his. Low ride jeans.*

The lights begin to fade.

FRANK (CONT.)

(typing) *A secret he could not. Keep.*”

Blackout.

2.

Lights up. BILLIE on her cell phone flipping through messages. Incredulous as she reads. Small room. Bookcase with fake books. An overwhelming number of small kleenex boxes on the shelves and small end tables. Light blue faux velvet furniture. Light wood. Brightly lit. Some pamphlets. Funeral parlor. FATHEAD watches as she reads.

FATHEAD

What?

BILLIE

(reading)

...

FATHEAD

What is it?

BILLIE

(reading)

...

FATHEAD

Someone write?

BILLIE

(reading)

...

FATHEAD

Seriously, Bill. What?

Short beat.

FATHEAD (CONT.)

Bill. Bill. Bill. Bill.

BILLIE

(reading; a chuckle)

...

FATHEAD

That guy. He's probably. He's at the door. Followed us back here, man. I know he did. He's waiting for you to write a check or somethin'. I don't know. C'mon. Let's go. We're not supposed to be back here. Guy freaks me out. He's gonna open that door and he's gonna lock eyes on me, Bill. And I'm gonna say somethin'. I don't know what I'm gonna say. But I'm gonna say somethin'. (abruptly grabs a box of kleenex) What is this? There's like fifteen friggin' boxes in here.

Abrupt beat.

FATHEAD (CONT.)

Bill? Bill. Bill. Bill. Bill.

BILLIE

(still reading; laughing)

...

FATHEAD

I'm serious. Just pay the guy so he'll stop followin' us friggin' around.

BILLIE

Already paid. Sent the letters; wrote the ad; called everyone. It's in the paper. I'm done.

FATHEAD

(looking around)

I don't like this.

BILLIE

(still scrolling; reading)

It's just a room.

FATHEAD

Friggin' fruitloop. That guy. Probably standin' at the door. Listenin'. Seriously, Bill.

Short beat.

FATHEAD (CONT.)

Bill. Bill. Bill. Bill.

BILLIE

(still reading; laughing)

Oh man.

FATHEAD

What?

BILLIE

(still reading)

Jesus.

FATHEAD

What is it?

BILLIE

(reading)

Christ.

FATHEAD

C'mon.

BILLIE

This is.

FATHEAD

What?

BILLIE

Fifteen profile visits this morning.

Short beat.

FATHEAD

Are you - ?! You have got to be - OH. MY. GOD.

BILLIE

Listen to this: "I saw your name and I couldn't believe it was you."

FATHEAD

What are you doing?! Are you friggin' - you're kiddin', right? You are friggin' kiddin' me.

BILLIE

What?

FATHEAD

I can't believe you.

BILLIE

(reading; chuckling)

...

FATHEAD

Seriously. Bill. What the hell? You said. You said you were gonna delete it.

BILLIE

Why? Listen to this: "I remember you from Austin High School. You were always my favorite. I wondered what happened to you." Yeeeeeeaaah.

FATHEAD

Stop it. I mean it. It's. Jesus. What the hell?

BILLIE

What's your problem?

FATHEAD

Give me that.

He reaches for the cellphone. BILLIE extends it over her head to avoid his reach. It beeps. It beeps again.

BILLIE

(still reading)

Look at this. Two more messages.

FATHEAD

You're gross.

BILLIE

I'm curious.

FATHEAD

Which is gross.

Another beep.

BILLIE

Oh. Wow. “You may not remember me, but - .“ Wait a minute. Oh my God. “Hi gorgeous.” Ohhhhhhhhh (reads; chuckles) Okay. Well. That’s. Wow. (reading; chuckling) Old people are so - wow.

FATHEAD

Uhhhh.

BILLIE finishes. Puts the phone back in her pocket.

BILLIE (CONT.)

What’s the big deal?

FATHEAD

You created an account for a (hushed whisper) *friggin' dead guy*.

BILLIE

Whatya you care?

FATHEAD

He’s DEAD. Stop friggin’ around.

BILLIE

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. C’mon. Let’s get this over with.

She exits. FATHEAD follows. Lights up on a reception room. They enter. The sound of guests softly talking. Some weeping. Laughing. This is the wake. A video of the deceased’s life plays Sinatra’s “My Way” on a loop with photos of a boy, young man, older man. FATHEAD bursts into muffled song, trapped in the back of his throat, when his anxiety and discomfort grow.

FATHEAD

Avoidance. It’s avoiding. Shoulda talked to him when he was alive. That's all.

BILLIE

Talked to him all the time.

FATHEAD

About what? What did the two of you ever talk about?

BILLIE

Meh.

FATHEAD

(a look)  
Really?

BILLIE  
What?

FATHEAD  
If you really want to talk; find something out. Ask these people.

BILLIE  
I don't know them.

FATHEAD  
Oh my GOD. Yes you do. Come ON. Put yourself out there. Ask. Walk up to 'em. That's it. Pow, pow, pow. Boom. Done. (abruptly sings in sync with the video loop) - "*My friend, I'll say it clear. I'll state my case, of which I'm certaaaain.*" JESUS.

BILLIE  
You're. So weird.

FATHEAD  
I'm weird because I think it's a good idea to - (abruptly sings) "*-face the final curtain...*" (stops himself). FRIGGIN' HELL.

BILLIE  
Yup.

FATHEAD  
You opened a [classmates.com](https://www.classmates.com) account. Under your dad's name. After the police found him dead in his apartment. I'm sorry. I'm. Really. We don't have to talk about it. Not right now. But. Seriously, man. Who does that? I mean, really. Who uses classmates.com? Classmates.com isn't even a thing people use.

BILLIE  
...

Short beat.

FATHEAD  
That's it?

BILLIE  
...

FATHEAD  
Ya got nothin'?

BILLIE  
...

FATHEAD  
Why am I here?

BILLIE  
Okay.

FATHEAD  
I mean it, man, why am I here? 'Cause I have things, you know, I could be doin' things. 'Cause I have lotsa - (abruptly sings) *Regrets, I've had a few...* (stops himself) Goddammit.

BILLIE  
Heh.

FATHEAD  
(a look)  
Shutup.

BILLIE  
What?

FATHEAD  
I'm your best friend. You didn't want me here, but I came anyway. You know why? 'Cause normal people do this, Bill. Normal people show up for the people they love -

BILLIE  
Awww. That's so nice.

FATHEAD  
STOP TALKING. Normal people get sad. Normal people. Jesus, Bill. Normal people don't.

BILLIE  
What?

FATHEAD  
Your dad died, man. You didn't call any of these people.

BILLIE

(snorts)

...

FATHEAD (CONT.)

You called me. And I was there after the police left. I was in his apartment packing things up. Walkin' around in shoes I could throw out. Just like the police guy said. Which is. Whatever. But. So. I wore my old, stupid shoes. And. I put his stuff in piles. And, yeah, it was sad, Bill. But you know what? It was easy. Because it was just stuff, Bill. "Things". "Things" are easy.

Short beat.

FATHEAD (CONT.)

Normal people get upset. Normal people don't crack jokes. Normal people don't open friggin' accounts under their dead father's friggin' name.

BILLIE

He woulda thought it was funny.

FATHEAD

Who cares what he woulda thought?!! He's dead. What are you doing?!

BILLIE

Checking my phone.

FATHEAD

Wow.

Beat.

FATHEAD (CONT.)

Okay.

BILLIE

What?

FATHEAD

I get it.

BILLIE

What? Jeeeesus, Fathead.

FATHEAD

No, I get it. I get it. I see what you're doin'. I get it. Look at you. You're being all "Look at me. I'm all – " Yeah. Okay. I get it. Go on, check your phone. Friggin' classmates.com. I don't care. I don't. Because, you know what? I know what you're doing.

BILLIE

I don't care.

FATHEAD

I think this whole thing? Freaks you out.

BILLIE

No, it freaks *you* out.

Abrupt beat.

BILLIE (CONT.)

(looking around)

Who are all these people?

FATHEAD

They're your family.

BILLIE

...

FATHEAD

They'd probably like to, you know, friggin' see you.

BILLIE

(another snort)

...

FATHEAD

Nothin'?

BILLIE

...

FATHEAD

No?

Beat.

FATHEAD (CONT.)

Well, if you're gonna be like that. Then. Mingle.

BILLIE

It's a wake.

FATHEAD

Jesus. Whatever. Walk around. Friggin' talk to people. That's what you do at these things.

BILLIE

...

FATHEAD

Everyone's here to show their respect.

BILLIE

I don't know them.

FATHEAD

Yeah. Well. Maybe they want to talk to you after all this time. Just walk around and. C'mon, Bill, just. Introduce yourself. Do it.

BILLIE

...

FATHEAD

They're gonna know who you are. It'll be easy.

BILLIE

Easy?

FATHEAD

YES. You don't have to do anything but. Walk up to them.

BILLIE

Let them come to me. I don't care.

FATHEAD

YES YOU DO. Stop being so. They're your family. It's a wake. You're supposed to walk around and - you're the host and - (abruptly sings) - "...*now the end is near*...." (stops himself).

GODDAMMIT.

BILLIE

Wow.

FATHEAD

Why can't you be a normal person?

BILLIE

What do normal people do?

FATHEAD

Walk around and talk to people at their father's goddanged wake.

BILLIE

What if I'm too broken up?

FATHEAD

Oh. My. God.

They overlap one another.

BILLIE

What if it's too much?

FATHEAD

Man, you're avoiding.

BILLIE

What if -

FATHEAD

Avoid.

BILLIE

- I made my peace with all this.

FATHEAD

Avoid. Avoid. Avoid.

BILLIE

What if I made my peace with him? What if I made my peace with this family?

FATHEAD

(in a stupid voice)

Oh dur dur dur. Fuzzy fuzz.

BILLIE

What if there's nothing I can do but skate through this until the (anticipates) -

FATHEAD

(singing)

...*final curtain.*

BILLIE laughs.

FATHEAD (CONT.)

Oh ha ha. Frig you, man.

BILLIE

(laughing)

Oh my God.

FATHEAD

You are such a jerk. I'm sorry. But.

BILLIE

These people have no idea who I am.

FATHEAD

So. Talk to them.

BILLIE

Where have they been the last hundred million years?

FATHEAD

I dunno.

BILLIE

No. Screw it.

FATHEAD

(a look)

Bill.

BILLIE

I organized this. Set it all up. Called everyone. I don't have to be here. I'm done. I did what I was supposed to. Dutiful daughter. Which is bullshit. I'm not gonna do or say somethin' just because

you think it's a good idea. They never helped him when he was alive. Cut him out. Whatever. What, I'm supposed to - now that he's dead – pretend all that didn't happen? They disowned him. Didn't speak to him. Whatever. Years of that. Forget it.

FATHEAD

(a look)

...

BILLIE

What? They did. They didn't want a gay guy in the family. A fag brother. Fine. That's what he was. So what. He was my dad. Told me he hadn't talked to them in years so why are they all here? So why the hell am I in a room with all these people? We stopped seeing them years ago. My dad went to all the weddings, anyway, sure, because the guy loved weddings. But I never did. You know why? 'Cause fuck these people. This is show. It's all show. People are bullshit.

FATHEAD

(a look)

...

BILLIE

What?

FATHEAD

You're killing me.

BILLIE

...

FATHEAD

Can you not, you know, for one second do that thing you do? You're just gonna stand there and friggin' say things to me like I haven't known ya since we were nine.

BILLIE

What, I'm not tellin' the truth?

FATHEAD

(a look)

Not the point.

BILLIE

How is that not the point?

FATHEAD

Ohhhhhhhhh. Come onnnnnn.

BILLIE

...

FATHEAD

You're at your father's wake. Stop friggin' around.

BILLIE

It's been two weeks. I'm fine.

FATHEAD

You're not fine.

BILLIE

Two hours and then I'm out.

FATHEAD

You're gettin' mad.

BILLIE

No, I'm not. I'm not mad. I'm not gettin' mad.

FATHEAD

Yes, you are. You're mad.

BILLIE

(a look)

...

FATHEAD

You're doing that thing, man. Avoid. Avoid. Avoid.

BILLIE

I'm not mad.

FATHEAD

Okay. You're not mad.

BILLIE

No.

FATHEAD

You're friggin' in denial. You're in denial, man.

BILLIE

I haven't slept in four days.

FATHEAD

I know.

BILLIE

I'm tired.

FATHEAD

I know you are.

BILLIE

Stop asking me to be normal.

FATHEAD

Okay.

BILLIE

I hate these people.

FATHEAD

All right.

BILLIE

I'm not normal.

FATHEAD

Bill.

BILLI

This isn't normal.

FATHEAD

I know it isn't.

BILLIE

This hasn't been normal since forever.

FATHEAD

I know.

BILLIE  
I don't wanna be here.

FATHEAD

...

Beat.

BILLIE  
(softly)  
I'm glad he's dead.

FATHEAD

...

BILLIE  
Wanna get a burger?

Lights out.

3.

Lights up. Prison cell. RAY sits, clutching a letter. Bottom bunk. Powder blue shirt and pants. Plastic sandals with socks. RAY's read the letter he holds ten or twelve times. The envelope at his feet. The ghost of his former cellmate on the top bunk. Lying down with his back to the audience. You'll never see his face. He's dressed in grey prison gear. Exists only in RAY's head and the light which rests on him is muted; other-worldly. A beat.

CELLMATE  
You're just sittin' there. Lousy sack a crap.

RAY  
I tol' you.

CELLMATE  
Your move. Your play, Ray.

RAY  
Don't wanna play right now.

CELLMATE

Ray?

RAY

Give me a minute. Already said.

Hunts around. Looks for a decent piece of paper and pen. Finds an old envelope. Opens it. His pen hovers.

CELLMATE

Whattaya got there, Ray?

RAY

Nothin' for you.

RAY carefully writes.

RAY (CONT.)

“Dear....”

Beat.

CELLMATE

How long you gonna stare at the page? There's no one out there wants to hear from you. C'mon, Ray. Give me a challenge.

RAY

Need a minute. “Dear...” “Dear...”

Short beat.

RAY (CONT.)

Shit.

RAY stops.

RAY (CONT.)

(softly) I don't know what to say.

CELLMATE

Pshhh. “You don't know what to say.” Lord have mercy. Hallmark card. That's what you sound like.

RAY

Don't need you drillin' into my head right now.

CELLMATE

Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz.

RAY

Shutup. Gotta think.

CELLMATE

You're thinkin' too hard. That's the thing. Always been your problem. Think you can do things better. You can't, Ray. You can't.

RAY

You ain't makin' sense.

CELLMATE

Tell me I'm wrong.

RAY

Stop talking.

CELLMATE

What does the letter say, Ray? C'mon. Entertain me. Tell me. What does it say? "You were the only person was ever nice to me."

CELLMATE laughs.

RAY

None your business.

CELLMATE

Ray?

RAY

Nothin'. It says nothin'.

Tries to write. Can't.

CELLMATE

I can see your dopey face from here. Musta said somethin'. C'mon. Let me read it.

RAY puts the letter back in the envelope. Puts the envelope in a box under his bunk. Now we can see that there are a number of similar boxes under his bunk. He begins the game. A form of movie trivia that helps pass the time.

RAY

(abruptly) Killed my wife. Found her cheating. Killed the man - I killed the man. I killed.

Abrupt beat.

RAY (CONT.)

Jesus. I told you. I don't wanna do this today. I wanna just. Wanna write a – just sit here. Write a damned letter. That's all. That's all I wanna do. Been sayin' that since this morning. You don't listen. That's what this is.

Grabs his pen.

CELLMATE

What're ya gonna write?

RAY

Shut up.

CELLMATE

What? You can't write nothin'. When ya ever written a damned thing worth readin'. You been starin' at that piece of paper for a week.

RAY

Shutupshutupshutup.

CELLMATE

Nah. You're good for one thing. You're good at sittin' your ass in this cell. That's all.

RAY

...

CELLMATE

Get your mind on the game, Ray. Keep yourself occupied. Occupado. You know the drill. Bzzzzzzzzz. Can't start thinkin' there's another way. There is no other way. There's just this here. You and me. No talkin'. No writin'. Just this.

RAY  
(softly)  
I'm gonna tell her.

CELLMATE  
Who her?

RAY  
(softly)  
Nothin'.

CELLMATE  
What? What're ya gonna tell her? Who her?

RAY  
(softly)  
His daughter.

CELLMATE  
Whatwhatwhat? Whooooooooooooo. His daughter. Well, how about that.

RAY  
Don't.

CELLMATE  
Oh this is goooooood.

RAY  
I mean it.

CELLMATE  
What'ya gonna say? That you cared?

RAY  
Stop.

CELLMATE  
That you knew the man? Her father? Shit.

RAY

...

CELLMATE

Look at your face. You're not tellin' her shit.

RAY

...

CELLMATE

Who the hell is she to you? What would she think? Gettin' a letter from someone like you. Lookin' at that return address.. No. No no no. No connections, Ray. Them's your rules. Mopey dopey. No. No, No. Ray. No. You gotta play. Occupied. Occupado.

RAY

Twenty years. Two months. Fifteen days.

CELLMATE

Had their reasons for locking you up.

RAY begins the game again.

RAY

Killed my wife. Found her cheating. Killed the man. Put me here. Dug a hole. In the wall. Sewage pipe. Crawled out. Made my way to -

CELLMATE/RAY

Mexico.

CELLMATE

Too easy. Give me another one.

RAY

(truth) Killed the neighbor.

CELLMATE

(softly) What?

RAY

Got a tan. White shirt. Fixed boats. Left a letter. Box of money. Wrapped in plastic. Stone wall. By a tree. Buried. You found it.

A sigh from the top bunk.

CELLMATE

(sighing)

Too easy. C'mon, Ray. Step up your game.

RAY

Locked up. Got out. Bagged groceries. Gave it up. Quit the job. Followed me. Found the tree. Stone wall. Tin box. Found the note. Took the money. Had a map. Came to Mexico . Found me.

CELLMATE

(sighing) Shawshank Redemption. Too easy. Jesus, Ray. Give me another.

RAY

I don't wanna play.

CELLMATE

C'mon.

RAY

No.

CELLMATE

What's in the letter?

RAY

Nothin'.

CELLMATE

Bad news, Ray? What'd say. Why she writin' to you.

RAY

Nevermind.

CELLMATE

You get some bad news from folks who don't never visit?

RAY

(softly)

Said I don't wanna play.

CELLMATE

Remember the slide. Remember the slide, Ray. Watchin' that old hand grip your pants –

RAY

(writes) "Dear...." I don't know what to call her. "Dear..." (to himself) *Just use her name, that's all. Just.*

CELLMATE

Aww, Ray. This is just sad. You're sad, Ray. What're ya gonna do? Be a big man? Tell your story? You ain't a big man, Ray. She ain't gonna care. She doesn't even know who you are. If she did she wouldn't a wrote.

RAY

He did.

CELLMATE

Nah.

RAY

He knew me.

CELLMATE

Too late.

RAY

First time he wrote. Didn't ask.

CELLMATE

Talkin' nonsense.

RAY

Everyone who knew what I'd done asked. Asked if were true. What I done. He never did.

CELLMATE

(interrupts)

I know what ya done.

RAY

(keeps going)

No. He never did because he said he knew me. Trusted me.

CELLMATE

Hah.

RAY

(keeps going)

Believed me. Said he couldn't see me doin' what they said I done. That I was good. He said. He thought. I was. He thought I was good. And now I get this letter from his -

CELLMATE

His what?

RAY

And now I get this here letter from his daughter.

CELLMATE

(a warning)

Ray. Don't you do it.

RAY

Maybe I just. Maybe I just want to do somethin' nice.

CELLMATE

(interrupts)

Nah.

RAY

(keeps going)

Be in the here and now. Remember someone I knew. Someone I. Someone who. Maybe I just want to pray. Pray for. Maybe I just want to ask -

CELLMATE

No prayer in cell, 45A, block 6. First rule you taught me when I stepped in. (short beat) Play.

RAY

No.

CELLMATE

Give me another movie, Ray. Another one. Give me another one.

RAY

No. I said no.

CELLMATE

All right. Do your thing.

RAY

“Dear...”

CELLMATE

(interrupts)

Don't matter to me if you tell her how sorry you are.

RAY

“Dear...”

CELLMATE

(interrupts)

For all the shitty things you done. Tell her you have no business writin'. That you're bad.

RAY

I'm not.

CELLMATE

Always have been. Don't matter what he said.

RAY

It does. It does matter.

CELLMATE

Doesn't matter to me 'cause he didn't really know you, did he? He don't know the TRUTH.

RAY

Sent me four hundred dollars a month - so I could save. Have a fresh start.

CELLMATE

Yeah. You don't get to keep money, Ray.

RAY

He sent checks.

CELLMATE

So. Can't cash 'em. Shoulda put money in your account. So you can buy cigarettes. Tampons. So you can make your fried noodles.

RAY

I saved 'em.

CELLMATE

Ain't worth shit if you don't cash 'em. What's the TRUTH, Ray?

RAY

Said I should get a place to live. A kitchen. Tomatoes. When I got out.

CELLMATE

Ain't that somethin'.

RAY

It is.

CELLMATE

Tucked away like some goddamned bad habit. You fooled 'im. But. I know you, Ray.

RAY

He was different.

CELLMATE

He sure was.

RAY

He was my friend.

CELLMATE

Yeah, he was. Don't mean shit to me. You wanna be like that? I don't care.

RAY

Wasn't like that. He was -

CELLMATE

He liked men, Ray. He liked you. That's what you told me. And you liked him. So.

RAY

Wasn't like that.

CELLMATE

TRUTH. Guards said. Read all your letters. Him to you. You to him. Oh they used to laugh, Ray, laugh so hard. "Dead End Ray got a fella".

RAY

(interrupts)

Said I could work in a flower shop. Like him. Make some money.

CELLMATE

Wear a skirt, Ray. Work at a flower shop. Buy your tampons. Your cigarettes. Fry your noodles. That's what you do.

RAY

I'm gonna have my own place.

CELLMATE

You ain't havin' shit, Ray. You ain't never gettin' out.

RAY

My own place with my own bathroom. A shower. Cook tomatoes. He said. He did. I could do it.

CELLMATE

Not you. No.

RAY

Put up my pictures.

CELLMATE

You threw them out.

RAY

Get a job. I don't care what it is as long as I have a little money coming in. The flower shop.

CELLMATE

Ya gotta check the box.

RAY

Nothin' stressful, you know. Nothin' beneath me. Just a somethin' to be proud of. Somethin' -

CELLMATE

Bag a crap. Nobody's gonna hire you. Nobody cares. Nobody wants you. You're dirt. You're garbage. Disgusting. Dead end. You're dead. You're dead. You're already -

RAY

(writes)

"Dear...dear...dear..."

Scratches out his writing. Starts again. Again and again.

CELLMATE

D-d-d-d-d-dear. Ooooooh. That dark night. The way you ran when you heard the sirens. Remember, Ray? Remember? You must be glad he never asked. Just believed what you told him. You lied.

RAY

I didn't.

CELLMATE

Tell his daughter, then. Tell her the truth. You gonna tell her? Awww sure. Tell her what happened. What you did. You remember what happened. You remember. Nah. You haven't blocked a thing.

RAY

(writes)

"Dear..."

CELLMATE

Wiping your hands on your pants. Watchin' that stupid old woman drop to her knees. Slidin' on down. I heard all of it. Tell her that.

RAY

(writes)

"Dear...dear...dear...". God. Let me finish.

CELLMATE

Get time. Lose time. Forget time. (softly) It's time, Ray.

Smooths his piece of paper. Grabs his pen.

RAY

(writes) "Dear..." "Dear..." "DEAR..." GODDAMMIT. I just wanna say I knew her father. That's all. Give me peace! He was a good man. He was a friend to me. (softly) Answering his first letter was the best part of anything I'd ever done. That's it. That's all. That's all I wanna say.

Beat.

CELLMATE

But.

RAY

...

CELLMATE

He didn't know you.

RAY

Shutupshutupshutup. (writing) "Dear..."

CELLMATE

"Dear nice, well-brought-up white lady. I ain't seen female flesh since 1996. You don't know me but maybe you seen my face on them posters." Piece of shit. You got nothin' to say to anybody.  
PLAY. THE. GAME.

Defeated, RAY crumples the page and begins the game.

RAY

Met a girl. Dirt road. Drank too much. Town to town. Took and took. Stole a car. Grabbed her hand. And.

CELLMATE

(softly)

You can do it, Ray.

RAY

FUCK YOU.

CELLMATE

Yeah! That's RIGHT.

RAY

(interrupts; gaining speed)

Maybe the car was long and sleek and black and dark in the night in the street and the lights so fast by the window looking out can't see but my girl is laughing and the bullets come and they rip and they rip and they rip and they rip blows apart and the black has holes and I can't feel my hands and I look to my right and there's nothing there but my girl and she's old NO and she grabs and I lose and she slides in the dark and my hands on my pants wipe them off in the dark and the black and end and she spits and she says she loves me but I don't love her and then I slide and then I slide and then I slide and then I slide and she's gone but no matter what.

No matter what happens.

No matter what.

I'll be all right. Didn't do nothin'. Didn't do.

Beat.

RAY (CONT.)

I'll be all right. I'm gonna be all right. I'm all. I'm all. I'm all. I'm all.

CELLMATE

There ya go, Ray.

RAY

(almost in tears)

Fuck you.

CELLMATE

Bonnie and Clyde. Yeah, man. Bonnie. And Clyde.

RAY

...

CELLMATE

Am I right, Ray?

RAY

Fuck you.

Lights out.

4.

Lights up. BILLIE and FATHEAD sit in a row of chairs with MARIBELLE. FATHEAD pinches the palm of his hand to keep from singing. His outbursts are now single words that burp from his mouth. The deceased's urn is down stage center, just in front of our three mourners, in a darkened part of the room. They all stare at it. This is the wake. They stare at the urn.

MARIBELLE

Jesus Christ on a bike. I mean. Really.

FATHEAD

OCK.

MARIBELLE

This isn't right.

BILLIE

...

FATHEAD

(softly, pinching himself)

Uh. Bill.

BILLIE

Shutup.

MARIBELLE

I mean. It's. It's disrespectful. Just standing there. Like that.

BILLIE

Okay.

MARIBELLE

Who told you to do it like this?

BILLIE

This is the way it came. This is how they do it. I don't know.

MARIBELLE

Well. It's. Wrong. Just sittin' there like that. (gestures to the urn) Ain't you never done one of these before?

BILLIE

Nope.

FATHEAD

Bill.

BILLIE

Shutup.

MARIBELLE

I mean. Should be a little more. I don't know. It's just all alone up there.

FATHEAD

Bill?

MARIBELLE

I'm just sayin'. If you'd done it right.

BILLIE  
What?

FATHEAD  
Bill. Bill. Bill. Bill.

MARIBELLE  
Where have you been?

FATHEAD  
OCK. OPE.

BILLIE  
Excuse me?

FATHEAD  
GAH.

MARIBELLE  
Where have you been? I'm askin' where you've been. I come all the way out here. See your face. I haven't seen you in twenty years. More. Probably more.

FATHEAD  
(a big pinch)  
OPE.

MARIBELLE  
I get your card; your call. Suddenly, I'm sittin' in a row a chairs wonderin' how I'm ever gonna say goodbye to my best friend?! And then I come here. And. And. I gotta look at *this*.

FATHEAD  
OCK.

MARIBELLE  
How am I supposed to do that? And you -

BILLIE  
What?

MARIBELLE  
You should be ashamed of yourself.

BILLIE

Um –

FATHEAD

OH. OH. OH.

MARIBELLE

(talking over)

When my mother was sick, God rest her, I was there.

BILLIE

He wasn't sick.

MARIBELLE

(talking over)

The whole time. Diabetes. Took her by inches.

BILLIE

He wasn't sick.

MARIBELLE

(talking over)

Barely recognized her at the end. Just pieces of her left. Fingers fallin' off her like candy. Just. Awful. Awful to watch.

Beat. MARIBELLE looks at FATHEAD.

MARIBELLE (CONT.)

Who are you?

FATHEAD

Um. Friend of Bill's.

MARIBELLE

Look at my teeth.

FATHEAD

What?

Weird smile for FATHEAD.

MARIBELLE  
You see anything?

FATHEAD  
No.

MARIBELLE  
Look in the back.

Opens her mouth wider. FATHEAD looks.

FATHEAD  
Uh. No.

MARIBELLE  
Found a pack of nuts on the bus. Didn't taste right.

FATHEAD/BILLIE  
What?

Gestures toward the urn.

MARIBELLE (CONT.)  
Why ya gotta put Frankie in the dark?

FATHEAD  
(blurts)  
OH.

BILLIE  
I'm sorry. I don't understa -

MARIBELLE  
He's in the dark!

FATHEAD  
(still pinching; blurts)  
AH.

MARIBELLE  
Not a light on 'im. You gotta.

FATHEAD  
OPE.

MARIBELLE  
You gotta move him. Shine a light.

FATHEAD  
Ack.

MARIBELLE  
(under her breath)  
*Come all the way down here.* Look! Look at this. Ya got the - the –

BILLIE  
Urn.

MARIBELLE  
YES. Ya got the urn. Just. Talk to someone. Tell ‘em you wanna. That tall skinny fella. Walks around. You saw ‘im. Wearin’ that awful suit with the lapels. Talk to him.

BILLIE  
I’m not gonna talk to -

FATHEAD  
(warning)  
*Bill.*

MARIBELLE  
No. No. Ya gotta ask someone who’s in charge. Or bring a light in. Can someone? (hollers behind her) Can someone bring one of them lamps over here? Silvio?! Silvio, honey, bring the lamp. THE. LAMP. BRING THE LAMP. Jo, tell Sil to bring the lamp. The other one. Gold. No. No. The one with the fringe. The fringe. Sil. The one with. With the fringe. Have him bring the – all right good. Bring it over here.

She moves to get up. Get the lamp herself. Sees that someone may be doing it for her.  
Sits back down.

BILLIE  
(under her breath)  
*Jesus.*

MARIBELLE

Your Uncle Silvio has had hearing problems since 1974. I've been shouting at that man since we was kids. (hollers) SILVIO. He can't hear me. Deaf as a bat. Since we was kids. I swear. SILVIO. You see?

FATHEAD  
OPE.

MARIBELLE digs in her purse. Looking for something. Can't find it.

MARIBELLE  
He made cookies today, your Uncle Silvio. They're in the kitchen. That kitchenette around the corner.

Abruptly turns to FATHEAD.

MARIBELLE (CONT.)  
My mascara look okay?

FATHEAD  
...

MARIBELLE  
Been crying since last Tuesday. Got some of that water proof. Waterproof mascara. I bought it at the Jewels. And. You know. They don't always keep that store clean. Probably bought it old. On Belmont. The store on Belmont Avenue. Too far west, you ask me. On Belmont. And them. Them pharmaceutical companies. Saying that what's in your mascara doesn't cause cancer even if you can't ever get it off even if you use Noxema.

BILLIE  
(a look)  
...

FATHEAD  
ACK. GOCK. OPE.

FATHEAD continues to pinch his hand to keep from singing.

MARIBELLE  
(to BILLIE)  
You don't wear make-up. So. You don't know.

FATHEAD  
You look. You look good.

MARIBELLE

Thank you. I mean. I just don't know. My eyes are puffy.

BILLIE

(a look)

...

MARIBELLE

Silvio's got them cookies. Put 'em in the kitchen. Big plate of 'em. Kitchenette in a funeral parlour. My land. With that smell. Everything smells. Who brings baked goods into a funeral parlour? Your deaf goddamned Uncle, that's who. All kinds of cookies, your Uncle Silvio baked. (holler) SILVIO. Bring the LAMP. (shouting) Jo, honey, tell Silvio - bring the lamp. I thought he was gonna - (short beat) this isn't right. Tell him. Or. Ask someone who's inchar -

BILLIE

I'm in charge.

MARIBELLE

I mean someone who works here.

FATHEAD

(blurts)

OH.

BILLIE

We're not moving the urn.

MARIBELLE

But -

BILLIE

We already spoke to the guy and this is the set up.

They sit. Stare at the urn. Long silence.

MARIBELLE

Well.

BILLIE

...

MARIBELLE

I just.

FATHEAD

Bill. Maybe you should –

BILLIE

Shut up.

FATHEAD

I'm just sayin' –

BILLIE

No lamp.

MARIBELLE

Well.

FATHEAD

Bill.

BILLIE

Shut up.

Awkward, long as hell silence.

MARIBELLE

I never thanked him.

BILLIE

What?

MARIBELLE

Your father. I never thanked him.

BILLIE

For *what*?

FATHEAD

You could say somethin' now.

MARIBELLE

Wouldn't be the same.

Long beat.

FATHEAD

(looking at BILLIE but speaking to MARIBELLE)

Maybe you could tell people how much he mattered to you and how glad you are to be here. Maybe you could say how nice it is to see everyone and show your respect. Because he really did mean something to you. He meant something to everyone here.

MARIBELLE

I don't care about these motherfuckers. Except maybe your Aunt Jo. She was a nun.

BILLIE chokes on a laugh.

BILLIE

Okay.

FATHEAD

ACK. JEEZ.

MARIBELLE

There was no one like him, your father. No one who did what he did. No one who cared like he cared. That's special. What he did all them years. He was a special man. A good man.

BILLIE scowls. Stares at the urn. In the pit of MARIBELLE's stomach is a wail of FRANKIEEEEE that threatens to erupt when she pauses.

MARIBELLE (CONT.)

My God. (softly) Why are we here? Why?

BILLIE

Yeah. Why are we here?

FATHEAD

Bill.

MARIBELLE

When we was kids, your father was the only man that was ever nice to us. Oh. (eruption) FRANKIEEEEEEE. No one who saw us. Lined up against that wall at the club waitin', just waitin' for someone to ask. None of them other cousins. Them good lookin' ones with the girls and the cars. Tight. Pants. They were such. They were good lookin'. With their cigarettes and their fancy lighters. Motherfuckers. God rest 'em. (sign of the cross) But your father? Always thought of us girls. Always. He did. Ask anyone here. Ask. SILVIO. Jo, get Silvio. Silvio. SILVIO COME HERE. TELL BILLIE ABOUT...about...oh...oh...oh...FranKEEEEEEE.

BILLIE  
(under her breath)  
*Fucking hell.*

MARIBELLE  
The thought of it. Just. All us girls. Lined up against that wall. Waitin' for a dance. So. So. Oh and your father. He worried about us, your father did. Made sure we was taken care of. Had someone to dance with. Oh and in high school.

BILLIE  
Austin High school.

MARIBELLE  
Oh you know about Austin?

BILLIE  
Not really.

MARIBELLE  
High school was a misery, but your father -

FATHEAD  
(pinching; blurts)  
URP.

MARIBELLE  
(talking over) - he made sure. He cared. Them other boys? Them ones that sat at the tables and smoked. They'd make fun. Oh they'd say things to make your flesh stand on end. Terrible things. They said. But not our Frankie. Not - oh my - that poor man - not our Frankie (a weak gesture to the urn). (an eruption) FRANKIEEEEEEE. He pulled us off them walls and asked us to dance. In high school, my sister Delores – you never met her - was picked on somethin' terrible. No one knows why. Well. I know why but no use bringing up here now. That was a long time ago. She's dead and so it goes.

BILLIE  
Okay.

The more MARIBELLE talks, the deeper BILLIE's scowl grows.

MARIBELLE  
Delores was the youngest of us. God rest her. But she was a horrible human being. And that's a fact. Ask anyone. Ask your Uncle Silvio. (shouts) SILVIO. And every day after school, our

Frankie – our Frankie – oh - no matter how nasty she was - our Frankie - oh - Frankie! He walked her home. Oh Frankie. FRANKIEEEEEEE.

MARIBELLE gestures toward the urn. FATHEAD gets up to move it.

BILLIE  
Sit down.

FATHEAD sits.

BILLIE  
We're not moving the urn.

MARIBELLE  
FRANKIEEEEE!

BILLIE  
That's where the urn goes. We keep the urn where it goes. Can't move the urn.

MARIBELLE  
But poor Frankie. It's. It's.

BILLIE  
It's in the dark. Yup.

FATHEAD  
I'm sure she would, eh, do somethin' if she could. Wouldn't ya, Bill?

BILLIE  
(a look)

...

MARIBELLE gives the sign of the cross. BILLIE and FATHEAD awkwardly; halfheartedly follow suit.

MARIBELLE  
I never thanked him.

BILLIE  
You said.

FATHEAD  
Say somethin' now.

MARIBELLE  
Wouldn't be the same.

Beat.

MARIBELLE (CONT.)  
Haven't thought about high school in years. Austin High School. Your father was such a dancer.

Abrupt beat.

MARIBELLE (CONT.)  
You wanna candy?

Digs in her purse. Pulls out one, two, three hard candies.

BILLIE  
What?

MARIBELLE  
A candy. You wanna butterscotch?

BILLIE  
No.

MARIBELLE  
You?

FATHEAD  
Yeah. Sure.

Gives FATHEAD the candy. They unwrap and resume staring at the urn.

MARIBELLE  
That color is awful.

BILLIE  
It's beige.

MARIBELLE  
A beige urn for Frankie. Imagine. He didn't like beige.

BILLIE

...

FATHEAD

...

MARIBELLE

I don't like beige. It's not a real color.

Long beat.

MARIBELLE (CONT.)

Did you find his novel?

BILLIE

What?

MARIBELLE

His novel. Been workin' on it for years.

BILLIE

No. Eh. Not yet.

FATHEAD

(to BILLIE)

I didn't find anything.

MARIBELLE

You have to promise me. You'll find that novel.

FATHEAD/BILLIE

Okay.

MARIBELLE

Wanted you to be proud of him. Since you was a writer, too.

BILLIE

I don't write.

FATHEAD

Whattya mean – (oof).

BILLIE elbows FATHEAD.

BILLIE

I haven't written in years.

MARIBELLE

That's odd. He always said –

FATHEAD

Bill.

BILLIE

(talking over)

I don't write.

MARIBELLE

- you wrote somethin' beautiful. Beautiful writer, he said.

BILLIE

(talking over)

I'm not a writer. I don't write anymore.

MARIBELLE

But your father –

BILLIE

(talking over)

Nope.

MARIBELLE

Well, he. Anways. He. Wanted you to know how much he loved you. *He* wrote about that, you know. Always wanted what was best for you. He worked so hard on the book. I'm surprised he never told you about it.

FATHEAD

I didn't find anything in his apartme - oof.

BILLIE gives another elbow to FATHEAD.

BILLIE

What's it about?

MARIBELLE

He didn't tell you?

BILLIE

Nope.

MARIBELLE

That's so odd. Imagine.

BILLIE

Isn't it?

MARIBELLE occasionally looks at the urn as though FRANK was standing there and was part of the conversation.

MARIBELLE

Well. From what I remember. It's about a man who goes off in search of himself. High adventures. And he has a little girl with him. Can't remember her name. And they travel and they travel and they travel. They have no money, of course. They eat powdered eggs outta boxes.

BILLIE

Wait. What?

MARIBELLE

(talking over)

Sleep in the car.

BILLIE

Wait a minute.

MARIBELLE

(talking over)

Beg their family for money. The fridge is empty. The eggs are gone. But the man keeps travelin' until one day he leaves the little girl behind. In New York City. A magical place.

BILLIE

OH. MY. GOD.

MARIBELLE

(talking over)

Right in the middle of Hell's Kitchen, he called it. I don't know what that means. But. That's what your father said.

FATHEAD

Bill. Bill. Bill. Get the door. The door. The door.

MARIBELLE is oblivious.

MARIBELLE

(talking over)

Left that little girl behind. Some hotel. Standing at the window. He knows this is best. Because the room is magic. He knows that she's a smart little girl and she can take care of herself while he's gone. Because she has -

BILLIE

- a dog.

MARIBELLE

Yes! How did you know? Named -

MARIBELLE/BILLIE

Puddin.

MARIBELLE

So he did tell you about the book.

BILLIE

...

MARIBELLE

Isn't that somthin'?

Long beat.

MARIBELLE (CONT.)

What do you think about the story?

BILLIE

What do I think?

FATHEAD

(a warning)

*Bill.*

MARIBELLE

Your father loved telling that story.

BILLIE

Well, all right -

FATHEAD  
OOP.

BILLIE  
He said it was a story?

MARIBELLE  
From the book, yeah. Talked about it all the time. About a young man's courage -

BILLIE  
*COURAGE?!*

MARIBELLE  
Your father wrote it all down. Such a beautiful ending.

BILLIE  
*Beautiful - ?!!*

FATHEAD  
Did you, eh, read it?

MARIBELLE  
Oh no. He wasn't finished. Said I could read it when he finished. Shame. Shame he's not here to  
– not here to – oh – oh – oh –

FATHEAD  
Bill -

BILLIE  
Shut up.

They all stare at the urn. MARIBELLE begins to cry. Little hiccoughs that turn into small  
“ohhhs.”

MARIBELLE  
Oh Frankie. I'm so sorry. FRANKIEEEEEEE.

BILLIE  
Oh yeah. We're ALL so sorry. Poor Frankie. Poor, poor Frankie. It's such a shame Frankie isn't  
here, man. Wouldn't it be GREAT to have one more conversation with “poor” Frankie? Wouldn't  
that be GREAT if he could just finish the story?!!

FATHEAD speaks as he's escorting a furious BILLIE toward the exit as MARIBELLE dissolves into sloppy tears.

FATHEAD

Okay. Time for a break.

MARIBELLE

I wanna talk to FRANKEEEEEEE.

BILLIE

I don't need a break.

FATHEAD

Oh yes you do.

MARIBELLE

FRANKEEEEEEEEE.

BILLIE

Where are we goin'?

MARIBELLE

SILVIO.

FATHEAD

The kitchen.

Lights out.

5.

Lights up on FRANK. Typing in his studio apartment. He sits for a moment. The pile of crumbled pages at his feet is even larger.

FRANK

(typing)

*Attend.*

Back space. Back space.

FRANK (CONT.)

(typing)

*Attend.*

Rips out the page; begins again.

FRANK (CONT.)

(typing)

*Attend.*

Rips out the page; begins again. A new piece of paper.

FRANK (CONT.)

(typing)

*When there was a story. If there was a story. He told it. So everyone knew. Everyone knew who he was. And. What. He.*

The lights begin to fade.

FRANK (CONT.)

(typing)

*Wished for. Tucked in the pocket of his. Low ride. Jeans.*

Lights out.

6.

Lights up on RAY. Where we left him. CELLMATE on the top bunk. Obscured. His back to the audience.

CELLMATE

You wanna talk about it?

RAY

No.

CELLMATE

I think you should talk about it.

RAY

...

CELLMATE

Listen, Ray, trust me when I say this: I know how this goes.

RAY

...

CELLMATE

How long you known me?

RAY

Twenty years.

CELLMATE

Twenty years. Cellmates. In this box. You don't like to talk about it but I don't mind.

RAY

...

CELLMATE

Whattya got in those boxes, Ray? What are in the boxes?

RAY

Nothing.

CELLMATE

(sings)

Regrets. I've had a few.

Short beat.

CELLMATE (CONT.)

How many years did you bitch to me about not gettin' any real mail? About gettin' shit from people who thought having pen pals in here was crazy. All those years, you had pen pals.

"Attention seekers", you called 'em. How many years? Someone finally sent you letters, Ray. A real friend. Boxes of 'em.

RAY

Five. Five years.

CELLMATE

Five years, Ray. Every day for five years. You bitched. And in those five years. Nobody came to visit. Nobody called. You didn't call no one. Why is that, you think? Nobody even comes now, I guess you could say.

RAY

I don't know.

CELLMATE

You don't know.

RAY

Because I didn't want to talk to no one.

CELLMATE

You talk to me.

RAY

That's not the same.

CELLMATE

Admit it.

RAY

What?

CELLMATE

Oh Ray. Don't make me work so hard.

RAY

...

CELLMATE

...

RAY

Admit what?

CELLMATE

Knew you for twenty years and never heard you admit it.

RAY

Admit what?

CELLMATE

No Rockefeller put you in this cage, Ray. This here is your doin'.

RAY

They trumped that shit up.

RAY rubs his temples.

RAY (CONT.)

You shouldn't be talkin'. You know. I think it's. I think it's "quiet time."

CELLMATE

I'm talkin' 'cause I know you want me to.

Beat.

RAY

I'll write her.

CELLMATE

(softly) You got the address. She made sure it was on the outside of the envelope. That means she wants you to write.

RAY

Maybe.

CELLMATE

Whattya want to say?

RAY

...

CELLMATE

Ray?

RAY

(softly)

That I'm sorry for her loss.

CELLMATE

That's a good start.

RAY

...

CELLMATE

What else ya gonna say, Ray?

Long beat. RAY grabs pen and paper. About to write.

CELLMATE (CONT.)

Why don't you really tell her somethin'.

RAY

What?

CELLMATE

You know.

RAY

That it was dark?

CELLMATE

(softly)

There it is.

RAY

That there wasn't a street lamp.

CELLMATE

(softly) Go on.

RAY

Hadn't turned on yet. Or maybe it did and I didn't notice. It was just. Dark. And I couldn't sleep. Never could sleep then. And I was hungry. I was always hungry. Old woman across the street had a garden in her yard. Right in the city. She had a garden.

CELLMATE

Isn't that nice. What else?

RAY

She had corn.

CELLMATE

I like corn.

RAY

Every day, I'd ask her to share. Just a few tomatoes, maybe. I wasn't working, so. My wife. My daughter, they loved tomatoes.

CELLMATE

Everyone loves tomatoes.

RAY

My wife worked nights. Worked all the time 'cause I couldn't.

CELLMATE

Couldn't work?

RAY

(softly)

I could work. I just. Didn't.

CELLMATE

There ya go.

RAY

Woman across the street. Old woman. She knew this. She knew we were hungry. Me. My wife. My kid. Wouldn't give me any - any tomatoes even when I asked nice. Even when she knew we were strugglin'. The whole block knew. And I was gonna share. I had a family to feed and I was just hopin' for a little help. But people. The neighbors. They all talked. About me. About us.

CELLMATE

People should mind their business.

RAY

I just wanted a few tomatoes. That's all. Didn't want nothin' else.

CELLMATE

What did you do?

RAY

I just. I had the bag of tomatoes and she come tearing outta her screen door with that old night dress she always wore. Hollering at me to put 'em down. That I ain't got no right. That she worked hard for that garden. And everyone knew - everyone knew - (anguished) everyone knew.

CELLMATE

Everyone knew what, Ray?

RAY

(anguished) What kinda man I was.

CELLMATE

Nothing wrong with you, Ray, is there?

RAY

I took. I took them tomatoes. Dropped the whole bag and stomped on them. Just. The whole bag. Thought she was gonna lose her mind. She. She came after me. Just like that. Like I'd crushed her kid. Somethin'. Standing on them tomatoes. And she said to me. She said "You are not right in the head, Raymond. Your wife shoulda left you years ago." And. And. And.

CELLMATE

What happened Ray?

RAY

I couldn't see her face. Just heard her voice and my hand reached out and. And.

CELLMATE

What happened Ray?

RAY

I don't know. I didn't. I can't remember. I can't remember.

CELLMATE

The *sliiiiide*.

RAY

She was grabbin' at me. And I --

CELLMATE

You watched her slide into the dirt. Clutchin' at your pants.

RAY

(softly)

Yeah.

CELLMATE

I always liked the smell of dirt.

RAY

...

CELLMATE

You know why?

RAY

No.

CELLMATE

It's real. You can trust that smell. Dirt reminds me of 4:00am. Gettin' up. Walkin' through the corn. Leaves cuttin' into the crease of my elbow. The sweat and the dirt. Real.

RAY

...

CELLMATE

What do you remember of the outside. Ray?

RAY

I don't remember anything.

CELLMATE

Sure you do. You remember the smell of -

RAY

I said I don't remember.

CELLMATE

Sure do remember what it smells like in here, don't you Ray?

Beat.

CELLMATE (CONT.)

This tooth I got here. Fell out weeks ago. Months ago. Maybe a year. How long has it been, Ray? Dental hygiene is important. Doc said this lost tooth coulda given me the heart attack. Bad teeth did. But you knew that 'cause you saw me. Right here. Top bunk. Rollin' around like I couldn't get air. Last time you saw my face.

RAY

Stop talkin'.

CELLMATE

Why don't you tell me what you remember? The smell out there. The smell in here.

RAY  
No.

CELLMATE

She was just the old woman across the street. Didn't like you much. And I was up in this here bunk havin' a heart attack and you didn't do a thing. 'Cause you were angry with me about some such and such and didn't want to help. So you just watched. Bad temper got ya here, Ray. Bad temper's all ya got.

RAY jumps into the game quickly. Speaks faster and faster until.

RAY

More horses were comin' the sound of their hooves and the dust that sprayed up as they ate up the space and our lead was dwinlin' and then there were shots and we couldn't see the end we couldn't see the road somethin' was comin' somethin' down the line forget about the money forget about the job just you and me and the edge of a cliff and we jumped.

CELLMATE

Sundance Kid. Kinda lame, Ray.

Beat.

CELLMATE (CONT.)

Before me it was Bill Kotter. Joliet 153-D-47. Before him it was Antonio Capirci. Joliet 047-D-12. And before him it was Jeremiah Stephens. Joliet 007-4-01. And before him, there was nothin' but swamp.

Beat.

CELLMATE (CONT.)

What's my name, Ray?

RAY

(softly)

Joey Napolitano.

CELLMATE

Why don't you tell her how sorry you are for watchin' Joey Napolitano have a heart attack right here. Right on this bunk. Doin' nothing. Tell her you had a beef with me. Kept you from shoutin' for the guards. Tell her that. Admit. ADMIT.

RAY

I didn't do that.

CELLMATE

You did. You petty sonofabith. You let me roll around up here, gaspin' for air - shoutin' for you. Beggin' you. Call for the guards. And you. You.

RAY

I let you die.

CELLMATE

Yes you did.

Beat.

RAY

(writes) "Dear...Billie."

A creak of movement from the top bunk. The CELLMATE moves.

RAY

What do I say?

CELLMATE

...

RAY

Tell me what to say.

CELLMATE

...

RAY

TELL ME WHAT TO SAY!!

CELLMATE slowly rolls over as though to reveal his face. Lights out.

7.

Lights up. FRANK in his apartment. The typewriter, idle. The stack of crumpled papers, larger. A pot of sauce now on the stove. Bubbling. He sits and stares. A really long beat. He gets up. Reaches for the phone. Lights out.

8.

Lights up. The wake. MARIBELLE and FATHEAD sit. They stare at the urn. Plate of overly large cookies on MARIBELLE's lap. FATHEAD grabs a cookie. It's huge. Eats.

MARIBELLE

Oatmeal, chocolate chips, nuts, raisins. All mixed together.

FATHEAD

They're heavy.

MARIBELLE

Took an hour to bake each of 'em. That's what Silvio said. Said he didn't know what to bake so he mixed them all together.

FATHEAD

Huh.

They sit and eat. BILLIE enters with a small box of kleenex. Sits.

BILLIE

Kleenex.

MARIBELLE

Oh thank you.

MARIBELLE grabs a tissue. Blows her nose.

MARIBELLE (CONT.)

This such a nice wake. I wish Frankie could be here.

BILLIE

...

MARIBELLE

Oh my poor Frankie. My poor, poor Frankie.

Sniffles. Hiccoughs. A wimper. Short beat.

MARIBELLE (CONT.)

Cookie?

BILLIE  
No thanks.

MARIBELLE  
I eat when I'm stressed.

Awkward beat.

BILLIE  
How long has it been since you talked to my father?

MARIBELLE  
To Frankie?

FATHEAD  
(a warning)  
Bill.

MARIBELLE  
Oh I don't know.

BILLIE  
Why are you here?

MARIBELLE  
Because I loved your father. Because -

BILLIE  
How long since you spoke him?

MARIBELLE  
I don't know. It's been -

BILLIE  
How long?

FATHEAD  
(a warning)  
Bill.

BILLIE  
I'd LOVE to hear -

FATHEAD  
Bill.

BILLIE  
- just how long it's been since you talked to my father.

MARIBELLE, perplexed. Thinking.

MARIBELLE  
Well. Let me think. Guess it's been. Two weeks since we found out. (gestures to the urn), so.  
Two weeks.

BILLIE  
Wait. What?

MARIBELLE  
I guess. Two, three weeks ago.

BILLIE  
Two, three weeks ago?

FATHEAD  
(a warning)  
Bill.

MARIBELLE  
He was making lists, he said. A pot of sauce, too, I think. On the stove. He mighta had an old movie on the tv. For background. You know how he likes those old black and whites. Talked to him all the time. Every Sunday like clockwork. Oh every Sunday. My Frankie. My. My.  
(pitifully) *Frankie*.

FATHEAD  
Every - wait a minute.

MARIBELLE  
(sniffing) Every Sunday -

MARIBELLE/BILLIE  
- like clock work.

MARIBELLE  
He was such a good. Such a good man. Oh Frankie.

BILLIE

That mother -

FATHEAD

Eh. You talked to him all the time?

BILLIE

She just said that. She said she talked to him all the time.

MARIBELLE

Not just me. We all did. The whole family. Every Sunday like clockwork.

BILLIE

You spoke. To my father. Every Sunday.

MARIBELLE

Oh honey. Not just every Sunday. We spoke all the time. Your father was always on that phone.

Checks in with both BILLIE and FATHEAD.

MARIBELLE (CONT.)

Oh my. You look. Honey, your face is red. You sure you're not too. That this doesn't upset you, does it? You wanna hear more? This must be so hard for you. I can't imagine. Losing your. Losing your. (looking at the urn; an eruption) OH MY GOD WHYYYYYYYY!

FATHEAD

(still pinching)

Bill. Bill. Bill. Bill.

BILLIE gets up. Moves the urn closer to the light. The urn is surprisingly heavy.

BILLIE

(as she moves the urn)

Jesus Christ. There. The urn is moving. Into the light. The urn is in the light. All lit up, the urn. (abruptly) Tell me again. When did you last talk to my dad? What did he say?

MARIBELLE

Two weeks ago.

BILLIE

Two weeks ago? What the -

FATHEAD

Bill.

MARIBELLE

On a Sunday. Oh Frank. Fraaaaaaank. Oh. Oh. Oh Frankie!

A few hiccoughs and the tears come.

BILLIE

That motherfucker.

FATHEAD jumps up.

FATHEAD

Okay. Time to go.

Grabs BILLIE's arm.

BILLIE

Wait a minute. I wanna hear what she has to say.

MARIBELLE

(in tears)

I didn't mean to upset you. Oh. Oh. FRANKEEEEEE.

BILLIE

Jesus CHRIST. No. I wanna stay.

FATHEAD

Nope. Nope. Nope. Out for walk. Out in the parking lot for you.

Now he grabs her and drags her to the door.

BILLIE

I wanna stay. I wanna hear what she has to say. That shitty motherfuck-

Forcibly moves BILLIE to the door. Lights out.

9.

Lights up on RAY in his cell. The CELLMATE on his bunk. Silent. RAY sits with pen and paper. He writes.

RAY

(writing) "Dear Billie. I got your letter. Thank you for writin'. You didn't have to. I have a daughter just your age, I think. Maybe a year or two younger. (softly) I don't think I've seen her in thirty years."

RAY crumples the page. A new piece of paper. RAY writes.

RAY (CONT.)

"You didn't have to write me back. But you did. I'm glad you did. You coulda thrown out them letters. I'm glad you didn't."

CELLMATE

Tell her the truth, Ray.

RAY

I don't know what to say.

CELLMATE

Read her letter.

Beat. RAY picks up BILLIE's letter. Carefully pulls it from the envelope. Unfolds it. Reads.

RAY

*"Dear Ray.*

*My name is Billie.*

*And I'm Frank's daughter.*

*He may not have told you about me.*

*But.*

*I found your letters in his apartment.*

*And I see that you've been friends for a long time.*

*I'm sorry to write that my father died.*

*A little over two weeks ago.*

*A heart attack in his sleep.*

*We don't know eachother.*

*But I didn't want you to think that he stopped writing.*

*For any other reason than this.*

*I thought you should know. Billie"*

RAY folds up the letter. Puts it in his pocket. A bell rings and all the prison doors swing open. A voice from off stage shouts "ROLL CALL" and RAY steps outside the bars. At attention.

10.

Lights up. Outside the funeral home. In the parking lot. FATHEAD stands. BILLIE on her knees at his feet. On the concrete, pulling scraps of paper out of her pockets. Two letters. On which she was directed to write to FRANK and burn at his funeral the other - a mystery.

FATHEAD

What are you doing?

BILLIE

That motherfucker. Give me your lighter.

FATHEAD digs in his pocket. Hands BILLIE the lighter.

FATHEAD

What're ya gonna do?

BILLIE

Bake a fucking cake. What does it look like I'm gonna do?

FATHEAD

What is it?

BILLIE

A letter.

FATHEAD

This isn't a good idea.

BILLIE

"We all talked to him. Every Sunday. Like clockwork." Had me living like a five cent puppy livin' outta a cardboard box. Tellin' me none of these fuckin' stupid people loved him. But I. I loved him. So I never talked to them again. An entire family of people in there who were just so fucking nice to me. I could barely stand it. And I was a jerk. I was jerky to them. All proud of being loyal to that JACKASS. Because he. He told me they didn't love him. He told me they didn't want a gay son. A fag brother. That shitty -

Lights a corner of the letter. It goes out.

BILLIE (CONT.)

So I. I. GODDAMMIT. I joined [classmates.com](http://classmates.com). You wanna know why? 'Cause I'm fucking. I'm pathetic. That wasn't a joke, Fathead. I wanted to know who my dad was. What people thought about him. At a time when I wasn't around and taking care of him because he'd – he'd – Jesus. When he was all fucked up and living in the park. On the street.

She unfolds the letter she's written to FRANK. Lights an edge. It burns. Then goes out.

BILLIE (CONT.)

Classmates.com. A bullshit site to stalk people you didn't like in high school. Because my stupid. My stupid dad was gone - dead - melted into that stupid floor of his hot stupid apartment - and I didn't even know who the hell he was!!! I didn't get a chance to know him.

FATHEAD

He was your dad.

BILLIE

Then why did he lie to me?

FATHEAD

I don't know.

BILLIE

He told me they were mean to him. He told me they disowned him and he was my dad and I -

FATHEAD

You were just a kid.

BILLIE

- believed him. Shut up. Let me do this. Why didn't he tell me?

FATHEAD

I don't know.

BILLIE

I don't even know my own father. What the fuck? What the fuck did I do all those years? Not asking for help because I thought there was no one TO ask. Every time he lost a job. Or had no money. Living on the streets. I took him in. Me. Got him his own pillow, even. And. And. Then I find out. All those people. Talked to him. All the time. Every Sunday. Like clockwork.

She lights the paper. Nothing.

BILLIE (CONT.)

I took him in. When I had nothing but a stick of butter in my refrigerator, I took that guy in. Told him I'd go to Northwestern with him. Get him meds. A diagnosis. Somethin'. So he could actually have a decent life. I told him I'd sit with him and the doctor. Make sure everything was all right. But he just sat there on the futon. For three weeks. Just sat there. And that wasn't the only time. No.

Beat. She lights the paper again. Nothing.

BILLIE (CONT.)

He wrote a novel?! I'm supposed to find his novel?! What the hell did he write? That wasn't a novel. That was him telling that stupid woman about the worst summer of my life. My, my dog and FRANK. FRANK telling us we were gonna to go home after a week. We were gone all summer. Drove to New York City and he just left me there for for four days. Alone. No food. No money. Just me, Puddin' and a fuckin' can a beans but no can opener.

FATHEAD

I didn't know.

BILLIE

Of course you didn't. Because who talks about this shit?

FATHEAD

Let me help.

Reaches for the lighter.

BILLIE

Fuck off. I can do it myself. He wrote a novel!??

She lights the paper. Nothing.

BILLIE (CONT.)

I've been talking to him for thirty years -

FATHEAD

I know.

BILLIE

- and I have no idea who he is. I've never been to his apartment. I don't even know how he lives. And now I meet all these. These fucking people. These nice fucking people and - and -

FATHEAD  
(softly)  
It's okay, Bill.

BILLIE  
Tell me again.

FATHEAD  
I told you already.

BILLIE  
Just tell me the whole thing. What you found.

FATHEAD  
...

BILLIE  
Tell me right now or I swear to GOD. I'm gonna set myself on fire and walk back in there and start punching people.

FATHEAD  
(abruptly)  
It was a studio apartment. That's all. Small. He had a lotta stuff all over the floor.

BILLIE  
What else?

FATHEAD  
C'mon Bill.

BILLIE  
What else?

Beat.

FATHEAD  
It was. Dirty. Probably because they just left it after they, you know. After, eh, they – (a gesture)

BILLIE  
Picked up the body.

FATHEAD  
Yeah.

Beat.

FATHEAD (CONT)

It made me kinda sad, Bill. It was a lonely room. His place. Just, all junked up. And you know what? It kinda fit. You know? Man, I knew your dad for a thousand years. I liked him. Even when he was douche-y, he was kinda funny.

BILLIE

He wasn't funny.

FATHEAD

I know.

BILLIE

...

FATHEAD

The only real pictures he had up were of you. Tons of them. And calendars. He had a frigload of calendars.

Lights up on FRANK. In his apartment. With the posters. Various calendars throughout the years: MR. LEATHER. 1979. 1980. 1974. Hot guys with body hair and outrageous mustaches. A small tv tray table at which FRANK sits typing on an old Olivetti Underwood typewriter.

BILLIE

What else?

FATHEAD

A lot of bags of beans.

BILLIE

Jesus.

FATHEAD

A lot of pictures of guys. From magazines and stuff. On the table and the walls. Just taped up there.

BILLIE

...

FATHEAD

I didn't take them down.

BILLIE

Good.

FATHEAD

I don't know. Maybe I should have. The police were kinda.

BILLIE

No. It was right to keep them up.

BILLIE attempts to light the letter.

FATHEAD

What'd you write?

BILLIE

(sullen)

Nothing.

FATHEAD

Who told you to do this?

BILLIE

Stephanie.

FATHEAD

Who's Stephanie?

BILLIE

Shut up.

Beat.

BILLIE (CONT.)

(sullen) My. Therapist.

FATHEAD

You've got a therapist? (short beat) Work better if you lit a small piece first. On the corner there.

BILLIE

Shut up.

FATHEAD looks back to the funeral home.

FATHEAD

Bill. Bill, it's not lighting. Let's go back.

BILLIE

THAT (points to the funeral home) fucking guy told me they all disowned him.

FATHEAD

(singing) I DID IT MY WAAAAAY. Goddammit.

BILLIE

Jesus. What's wrong with you?

FATHEAD

I can't help it.

BILLIE

You can't even hear the song out here.

FATHEAD

I know. It's a tic. It's in my head now. Been listenin' to it for the last hour. (short beat) Let me try.

Grabs the lighter. The letter. Lights. They watch the letter burn.

BILLIE

I kept myself away from this whole family. Everyone in this fucking room. Why did I do that?

FATHEAD

Because you were seven.

BILLIE

I haven't had a family for thirty years because my fucked up father decided to lie to me about who they were and how they felt about him. Who does that? Who lies to their - their own daughter. Their only fucking kid. About somethin' like that?

FATHEAD

We left that woman sitting there. With a box of kleenex.

BILLIE

Fuck her.

FATHEAD

Let's go back in.

BILLIE

Let me just do this and we can go.

FATHEAD

There's an hour left.

BILLIE

...

BILLIE

It's too late.

Lights another edge of the page. The letter finally burns.

FATHEAD

It's not. Close the account. The [classmates.com](http://classmates.com) account. Don't check the messages. Go back in there and really, I mean really, find out who these people are.

BILLIE

...

Watches the letter burn.

FATHEAD

You can do it, Bill.

FATHEAD stomps on the letter. Ashes.

FATHEAD (CONT.)

C'mon. Let's go. Come back in and talk to them, Bill. Talk to you uncles. Your aunts. Say somethin' to the people in your dad's actual family. And so what. Yeah. He lied. Your father was a friggin' - he was an asshole.

BILLIE

GODDAMMIT.

FATHEAD

It's not too late.

BILLIE

...

FATHEAD

Let's go back in and learn somethin'.

FATHEAD extends his hand to BILLIE. She grabs it. Lights out.

11.

Lights up. RAY sits on his bunk. The upper bunk, empty. The ghost is gone. He goes to the small mirror above the small sink. Slicks back his hair. He's gettin' ready. Checks his image. He's satisfied. Sits back down. Grabs paper and pen. He writes. The lights fade.

12.

As the lights on RAY fade, the lights come up on MARIBELLE, FATHEAD and BILLIE. They sit in a solemn row. Now holding hands. They stare at the urn. The video recording of Sinatra's "My Way" plays. FATHEAD remains silent. The sit. They stare. The music plays. The song finishes. BILLIE begins to cry. Lights out.

13.

Lights up. FRANK sits at his typewriter, furiously typing. He's not there, but he is. He looks. He crumbles it and throws it in a stack at his feet. He does this two or three more times. Stops. Beat. Takes all the paper and the typewriter and throws it in a large garbage can by the sink. The door opens. It's BILLIE. Touches a few moustached calendars. The boxes. Sifts through them. Each box has items specific to the addressee. For MARI-BELLE, a small bag of hard candies (butterscotch); a small book. For RAY, a hand-written check from FRANK; pens and paper; books. Gets to her own box marked BILLIE. Sits. As she sits, she sees the child's laboratory backdrop. Goes to it. Touches it.

BILLIE

(softly)

Oh. My. God.

Grabs the laboratory backdrop. Pulls it downstage with the box.

BILLIE (CONT.)

You. Kept this ratty old thing.

Sits again. Pulls the laboratory backdrop around her. Pulls a letter from her pocket. RAY's letter. Lights up on RAY as she reads. He's writing. His CELLMATE, the ghost, gone.

BILLIE

(reading)

*“Dear Billie. I can’t thank you enough for writing. Lotta people wouldn’t have taken the trouble. Your dad was a good man. Thought you should know that, just because he wrote me in this place. Someone like me. That he was a good man. He told me all about you. What you do. What you’ve done. I’d guess I’ve known you since you were little. Even though we didn’t meet. I can’t imagine what it must be like. Gettin’ a letter like this from a place like this. Frank always said you’d be surprised by the company he kept. But he meant that as a joke.”*

RAY stops writing. Looks up to the top bunk. Continues.

BILLIE

(reading)

*“And I guess I just wished - I guess I just wish I’d gotten to know you a bit better. In person I mean. Although they keep telling me there’s no way I’m ever gonna get outta here. But. That’s another story. Guess what I’m trying to say is. I’m grateful. To you for writing me. For you dad. All these years. A lot of folks wouldn’t have bothered and I wouldn’t have known. Not for real. I woulda thought, maybe, if I hadn’t heard from him, that he just found someone else or got bored. I know it ain’t easy to wait. And I just thought it was important to say a few things before I go. Guess you’d call it advice. But. I don’t want you to feel you have to take it. Guess since I feel I’ve known you so long. Well. Guess I’m just gonna just put both feet in my mouth and write.”*

RAY

(writing)

*“I been scared since I was a kid. Ashamed to admit it, but. I’ll write it here. Scared someone see me for who I am. That I wasn’t good. Guess it’s no surprise that I landed here. Ha. Ha. We never had much growin’ up. I know alotta folks say this. But. Still. It was true for us. My family wasn’t bad. Neither was I. It’s just. Ya get to the point you’re just tryin’ impress folks. You ever done that? To fit in. And you start doin’ stupid shit. And pretty soon the stupid shit feels good because finally you belong somewhere. And then you just grow up. You get big. And the stupid shit is who you are. Whatever ya had before is gone. And then you start lookin’ around you and you see that the people that really get things done. The fellas that really get respect. Are the ones that put up their fists. Slap people around. Flash their money. So you do that. And pretty soon. That’s all you do. And one day. Someone says somethin’ innocent. She don’t mean anything by it. And even if she did. What you did to her wasn’t right.”*

Beat. RAY pauses. Then begins again.

BILLIE

(reading)

*“Suppose you wouldn’t know anything about this. ‘Cause. I know Frank says you’re a good kid. I have a kid, too. Her name is Pearley Jean. I know. That’s a name, ain’t it. Ha. Ha. Haven’t seen her in thirty odd years. She must be about your age, I’m thinkin’.”*

Beat.

RAY (CONT.)

(writing)

*“I don’t know if your dad talked about me. Told you about me. My guess. He probably didn’t. I’m not the kinda guy ya talk about or bring home dinner. Ha. Ha. Me being here and all. But. Your dad showed me a kindness that I figured I’d never see again. And I’m not proud to say that I didn’t –“*

Beat. Thinks.

RAY (CONT.)

(writing)

*“He told me he loved me.”*

Beat.

RAY (CONT.)

(writing)

*“I didn’t have the sense to tell him. You know. So. I get your letter and sure it seems to me that someone should know how I felt about your father. ‘Cause of what he shared with me about you, I knew I could say this. Wish I had a bible verse to throw in here like I seen some of the other fel-las do, but I never did take much stock in the bible. The guys in here. The ones who read it. They’re just as messed up as the rest. Figure they can give their problems to the “good book” to hold on to instead of dealin’ with the facts of their own situations. What they done and all.”*

Beat.

RAY (CONT.)

(writing)

*“That’s crap. What I just wrote. I’m running out of paper or I’d start again. That’s crap. I’m just as bad as the rest. I’d give my problems to the good book if I didn’t think it was so confusing. So. Ha. Ha. The joke’s on me. I guess. If you could call that a joke.”*

Beat.

RAY (CONT.)

(writing)

*“So, what am I about with this here letter to you? I guess I wanted to thank you. You’re like your dad in that way. For letting me know that your he’d passed. I will tell you that when I read it? Your letter come with a few days of darkness. Was hard to hear that Frank was gone.”*

Beat.

RAY (CONT.)

(writing)

*“I’m sorry. He was your dad and I reckon you already know them dark days and had a few yourself. I hope not too many. I hope that you knew that he loved you. Told me all the time. And that he always hoped the best for you.”*

Beat.

RAY (CONT.)

(writing)

*“I don’t know what happens next.”*

Long beat.

RAY (CONT.)

(writing)

*“I think you should also know, and I ain’t never said this to another living person before. I think you should know that I loved your father very much. He was my friend and I was his. I don’t know what any of this woulda meant had I got out. But I do know that he made the time in here go smooth. And I was always grateful for that.”*

Beat.

RAY (CONT.)

(writing)

*“He never asked me “why” I was here. And for a man who spent most his days pointin’ a finger the other way. I was glad to never have to answer that question. I was glad to never have to lie”*

Beat.

RAY (CONT.)

(writing)

*“I suppose that’s all I have to say right now. I hope you might write again. I’d love a card from you with happy news. But. I sure do understand if that don’t happen.”*

Beat.

RAY (CONT.)

(writing)

*“Thank you, Billie, for writin’. And I hope that, whatever you do, you’re happy and free.”*

Beat.

RAY (CONT.)

(writing)

*“Signed. Raymond T. Beemis of Ashton, Illinois. #4015-D-416. Joliet Prison.”*

She carefully folds the letter. Puts it back in her pocket as FRANK continues to type and the light fades to darkness on RAY, BILLIE pulls her box and the backdrop further downstage. Sits. Opens the box. A card. She reads.

BILLIE

(reading)

*“It’s never too late. Write somethin’. Finish it.”*

From the box, pulls out a group of odd-sized pens clamped together with a giant rubber band. A stack of paper. FRANK types. Grabs the perfect pen. Reads the side.

BILLIE (CONT.)

(reading)

*“Superior Flowers.”*

Grabs a blank piece of paper off the floor. Puts up the backdrop behind her. Sits in front of it with her feet extended. She’s a kid agin. Playing. She laughs. She pulls the laboratory backdrop around her and throws herself on the floor to write. Grabs pen. Paper.

BILLIE (CONT.)

(writing)

*“Attend to the story of Dr. Victor Frankenstein.”*

She stops. FRANK stops. A connection from the other world.

BILLIE (CONT.)

(softly)

Thank you.

Beat. FRANK smiles. Types. BILLIE writes. Pulls the laboratory backdrop around her.  
Closer.

BILLIE (CONT.)

(writing)

*“A man of his own making. Of uncommon skill. Who brought the dead back to life  
from random –“*

Short beat.

BILLIE (CONT.)

(writing)

*“- parts.”*

Lights out. End of play.