



**Sample Pages from
The Bottom of the Lake**

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THE BOTTOM OF THE LAKE

A PLAY IN ONE ACT BY
Steven Stack



The Bottom of the Lake

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Casting

12W+2M+2 Either

DANI

A lonely girl

VANESSA

Friend of Lindsey and Claire; the undeclared leader of the group

LINDSEY

Overly sarcastic friend of Vanessa and Claire

CLAIRE

Friend of Lindsey and Vanessa, the “not quick” one

HAYLEY

Carefree friend of Alexis and Molly

ALEXIS

Friend of Hayley and Molly who doesn’t believe in ghosts

MOLLY

Overly worried friend of Hayley and Alexis

LADY IN WHITE

A murderous ghost

SULLEN SUMMERS

Ace private eye

TORCHY BLAZE

Singer, girlfriend of Sullen

CARISSA CRANBERRY

Sullen’s secretary and ex

SIMON SILVERSHOES

Bookie with a heart of gold

SAL

Scared of the forest and squirrels (gender-neutral)

JAMIE

Sal’s coworker

BLOODY MARY

Bloody Mary

HOOK HAND

Tends to lose his hook (gender-neutral)

SCENE I

SETTING: Woods at night

AT RISE: We are almost in blackout. A very faint light is seen, representing moonlight. We hear some forest sounds. On stage, random foliage is seen along with several stumps center stage. DANI, a girl of 13, enters looking lost. We hear some laughing and talking. DANI looks in the direction of the sounds, then sits and looks out. We see lights coming from backstage right and then VANESSA, CLAIRE, and LINDSEY enter carrying flashlights.

LINDSEY: I still don't understand why we have to come out this far. It's not like we're going to see anyone.

VANESSA: You never know. Besides, this is where it all happened. It'll still be creepy.

CLAIRE: How do you even know where we're going?

VANESSA: I don't, really.

CLAIRE: (*nervously*) What?

VANESSA: I'm kidding. Here it is.

*LINDSEY's flashlight catches DANI watching them.
LINDSEY jumps a little.*

LINDSEY: (*shocked but underplayed*) And here she is.

Their flashlights find DANI, who continues to look at them.

DANI: Hi.

VANESSA: Uh...hello, person sitting in the middle of the woods. At night. Without a flashlight.

DANI: I forgot it.

CLAIRE: Seems an odd thing to forget.

DANI: Or maybe I didn't want to be seen.

LINDSEY: Looks like you failed there. (*pause as LINDSEY sits on another stump, then turns back to Dani*) You from the other camp?

DANI stares at her for a moment.

DANI: I guess.

VANESSA: Why are you out here by yourself?

DANI: There was no one else to come here with.

LINDSEY: You're some kind of weirdo, aren't you?

DANI: (*standing up*) Well, it certainly has been nice meeting you but I've been picked on enough today, so I will go... (*not sure where to go*) somewhere else.

VANESSA crosses to her.

VANESSA: Hey, look, my name's Vanessa.

DANI looks at her for a moment.

DANI: I'm Dani.

VANESSA: This is Claire (*CLAIRE waves*) and this charmer's Lindsey.

LINDSEY: You said charmer as if I'm not one.

CLAIRE: You're not.

LINDSEY turns to her.

LINDSEY: Well, your opinion is false.

VANESSA: Look, you're obviously lost or something, so why don't you hang out with us for a while and then we'll help you get back to your camp.

DANI: Yeah, I didn't think there was another camp here anymore.

CLAIRE and LINDSEY look at VANESSA, who sees them looking out of the corner of her eye.

VANESSA: Yeah, Camp Espantosa. On the other side. It's still open but it's not as popular anymore after—

DANI: After what?

An uncomfortable moment passes.

VANESSA: Just stories. So what do you say?

DANI: (*considers it*) Well I guess it's better than the alternative.

LINDSEY: (*smiles*) Don't be so sure.

LINDSEY, VANESSA, and CLAIRE laugh. DANI watches for a moment, then laughs a little and sits down.

DANI: So why are you out here?

LINDSEY: We do this a lot. Come out to the woods at night. Usually not this far, but our brilliant leader had a plan.

DANI: And you come out here to do what?

VANESSA: Hang out, mostly. We don't really get along with the other campers.

DANI nods in understanding.

LINDSEY: Because they don't really like us. But at least we have each other.

CLAIRE: Yeah, we're like sisters.

LINDSEY: Claire's adopted, obviously.

VANESSA and LINDSEY laugh while CLAIRE rolls her eyes.

CLAIRE: And you know what else we do, Dani?

DANI: Um...no.

CLAIRE: Tell ghost stories.

LINDSEY: Well, Vanessa and I do.

CLAIRE: Hey, I've been practicing.

LINDSEY and VANESSA laugh and shake their heads.

DANI: I'm not a big fan of ghost stories.

VANESSA: Really?

DANI: Yeah.

LINDSEY: Is it because they scare you?

DANI: I guess.

VANESSA: Well, then you're just who we're looking for.

DANI: For what?

VANESSA: To tell ghost stories with. Look around, you couldn't find a better place to tell them. Anything could happen out here. (*very pointed*) Anything.

DANI: Thanks, but—

LINDSEY: What? You'd rather be alone? 'Cause we could go somewhere else.

DANI: (*a little too quickly*) No, don't leave.

VANESSA, LINDSEY, and CLAIRE notice DANI's urgency.

LINDSEY: Then it's decided. I'm telling the first story.

CLAIRE: Wait, I thought I was going first tonight.

LINDSEY: (*looks at CLAIRE*) Why would you go first? (*to everyone*) Once upon a time in a very nice neighborhood, there was one house that didn't belong. It was said to be haunted. By the Lady in White.

SCENE 2

SETTING: Outside an old house at night.

AT RISE: In darkness, we see flashlights coming from off stage left through the audience.

HAYLEY: Here it is. (*they look at the house*) No one's been in it for over 70 years.

ALEXIS: Why haven't they torn it down?

MOLLY: My dad said they tried a bunch of times but something always happened. Equipment broke, horrible storms came out of nowhere, people got hurt. So at some point, they gave up and put the fence up. (*turns to ALEXIS*) Are you sure you want to do this, Alexis? I've got a really bad feeling.

ALEXIS looks at MOLLY.

ALEXIS: I think I'll be all right.

HAYLEY: Besides, Molly, you get a bad feeling about everything. (*looking at the house*) I don't even think it looks all that bad. I mean if you look past the fire damage, the peeling paint, broken windows, what looks to be bullet holes, and that blood splatter on the door, I don't— (*jumps*) Did you see that?

MOLLY: What?

HAYLEY: In the upstairs window!

ALEXIS: What was it?

HAYLEY: It looked like a woman. In white.

MOLLY: Stop messing around, Hayley.

HAYLEY: I'm not.

ALEXIS: It was probably the drapes or something. (*uncomfortable silence*) Who is this Lady in White anyway?

HAYLEY: (*turning to ALEXIS*) How do you not know this story?

ALEXIS: My parents don't talk about stuff like this.

MOLLY: Well, her name was Abigail Caldwell and this was the only place she ever lived. She even turned it into an orphanage after her parents died.

ALEXIS: Why would she do that?

HAYLEY: No one really knows, but people say it was so she could help kids avoid having a childhood like hers.

ALEXIS: What was so bad about her childhood?

HAYLEY: Her parents were really strict and supposedly into some weird stuff. Never let her out of the house. Her only friends were her dolls.

ALEXIS: Creepy.

MOLLY: And as she grew up, she would either play with them or look out the attic window so she could watch the other kids playing. But when her parents caught her doing that—or anything, really—they would lock her in an attic closet for days as punishment.

ALEXIS: Oh man.

HAYLEY: As Abigail got older, she blamed her parents for her horrible life and then, when she was in her twenties, her parents died under suspicious circumstances. It was ruled “accidental” but people always wondered. About three years later, she opened the orphanage.

ALEXIS: Well, at least she tried to help other kids.

MOLLY: Yeah, but her childhood really messed her up. There were rumors about how she treated the kids, and people barely saw

them outside. People said she had become her parents. The town was about to close the place down...

HAYLEY: When the fire happened. The fire department came to put it out...and they found her sitting on the porch, rocking, as the house burned behind her.

MOLLY: They found the kids locked in their rooms.

ALEXIS: Were they... (*MOLLY and HAYLEY nod*) Wow. What happened to her?

HAYLEY: Well, the fire was ruled an accident and they put her in an institution for a while. When she got out, she returned to the house. A few years later, they found her body. Locked away in a closet. Wearing a white dress.

ALEXIS: (*confused*) What happened to—

MOLLY: No one knows. But the rumor was that some townspeople took revenge on her. For what happened to the kids. They say she's been haunting this place ever since.

HAYLEY: (*to ALEXIS*) And just think, Alexis—maybe you can join her.

ALEXIS: (*laughing while mustering her bravado*) I think I'll pass. Besides, ghosts aren't real. Abigail Caldwell is dead and buried. Or at least dead. There's nothing in that house now but cobwebs, old furniture, and bad memories. (*to HAYLEY*) So... I go in and what?

HAYLEY: Take one item that belonged to her. In and out in no time.

MOLLY: Don't do it, Alexis. It's not worth it.

HAYLEY: A bet's a bet, Molly.

MOLLY: (*looking at ALEXIS*) You shouldn't go into her house.

ALEXIS: You worry too much. I'll be fine.

ALEXIS starts to leave and then MOLLY stops her and hugs her.

MOLLY: Well... Godspeed then.

ALEXIS looks at MOLLY for a moment.

ALEXIS: Thanks.

She walks off. HAYLEY is staring at MOLLY, who turns and looks at her.

HAYLEY: Who says Godspeed?

MOLLY: I do. (*HAYLEY laughs a little and then starts to walk off*) Where are you going?

HAYLEY: I have to go to the bathroom. I'll be right back.

MOLLY: I'm not standing out here by myself.

HAYLEY: Come with me then.

MOLLY: To the bathroom? That would be awkward.

HAYLEY: I meant to my house.

MOLLY: Oh. But what about Alexis?

HAYLEY: What about her? We'll be right back.

MOLLY: All right, but let me be clear. I'm not on board with this. Any of this.

They leave. The lights change slightly onstage as ALEXIS enters the house.

ALEXIS: This isn't so bad. Just an old house. An old, dusty, decrepit house. There's nothing to be scared of. (*bumps into something and screams*) Crap! (*flashlight pans around on dolls*) Wow, she did have a lot of dolls. Maybe I should just take one of those and... (*we hear a cat's meow*) Well, that's cliché. Here, kitty, kitty. Where are you? I bet you're not scared. (*Moves the flashlight around. Hears movement behind her. Cat makes screeching sound and then runs.*) Or you are. (*hears a noise and quickly turns*) Who's there? (*sees nothing*) I'm just letting Molly get to me. Nothing here but me, creepy dolls and a cat. (*hears children laughing*) And laughing children. (*looks around with flashlight*) I gotta get out of here. (*flashlight starts to flicker and then cuts off and ALEXIS is left in the dark*) Okay, okay. Relax. Just slowly make your way to the door that you left open. (*footsteps are heard*) Oh god. Who's there? (*More movement is heard. We hear ALEXIS bumping into things.*) Oh, man.

Breathing is heard. ALEXIS stops moving. Her flashlight starts to slowly flicker on. ALEXIS begins slowly moving the light around. After a moment, her flashlight finds the LADY IN WHITE, a ghostly figure dressed in white and obviously dead. She is looking at ALEXIS, who is completely frozen. The LADY IN WHITE starts moving closer to her. ALEXIS continues to stare, unable to move. The LADY IN WHITE ends

up right in front of her. ALEXIS looks as if she is about to cry. Silence fills the space.

LADY IN WHITE: Did you come to play?

ALEXIS: *(struggling to speak)* Wh...I...what?

LADY IN WHITE: Did you come to play? *(silence)*

ALEXIS: Uh...no.

LADY IN WHITE: That's too bad.

ALEXIS: Are you—?

LADY IN WHITE: I am.

ALEXIS: Holy crap.

LADY IN WHITE: I assure you, there's nothing holy in this house.
(ALEXIS looks scared) You're afraid.

ALEXIS: Seems like a natural feeling.

LADY IN WHITE: I suppose. *(she walks away from ALEXIS, over to a window, and looks out)*

ALEXIS: Look, I just came to—

LADY IN WHITE: Take something. I know.

ALEXIS: But how could you—

LADY IN WHITE: I was watching from the window. *(turns to ALEXIS)* It wasn't the drapes. *(begins wandering through the room)* I'm glad you came. I've been rather lonely all these years with just my dolls. And the children, of course. *(looks at ALEXIS)* You heard their laughter, I suppose?

ALEXIS: Yeah.

LADY IN WHITE: *(looks off)* When I hear them laugh, I relive it all again. Every painful moment. *(pause)* They said I murdered them, but how could I murder the only things I ever loved? *(pause)* They were like me. Damaged. *(looks at ALEXIS)*

ALEXIS: Then why did you let them die?

LADY IN WHITE: *(turns on her angrily)* What did you say?

ALEXIS: I... uh...

LADY IN WHITE: How dare you come into my house and accuse me of such things?

ALEXIS: I'm sorry. I just heard—

LADY IN WHITE: (*staring at ALEXIS*) You shouldn't always trust what you hear. (*begins walking around the room*) I had locked them in their rooms because they wouldn't listen to me. Unruly children need to be punished. (*silence*) When the fire started, I rushed upstairs. The doors were so hot and flames... were everywhere. I couldn't breathe, and the next thing I knew, I was outside on the porch. I tried to get back in but it was too late. So I sat and waited. (*silence*) They sent me away and when I got out... I came back here. To the only home I've ever known.

ALEXIS: How did you die?

LADY IN WHITE: (*turning to her*) They murdered me. The ones who believed that I was responsible for the children's... (*stops herself and looks out a window*) They tied me up and locked me inside the closet. The one in the attic. The same one I was locked in as a child. I pleaded with them, but they didn't listen.

ALEXIS: I'm sorry.

LADY IN WHITE: Are you?

ALEXIS: Yeah.

LADY IN WHITE: (*smiling slightly*) Then perhaps you could do me a favor.

ALEXIS: What?

LADY IN WHITE: I'm bound here, in this house, with these memories unless I am released.

ALEXIS: Look, I would really like to help but my friends are waiting for me so—

A door slams. ALEXIS jumps.

LADY IN WHITE: It wasn't really a favor. If you don't help, you shall remain here with me, my dolls, and the children.

Children start laughing. ALEXIS looks around and then turns to the LADY IN WHITE.

ALEXIS: What do I have to do?

LADY IN WHITE walks over to a book that is open.

LADY IN WHITE: It's true what they said about my parents. They had certain... hobbies. And this book was theirs. (*points to a section of the book*) If you read this aloud, I shall be free.

ALEXIS walks over and looks at the book.

ALEXIS: I can't read this. It's in—

LADY IN WHITE: Try.

ALEXIS: (*looks at her*) And then you'll let me go?

LADY IN WHITE: Of course.

ALEXIS: (*considers it*) Promise?

LADY IN WHITE: (*staring at her*) You're in no position to ask for a promise. But I shall do what I said I would.

ALEXIS: Why can't you—

LADY IN WHITE: It needs to be recited by the living, and you're the only thing alive here.

ALEXIS stares at the LADY IN WHITE and then looks down at the book. She begins to read the passage as the laughter gets louder.

ALEXIS: In vicis illae moment Permissum thy vomica obduco. Silenti etc fio victus victus fio silenti etc.

During this, we begin to hear the children laughing again. After the reading is complete, both ALEXIS and the LADY IN WHITE collapse. There is little movement until ALEXIS gets up. There is clearly something different about her. She is now possessed by the LADY IN WHITE. She walks over to the body of the LADY IN WHITE (now ALEXIS) and smiles. She heads for the door. Blackout on ALEXIS and LADY IN WHITE and up on MOLLY and HAYLEY.

MOLLY: (*nervously*) She should be back by now.

HAYLEY: Would you relax? She'll be out soon.

MOLLY: You don't know that. Something could've happened to her. You should go in there and get her.

HAYLEY: Me? Why not you?

MOLLY: What part of our shared history would make you think that I would go into a haunted house?

HAYLEY: (*looks up and sees ALEXIS approaching*) Look, it doesn't matter anyway. Here she is. (*to ALEXIS*) What took you so long? (*ALEXIS looks at her*)

ALEXIS: I'm sorry. Was I gone for some time?

MOLLY: Yeah. We were worried.

ALEXIS: (*looks at MOLLY*) That's very sweet of you to be concerned about my well-being.

HAYLEY: So what did you take? (*looks around*) Wait, you didn't take anything, did you?

ALEXIS: (*looks at her and smiles*) I wouldn't say that.

ALEXIS looks at them, smiles, then turns and leaves, leaving HAYLEY and MOLLY staring at each other.

SCENE 3

SETTING: Woods at Night

AT RISE: We return to the camp scene where the four girls are still seated.

VANESSA: Wow, that was... almost good. (*DANI agrees*)

LINDSEY: Thanks for the... almost compliment. (*LINDSEY looks at CLAIRE*) You look confused.

CLAIRE: I am.

LINDSEY: About?

CLAIRE: About why Alexis was acting all weird at the end.

DANI: Because it wasn't Alexis.

CLAIRE: (*shocked*) What!?

VANESSA: It was the Lady in White. In the body of Alexis.

CLAIRE: Well, where did Alexis go?

LINDSEY: She's now the Lady in White. They switched bodies.

CLAIRE: Well, why didn't you say that?

LINDSEY: Because you don't spell everything out. It's scarier that way.

CLAIRE: Well, I think it's scarier when you understand what's going on.

LINDSEY: I'll keep that in mind for my next story: *Things That Are So Scarily Clear, Even Claire Can Understand Them.*

CLAIRE: You should.

LINDSEY: (*laughing*) I won't. (*they begin to argue*)

VANESSA: (*Changing the subject. To DANI.*) So, speaking of changing the subject, do you get picked on a lot? (*DANI turns to VANESSA*)

DANI: Why would you ask that?

VANESSA: Just the stuff you said at the beginning. And the fact that you're out here by yourself. (*DANI turns away for a moment, then nods "yes."*) You seem all right though.

DANI: Yeah, I'm not. (*stands up and walks away slightly*) I mean, no one else thinks I am. I've always been the girl on the outside looking in, you know? It sounds lame, but... (*trails off then silence*)

LINDSEY: No, it sounds depressing. I'm glad I'm not you.

VANESSA: Do you ever have a thought you don't say out loud?

LINDSEY: (*considers*) Hasn't happened yet, but I suppose there's hope.

DANI: It's all right. I haven't wanted to be me for a long time either. (*turns and faces the girls*) It's... rather lonely.

VANESSA: Well, you're here with us, so maybe this summer will be a little different.

DANI: (*looks at her and smiles*) Yeah. Maybe it will.

VANESSA: Hey, why don't you tell the next story? I mean, if you have one.

DANI: Really?

VANESSA: Yeah.

DANI: Well, okay. I mean, it's not really scary though.

LINDSEY: That's okay. As long as it's good.

CLAIRE: Wait, wait. I thought I was going next.

LINDSEY: No.

CLAIRE: Oh.

VANESSA: What's it called?

DANI: It's a story my dad used to tell me. And it's called *Sullen Summers and the Case of the Dead Dame*.

Blackout.

SCENE 4

SETTING: A City Street

AT RISE: *Sullen Summers, private eye, is talking to his girlfriend Torchy Blaze, who looks sad.*

SULLEN: You're kicking me to the curb?

TORCHY: I don't want to, Sullen, but I'm tired.

SULLEN: That's because you're performing too much. Maybe if you—

TORCHY: That's not it. I'm tired of you, Sullen. (*SULLEN looks shocked and TORCHY turns away*) I'm tired of you always having something else to do. Tired of you making promises to me and never keeping them. I'm tired of you not having time for me...

SULLEN: Wait, what? I've got plenty of time for you.

TORCHY: Really, Sullen? (*SULLEN nods*) When was the last time you saw me perform? Do you remember? (*SULLEN doesn't say anything*) It was 9 months ago today.

SULLEN: Was that a Wednesday?

TORCHY: (*looking bewildered*) I don't know. Maybe.

SULLEN: Then it wasn't me. I was at a poker game. I told you about it. So it's probably more like a year and a half.

TORCHY: See what I mean? And if it's not a poker game, it's one of your cases.

SULLEN: Torchy, I'm Sullen Summers, Ace Private Eye. I solve cases.

TORCHY: You haven't solved a case in years, Sullen. (*sees that he is hurt*) I'm sorry.

SULLEN: No, you're right. It's actually been 4 years. But solving... I mean, almost solving cases is what I do. It's my life, you know?

TORCHY: I do know. But there was a time, Sullen, that I was a part of that life, too. I'm not anymore. (*SULLEN starts to protest*) Don't. (*SULLEN stops and TORCHY turns away*) I need—

SULLEN: (*turns her around*) Don't say another man. I couldn't bear that.

TORCHY: I was going say I need to leave.

SULLEN: Thank god. (*TORCHY looks at him, hurt*) Oh, no. I didn't mean that I wanted you to leave... I just meant... look, it doesn't matter. Do you still love me?

TORCHY: (*looks at him and takes his hand*) Sullen, I think I'll always love you but we need—

TORCHY stops talking and is looking over SULLEN's shoulder.

SULLEN: What's wr—

TORCHY nods to behind SULLEN, who turns. It is CARISSA CRANBERRY, his secretary and old girlfriend.

SULLEN: What, Carissa?

CARISSA: You would think that after breaking my heart you could at least speak to me in a nicer tone.

SULLEN: Look, I'm in the middle of something here. And I—

CARISSA: (*throws a glance to TORCHY*) I see. (*an uncomfortable silence passes between TORCHY and CARISSA*) Well, you need to come back to the office.

SULLEN: Why?

CARISSA: Two reasons. One, Simon Silvershoes is coming by and needs to talk to you. But more importantly, I need to talk to you about some pictures I found.

SULLEN: Pictures? (*takes a moment and then turns to TORCHY, who nods sadly*) I'm sorry. (*he turns back*) Fine, I'll be there in a while. For Simon. Now, can you go back to the office so I can talk to Torchy?

CARISSA: Fine. But don't be too long.

CARISSA smiles slightly at TORCHY and then flounces off. SULLEN shakes his head, and turns back to TORCHY.

TORCHY: Why would you hire her as your secretary? You know she's never gotten over you.

SULLEN: Felt like I owed her something. Plus she was always there staring in the window anyway. And the office is on the fourth floor. *(Pause. Then holds his mouth.)*

TORCHY: Is your tooth still hurting? *(SULLEN nods)* You really should get it looked at.

SULLEN: I will. Hey, wanna get some coffee or something?

TORCHY: No. I gotta get to the club. We have a short rehearsal before the show tonight.

SULLEN: Oh yeah, Simon told me you were performing at his joint. *(SULLEN takes hold of her)* I'll be there. I just have to stop by my office first.

TORCHY: The show starts in an hour. You'll never make it.

SULLEN: I'll be a little late but I'll be there.

TORCHY: *(looks at him)* You promise?

SULLEN: No matter what. And after the show, I'll meet you in our spot. Then I'll fix things, okay?

TORCHY: I hope so. *(silence)* Well, I have to go. *(TORCHY starts to leave and then turns)* Sullen, I need you to keep your word. For me. For us. *(SULLEN nods)* And watch out for puddles.

SULLEN smiles and TORCHY exits. SULLEN watches her go. The lights change and SULLEN crosses to the office, where CARISSA is sitting on his desk flipping through pictures. She looks up and sees SULLEN.

CARISSA: Finally done talking to your hussy? Torchy Blaze. What a ridiculous name.

SULLEN: Ridiculous? Your name is Carissa Cranberry. What are you doing in my office?

CARISSA: What took you so long? And why are you wet?

SULLEN: *(shaking off his coat)* I got lost. Then I fell into a puddle. So, what are you doing in my office?

CARISSA: What are you doing with these pictures? *(shows him pictures)* Is this your lady "on the side?"

SULLEN: *(walks over and takes them)* It's a pineapple. It's a case I'm working on.

CARISSA: What case?

SULLEN: *(looks out)* The Case of the Purloined Pineapple. *(turns back to CARISSA)* So those pictures are evidence.

CARISSA: *(accusingly)* Even this one? Where she's wearing a bikini?

SULLEN: Can't a dame pineapple wear a bikini?

CARISSA: Do you find her prettier than me?

SULLEN: What?

CARISSA: Do you find her prettier than me?

SULLEN: It's a pineapple.

CARISSA: Answer the question, Sullen!

SULLEN: Yes, yes I do. And... and you know what? I find this...*(searches for something and picks up a pen)* pen prettier than you, too.

CARISSA: Oh, really. *(SULLEN nods and CARISSA snatches the pen)* This pen?

SULLEN nods and CARISSA throws it out the window. Sound of window breaking. SULLEN looks at her incredulously. CARISSA goes and sits on SULLEN's desk again.

SULLEN: Could you get off my desk?

CARISSA: I'm never getting off this desk again.

The lights go off and we hear CARISSA scream and fall.

SULLEN: Why did the lights go off?

SIMON: Because I turned them off. For dramatic effect.

SULLEN: Simon Silvershoes, the bookie with the heart of gold. Good to see you...or...not see you.

SIMON: Yeah, the not being able to be seen is not as dramatic as I hoped. *(SULLEN makes a sound of agreement. Then silence. Uncomfortable.)* Maybe I should turn on the lights.

SULLEN: Yeah, maybe.

SIMON turns on the lights and SULLEN looks around for CARISSA.

SULLEN: Where's Carissa?

SIMON: Over there. Looks like she fell off the desk.

SULLEN: That's what the screaming was about. (to CARISSA) You all right?

CARISSA: (*getting up and dusting herself off*) Yes, I am. No thanks to you.

SULLEN: Sorry. Didn't know you were planning to fall off my desk.

CARISSA: You would have if we were still dating. (SULLEN starts to speak, but CARISSA puts her finger to his lips) Don't say anything. It will only be a lie.

SULLEN: Then can I talk to Simon? Alone?

CARISSA: Sure. Fine. I don't care.

CARISSA exits. SIMON and SULLEN watch her leave.

SIMON: She's one crazy broad.

SULLEN: You can't even imagine.

SIMON: What happened to your... you fell into a puddle again, didn't you?

SULLEN: Yep.

SIMON: Big puddle. (SULLEN nods. Leading him.) So—

SULLEN: Look, I don't have the money.

SIMON: What about all the cases you have?

SULLEN: What about them? I haven't solved one in years. 4 to be exact. Though, I got this purloined pineapple case I might actually solve.

SIMON: What's the case?

SULLEN: (*looks off*) The Case of the Purloined Pineapple. (*turns back to SIMON*) There was another detective on it. Some dame. Not anymore, though.

SIMON: What happened to her?

SULLEN: She was found, what was left of her, with some other broad tied up in chairs. And apparently they were both eaten by a pack of wild dogs.

SIMON: (*looks at him*) That sounds disturbing.

SULLEN: It was.

SIMON: You have something to do with it?

SULLEN: No, I...Ow. (*SULLEN holds his mouth*)

SIMON: What's wrong?

SULLEN: One of my teeth in the back is killing me.

SIMON: Let me take a look. I do a little dentistry on the side.

SIMON walks over to SULLEN, who opens his mouth wide. SIMON sticks his face really close to SULLEN's. CARISSA enters and sees this.

CARISSA: What is going on here?

SULLEN: (*turns and looks at her*) Do you need something?

CARISSA: (*takes him by the shoulder*) I need to be able to trust you, Sullen. Which apparently I can't.

SULLEN: We're not dating anymore, Carissa.

CARISSA: You wouldn't say that if we were dating, Sullen.

SIMON: She's got you there. (*SULLEN turns to SIMON*)

SULLEN: Don't help.

SIMON smiles as CARISSA returns to sitting on the desk.

SULLEN: What are you doing?

CARISSA: Staying here because obviously I can't trust the two of you alone. (*CARISSA sits down and SULLEN looks at her*)

SULLEN: Fine. (*turns to SIMON*) Where were we?

SIMON: What does she mean, she can't trust the two of us alone?

SULLEN: She didn't trust me with a pen earlier.

CARISSA: And I still don't!

SIMON: Okay. So anyway, how much you gonna get paid for this purloined pineapple case?

SULLEN: Enough to pay you back and get me and Torch a cheeseburger. Maybe some fries. *(realizes)* Crap. I've gotta go. I told Torchy I would be at her show.

SIMON: You're not gonna make it. It started about an hour ago. There's one tomorrow. Catch that one.

SULLEN: No. I promised her.

SULLEN's office phone rings and he goes to answer it but CARISSA answers it first.

CARISSA: *(into phone)* Office of Sullen Summers, he's an ace private... liar! *(SULLEN reaches for the phone but CARISSA pulls it away)* Oh. *(takes phone away and hands it to SIMON)* It's for you.

SIMON: This is Silvershoes. What? *(SULLEN is quietly arguing with CARISSA but then looks to SIMON)* When? And everything went up? Were there any...? Oh. So Torchy...? *(SULLEN crosses to SIMON)*

SULLEN: So Torchy what? What happened?

SIMON: Okay. Yeah, he's here now. Okay. *(hangs up the phone and looks at SULLEN)* There was a fire, Sullen.

SULLEN: At Silvershoes'? *(SIMON nods)*

SIMON: Yeah. Started in the lights above the stage during rehearsal. Everything's gone.

SULLEN: Is Torchy...

SIMON: She was onstage at the time. *(pause)* There was nothing they could do.

SULLEN: I've got to get over there.

SIMON: Sullen, she's gone.

SULLEN: It doesn't matter. I promised her.

SULLEN exits. CARISSA looks at SIMON.

CARISSA: Well, I guess someone's back on the market!

SIMON turns to her as the lights fade on SIMON and CARISSA. Lights up on SULLEN walking and looking lost. He waits. TORCHY enters and sees him. She starts to run over and give him a hug, then stops.

TORCHY: Sullen. You came.

SULLEN: A little late.

TORCHY: I figured you would be.

SULLEN: I...uh...got lost on the way to the office and—

TORCHY: Fell into a puddle again?

SULLEN: A really big one. (*silence*) I should've listened to you.

TORCHY: (*smiles*) I'm glad you're here.

SULLEN: Yeah.

TORCHY: You heard about the fire, I suppose?

SULLEN: Yeah. Simon got a call.

TORCHY nods. Silence as she turns.

TORCHY: I didn't make it, did I?

SULLEN: No. (*starts to touch her shoulder but stops himself*)

TORCHY: I'm not surprised. Not many people survive a burning ceiling falling on their head. (*turns to him*) When I saw you, though, I had that little hope that maybe...but then I saw the look on your face. (*pause*) Guess we weren't meant for a happily ever after, were we?

SULLEN: I've never been much of a prince anyway. More like a jester.

TORCHY looks back at him and smiles a little, which he returns. There is silence.

TORCHY: If you knew I was dead, why did you still come here?

SULLEN: I promised I would.

TORCHY: (*Smiles at him. Silence.*) I want to tell you something, Sullen.

SULLEN: Are you still breaking up with me?

TORCHY: (*smiling at SULLEN*) No. I wanted to tell you...before I went to...wherever...that you were always my ace private eye, Sullen Summers, and I'm going to miss everything about us. About you.

SULLEN: Even how I fall in puddles all the time? (*TORCHY smiles and nods*) Me too. Well, I mean, I'm going to miss everything (*pauses and looks down*)...more than you'd ever know. (*silence*) I'm sorry that—

TORCHY: (*stopping him*) No more apologies. You were everything I needed. Even when you weren't. (*they smile*) Goodbye, Sullen. (*she kisses her hand and almost touches his lips and then walks away*)

SULLEN: Goodbye.

Lights fade as TORCHY exits and SULLEN watches her go.

SCENE 5

SETTING: Woods at Night

AT RISE: *Lights up on the campers. CLAIRE is crying loudly.*

VANESSA: Are you crying?

CLAIRE: Yes I am. (*crying grows louder*) He finally kept his promise and she was...I need to be alone for a moment.

*CLAIRE gets up and walks off, looking down.
VANESSA looks at DANI.*

VANESSA: That was good. You were right though—not much of a ghost story. I mean, there was a ghost but—

DANI: Yeah. When you spend so much time by yourself, you tend to not...(stops herself) Where's Lindsey?

At that moment, LINDSEY jumps out in front of CLAIRE.

LINDSEY: Ahhh!

CLAIRE: Ahhh!

DANI, LINDSEY, and VANESSA laugh. CLAIRE looks at LINDSEY and punches her in the arm.

LINDSEY: OW!

CLAIRE: I don't like you.

LINDSEY: (*laughing*) I get that all the time.

LINDSEY joins the rest of them from upstage right.

VANESSA: Where were you?

LINDSEY: I had to go to the bathroom, if you must know.

VANESSA: Oh. *(they laugh and then CLAIRE comes back and VANESSA looks at her)* Guess you don't need to be alone anymore.

CLAIRE: No, not anymore. *(looks at LINDSEY)*

LINDSEY: You're welcome. *(CLAIRE stares at her for a moment and sits down and seems to be pouting)* Oh, don't start sulking. I'm sorry.

CLAIRE/VANESSA: Really?

LINDSEY: Why is that so shocking?

DANI: Hey, Claire, why don't you tell your story now?

DANI smiles nicely at her but VANESSA and LINDSEY turn to DANI, shocked.

CLAIRE: *(smiling)* Okay.

VANESSA: What have you done, Dani?

DANI: What?

LINDSEY: Claire hasn't gotten a story right since...well, ever.

CLAIRE: For your information, I know this story. Kind of.

DANI: What's it's called?

CLAIRE: *(takes a big pose and looks off)* The Tale of the Golden Arm. *(VANESSA and LINDSEY laugh)* Go ahead and laugh, but soon... soon you'll be crying. Crying in fear. *(LINDSEY is about to say something, but VANESSA stops her)* It was a dark and stormy night, the darkest and stormiest night since the last night. That was... really dark. And stormy.

Blackout.

SCENE 6

SETTING: An old graveyard deep in the woods.

AT RISE: SAL is pacing around the woods nervously.

SAL: Come on, come on. *(continues pacing nervously)* What is taking her so long? I hate being in the woods at night. Everything gets crazy. Especially the squirrels. Beady-eyed freaks. *(yelling)* I know you're watching me!!! *(SAL turns and JAMIE is there, carrying a bag)* AHHH!

JAMIE: Did I scare you, Sal?

SAL: A little, but the squirrels did it first.

JAMIE: Oh. Is that who I heard you yelling at?

SAL: Yes.

JAMIE: (*laughs*) You're losing it, man.

SAL: Of course I'm losing it, man. What took you so long?

JAMIE: I had to dig up 13 graves to find the right one.

SAL: Why didn't you just check the name on the tombstone?

JAMIE: (*looking at SAL*) Suppose I should have thought of that, but at least I got some stuff from the other ones too. And...I found the golden arm.

SAL: Don't say that so loud, Jamie. (*whispers*) They can hear you.

JAMIE: The squirrels? (*SAL nods*) Have you actually seen any?

SAL: No! (*whispers*) But that's how you know they're there.

JAMIE: Well, I suppose we need to hurry then. (*begins digging through the bag*) You can't imagine how tough bones are to cut through.

SAL: Gross.

JAMIE: (*keeps searching, pulling various items out*) Yeah. She's held up surprisingly well after being dead for two hundred years. (*pulls out her sandwich*) Ah, my sandwich. Could not remember where I put it.

SAL: Wait, you put your sandwich in there?

JAMIE: Apparently. (*SAL shrugs. JAMIE takes a bite of her sandwich while digging through the bag.*) Oh, here it is. (*pulls the golden arm out and hands it to SAL*)

SAL: And you're sure this is the right one?

JAMIE: Don't imagine there are a lot of golden arms lying about in graves.

SAL: Don't be so sure. My mother harvested golden arms when I was little.

JAMIE: Really?

SAL: No, but I wish she had. Harvesting golden arms was the key to popularity where I was from. (*disgusted*) Michigan. (*JAMIE hands him the arm and he inspects it*) This is it. Now we'll be set for life.

JAMIE: Well yeah, that is...if we survive. (*SAL quickly looks up*)

SAL: What?

JAMIE: (*turns back to SAL*) Wait, you don't know? About the legend?

SAL: No, what are you talking about?

JAMIE: The legend of the golden arm and what happens when someone steals it.

SAL: (*scared*) What...what happens?

JAMIE: Well...(walks off) Legend has it that the woman that arm belongs to...comes back to get it, and then she... (*Moaning is heard. SAL and JAMIE look off.*) Well, I guess we're about to find out. (*SAL yelps and throws the arm to JAMIE. Louder moaning is heard.*) Quick Sal, we need to cower.

SAL runs over to JAMIE and they cower. BLOODY MARY enters, stops, and looks at them. SAL looks at her and notices that she has both of her arms.

SAL: (*whispering*) Jamie, she's got both of her arms. (*JAMIE turns and looks at her*) I think we're okay.

BLOODY MARY: (*to SAL and JAMIE*) Who summoned me?

JAMIE: Uh. (*to BLOODY MARY*) You're not the woman with the golden arm...are you?

BLOODY MARY: Do I look like I'm missing an arm?

JAMIE: No.

BLOODY MARY: Then I suppose I'm not.

SAL: Who are you then?

BLOODY MARY: I'm Bloody Mary. You called my name three times while looking in a bathroom (*looks around*) mirror...that's obviously not here...because we are in the middle of...wait... is Claire telling this story?? (*Lights go up on DANI, VANESSA, LINDSEY, and CLAIRE, who all look shocked. CLAIRE swallows hard as BLOODY MARY looks directly at her.*) Really, Claire, again?

CLAIRE: Aw, man.

BLOODY MARY: Do you ever get a story right? Ever? And why do I have to be in every one you screw up? (*takes golden arm*) See, this is a golden arm that belongs to someone who doesn't have

two arms anymore. Like I do. Okay? So now what's supposed to happen is the dead person whose arm this is, the one without two arms, comes shambling out moaning, "Who has my golden arm?" Then she kills them both.

JAMIE: That's what I was about to tell you, Sal.

SAL: That would've been really scary.

JAMIE: Wouldn't it?

SAL nods.

BLOODY MARY: Well, it doesn't matter because it didn't happen.

CLAIRE: So you're not in this story either?

BLOODY MARY: You think? Yet here I stand. Idiot.

SAL: Hey, lay off her a little.

BLOODY MARY: *(crossing to SAL and talking in his face)* Are you speaking to me?

SAL: *(nervously)* Um...no, ma'am.

BLOODY MARY: Good, because if you were, I would pay you a visit tonight...and kill you.

SAL: *(looking at her)* I think I'll be over here. *(walks away)*

CLAIRE: Bloody Mary?

BLOODY MARY: *(turning to her)* What?

CLAIRE: I think I know a way for this story to make sense. I mean, since everyone's already here. If everyone's agreeable.

JAMIE: I am.

SAL: Me too.

They all look at BLOODY MARY, who looks back at them.

BLOODY MARY: Of course you two are. You're random characters that could be played by anyone and—

JAMIE: Hey—

BLOODY MARY: *(to JAMIE)* No one cares. *(turning to CLAIRE)* But yes, I will be in it since I really have no choice. *(a warning to CLAIRE)* It better be good.

CLAIRE: Oh, it will. Hopefully. *(clears throat)* Now, Bloody Mary's appearance was shocking to everyone but me, since I'm telling the story and I thought she was in it, but what happened next was even more shocking...

Lights fade on the camp girls. HOOK HAND jumps out and screams "Ahhh!" SAL and JAMIE jump. BLOODY MARY stares at HOOK HAND and shakes her head. HOOK HAND looks around.

HOOK HAND: *(to BLOODY MARY)* Where's the car?

BLOODY MARY: There is no car.

HOOK HAND: But I need a car. I'm Hook Hand. I need to get my hook caught on a car. *(they notice that he has a spatula, not a hook)* 'Cause see, I got the hook, and now I need the car.

BLOODY MARY: That's not a hook. It's a spatula.

HOOK HAND: It's not a spatula, it's a...*(looks at it)* It is a spatula. What the...oh...Claire's telling this story, right? *(lights up on camp girls)*

CLAIRE: *(sheepishly)* Hi.

BLOODY MARY: You've got to be kidding me. *(HOOK HAND looks around and sees SAL and JAMIE)* I'm done. *(to CLAIRE)* And don't you even say my name once, much less 3 times.

BLOODY MARY mutters as she exits. Everyone looks around uncomfortably, then HOOK HAND continues trying to make his story right.

HOOK HAND: Well... *(looks at SAL and JAMIE)* Are you two... you know? 'Cause I could get my spatula stuck in your...bag or something?

JAMIE: Are we what?

HOOK HAND: You know? Boyfriend and girlfriend.

JAMIE: What? No, no, no. We're not...this is a working relationship. Strictly platonic. Why would you even assume that? That's disgusting.

SAL: *(looking at her)* Hold on. Really? Disgusting?

JAMIE: Hey, don't take it personally.

SAL: I...I think I should take it personally. Someone calling you disgusting is rather...personal.

JAMIE: So, what are you saying? You want to be my boyfriend or something?

SAL: No, I mean... well maybe, but it's more that I'm bothered that you find me basically repulsive.

JAMIE: I didn't say that.

HOOK HAND: Maybe not in words, but I feel the intention was there.
(*everyone agrees*)

SAL: See? Even Spatula Hand agrees. (*HOOK HAND starts to disagree*) I can't work with you anymore.

JAMIE: Come on now. Don't say that. You know—

SAL: (*puts finger to her mouth*) No, I don't. Not anymore. And we're finished as...whatever we were. (*as he leaves*) Though not boyfriend and girlfriend, obviously.

JAMIE: Sal! Come back! I'm sorry!

JAMIE exits after him and HOOK HAND looks around uncomfortably. Silence as HOOK HAND doesn't know what to do. He then turns to CLAIRE.

HOOK HAND: Think it would be all right if I...go?

CLAIRE: Yeah, I think that would be okay. (*HOOK HAND walks off*)

SCENE 7

SETTING: Woods at Night

AT RISE: VANESSA, LINDSEY, and DANI are all staring at CLAIRE.

VANESSA: So...that was bizarre.

LINDSEY: Yes it was.

DANI: Claire, has this happened before?

CLAIRE: Let's just say no and move on, okay?

VANESSA: That's a great idea. Besides, it's getting late so it's about that time.

LINDSEY: (*looking at her*) For what?



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