

[Fourth Draft: 6/30/22]

EXILE

by

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(Full-length Play, Copyright, 2022)

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Characters: APRIL - mid-50s, Augie's sister; bookish, agoraphobic.
AUGIE - late 50s, April's brother; worldly, retired on military disability.
FRANKIE/YOUNG FRANKIE - Augie's childhood friend; a minister of sorts, late-50s, thin and drawn/19-year old, healthy and overweight.
RUTH and JAKE HARPER - late 30s; Augie and April's parents (non-speaking parts).

Place & Time: Here, not so long ago, or far from now.

The Set: The set is more impressionistic than real. That said, there's a kitchen with a sink and cupboard beneath, and a table with 4 chairs, with an entrance off the kitchen. There's some books and magazines on the table. There's a living room with a couch and front door frame. There's also a visible hallway that dissolves into darkness.

At Rise: The silhouette of a treehouse, with a young boy and girl huddled together, looms upstage. They seem more in distress than at play. This dissolves as the action of the play begins below, returning only at the end of the play as described, *post*.

**Playwrights'
Note**

Jake and Ruth's presence corresponds with April's awakening and growing awareness of her long-repressed past. She senses Jake and Ruth's presence, as opposed to actually "seeing" them, as we do.

Except when otherwise indicated, Jake and Ruth's presence and actions are muted, so much so that the audience might grow to disregard them at times, until events dictate otherwise. These manifestations do not seem to engage in conscious decision-making.

ACT I

(In near darkness AUGIE enters with a penlight, HUMMING snatches of his high school fight song. He crosses to the kitchen sink and opens the cupboard beneath the sink and begins clearing items away somewhat noisily, setting them on the floor. He breaks into the fight song, SINGING softly to himself.)

AUGIE

*W-e-e are the Warr-iors,
Mighty, mighty Warr-iors,
Ev-er-y where we-e-e g-o-o
Peo-ple wan-na kno-o-o-w,
Wh-o-o we a-a-re,
S-o-o we-e tell them.*

(AUGIE sprawls out under the sink with the penlight in his mouth, reaching up underneath it looking for something. He is still singing when APRIL enters the kitchen in her robe or nightgown with a pistol. She fires a SHOT in AUGIE's direction. Startled, AUGIE hits his head and the penlight goes out; there is nothing but heavy breathing in the darkness. A beat.)

APRIL

I, I know you're there. Put your hands up!

(AUGIE GRUNTS, then another beat.)

There's plenty more where that came from. Just try me...us.

(More heavy breathing.)

My, my husband, ah, Harry's -

(Calling off:)

HARRY! ... he's calling the police. Yeah-I'm, I'm sure they're...good, good, they're on the way!

(A beat.)

Really!

(Another beat.)

Hello?

(APRIL fires another SHOT toward the sink area, and flips on a kitchen light. AUGIE has crawled on his hands and knees across the living room area and when the lights go up is near the front door, frozen. He watches APRIL as she continues to point the gun at the sink area, while searching for her cell phone, which is on the table.)

Don't move a muscle! No more warnings! I'll shoot if I have to.

(A beat; finally:)

What, are you deaf!?

(Another beat.)

Okay...just tell me you're a nice person.

AUGIE

I'm a lousy person.

(APRIL swings the gun around in AUGIE's direction.)

Hey, I'm nice enough.

APRIL

(Working towards her cell phone on the table.)

You broke into my house. You get out! Nice persons don't do that.

AUGIE

Your phone's there. On, on the table. In case you need it.

(Overlapping.)

APRIL

I know where my phone is.

AUGIE

(Taking a miniature whiskey bottle out, he drinks.)

Good. We okay then?

APRIL

We? Who are we?

AUGIE

(SINGING:)

We-e are the Warr-iors, mighty, mighty, Warr-iors...

APRIL

Are you drunk?

AUGIE

Pretty much.

APRIL

You gotta get outa here.

AUGIE

Agreed. Believe me.

APRIL

Now!

AUGIE

Soon as I get what's mine.

(APRIL fingers the phone on the table.)

You gonna call the coppers? I thought, ah, Harry was doin' that. Maybe I should talk to Harry.

APRIL

Shut up. I get to ask the questions. You gonna rob me?

AUGIE

No-o-o! Just wanna get what belongs to me. Under the sink.

APRIL

Sink? That sink? It's the middle of the night. There's, there's nothin' of yours under there, mister. You got the wrong house.

AUGIE

Oh, believe you me, this is the right, wrong house. Here, lemme show ya.

APRIL

Don't come any closer!

AUGIE

Okay, okay. Look, sorry, I know it's late-early. It came up kinda spur of the moment. I'm only in town - I put something under the sink, and I'm here. I grab it, I'm gone.

APRIL

What are you...when?

AUGIE

I was a kid, ah...maybe [naming a time about forty-five years ago; e.g. "late 70s"]. I grew up in this dump. No offense.

[There is a flash, and only a flash, of shadowy figures, JAKE and RUTH, deep in the recesses of the hallway.]

APRIL

(Lowering pistol, staring at AUGIE.)

There's nothing of yours under there. Go...look. You, you got two minutes. Two! Then you, you gotta go.

AUGIE

Yeah, or, or else! Okay. Lemme get rid of my lumpy little friends.

(AUGIE crosses to the table and unloads a number of miniature liquor bottles from his pockets and lines them up on the table. He also sets on the table the program from his

high school reunion, his plane ticket, some keys, and a cell phone. As he crosses to the sink, referring to the liquor bottles:)

You boys behave. Armed to the teeth are we, protecting the ol' homestead?

(APRIL watches as AUGIE, at the sink again, is moving more things out of his way. This includes two clear plastic bags with gray matter inside, later identified as ashes.)

[Another flash of JAKE and RUTH in the hallway.]

APRIL

You're gonna put all of that back.

AUGIE

Yes, mam. Yunno, been around guns all my life, an' that kinda looks like a starter pistol to me.

APRIL

All of a sudden you remember something under a sink from forty some years ago. I mean, what have you been doing?

AUGIE

Wandering...

APRIL

Wandering? Where?

AUGIE

Here and there. You wouldn't think...it's a fulltime job. So I'm talking to this guy - well, my friend Frankie. Frankie Talarico. Used to be my friend. I grew up with him. Guess he still is. He's a nut job. 'Specially baseball. Always was. Anyway, we're at our fortieth and he starts goin' on like it was yesterday. Jackie, Duke, Fernando. All these Dodgers. Brooklyn, LA - *blah, blah, blah*. Always apeshit about the Dodgers. And it hits me - my card! Jesus, I can't see a thing. You got a flashlight?

APRIL

Maybe.

AUGIE

You broke mine.

APRIL

(APRIL starts to exit.)

I didn't break anything. You're the one who broke in.

AUGIE

(Referring to liquor bottles.)

Oh, hey, toss me one of them, will ya.

APRIL

(On exit.)

Who died and made you boss?

(APRIL is gone. AUGIE crosses and opens another liquor bottle. APRIL returns with an old, oversized flashlight, one of those four D battery kind. AUGIE takes the flashlight and inspects it closely.)

It's what I got.

AUGIE

(Resuming his search.)

Thing's a beast. Anyway, around eighth grade, Christmas time. We get the usual cheap-ass five 'n dime Santa stuff. Yunno, shriveled orange, some toothpaste, maybe a yo-yo. Shit like that. Then there's this official like letter for me. My grandfather dies and left me this baseball card. Never met the guy. It's an Ernie Banks, Chicago Cubs rookie card. There's a note from him with it - "this is for August when I'm gone - nobody else." It's a "TOPPS, 1954." That's the, yunno, the maker - the brand. So, anyway, I put it right up under here, so he couldn't find it. Frankie says it's worth a fortune now.

(AUGIE gets out from under the sink.)

So, what the hey?! I came back for Ernie.

APRIL

Don't look at me. I don't know Ernie Banks from Adam.

(AUGIE studies APRIL.)

Maybe you dreamed you put it there.

AUGIE

No way he coulda found it.

APRIL

He who?

AUGIE

(On exit through the kitchen.)

He-haw.

(AUGIE exits.)

APRIL

(Calling off.)

Hey, where you goin'? Get back here! Your two minutes are up.

(APRIL sits at the table, and opens one of the liquor bottles and takes a drink, winces, then takes another swig. She picks up the reunion program, and is looking at it when

AUGIE re-enters with some mail and magazines in hand.)

AUGIE

Hey, Mouse.

APRIL

Augie. I don't go by Mouse any more. Just April.

AUGIE

Yeah, I see that.

(Referring to the various mail/magazines.)

Miss April Harper. What's with all this? Books 'n magazines up the ying-yang.

APRIL

What's it to you? I like to read, okay. It passes the time.

AUGIE

Still into crosswords, I see. You, you...look...ah, good. Different.

APRIL

You look old.

AUGIE

Yeah, forty years'll do that.

(Looking around.)

Jesus, this place.

(AUGIE goes to touch her, and APRIL recoils.)

What are you doing here?

APRIL

I live here, Augie.

AUGIE

Thought maybe I was having some kinda hallucination, or somethin'. It's Gus now.

APRIL

Gus? Well, *Gus*, you scared me to death.

AUGIE

How was I to know?

APRIL

You still scared me to death. It's the middle of the night.

AUGIE

I was kinda in a hurry. I didn't know!

(AUGIE picks up the pistol and looks at it.)

Then you and your cannon here go all Annie Oakley. Oh, hey, we forgot about Harry. He's prob'ly got the drop on me right now. Come on out, Harry. We're good. It's your brother-in-law.

APRIL

Coach over at school gave it to me. There was a prowler a while back. He said I should take this, and make like there's others around. To scare 'em off.

(Indicating reunion program.)

You went to your reunion.

AUGIE

Yeah. Some go-getter Vet committee tracks me down. Wants to honor a bunch of us patriots.

(SINGING.)

Ev-er-y where we-e-e g-o-o

Peo-ple wan-na kno-o-o-w....

Tell me, you can't miss your fortieth. Offered us all a plane ticket, as thanks for our service. I got nothin' going, so why not. You been here all along?

APRIL

I stayed with Rose -

AUGIE

- Auntie Rose!

APRIL

- at her place for a while, after the folks...after they left.

[Another flash of JAKE and RUTH in the hallway.]

AUGIE

Left.

APRIL

Junior an' senior year. Moved back after graduation. Rose stayed here with me for a while. She said you sent a paper, signed away your half of everything. That why you're here, you want it back?

AUGIE

Just want my card.

APRIL

Some of your stuff's in your room. You mighta dreamed it. How can you even remember -

AUGIE

(Overlapping.)

What are you talkin' about? You were there! We're sittin' around that scrawny tree an' she gives me the envelope. I'm opening it, he grabs it out of my hand, says it ain't worth a plug nickel. He knew, right away. You said it was mine - made him give it back.

(Referring to sink.)

And I put it right there, somewhere. Wait - you knew! I told you where it was, just in case. What's with this dream bullshit? Hell, that's the only real thing left in the whole goddam nightmare. You, here. This table, flashlight. Christ, it's like I'm in one of those archeological digs, or something. What are you doing here?

APRIL

Whadda you care? You take off in the middle of the night, not even a goodbye.

AUGIE

I'm here now. I'm just asking.

APRIL

I, I cook over at the elementary. I can cut through the back and I'm there.

AUGIE

To and fro. That's it? Read, and play crosswords?

APRIL

Yeah. I make some too.

AUGIE

Make what?

APRIL

Crosswords. I construct them. Make 'em up.

AUGIE

You do the puzzle? The answers and all?

APRIL

Yeah. I like it. It's where I live.

AUGIE

Then what?

APRIL

I sell some.

AUGIE

To who?

APRIL

Here and there. Some youth, juvenile monthlies, airlines. Not so much anymore. It's all AI now. Computers.

AUGIE

Airlines! Like in the magazines, in the back?

(APRIL nods.)

AUGIE

How 'bout that. I never look at 'em. Hey, you could sit there in your seat and just whip out the answers in front of everybody. Whiz bang!

(A beat.)

You, you ever flown?

(APRIL looks away.)

You've got your words flyin' around up there, but you never -

APRIL

- not everybody gets away scot-free and wanders the world. You remember Jimmy Demeter, down the street?

AUGIE

Zombie Boy? Teeth goin' every direction.

APRIL

You'd find somethin' wrong with anybody who didn't laugh at your crummy jokes. He got 'em straightened.

AUGIE

No way.

APRIL

He's principal over there now - Dr. Demeter to you.

AUGIE

Prob'ly had them pulled, got phony ones.

APRIL

(At reunion program.)

You still in the military?

AUGIE

Retired.

APRIL

Musta suited you.

AUGIE

It was a living. Three squares, everything by the book, left-right-left. It was alright...when somebody wasn't shootin' at ya, or tryin' to blow you up.

APRIL

Looks like you came out all right.

AUGIE

I guess.

(A toast.)

Yeah, so here's to the both of us still bein' in one piece.

(They drink.)

APRIL

When you take off, go back?

AUGIE

Tomorrow morning.

(Glancing at watch.)

Yeah, well, today.

(Referring to plane ticket.)

Couple a hours.

APRIL

Just like that. You weren't even gonna -

AUGIE

I didn't now! I'm outa Barstow - California. Kinda got used to the desert over the years. Don't miss the land mines. Gotta double wide with a sagebrush lawn, and a pet rattler named Sparky, lives under the deck. Keeps me on my toes.

APRIL

(Referring to reunion program.)

This says you're an astrophysicist. That after the military?

AUGIE

Yeah, well, I mighta exaggerated some. Sounded better than handyman. They want alumni to come back, make 'em proud. Tell 'em about your sparkling life in a hundred words or less. Strut you around, use ya to raise a shitload of money for the booster club. Fuck 'em.

APRIL

(Off AUGIE's look.)

I hear worse in the lunch line. You always were crazy about outer space. Counting the stars, which were yours, which were mine.

AUGIE

(At window U.S.)

It still there?

(APRIL nods.)

Stars. We climbed up there to get away from the yellin' and screamin'.

[There is a flash, and only a flash, of JAKE and RUTH in the hallway.]

Not like there were snacks and a secret handshake.

APRIL

You saw Frankie?

AUGIE

Forty years don't look so good on him either.

APRIL

(Indicating program.)

That's interesting, 'cause this says he's dead. "In memoriam."

AUGIE

Yeah, caught us all by surprise when he showed up. Said he tried it for three days and changed his mind. Same 'ol Frankie. Still pretty fuckin' hysterical.

APRIL

So, he still heavy?

AUGIE

You mean fat. Naw, he's skinny now. Says - you know how to lose thirty pounds in a hurry? Cancer. Told me not to worry, it ain't contagious. He asked about you.

APRIL

Yeah? What'd you say, with your vast knowledge 'n all?

AUGIE

(At sink.)

I gotta go.

APRIL

You just got here.

AUGIE

You gotta sledgehammer, maybe an axe? It's in there somewhere. Lemme bust it up. I'll buy ya a whole new one from the proceeds. Maybe throw in a garbage disposal.

APRIL

You're not bustin' up my sink. He kissed me once, yunno.

AUGIE

Frankie?

APRIL

When you weren't around. Tried to stick his tongue down my throat.

AUGIE

No! What'd you do?

APRIL

I, ah, bit it. I mean, I didn't mean...it just happened.

AUGIE

That prob'ly killed the moment. Well, no worries, he's a man of the cloth now - minister. Been to divinity school an' all.

APRIL

Does he wear a get up...uniform?

AUGIE

Naw, but when the light's just right, you can see this little circle over his head. He doesn't advertise it or look, yunno, prayerful or anything. Says he finished up a last-ditch experimental treatment. Some blind study. He's pretty sure he got the placebo. Didn't we all. Forgot you had a crush on him.

APRIL

I did not.

(Referring to reunion program.)

This says you were married - "sorta."

AUGIE

Nothin' official. One of those common law jobs. We called it quits before it got complicated.

APRIL

Any nieces or nephews?

AUGIE

(Shaking his head.)

You ever -

(Shakes her head.)

So, hey, to us - the end of the line.

(Raising a bottle for a toast.)

And to those before us - to whom we owe everything. To the Harpers - Jake and Ruthie.

[There is a flash, and only a flash, of JAKE and RUTH standing in the hallway entrance.]

The Folks who *left*. Right? I mean, I guess a murder-suicide's a kinda leaving. I gotta get outa here.

(AUGIE passes out.)

APRIL

Augie?

(APRIL tries unsuccessfully to wake AUGIE up.)

Augie! Gus! Jesus! You stupid...

(At a loss, APRIL EXITS and RETURNS with a pillow and blanket, and tries to make AUGIE comfortable. She studies him for several beats, EXITS, then returns with a roll of duct-type tape and begins binding AUGIE to the chair. As she does this, YOUNG FRANKIE appears. APRIL continues taping AUGIE through the following:)

What are you doing here?

YOUNG FRANKIE

They gone?

APRIL

Yes, Frankie. Bingo. If it's Friday, it's bingo.

YOUNG FRANKIE

R-i-g-h-t. Under the "I," twenty-two. Hey, like, did he say I twenty-two?! *Bb-b-b-b-b-b* [explosive sound], *b-b-b-b-b-b-b* [another explosive sound], yeah - *b-b-b-b-BINGO!!* [Big finale-like explosive sounds]. Oh, no/no/no, wait/wait/wait-sorry, sorry folks, it's, it's "I"-twenty-three. *A a a h h!*

(YOUNG FRANKIE collapses on floor.)

APRIL

Don't be a turd.

YOUNG FRANKIE

Hey, I'm *undeterred!* How's my favorite audience?

APRIL

Tired.

YOUNG FRANKIE

Tired's for when you're old. Like *retired*, which, as you may know, is short for really tired.

Huh!?

APRIL

Got it. Don't *punish* me, Frankie.

YOUNG FRANKIE

Whoa, whose the straight man here! You wanna take me? Bring it!

APRIL

You shouldn't be here.

YOUNG FRANKIE

I hadta see how you're doin', check in about the prom.

APRIL

Prom?

YOUNG FRANKIE

Yeah. Got a partner yet?

APRIL

Sophomores don't go to the prom.

YOUNG FRANKIE

Some do. I'm thinkin' maybe you need a prom in your life.

APRIL

What - with you? You, you didn't even go to your own prom! You and Augie played laser tag.

What makes you think I'd wanna go to mine? And with you?

YOUNG FRANKIE

What's wrong with me? Hey, I'm a prominent member of the community. A college boy now - read super *stud-ent*. *Stud-ent*, huh?!

APRIL

Community college super stud-ent.

YOUNG FRANKIE

A mere way station. I head to the majors in August. Ivy halls, and all that. Maybe I'll smoke a pipe, solve the universe. Unscrew the inscrutable. Then, see the world! Who knows? Someday maybe you'll say I knew that guy. You could do worse, yunno. I'm not bad on my feet.

(YOUNG FRANKIE does a dance step, with an attempt at a big finish.)

You might hafta wear shades. I can be dazzling!

APRIL

Augie put you up to this?

YOUNG FRANKIE

He didn't put me up to nothin'. This is me - I, I chart my own path.

APRIL

You heard from him? You have! He wouldn't do anything around here. I know he's sending Rose money. Like he cares. Come on, what is it?!

YOUNG FRANKIE

(FRANKIE hands APRIL a photo.)

Came yesterday. That's all there was. Some base in Timbuktu. (Reading back of photo.) "For Mouse. Busy saving the world." Snazzy uniform.

APRIL

Looks like he's standing on Mars. You knew. He told you, didn't he?

YOUNG FRANKIE

No.

APRIL

I saw you. I look outside that morning, you're in the treehouse.

YOUNG FRANKIE

I told you...it just happened I was there. True story.

APRIL

I didn't believe you then, and I don't believe you now. The day he takes off you're in our backyard.

YOUNG FRANKIE

I know. Hey, I get these notions, a feeling, yunno, telling me something. I, I can't explain it. It's like a sign or somethin'. I woke up...that's where I needed to be. Then you're staring out at me, and you tell me he's gone. I only knew that something was happening. Swear to God. May she strike me dead.

APRIL

They think you did. They'll skin you alive, you come back around.

YOUNG FRANKIE

We did go by this recruiting office, a few months before Augie took off. He got a pamphlet and stuff. That's it. He said if it happened, you'd be alright. That she needed you.

APRIL

And?

YOUNG FRANKIE

He asked me to, yunno...if he took off, if I'd check on you.

APRIL

So you've checked. You've done your job.

YOUNG FRANKIE

It's not a J-O-B. It's a J-O-Y, a joy for the boy! Huh! So, you're good?

[Through the following, JAKE appears in the hallway leering at APRIL, with RUTH in the shadows behind him. BOTH then recede into the darkness.]

APRIL

Okay. It's different. I, I sweat a lot. Can you tell?

YOUNG FRANKIE

No. No, I, I think you smell okay...I mean, ah, good, actually. Great even.

APRIL

(APRIL has finished taping AUGIE. She is at the window, looking out towards the treehouse.)

It's best when I'm out there. Was. They tore the ladder down.

YOUNG FRANKIE

I could fix it. Augie'd want me to. I can hide it - make it so they wouldn't know. So...you wanna go?

APRIL

The prom?

YOUNG FRANKIE

Yeah.

APRIL

And what are your intentions, Mr. Talarico?

YOUNG FRANKIE

Oh, honorable, totally.

APRIL

That's disappointing. Just kidding the kidder. Like I have a gown.

YOUNG FRANKIE

Hey, I don't have a tux. There's no law, yunno. They can't make us. I say we get matching overalls, maybe add some piping?

APRIL

And then what?

YOUNG FRANKIE

We dazzle them. Then, maybe we dance right off the floor, out the door, and keep goin'.

APRIL

Are you courtin' me, Frankie?

YOUNG FRANKIE

No... I, I don't think so. Just tryin' to help.

APRIL

Augie put you up to this.

YOUNG FRANKIE

No...yeah...maybe. I mean, maybe I am courtin' you. You still bite?

APRIL

What?! - *Wham*-all of a sudden there's this big, fat thing in my mouth. What do I know about tongues.

YOUNG FRANKIE

It wasn't supposed to be like that. Sorry. They don't call me The Smooth for nothin'.

APRIL

Do you even like me, or was it some kinda dare? Augie pay you or something?

YOUNG FRANKIE

N-o-o! No, I thought you thought I'm just your big brother's stupid friend. So I figured I gotta try something like, huge. Let you know. Big mistake. I shoulda started smaller. What do I know.

(YOUNG FRANKIE may give APRIL a peck on the cheek.)

APRIL

I mighta overreacted.

YOUNG FRANKIE

That's for *thurr*. So? Yes?

APRIL

To the prom, or the keep going part? What would we do?

YOUNG FRANKIE

No plan. I'm thinkin' pure adventure.

APRIL

You don't just wander off.

YOUNG FRANKIE

Why not?

APRIL

What about college? Me finishing school?

YOUNG FRANKIE

We figure it out.

APRIL

Uh-huh, and your family?

YOUNG FRANKIE

Eeehh! Mother and father might be relieved. I'm the pigtail. I'm told I wear them out. My brother and sister are more like an aunt and uncle. It's not like they'll disinherit me. They'd probably help me pack.

APRIL

Where would we go? How would we eat? Live?

YOUNG FRANKIE

We'll be like the sparrows. She provides. I mean, if we have to, we can always fast.

APRIL

Fast? Like, not eat? You're a charmer, Frankie. No fasting. That's just a slow way of dying.

Fast - slow, huh!?

YOUNG FRANKIE

Got it. Yunno, it's amazing what a body can endure. Fasting can make you a better person, spiritually. Bring clarity. That's what they say. Anyway, I wouldn't let you starve.

APRIL

So we take off. No money, car, plan - nothing.

YOUNG FRANKIE

Two pilgrims. Walk, hitchhike, whatever.

APRIL

Just take the leap. I don't even know what you wanna do with your life.

YOUNG FRANKIE

I got some ideas. We're not really in charge, you know. I been lookin' for a sign. I'm kinda torn.

I've been thinkin' about my major, maybe stand-up comedy, maybe the ministry. Maybe both.

Make 'em laugh, while saving their souls. Whaddya think?

APRIL

We're gonna starve.

YOUNG FRANKIE

That's so Old Testament.

APRIL

So, what if we're going along and, ah, you faint - pass out, drop into a coma, die!?!? What happens then? To me.

YOUNG FRANKIE

No problem. Really. I'll, I'll stick some extra money in my shoe. Just in case. I've got some saved up. Maybe ten bucks, so, if it happens, you can get a cheeseburger, somethin' to drink.

APRIL

Just leave you and go get a cheeseburger.

YOUNG FRANKIE

Yeah. Sure.

APRIL

Shouldn't I try to save you? Use the ten dollars to get a ride, take you to the emergency.

YOUNG FRANKIE

Yeah, you could do that. That would be totally nice, actually. Ten might not be enough if we're out in the sticks or something. Maybe it should be a fifty.

APRIL

Good thinkin'. Or maybe I'll decide not to save you, in this the stupidest plan ever, and go get a steak.

YOUNG FRANKIE

You gotta have faith, April. Plans are overrated. You take that, ah, that Swiss Family Robinson. They make this big plan to get away from Napoleon, start over on the other side of the world. What happens? They're shipwrecked, and end up on this island in the middle of nowhere. And they're fine. They improvise. Yeah, and the same with that Robinson Caruso - no relation. He makes it, too. So, now it's April Swiss Family Robinson Caruso Harper, and her loyal sidekick, Frankie!

APRIL

You don't even know me, Frankie.

YOUNG FRANKIE

Sure I do.

APRIL

Tell me something about me you like.

YOUNG FRANKIE

I, I like your name, ah, spring and all. It's perfect, elevating, like in a fairy tale.

APRIL

That's nice, except they named me for the month I was born. Same with Augie.

YOUNG FRANKIE

It's still beautiful.

APRIL

Alright, so what about love. Do you love me, Frankie?

YOUNG FRANKIE

Boy...

APRIL

See, I knew it! You're just here 'causa Augie.

YOUNG FRANKIE

No! I don't know. Is that even wrong? This is the most I've ever been around you, I mean, alone. Are you supposed to know like that? Maybe I do. Maybe I could learn. It's a wonder anybody finds anybody. Whadda you think? I mean, about me. You must have an opinion.

APRIL

An opinion? About love. Thank you, *Dr. Smooth*.

YOUNG FRANKIE

You know what I mean. When I've been here, with Augie. I've seen you. Yunno, kinda get the *jitters*.

(Off APRIL's look.)

There! Yeah, that! I get 'em, too.

(FRANKIE takes APRIL's hand and they look at each other.)

I don't know what it is. It could be enough, yunno. We can find out. Hey, come on, I can pack and be back in ten minutes -

(AUGIE wakes abruptly, SCREAMING.)

AUGIE

No, no! Oh God, oh God, no!! N-o-o-o-o!!

(APRIL crosses to AUGIE.)

APRIL

Augie! Augie, wake up! Augie! It's okay. It's me.

(APRIL looks for FRANKIE, but he's gone.)

Frankie!?

AUGIE

What the hell!?! Mouse?!? How'd I...what... Oh, my head! What happened?

APRIL

You passed out.

AUGIE

And this?!

APRIL

This! What this is, is I hate you.

AUGIE

Okay, okay, I shoulda knocked, called ahead. I, I get it. But hate me? You haven't seen me in forty years.

(Off APRIL's look.)

I joined the Marines. They don't let you bring your kid sister along. I asked, they said no. Mouse!?

APRIL

You don't get to call me that.

AUGIE

I was serving my country, for Christ's sake.

(A beat.)

I couldn't stay here.

APRIL

But I could. You show up in the middle of the night and can't find your, your *card!* And then you say you gotta go. Again!

AUGIE
You, you said Frankie? Did he come in? Where is he?

APRIL
He's not -

AUGIE
(Calling off.)
Frankie!

APRIL
He's here?

AUGIE
Yeah, out in the car.

APRIL
What car?

AUGIE
The rental car.

(Calling off.)

Frankie!

(To APRIL.)

Said I'd give him a ride back to the hotel. He passed out in the back seat. After he barfed all over the place. There goes my damage deposit. So?

(Yelling, off.)

F-R-A-N-K-I-E!!

APRIL
(Threatening to tape AUGIE's mouth.)

Shut up, Augie!

AUGIE

Gus, god dammit! Okay, look, you gotta understand this isn't good for me, all seized up. I, I got osteoporosis. They tell me my bones are disintegrating. I'm supposed to watch my posture.

APRIL

Tough!

(AUGIE's phone bleats. APRIL picks it up and reads a message. To AUGIE:)

The airline. I guess you can check in, get your seat assignment.

AUGIE

Good, lemme out.

(APRIL indicates she won't.)

At least so I can...one hand? Please!

(APRIL stares at AUGIE.)

It's first come, first serve. I can't get stuck in the back with the little screamers.

APRIL

What's your, ah, code? Security code.

(AUGIE hesitates. APRIL sets the phone down.)

AUGIE

Okay, okay. 1, 2, 3, 4.

APRIL

1, 2, 3, 4.

(Picking up phone again and punching in the code.)

Military intelligence branch?

AUGIE

Get an aisle seat, as far front as you can.

APRIL

(Continues working phone.)

Aisle seat, toward the front...no screamers. There. Done.

AUGIE

We're good?

APRIL

Ah, no.

AUGIE

What?

APRIL

(Setting the phone on the table in front of AUGIE so that he can see the screen.)

Looks like you cancelled your flight.

AUGIE

You're shitting me! You are such a snot. I'm gonna kill you!

(Calling, off.)

F-R-A-N-K-I-E!! This is on you - he's not well. He wanted to come. I didn't think he was gonna go get sick on me.

APRIL

You're so full of it.

AUGIE

Oh, yeah. Cut me loose. You'll see.

APRIL

It would be just like you to leave him out there to freeze to death.

AUGIE

Freeze? Whaddaya talkin' about? It's balmy out there.

APRIL

(Grabbing the flashlight.)

You say he's got cancer, that he threw up. If that's even true, what's wrong with you?! He could choke?! Aspirate on something!

AUGIE

As-pir-ate! That one of your Jumble words of the day?

APRIL

Where's the car?

AUGIE

Over across the street, somewhere.

APRIL

How close?

AUGIE

Whadda I know how close. It's not far. I didn't pace it off!

APRIL

Well, what color is it?

AUGIE

Got me. It's a rental car. It's dull. Look for the one that smells like vomit.

(APRIL summons her courage and exits; AUGIE yells after her:)

Hey, I can't breathe!

(Once alone, Augie works feverishly to get loose. Finally giving up, he focuses on his phone on the table. To the phone:)

Siri? Alexa? Anybody?!

(Nothing.)

Goddamit!!

(Unable to use his hands, AUGIE unsuccessfully works at unlocking the phone with a pen lying on the table that he picks up with his teeth, with GRUNTS and GROANS along the way. He then resorts to using his nose to try to punch in his security code on the

screen. While he is able to work the keys with his nose, he can't see the numbers with his face so close to the screen.)

Shit! Shit, shit, shit!

(AUGIE abandons this effort and attempts to lurch his way across the room toward the front door, finally settling on tipping the chair over, using the couch to cushion his fall. He is scooching his way toward the door on his side when APRIL appears in the doorway, alone, and stands staring at AUGIE.)

You find him?!

APRIL

You're such a dick! I'm goin' to bed.

AUGIE

I swear! You, you said yourself he could freeze or choke to death. April! Can't we talk?

APRIL

No!

(APRIL grabs the pillow and blanket and through the following shoves the pillow under AUGIE's head and drapes the blanket over the chair.)

I'm all talked out. Sweet dreams.

AUGIE

You're leaving me here?!

APRIL

(Drawn to the clutter around the sink.)

Look at this.

AUGIE

Mouse -

APRIL

Don't.

AUGIE

April - I think I'm bleeding internally. I got this funny taste in my mouth.

APRIL

(Beginning to pick up the clutter and put it away.)

Yeah, well, do what I do - don't think about it. Just breathe. In, out - in, out. You get by. Oh, yeah, I forgot - your card's *pfffft*.

AUGIE

What?

APRIL

He sold it, and they drank and smoked and casinoed it all up.

AUGIE

You told him.

APRIL

I'd say I'm sorry, but I'm not.

AUGIE

I trusted you! That was gonna be our, our -

APRIL

Our what, Augie? What! Our rainy day fund? Yeah, I remember. Then you're gone and there's this monsoon!

AUGIE

So you get even!

APRIL

I did what I had to. It was Ernie and me. He bought me some time.

(APRIL is staring at the two plastic bags.)

[JAKE and RUTH appear, laying on the floor in the hallway, dead, JAKE crosswise on top of RUTH.]

AUGIE

Please, can't we talk?

(APRIL picks up the bags of ashes and sets them in front of AUGIE in plain sight.)

I know I -

APRIL

You wanna talk, talk to them.

AUGIE

What the...?

APRIL

(On exit.)

Not what - who. They can keep you company.

AUGIE

(Realizing the contents of the bags, he SCREAMS, then:)

April! You can't... Stop! HELP!!! ANYBODY!! IN HERE!!

(APRIL grabs the duct tape and, over AUGIE's protests, covers his mouth with tape.

APRIL is exiting as FRANKIE bursts in the front door, his shirt covered in vomit.)

FRANKIE

Augie?! Gus?

(Dropping to his knees.)

I see you're tied up. I'll, I'll...

(FRANKIE crumples to the floor as AUGIE continues making muffled noises.)

APRIL

Frankie?!

BLACKOUT

End of Act I

ACT II

(AUGIE is alone, removing the remnants of the duct tape still attached to his clothes or skin. A coffee pot and cups are visible. Balled-up duct tape is strewn about the floor. AUGIE occasionally yelps in pain as he removes another piece of tape. He is standing gazing out the window at the unseen treehouse when APRIL enters, off the kitchen. [As APRIL enters, JAKE and RUTH pass through the room.]

AUGIE

How is he?

APRIL

He's in the shower. I got him some of your old clothes. He's...

AUGIE

Yeah. When's the last time you saw him?

APRIL

He was still chubby. After you... He'd drop by, when they weren't around. You oughta know, you put him up to it.

AUGIE

(Struggling to remove a piece of duct tape stuck to the back of his neck.)

You mind?

(APRIL examines AUGIE's head.)

There a problem?

APRIL

Just checking for nits.

AUGIE

Yeah, the good ol' days.

(AUGIE reacts as APRIL rips a piece of tape off.)

Having fun.

(Referring to unseen treehouse.)

You ever go up there?

APRIL

Long time. Not the same.

AUGIE

You mean without me.

APRIL

I mean it's not the same. I'm not gonna go break my neck.

(Removing another piece of tape.)

AUGIE

Easy!

APRIL

You shouldn'ta got him drunk.

AUGIE

He didn't have a drop. That's him now. I tol' ya, it's not good. I hadn't seen him 'til he showed up yesterday. Coffee smells good.

[JAKE and RUTH reappear and will lurk about until indicated otherwise.]

APRIL

This isn't a bed and breakfast. You said you were going - go.

AUGIE

What's the hurry. Not without Frankie. I gotta get him back to the hotel.

APRIL

I'll take care of Frankie - get him a cab, or one of those Uber things. I don't drive. Now, go.

AUGIE

I'm not leavin' in the middle of the goddamn night in a car full of vomit. All of a sudden you want me gone. You hogtied me and cancelled my flight!

APRIL

You had it comin'.

(APRIL tosses the photograph at AUGIE.)

That supposed to be enough? "For Mouse." I was totally...it was just me. You don't get to show up and start calling the shots.

AUGIE

I kept track. I'd call Rose. Then...I couldn't drop everything. I was on the other side of the world.

APRIL

You coulda come back. Got that, that bereavement leave.

AUGIE

Yeah, well, you gotta be bereaved.

APRIL

Forget them. What about me!?

AUGIE

You were tough. You've always been tough.

APRIL

Tough. What does that even mean?

AUGIE

I thought you could take it. And, I asked...Rose said you weren't ready. Then she says you won't talk to me. Give it some time. After a while, I, I, got caught up.

(Referring to photograph.)

You kept it.

APRIL

Yeah, to remind me to hate your guts.

AUGIE

(Referring to ashes.)

What's with this? Why are they still here? Under the sink, for Christ's sake.

APRIL

(Shrugs.)

We picked them up at the funeral home. Rose said we couldn't afford to do anything. I don't know. I forgot. She musta put 'em there.

AUGIE

Did you ever wish them dead?

(A beat.)

I did. Then, they were.

APRIL

What, you want credit.

AUGIE

No -

APRIL

(Overlapping.)

I owe you? You owe me.

AUGIE

I'm just sayin', I wished it - then it was true. I knew you'd be better off. I was happy for you. They couldn't bother you anymore -

APRIL

- Bother!

AUGIE

- well, trouble you, whatever. You didn't need me. Look, I'm hung over, Frankie's sick. We'll kick around here while you're at work.

APRIL

It's the weekend.

AUGIE

Yeah, I'm a little rummy. So we all relax. Catch up, visit.

APRIL

Not my idea of relaxing.

AUGIE

Whadya mean? We talked all the time. This isn't you.

APRIL

You're the expert on me now. You are a total stranger. I said no, and you're not gonna tell me different. Get out, Augie.

AUGIE

I'm stayin'.

APRIL

I'll call the cops!

AUGIE

I need some -

APRIL

Now!

AUGIE

- time. We'll take care of Frankie, do it together. Then, say the word, I'm gone.

APRIL

(Pushing AUGIE toward the front door.)

[JAKE and RUTH are now behind AUGIE, between him and the front door.]

No! Out. Now! I said GET OUT! GET OUT!!

(FRANKIE enters, wearing AUGIE's oversized clothes, including a faded high school "Warrior" T-shirt, still pulling up his pants.)

FRANKIE

(Overlapping.)

Hey, hey, hey! Guys, what gives?! April - Augie!!

(FRANKIE tries to separate them.)

Time out! Stop it! Deep breaths! Whoa!!

(In the struggle, FRANKIE is knocked to the floor and AUGIE and APRIL separate. A beat as everyone catches their breath. [JAKE and RUTH remain on the periphery].)

Good morning.

AUGIE

Tell her that.

APRIL

He started it.

AUGIE

Did not!

APRIL

Did too!

FRANKIE

Okay, okay, go to your rooms! It was worth a shot. See, what we have here, as my Nana would say, is the classic Gingham Dog and Calico Cat - spat. "And by morn' they found no trace of cat nor pup - the truth is this, they ate each other up!" So, that's option one.

(No response.)

Good. Option two - go your separate ways -

APRIL

That!

(AUGIE grunts in disagreement.)

FRANKIE

Or...or, three - we can give it a go and talk. If nobody's gonna sleep, like the rest of the world.

So, spat, scat, or, ah, chat. Huh? Still got it.

(Quickly.)

I'll start. Sorry about this version of me. Best I can do.

APRIL

He says you're...sick.

AUGIE

Now you're gonna talk.

APRIL

Is there something you can do? Or take...?

FRANKIE

(Shaking head.)

Graduated. Done with Western medicine. At that grasping at straws stage.

(Referring to Warrior t-shirt.)

Now, this seems to help.

(Singing)

W-e-e are the Warr-iors, mighty, mighty Warr-iors...Mostly mighty. They've taken some chunks outa me. No pills or treatment left. Meditation helps, but it's no cure. I'm down to sheer will - the last antidote. End of report.

APRIL

Can I get you anything? Some coffee, juice?

FRANKIE

Ah, no, thanks.

(AUGIE prods FRANKIE to ask for coffee.)

FRANKIE

Wait, they say coffee helps prevent cancer, but, hey, once you've got it, who knows. Let's give it a try.

(AUGIE mouths "sugar" to FRANKIE.)

Maybe some sugar.

(Through the following, APRIL pours a cup of coffee for FRANKIE, and sets out some sugar. FRANKIE adds sugar with AUGIE's prodding, then discretely leaves the cup for AUGIE.)

APRIL

(Referring to reunion program:)

This says you're dead.

FRANKIE

Yeah, I'm a little behind schedule. Thought I'd be smart and write my own obituary.

APRIL

You're a minister, or something?

(Reading:)

"A lightly-regarded standup comedian and so-so soul catcher?"

FRANKIE

Yeah. Yunno, when I started out I was gonna chart a whole new path to salvation. Thought it'd work for sure - standup and preaching. You got a captive audience. Figured it'd be a lot harder for the audience to walk out of a church than a bar. Not true. That was my shiny, self-possessed phase. Turns out I'm more of a one-on-one, street level kinda guy. Worker bee.

APRIL

So, how long...?

AUGIE

That's none of our business.

FRANKIE

No harm. I'd say it's, oh, maybe, bottom of the eighth. That might be optimistic. If I start to drift off, light a match between my toes. They're getting hard to reach. In the meantime, I'm trying to figure out what we're doin' here. What I'm doin' here? August?

AUGIE

Just your basic grunt honoree.

(FRANKIE looks to APRIL, who glares at AUGIE. FRANKIE surveys the house.)

FRANKIE

Wow. A whole lot of yesteryear around here.

(Taking in the clutter around the sink, suddenly:)

Oh, hey - Ernie?!

AUGIE

Gone. She sold me out.

APRIL

Go to hell.

AUGIE

Been there.

FRANKIE

Yunno, Ernie Banks-his only flaw, he was a Cub, not a Dodger. And, not just any Cub - *Mr. Cub*. Never played for anyone else, never complained, never did get to the World Series. Didn't seem to matter. Just played the best ball he could, did his job with a smile on his face, and a whole lotta grace. He loved the game - not sure he even needed the crowd. "Let's play two," that's what he'd say. You stand him next to the Babe, with his big ol' bat and appetites, I'll take

Ernie every time. Saint Ernie in my book. Well, maybe not on the same plane as, say, MT, or somebody like that.

(Puzzled looks.)

Mother Teresa.

What about her?

AUGIE

I worked for her some.

FRANKIE

You knew her? Mother Teresa.

APRIL

Yeah, drove for her a while after I got outta the Peace Corps. She kinda took me under her wing.

FRANKIE

We're talking THE Mother Teresa.

AUGIE

Saint Mother Teresa now, if you wanna get technical.

FRANKIE

And you called her MT?

APRIL

Well, not to her face.

FRANKIE

What was she like?

APRIL

Ah, short. Not exactly a chatterbox. She could be quiet in five languages. Always tellin' me, less mouth, more ear. Kinda her motto. I tried to jazz it up for her - "you listen, you glisten!" Huh. She was a bit of a clothes horse. No, really. Everybody wanted to make her a habit. Her outfit. They'd leave 'em on the doorstep. She'd try to switch around, dependin' upon what she was doin', so they'd all feel good. Just like Ernie though, let her bat do the talking. 'Course he

FRANKIE

mighta had it easier. Wrigley Field's no Calcutta. Then again, don't suppose she woulda been much fun in the dugout. Funny how some people end up doin' exactly what they're supposed to do. Others don't. Why is that? Whaddya think, Gus?

AUGIE

That you're still a fuckin' nut job.

(FRANKIE is examining the two bags of ashes and sets them on the table.)

FRANKIE

Now, the card, I'm sure April here had her reasons. Same as you probably had yours. Maybe you should swap stories. Game?

APRIL

I'd rather fight off locust.

AUGIE

What, you're some kinda facilitator or somethin'? St. Francis?

FRANKIE

N-o-o-o. I'm still your friend, right? All I know is I woke up last week to a brand new batch of bad news and thought what now. I get this reminder about the reunion...seemed like this was where I was supposed to be. Here I am.

(FRANKIE inspects the plastic bags.)

Maybe I am here to, ah, mediate. Umpire. Wouldn't be the first time.

(Referring to one of the bags of ashes.)

This what I think it is?

(Picks up the bags and compares their weight; reading:)

Yup, Jake. Remember that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return. Quite a send off - humbling. Incinerated and marked up with a Sharpie. Boy, when these two would get goin', peel the paint right off the wall.

AUGIE

Let's not start on that.

FRANKIE

Oh. Then why are you still here?

APRIL

He's just leavin'.

AUGIE

Maybe I wanna know why she's still here. Says I left her all alone. Shame on me. Miss high and mighty. Nothin' keepin' you here all this time.

FRANKIE

If I was a facilitator, I'd say maybe we should start out smaller. Find a way to reconnect, before we get to the hand-to-hand combat. Yunno, like some fun facts we remember from the good ol' bad ol' days. Anybody?

(AUGIE and APRIL are silent, so FRANKIE challenges them to play Rock-Paper-Scissors, and both will reluctantly assume the pose.)

Okay, so, loser goes first. Come on.

(FRANKIE initiates the "one/two/three" sequence and the first two times it's a draw. The third time, FRANKIE does paper and both AUGIE and APRIL do scissors.)

AUGIE

Same old Frankie, we could always count on you for paper every other time. You loved paper.

(APRIL smiles at this.)

FRANKIE

Aren't we the historian. Okay, fun fact - truth or dare in the treehouse.

(To APRIL.)

That time we let you play and she wants you to name your secret sweetheart. You wouldn't and had to lick that bug.

AUGIE

Slug. And, by God, I licked it.

APRIL

You..., he did not.

FRANKIE

I thought he did.

APRIL

He pretended to lick it. You didn't even make a face.

AUGIE

I wasn't gonna give you the satis-

APRIL

- what'd it taste like?

AUGIE

Slug. Exactly like slug. Try it sometime. It has a slightly different bouquet than, say, salamander, in my opinion.

FRANKIE

So, who was it?

AUGIE

Nobody.

APRIL

That's for sure. Who'd ever love him. He was sweet on that hag, Colleen Whitmore. She told him to get lost. I saw the note in your drawer.

AUGIE

What were you doin' in my drawer!?

APRIL

Lookin' for my bike.

FRANKIE

Fun fact! Shall we?

(APRIL and AUGIE do Rock-Paper-Scissors and AUGIE "loses.")

AUGIE

Slim pickins'. The night she tied his laces together, when they were passed out in front of the TV.

APRIL

That's your idea of fun. You egged me on, practically made me do it.

AUGIE

She screams bloody murder and he comes roaring outa that chair - *BLAM!* Right on his face.

Ends up with a black eye. Pretty sure Ruthie knew. Got him off to bed, never said a word.

[JAKE and RUTH are again nearby, and will begin crowding APRIL.]

APRIL

Maybe not to you. Next morning she asks me if I'm tryin' to get her killed.

FRANKIE

(To APRIL:)

So, you're up.

APRIL

Pass.

AUGIE

(Shaking head.)

Uh-uh, no you don't.

FRANKIE

It'll be fine.

APRIL

How's this - I woke up one morning and my brother was gone.

FRANKIE

Ah, ah, fun facts. Think happy, safe. You just hafta look. It's there.

[JAKE and RUTH now flank APRIL.]

(APRIL shakes her head.)

Give it a try.

APRIL

I can't. I...

FRANKIE

Ah - What was that? That! Go with that.

APRIL

(Agitated; to AUGIE.)

The song.

AUGIE

What song? I don't sing - what are you...? No! No.

APRIL

(To FRANKIE.)

Sometimes if we ...he'd sing it when I asked, if I needed -.

FRANKIE

Yeah, yeah.

AUGIE

No way.

APRIL

(Becoming frantic.)

Augie!

FRANKIE

Give it a go.

[Through the following, APRIL's agitation increases as JAKE and RUTH close in.]

AUGIE

No! Jesus, I just came for my card.

FRANKIE

You sure?

Shut up, Frankie.

AUGIE

Augie -

APRIL

Why are you still here? She told you it's gone.

FRANKIE

I said shut up. I'm not your puppet and I'm done playing your stupid ass games. There are no fun facts left. For any of us.

AUGIE

Please, Augie!

APRIL

Tell her that.

FRANKIE

We were kids. We didn't know what to do. It doesn't work anymore. It never did.

AUGIE

(APRIL is pacing, and thrashing about frantically.)

Make it stop, Augie!

APRIL

Enough of this! I gotta get back.

AUGIE

You are back, Augie. This is back.

FRANKIE

No, it's no good.

AUGIE

Please!

APRIL

It won't help. You don't understand. She doesn't want me. I, I've done...unforgiveable things.

AUGIE

FRANKIE
Who hasn't. It's only unforgiveable if you don't ask. Try us.

AUGIE
It's not that simple.

FRANKIE
It is that simple. It's just hard.

APRIL
Sing it!

FRANKIE
For her, Augie. For you.

APRIL
P-l-e-a-s-e! Please/please/please!!

(APRIL continues to moan, overwrought.)

FRANKIE
Who is this?

AUGIE
I know who it is!

FRANKIE
Tell me.

AUGIE
She's my sister, goddamit!

FRANKIE
So, sing for your sister.

AUGIE
I can't.

FRANKIE
Sure you can. Look at her, Augie. Look! I'll help.

AUGIE
Row...row-

FRANKIE
Row-

[Through the following JAKE and RUTH will retreat to the periphery.]

(APRIL will slowly calm down through the following:)

AUGIE
- row your boat...gently down the stream -

FRANKIE
Gently down the stream -

AUGIE
Merrily, merrily...

FRANKIE
Merrily, merrily -

AUGIE
Life is but a dream.

FRANKIE
Life is but a dream.

(AUGIE and FRANKIE continue SINGING, and APRIL finally joins in. They sing the remainder of the song as a ROUND. As the SINGING winds down, APRIL, AUGIE, and FRANKIE are in a circle.)

FRANKIE
Better?

(APRIL nods.)

They gone?

AUGIE
They. What?

APRIL
(With FRANKIE's prodding.)

You woke the dead.

AUGIE
I, I shoulda stayed.

(YOUNG FRANKIE is at the front door, wearing overalls, with a suitcase nearby. He beckons APRIL, does a quick dance step, picks up his suitcase and is gone.)

APRIL

Part of you did. Sometimes, in the lunch line -

(FRANKIE's knees buckle and he is held up by AUGIE who, joined by APRIL, helps FRANKIE to the couch.)

AUGIE

You okay?

FRANKIE

(Indicating).

I need to.... You two are exhausting.

APRIL

(FRANKIE lies down on the couch.)

You need help, Frankie.

FRANKIE

Let me rest. Keep going. I can call balls and strikes from here.

(To APRIL.)

The lunch line -

(APRIL hesitates.)

April.

APRIL

(To AUGIE:)

After I started working the lunch line...I'd see some boy in line. Like you, with your wise-ass smirk. Kinda wide-eyed and leary...yeah, leary. Once in a while, there I'd be behind you. Funny. I'd try to slip a little extra on your plate. Sometimes you'd look up.

(A beat.)

Do you think this is it? I don't mean heaven -

FRANKIE

Nothing wrong with a good hereafter.

APRIL

I mean, do you wonder if we have it better somewhere else? That it evens out. It's not so lopsided.

AUGIE

Who cares. What's it matter? This is what we've got. What we know.

APRIL

No, you ever get a feel for something else. Something real.

AUGIE

Like when you're asleep? A dream, something like that?

APRIL

Any time.

AUGIE

You've been squirreled up here way too long. It's not good. Was it them?

APRIL

You first -

AUGIE

That woke up.

APRIL

- you're the oldest.

AUGIE

I'm supposed to know what we're talking about?

APRIL

(At the table, picking up a key.)

You got this from behind the loose brick. It's how you got in.

AUGIE

They never did know.

APRIL

You knew I was here.

(AUGIE shakes his head.)

He tell you?

AUGIE

No. I get here, it's all locked up. What, I kick the door in, break a window? I checked the brick.

There it was. I was just supposta slip in and out.

(Off APRIL's look.)

Then you.... I didn't wanna go. Not alone. That spring, she pulls me aside and says that after graduation I hafta clear out. They done their part. I was grown, the house was too small. There could only be one rooster.

(A beat.)

APRIL

When you woke up, all that screamin'. It because of that?

AUGIE

Some. A little. When it came time, I had nowhere to go. Frankie was taking off for the summer, then school. I joined up. In basic training, I was top marksman in the battalion. This officer hands me a pin, asks if I'm that good. Can I knock the top hat off a tick? They give me a bunch of tests, tell me I've got talent. Send me off to this advanced course. My TO there says he loves working with a new crop of gifted sociopaths. When we finish up, our unit's shipped out to what one of the guys calls Palm Springs East. We rotate around. I start in recon - reconnaissance - then spotting, then a full-fledged shooter. Sniper. Turns out I'm at my best at a thousand yards. After a couple of tours, we're the go-to unit. Takin' out the bad guys. This night, we're along the border after some insurgents raising Cain mining supply routes. I take this target out. Command radios it needs proof of kill. We move in for a pic. She's maybe eleven,

twelve. Go through her backpack for mines. There's a map...and a kite. She was eating an apricot.

APRIL

So, what happened?

AUGIE

They wrote her up as a scout. Gave me a medal.

APRIL

How could you know.

AUGIE

All that time...whatever the target, I'd look through the scope I'd see them. Made it easy. After that night, the only thing I saw was the apricot, squeezed tight in her fist. I was pretty fucked up when Rose got word to me. They said I had the yips. I spent the last couple years in motor pool, 'til they turned me out on disability. Old Jake woulda had a good laugh on that. Only thing he ever knew was the inside of an engine. Yunno, the only time he touched me he'd give me one a his Dutch rubs. It'd burn like hell, an' my hair'd be full of grease. I don't know where...

They've tried to pry it outa me for years.

(To April.)

The truth is, I wanted out. You're right to hate me. Tag, you're it.

(Several beats.)

His holiness here says I'm supposed to listen.

FRANKIE

If you want, I can leave -

APRIL

No. You know the story - talked to Rose, saw the papers. Daughter spared in parent murder-suicide.

FRANKIE

Were you - spared?

(A beat.)

He wasn't there. He doesn't know. He needs to know.

APRIL

I was in my room. They were yelling back and forth, then she runs by the door and down the hall. Pretty soon he goes by, real slow. There's a shot...then another.

[JAKE and RUTH are gone.]

Then nothing. I went out, they're laying there. I called Rose, she came over. After a bit, she called the sheriff.

FRANKIE

(Sitting up, with great effort. To APRIL:)

Can I get some water.

(APRIL crosses to the kitchen sink and pours a glass of water. She turn to cross to FRANKIE. [JAKE is there, between them.] APRIL stops, transfixed. AUGIE wants to cross to APRIL, but FRANKIE stops him.)

[During the following, JAKE will retreat, then exit.]

APRIL

I came down the hall...he's there, standing over her. Holding the gun. Looking down. Says it's all wrong, he shoulda shot her here.

(Indicating her temple.)

Close up. Like she killed herself. He...he keeps standing there. Says we have to get rid of her. That it's just us now. I'm nodding. I, I keep nodding. I go to him, and I, I reach down. He lets go of it. He's standing there, looking down, and there's this NOISE, and he falls.

[JAKE is gone.]

I called Rose and...she comes over, and helps out. Then she called the sheriff.

(AUGIE crosses to APRIL and holds her; FRANKIE lies back down on the couch.)

APRIL

(After several beats, to AUGIE:)

I'm a killer.

AUGIE

Welcome to the club.

APRIL

You were in a war.

AUGIE

So were you. I'd give you a medal, but I threw it away.

APRIL

I should turn myself in. You could be one of those accessories after the fact.

AUGIE

Shit, I'm an accessory before the fact. Shoulda been one during the fact. Only thing I gotta say is, God bless Aunt Rose.

(To FRANKIE:)

Is that a prayer?

(To APRIL:)

I always wondered if Rose hated his guts. What did she say?

APRIL

This is family.

(APRIL turns to FRANKIE.)

FRANKIE

Don't look at me. I'm covered by that clergy privilege. All I heard is you heard a noise.

(A beat.)

What would have happened if there wasn't a noise?

APRIL

I don't know.

FRANKIE

Sure you do. This is Monday morning's crossword.

APRIL

He woulda got rid of the body. Made me help.

FRANKIE

And then?

(Several beats.)

Go and shoot no more.

(FRANKIE closes his eyes.)

APRIL

(To AUGIE:)

What do we do?

AUGIE

Shit, I don't know. We move on. And it starts with me taking a whiz.

(AUGIE crosses toward the exit off the kitchen.)

APRIL

Are you staying?

AUGIE

(On exit.)

Here?

APRIL

I mean, if you did, if you wanted we could fix it up. Remodel.

AUGIE

(Off.)

I'd start with a bulldozer.

FRANKIE

He's right. You should move on.

APRIL

Where?

FRANKIE

Have faith. Plans are overrated. I'd start with up.

(YOUNG FRANKIE appears, and takes APRIL's hand and they dance. YOUNG FRANKIE is gone as AUGIE returns.)

AUGIE

(Quietly; at the window.)

Almost light. Let's get outa here.

(Picking up the bags of ashes; referring to FRANKIE.)

He's fine.

(On exit, through front door.)

I'll be out back.

(AUGIE exits. APRIL finds her coat, then takes a blanket off the back of the couch and places it on FRANKIE. SHE kisses FRANKIE's forehead, suddenly steps back, then kisses it again, and exits through the front door. A slow cross fade from FRANKIE to the treehouse in silhouette, backlit by morning twilight, with AUGIE and APRIL huddled inside.)

END OF PLAY

(Fourth draft 6/30/22)