

PARKING LOT TRAFFIC

a comedy in process

by
Michael Perlmutter



©Michael Perlmutter
1719 N. 6th St
Port Hueneme, CA 93041
805-469-2897
lmjdj@msn.com
www.DirectingHamlet.com

A NOTE ON THE NOTATIONS:

1. A slash (/) indicates the character with the next line of dialogue begins his or her speech (overlapping dialogue).
2. Dialogue in parenthesis “()” is expressed aloud, as an aside or unintentionally.
3. Dialogue in brackets ([]) is not verbalized / may be expressed nonverbally.

LOW TECH VERSION:

This version of the play requires full stage width video projections to be employed (preferably with audio as well: though screen voices may be produced as voice overs offstage if necessary).

The original version of this play (available upon request) does not require projections. However the original version does require rigging to “fly” pieces of scenery and two actors (each separately).

ACT I

(At Rise:

A bedroom. Shades are drawn over the windows as STACI, twenty/thirty something, clad in sleeping attire, enters quietly from one of three doors (closet, bathroom or rest of the apartment). She is holding something (or things) behind her back, being sure not to awaken the man (CRAIG) sleeping on the bed. Reaching her destination, she swiftly jumps on CRAIG, who is lying on his back, and straddles him: holding him down as she moves into place: a rubber kitchen mallet and a wooden stake positioned over CRAIG's heart in classic horror film style. CRAIG opens his eyes at first aware only of being provocatively straddled but then keenly aware of the weapons now in play. Yet before he can say anything STACI announces:)

STACI

Quick: You're a vampire: how do you get out of this alive?

CRAIG

(A beat.)

Can we not do this right now, I don't think I'm / awake yet?

STACI

Then you die. I own the element of surprise.

CRAIG

I'm surprised but I'm really not in the mood / for this.

STACI

(Feeling him beneath her:)

Oh, I think you are.

CRAIG

[Please?] Can you just give me a chance to breathe?

STACI

Don't change the subject; You who are about to die—save yourself. Or is *this* maybe your way of ...

CRAIG

Why can't I just have a normal relationship with a normal girlfriend?

STACI

Because that would be boring; for both of us.

(Touching the stake to his skin innocently:)

{Any} thoughts?

CRAIG

(Acquiescing if only to end the torture:)

What if I do nothing?

STACI

(Touching the stake to his skin:)

Then you die.

CRAIG

Hey! That's sharp.

STACI

There has to be an element of danger involved.

CRAIG

Why?

STACI

Save yourself, Demon.

CRAIG

OK. I'm a vampire.

STACI

We know that.

CRAIG

Where am I?

STACI

In your lair.

CRAIG

Could you [move off me or at least shift to the left]?

STACI

Tick-tock. Whaddo you do?

CRAIG

(Thinking quickly:)

How bad do I want to live?

STACI

Trick question: you're already dead.

CRAIG

If I'm a vampi—

(Responding to the pressure of presumably the stake:)

Pull up. Pull up for godsakes.

STACI

(Eases up just slightly.)

Sissy.

CRAIG

What time is it?

STACI

[Why?] Who's asking?

(Staying on subject:)

Three o'clock.

CRAIG

a.m. or p.m.?

STACI

a.m.

CRAIG

Old style vampire or new [style]?

STACI

Old school: definitely old school. Sunlight is not your friend.

CRAIG

Silver bullets?

STACI

Werewolf.

CRAIG

Mirrors?

STACI

Don't own any. For a reason.

CRAIG

Garlic?

Burns. STACI

Crosses? Holy water? CRAIG

Anything religious. STACI

Wiccan? CRAIG

Except wiccan; Times up. STACI
(She raises the hammer.)

I could kiss you. CRAIG
(Quickly:)

Distract me? Ha! Too cliché. STACI

I could . . . CRAIG
(Slightly rotates his hips beneath her.)

Later. STACI

I could cry. CRAIG

I like that. Unexpected. STACI
(She is stopped. Thinks on it)

I could beg you to kill me; beg you to release me from my / torment. CRAIG
(As she continues to loosen her position over him:)

Too much talking. I hate it when the villain has to spill his guts to the hero instead of just pulling the trigger and being done with it: it's sloppy. [I like it:] a tear. Just a tear. It's ... symbolic. STACI
(Still atop him--thinking aloud as much to herself as him:)

(Having the upper hand finally, CRAIG disarms STACI and flips her onto her back on the bed as if to overpower her sexually but instead continues to roll up and over her, sending his feet to the floor and continue his travel to the bathroom.)

STACI

(Remaining where she is--thinking all things over.)

Thanks, Babe.

CRAIG

Sometimes I think you're crazy.

STACI

Sometimes me too.

(We hear the unmistakable sound of water on water.)

STACI

Close the door for godsakes.

(Flush. Followed by the sound of the sink after which CRAIG reemerges from the bathroom.--closing the door behind himself.)

CRAIG

Sorry. What time is it?

STACI

Three a.m.

CRAIG

Real life?

STACI

Yeah. Maybe three twenty.

CRAIG

What the hell'd you wake me up at three a.m. for?

STACI

I was stuck.

CRAIG

On wha—At 3 a.m.?

STACI
So?

CRAIG
I don't have to be to work till— ...

STACI
Then go back to bed.

CRAIG
I think I'm awake now. Thank you.

STACI
Sorry.

CRAIG
Yeah.

(There is a long pause as CRAIG watches STACI lying on the bed lost in thought. The silence says everything.)

STACI
Later.

CRAIG
What?

STACI
(Sitting back up:)
Next time don't let me watch you pee.

CRAIG
You couldn't see anything; nothing you haven't seen before.

STACI
OK; if you're a vampire: what kind of work do you do?

CRAIG
Really? You're still on this?

STACI
Not to get close to your prey—or ahead of your hunter—none of that kind of crap—but because you really need a job.

CRAIG
Then I'm going back to bed.

STACI

(As he climbs back into bed :)

No, think about it: what if—what if he works at a Seven Eleven or a Dunkin Donuts—something open all night—'cuz he's broke.

CRAIG

You're on your own.

STACI

(Moving to sit on the dresser—she knows too well exactly what his climbing into the bed means.)

Enough with the bourgeoisie, independently wealthy, sucking the life out the working class: that's had its day. It was a great political statement for its time but now the disease has to be reborn—coming up from the gutter.

CRAIG

I liked you better with a stake in your hand.

STACI

Come on; help me with this.

CRAIG

Why?

STACI

'Cuz it's three a.m. and you're wide awake.

CRAIG

I thought there was something to be awake for.

STACI

(Looks at him a moment—tilting her head:)

You're cute.

CRAIG

Really?

STACI

So ... now that you're awake: where does he work? Do you like the convenience store or—

(As CRAIG buries his head back into his pillow:)

—Ple-e-e-e-ease.

CRAIG

Why are we doing this? Are you writing a book or something?

STACI

No. Should I? Would would would you read it?

CRAIG

If it'll get you back in bed I'll memorize it.

STACI

What?

CRAIG

It's the best I could come up with in short notice.

STACI

I want a donut now. You want a donut?

CRAIG

(To himself more than her:)

Oh my god.

STACI

It's not gonna happen till I get that picture out of my mind.

CRAIG

You didn't see anything.

STACI

You will learn.

CRAIG

OK, [I'll play along:] if only to distract you for the purpose of conquering you.

STACI

Was that supposed to be romantic or ... ?

CRAIG

It's three a.m.

STACI

[It's] closer to three thirty now.

CRAIG

(Getting out of bed; throwing on a zippered sweatshirt:)

Coffee or Something stronger?

STACI

You going out for donuts?

CRAIG

No.

(CRAIG steps into the doorway—the lights shift: preferably the stage turns to reveal a modest living room and kitchenette just beyond the bedroom while the bedroom itself [bed, dresser and all] veer into the background or offstage.¹ CRAIG continues his stride to the kitchenette to retrieve a bottle of "something stronger" and two glasses to pour into as STACI follows him out to trade in her hammer and stake for a pen and paper from the kitchen counter. A sofa, side table, chair and other living room amenities make up the room.)

CRAIG

Don't follow me. I'm trying to get you back in there.

STACI

(Already sitting at the counter—across from him—making notes:)

What should I name him?

CRAIG

(Takes the moment in: pours himself a shot and her a full drink. He then takes his shot and pours himself another full drink.)

How did we get stuck on this?

STACI

I was watching a movie.

(Reading from her list:)

Should it be a movie?—A graphic novel or a short story?—Or a series of books; We could get rich, right?

CRAIG

You saw a movie?

STACI

Yeah, it was stupid, they did everything dumb—like one of those franchise things but worse.

CRAIG

Halloween?

¹ Of course, if a turntable set is not possible, the bedroom may remain stable and the two rooms be viewed throughout the entire play. Preference would be just that: "preference". Enough here ... back to the story ...

STACI

Worse. Much worse. Halloween—the first one—was good.

CRAIG

(Changing the subject:)

You want me to put on a movie?

STACI

Nope. I wanna do this.

CRAIG

You know what I wanna do?

STACI

Really? This is / you're good stuff?

CRAIG

(Continuing anyway:)

You.

STACI

That line ever work for you?

CRAIG

Not tonight obviously.

STACI

I'm worth waiting for.

CRAIG

So why a vampire? You feel like biting?

You ever met a vampire before?

STACI

(Still writing:)

Yes.

CRAIG

Really?

STACI

When I was nine I had an aunt. And she had this one long hair sticking out of her chin and nobody would talk about it.

CRAIG

And that would make her a witch.

STACI

That's what I thought at first too, right? But then I figured why didn't she just pull it—trim it: shave—something—electrolysis maybe. Then I realized maybe she doesn't even know it's there—but of course it's *there*—everybody can see it's *there*. But what if *she* couldn't see it was there and that got me to thinking what if she couldn't see it because she couldn't see her own reflection in the mirror? And that's when I realized—she was a vampire. It made perfect sense: and I mean who could care about a stupid hair on your chin when you've got so many other problems to deal with, right? It never struck me funny after that that she wouldn't go to church with us. Give me some good names.

(As STACI continues CRAIG lets his eyes fall from her cleavage over to the mail piling up at the end of the counter [where the Formica meets the wall].)

CRAIG

(Pulling out a piece of mail that has caught his interest:)

This better be a jury summons.

STACI

C'mon, you're good with names.

CRAIG

(Having opened the previously opened mail:)

You got another ticket?

STACI

It doesn't matter—it won't hold up.

CRAIG

Whaddo you mean it doesn't matter—they're gonna drop your insurance policy.

STACI

It was in a parking lot.

CRAIG

So?

STACI

Parking lot traffic doesn't count.

CRAIG

Who told you that?

STACI

The way I see it: it's private property. [The] signs are there to be used as suggestions [and] guidelines they're not etched in stone.

CRAIG

How did you get a license?

STACI

It's private property.

CRAIG

It's public access.

STACI

On private property. It doesn't count.

CRAIG

(Closing up the envelope again and setting it aside:)

Good luck with that.

STACI

And why are you opening my mail?

CRAIG

Really? What's mine is yours, babe.

STACI

(Following her mood swing—mocking him:)

"Babe"—whaddo you think of that as a name?

CRAIG

Perfect.

STACI

(Repeating it for him . . . just in case:)

"Babe".

CRAIG

(Taking his drink and crossing to the sofa to sit it out:)

And call it: time of death: Three twenty-four.

STACI

I don't open your mail.

CRAIG

I didn't mean anything by it.

STACI

Sure you didn't.

CRAIG

(Picking up the remote:)

I'm putting on a movie.

STACI

No, no, no, no: help me with this. I think I'm really on to something here.
You want me to read it to you?

CRAIG

No.

(A beat.)

Of course.

(As she moves to the sofa:)

So you're going to be a writer now.

STACI

Who can't be a writer?

CRAIG

Apparently the people who wrote the movie you just saw.

(No reply.)

Didn't you try this once before?

STACI

[That] wasn't my fault.

CRAIG

What's wrong with the career you already have?

STACI

I am three jobs removed from "do you want fries with that?"

CRAIG

So what does that make me?

STACI

Four jobs removed.

CRAIG

Such is the world of high / finance.

STACI

Haven't you ever wanted to have a more exciting life?

CRAIG

My life is exciting enough—*You* are exciting enough.

STACI

I mean real exciting. Dream big or go home.

CRAIG

Sitting alone in a room writing about other people having an exciting life—that's what you're saying here.

STACI

For someone who wants to get in my pants you're doing a pretty lousy job.

CRAIG

(After the slightest beat:)

Go ahead, please.

STACI

(Positions herself on the couch--sitting cross legged--facing him; enraptured with her project:)

I still don't have a name but I'm toying with Frank—In honor of Frank Langela—but / he's—

CRAIG

So why's he have to be a boy? Why can't he be a girl?

STACI

(Stopped with the new thought--regroups--storing the thought for later:)

Ok: good thought—maybe later: Frank works at an all night record store.

CRAIG

Where are you going to find a record store anymore?

STACI

Right? Right?

He's a relic—but a new fashioned relic—like in a big city somewhere. Somewhere that sells vinyl. Like LA or New York or Chicago or Detroit: yeah, Detroit. They still have Hell's night in Detroit, right? Whaddo you think of that as a title: "Hell's night"?

(As STACI continues: four record bins roll into place on stage: two on either side of the sofa. FRANK, a pale, thin, man in his twenties, shuffles thru the bins, cleaning & restocking records. He uses a roll of green painter's tape, wrapping tape around his fingers to remove any lint from the records themselves.)

(CRAIG chooses not to reply . . . his comment would only make things worse.)

STACI

So, I'm thinking Frank: he works the night shift, obviously, and he *needs* the job 'cuz he's always broke and he's next to homeless. Another victim of the next recession—

CRAIG

[What recession?]

STACI

(There's always one around the corner)—he had money but he lost it all—like / everybody else did.

CRAIG

Like my Dad.

STACI

Not like your Dad; like everybody else did. I don't wanna make this maudlin. I want it alive [and] vibrant. He's in a record shop so of course there'll be this amazing soundtrack.

CRAIG

So, it's a movie?

STACI

Of course it's a movie. What do you think?

CRAIG

About what?

STACI

What I read to you.

CRAIG

That's everything?

STACI

So far.

CRAIG

... It's a start.

STACI

You hate it.

CRAIG

No, [not at all.]

(And to back up the concept he ads:)

And his love interest?

(FRANK reacts--looking about expectantly.)

CRAIG (Continued:)

It's a customer or a girl who works there?

STACI

(Excited about the possibilities:)

I don't know I haven't gotten there yet.

(FRANK just stares at her.)

STACI

(Head back in the paper: writing away.)

This is going to be fun.

CRAIG

(Gets up and crosses over to the kitchen counter--
maneuvering around the record racks as though they're not
there--to retrieve the bottle.)

This is going to be something. Freshen—you didn't take your meds, right?

STACI

It's Thursday. I don't take my meds on Thursday.

CRAIG

That's not / the way you're supposed to—

STACI

I have Fridays off and I don't want to be all medicated on my day. So, no, I didn't
take my meds. So, yes, I'll have a drink.

CRAIG

(Bringing the bottle and her drink back to the sofa.)

But it's Thursday, three a.m.; so you're telling me you didn't take your medication
on Wednesday?

STACI

I forgot. Gimme.

(Takes her drink from him.)

Ok: you tell me about her.

Who? CRAIG

The love interest. STACI

No, this is your story. CRAIG

I want it to be our story. STACI

By "our" story . . . CRAIG

You know what I mean: we write it together. STACI

Does this end with me on top of you? CRAIG

Not unless it ends with me on top of you. STACI

[My Lord,] when you put it like that how can I say, "no"? CRAIG

What's her name? STACI

Who? CRAIG

The girlfriend.
Frank's girlfriend. STACI

... Veronica. CRAIG

No. STACI

(FRANK again is looking out for the mystery woman.)

CRAIG

[Whaddo you mean "no"?:]

STACI

We'll call her Ronni.

CRAIG

Call her what you want.

(RONNI enters. Also in her twenties, she looks on with a wide eyed innocence waiting for her cue.)

STACI

Her name's Ronni. Ok. Does she work there? Where's she from?

CRAIG

No.

(Changing his answer to match what he thinks Staci wants to hear:)

Yes—she's looking for work.

(FRANK and RONNI do their best to try to comply with the changing dynamics as STACI and CRAIG continue:)

CRAIG (Continued:)

She comes in as a customer. Visits a few times and then applies for a job.

STACI

He asks her to apply—because there's an opening. I don't know if I want him to have a love interest.

CRAIG

There has to be a love [interest]. There's always a love interest.

STACI

My point exactly: there's always a love interest. What if there wasn't one?

CRAIG

You mean he's gay? That's been done.

STACI

Why does there have to be sex?

CRAIG

You can't do a vampire movie without sex.

STACI

Why not?

CRAIG

Vampires are all about [sex]--it's a euphemism.

STACI

What if it wasn't?

CRAIG

No one would see it.

(Correcting himself:)

Do what you want.

(FRANK watches unwillingly as RONNI exits.)

STACI

I might bring her back. Maybe. I want I need to focus on him right now.

CRAIG

[It's] just the genre's always been about sexual repression. Springs awakening but in a forbidden venue.

STACI

You're enjoying this aren't you? Tell the truth.

CRAIG

(Before taking another drink.)

You can't handle the truth.

(FRANK meanwhile has gone back to sorting, cleaning and restocking merchandise. He is fact now holding a forty-five and staring at the hole in the center of the record.)

STACI

(To Craig:)

Put it away.

(FRANK places the forty-five back amongst the other records. STACI gets up and using her notes as reference starts to move about the room.)

STACI

OK, work it out with me. We open with a wide shot of the record store. No, no, what? Full moon? Full moon and fade into a record. We pull back and we see / rows and rows of—

CRAIG

What are you doing?

STACI

I'm starting.

CRAIG

It's thr— ... You need to have a story first.

STACI

We need an opening first: something that says "bang" This is it.

CRAIG

This is what?

STACI

This is what you're looking for. This is different. This is

(Using an affected voice:)

'Hell's night' Too much? I think it's too much. I don't like the title. We need something more catchy. One word. Something with one word.

CRAIG

I think you ... need a story and a premise.

STACI

I have that: a modern day, struggling to make it, vampire.

CRAIG

And your story?

STACI

Can he survive? *Can* he make it in a world where he doesn't belong—where no one understands him? It speaks to a / generation.

CRAIG

That's not a story—that's another question.

STACI

Oh you mean: boy meets girl—boy loses girl—boy gets girl again?

CRAIG

[It] has its merits.

STACI

It's boring; I don't want this to be boring. I just spent two hours watching boring. I want something fresh. I want something new, something different.

CRAIG

OK ... 'f you say so.

STACI

I say so ...

(CRAIG watches STACI writing away.)

CRAIG

Have you [gotten any sleep?] ... When's the last time you took your medication?

STACI

Why're you so interested in my medication all of a sudden?

CRAIG

I'm just watching you here [and] you're ...you're getting a little maybe obsessed with this already, aren't you?

STACI

It's called passion. You should try it sometime.

CRAIG

That's where I thought we were going when you woke me up.
Don't you think this can wait till the morning?

STACI

No. No; no, no, no, no, no: it can't.

(No reply. Immersing herself in her writing:)

You remember *Crossing Over*; and then they came out with *The Ghost Whisperer*?² I can't let that happen again.

CRAIG

That was a fluke.

STACI

Stories are out there. They—they-they-they live in the biosphere and whoever catches them first wins. If you don't want to help me: fine.

CRAIG

Don't you have to be to work at eleven?

STACI

I can call in sick—I got a couple days piled up. I haven't taken my meds.

² - *The Ghost Whisperer* can be exchanged for any more current television series with a supernatural hook.

CRAIG
Which concerns me.

STACI
Why?

CRAIG
You know how you get.

STACI
No, tell me, how do I get?

(CRAIG chooses not to answer.)

STACI
I want to do something creative. Maybe I want to express myself—explore something.

CRAIG
Which is all fine and good but— ...

STACI
"But"?

CRAIG
(Changing the subject; holding up the traffic ticket as reference:)
But I don't think you should be driving, is all.

STACI
Exactly. Can't go to work. Everything's settled. I don't want to talk about this anymore; I want to do this.

(Stops.)
Fuck.

CRAIG
What?

STACI
I ... lost it—I can't ... I was going to say something or write something but I ... You made me lose it.

CRAIG
If it's supposed to be it'll still be in there in the morning. Everything / has a

STACI

A purpose? Are you going to give me your purpose speech again?

CRAIG

I know it's just my two cents here but you know you don't forget what you're thinking about when you're on your meds.

STACI

Because I don't think at all when I'm on my meds—I just [am]. I'd rather have a thought and lose it than not have a thought at all.

CRAIG

Maybe if you took your prescriptions regularly ...

STACI

I'm not doing this.

CRAIG

[I'm] just saying.

STACI

They zone me out. I don't want to live my life in some "zone" that isn't me so the rest of the world can sleep at night because I'm obviously such a threat to society.

CRAIG

You're not a threat to society

STACI

Apparently I am or they wouldn't want to keep me doped up twenty-four, seven.

CRAIG

It's not they want: it's what they have--it's all there is--'til someone comes up with something better this is what they've got: you know that.

STACI

And to that I say I will continue to continue to snatch up whatever moments I can.
(No reply. Not that she allows too much time for one all the same:)

I mean, [you ever wonder] what would've happened if they'd medicated Einstein?
Or Sylvia Plath?

CRAIG

Sylvia Plath? Really?

STACI

I'm just saying that is not my "purpose".

CRAIG

And this started out as such a friendly conversation.

STACI

If you wanna help me: help me; but otherwise: I'm busy.

CRAIG

I didn't [mean anything by it.]

STACI

You never do.

(CRAIG watches her as she buries herself back into writing.)

STACI

Maybe my life's purpose is to be the goal and you're the one living out the "cautionary tale"?

CRAIG

Maybe if you stopped mixing medications ...

STACI

I'm not mixing medications.

CRAIG

Alcohol?

STACI

Alcohol?: Alcohol isn't a medication: it's alcohol—that's why they gave it its own special name.

CRAIG

Yeah ... and that sounds like my cue.

(Finishes off his own drink before heading back to the bedroom.)

STACI

(Looking up from her notes--sincere in her thought:)

Stay up with me.

CRAIG

I'd love to, Stace, really, but ... no. Anyway, I still have to be up before the sun.

STACI

The bank can run itself for a day.

CRAIG

You work at the bank; I work in a realtor's office, and if *I* don't show up to work someone else tries to sell my properties.

STACI

Haven't you ever wanted to be something more--something better? This / could be—

CRAIG

Better than this? Not possible.

(No reply. He kisses her forehead..)

You dream: be brilliant.

STACI

This could be our destiny here.

CRAIG

Don't stay up too late.

(As he turns to head back to the bedroom:)

Please stay away from the sharp objects.

STACI

Ha-ha.

(Just before he's gone:)

You don't think I'm crazy, do you?

CRAIG

Just the right amount.

STACI

That's what I said.

(Looking directly at Frank--or should I say through Frank--
Suddenly receiving a thought:)

Wait.

CRAIG

(Simultaneously as Frank reacts:)

What?

I'm trying to make a graceful exit here.

(No reply. As he goes:)

Wake me if you change your mind.

(The room stays where it is.³ We stay with STACI as she
stares toward FRANK, deep in thought. FRANK is fully

³ If, as previously noted, both rooms remain in view, CRAIG will indeed need to put himself to bed and adjust accordingly throughout as needed as the play continues (rather than my repeating this note any further).

aware of her as she is only cognizant of him as a figment of her own imagination unmaterialized in her head.)

STACI

So it's just you and me then.

(Meanwhile RONNI hangs back, loitering around the edges of the background, waiting for either an invitation or the right moment to burst into the scene.)

STACI (Continued:)

(Excited to engage with her thoughts aloud:)

Tell me about yourself. What is there to know about Frank? Do you like the name Frank? Did you choose it yourself or did your parents name you Frank—who are your parents—Or is it Francis? What are you doing in a record store anyway? I have so many questions for you. Who is Frank?

(Freshens her own drink:)

Why Detroit? How long have you been in Detroit? Who knows you? Friends: Who are your friends? Do you have any friends? Are you good or are you evil? Or are you just the quiet type? Strong and—no, you're scrawny, scrawny and pale. Scrawny and pale definitely. Why do we like you? Why do we root for Frank?

(Thinks about it as FRANK eyes RONNI in the shadows.)

Because you're in love. Fuck.

(In Craig's direction:)

Right again. Don't you hate that. So you watch her. But we need to get to know you first. Are you a killer? You're a vampire—you have to be a killer. But how do you *feel* about being a killer? And how do *we* feel about how you feel? And how does—

(Referring to Ronni)

—[she] change your world?

Talk to me, dammit.

FRANK

(To Ronni—rather unemotionally:)

Can I help you with something?

RONNI

No, I'm just ... browsing.

STACI

Nobody says "browsing". Why do you say "browsing"?

FRANK

Let me know then.

(Nothing. STACI watches both FRANK and RONNI waiting for them to make another move. They, in turn wait for input from her. Nothing. The silence continues.)

STACI

That was stupid.

RONNI

I suppose you can do better?

STACI

Sure: Hit me with it.
Hello.

CRAIG (offstage)

What?

STACI

Go to sleep.

(To Frank:)

Go.

FRANK

(To Staci--still as unemotional [not uncaring but more aloof than necessary]:)

... Can I help you with something?

(STACI deliberately says nothing.)

FRANK

Miss?

(Again no reply.)

Miss?

RONNI

(Insincerely:)

Wow: you're a master.

(STACI holds up her hand as if to tell Ronni "wait for it."
FRANK sighs, sets down his record sorting, and crosses closer to STACI.)

FRANK

Did you need some help finding something?

RONNI

Amazing: you got him to move toward you. But if this is a [film]—this is a film, right?—you don't need dialogue in a film.

STACI

Oh [god, you're right: even] better. Go back, go back.

FRANK

Here?

STACI

Back to where you were.

FRANK

(To Ronni:)

What're we doing this for?

RONNI

Sex. You want sex.

FRANK

[But] I'm a vampire.

RONNI

You want vampire sex.

FRANK

Vampire sex ... right.

STACI

Shut up.

CRAIG (offstage⁴)

I didn't say anything.

(STACI writes feverously as the "dance" begins. RONNI drifts through the aisles waiting to be noticed while FRANK watches her through the corner of his eye, pretending to be stocking and sorting merchandise. They move like chess pieces to different positions in the aisles-- under Staci's direction until they are almost side by side.)

RONNI

What do you know about Chernobyl?

⁴ See previous note – I would add here that CRAIG (does not and) has not moved from his position and was understandable presumed asleep by all.

FRANK

Chernobyl? Chernobyl the town or the Chernobyl factory?

RONNI

The band. This is a records store, isn't it?

FRANK

... I'm sorry—never heard of [em]. Did they put anything on vinyl?

RONNI

Nothing but.

FRANK

(Awkwardly moving in to ostensibly rearrange records in the bin in front of her:)

Are they uh ... No, I don't have any idea who they are. Are they still together?

RONNI

No, the lead singer got married and moved to somewhere like Bumfuck Idaho or something. I think his name was Jerry.

FRANK

Jerry ... ?

RONNI

I don't know, he was just Jerry.

FRANK

You knew him?—I mean you *knew him* knew him?

STACI

This is ... God ... This is [hard].

(Both RONNI and FRANK turn their attention back over to Staci.)

STACI

Cut to: Locked lips.

(As Ronni and Frank try to comply:)

We're in the break room and there are stacks of records falling everywhere as Frank throws himself at Ronni—No: wait: Ronni throws herself at—Shit, nobody throws themselves.

(RONNI and FRANK come up for air.)

STACI (Continued:)

Starting over. Ronni has just entered the store. Frank, meanwhile, hasn't eaten for days. Should he look—he dare not—but can he stop himself? She watches him out of corner of her eye. Will he ever notice me? What will it take—No, no, no—Wait:

She ducks into the store to get away from a boy who's been following her—stalking her—An ex-boyfriend who's been stalking her.

(Meanwhile FRANK and RONNI have met up with each other already—well ahead of Staci's rambling narration.)

FRANK

There is no ex-boyfriend is there?

RONNI

No. I just wanted to see you.

FRANK

Why didn't you just say that?

RONNI

Because it has no style.

FRANK

Style?

STACI

Cut to:

RONNI

Wait—Can't we just get to know each other first?

STACI

No: action first; background later.

RONNI

You're thinking like a teenage boy.

STACI

Teenage boys buy most of the tickets.

RONNI

So, you're pandering; that what you're doing now?

FRANK

Meanwhile—I haven't had anything to eat in how long?

STACI

We'll get to that.

FRANK

I need food.

STACI

You need rent money.

FRANK

Why can't I just roll some rich kid—kill him—feed—and make off with his wallet?

STACI

(Taken aback by the betrayal:)

I don't want you to be like that.

FRANK

Like what?

STACI

With no conscience. No morals, no sense of empathy. I want you to be torn. I want you to have a sense of / right and wrong.

FRANK

Oh god, you're writing a chick flick.

STACI

I am not writing a chick flick.

FRANK

Sounds like a chick flick.

STACI

This is definitely not a chick flick.

FRANK

I think it is.

STACI

And you'd be wrong.

RONNI

Alright, but for the case of argument: if you were and I'm not saying you are but if you / were—

STACI
Which I'm not.

RONNI
But if you / were—

STACI
I know what you're going to / say.

RONNI
Of course you know what I'm going to say; I'm in your head.

FRANK
I don't know what she was going to say—
(Corrects himself: to Ronni:)
—*you* were going to say.

RONNI
It doesn't matter.

FRANK
Of course it does.

STACI
It really doesn't.

FRANK
Why not?

RONNI
Because ... I forgot—I forgot what I was going to say.

FRANK
(To Ronni:)
Did you?

RONNI
It happens.

FRANK
(To Staci:)
Did you?

STACI
Did I what?

FRANK

Forget; Forget what she was going to say.

STACI

I don't think I want to answer that.

RONNI

Ha.

STACI

Oh "ha" all you want. I'm the one writing this thing.

FRANK

So when do I get to start eating?

STACI

Craig!

CRAIG (offstage⁵)

What?

STACI

I need a plot.

CRAIG (offstage⁶)

Sleep on it: it'll be there in the morning.

FRANK

It is the morning.

STACI

It is the morning.

CRAIG (offstage)

I can't hear you: I'm covering my head with a pillow.

STACI

Coward.

RONNI

Why don't you just start with an outline.

STACI

It's not organic.

⁵ See previous note.

⁶ Ibid (always wanted to use "ibid")

RONNI
(Mouthing the word:)

["organic"]?

STACI

It's a / word.

RONNI

I know it's a word.

FRANK

From the seventies maybe.

STACI

When used appropriately.

RONNI

Just write a dammed outline.

(Takes the paper and pen:)

"Boy. Meets. Girl."

STACI

(Taking them back:)

No.

FRANK

Why don't you write a zombie movie. Zombie movies are cheaper to make.
Everyone moves in slow motion.

STACI

(Sitting on the counter—mulling over her notes:)

I need you to fall in love.

FRANK

(Putting his arm around Ronni—and she him:)

OK: we're in love.

(And to prove the point: RONNI and FRANK kiss.)

STACI

It doesn't work like that. You need to *fall* in love.

FRANK

(Asking for clarification:)

Not *be* in love?

No. STACI

Fall in love. FRANK

Fall. STACI

How did *you* do it? RONNI

How did I what? STACI

How did you fall in love? FRANK

That's not the point. STACI

Are you in love now? FRANK

(STACI hesitates to answer.)

Oooo: ouch.
And you're sleeping with him. RONNI

This isn't about me. STACI

It's always about you—a writer always writes about herself. RONNI

This is a vampire movie. STACI

Is it? FRANK

Yes. STACI

RONNI

Is it?

STACI

(Annoyed at the repetition:)

Yes.

FRANK

Or maybe: maybe it's a love story, masquerading as a vampire movie. Maybe it's all about ...

(Indicating the bedroom:)

you know who.

RONNI

And how *do* you feel about him?

STACI

(Not going there:)

No.

RONNI

Really?

STACI

(Standing firm:)

No.

FRANK

I think the lady doth proteth too much.

RONNI

What?

FRANK

She doth proteth.

RONNI

... you have a lisp?

FRANK

No.

RONNI

"Protest".

FRANK

What?

RONNI

"Protest". She doth "protest" too much.

FRANK

You don't even know what you're talking about.

RONNI

No: *you* don't know what're you're talking about.

STACI

Neither of you know [what you're talking about]; it's a vampire movie: nothing more.

RONNI

See?

FRANK

Well, it's not a very good one. It's been how long into the script and nobody's gotten bitten yet?

RONNI

You can bite *me*.

FRANK

Really?

RONNI

Sure.

FRANK

(Matter of factly:)

OK.

STACI

What are you doing?

FRANK

Well, *you're* not going to feed me.

(FRANK moves in to bite RONNI, who melts into the moment. Then giggles.)

RONNI

It tickles.

FRANK

Don't laugh-this is supposed to be simulated sex.

RONNI

Then bite harder—

(As he does:)

—Ohhh, there: that's it. God ...

(As the hormones begin to take over:)

Damn.

(She starts to writhe under his body.)

(STACI sits uncomfortably as the young couple proceed to make out, biting, fumbling, and kissing. She (STACI) finds herself engrossed in their flailing bodies, wrapping and intertwining. The moment becomes almost too heated if it weren't so comical in its fumbling execution..)

STACI

Alright ... OK ... That's enough of that.

(Yet the couple continue on unabated—falling into and behind furniture as they stay the course.)

STACI

Ok you've had your fun. Will you stop already? Stop. Stop, I mean it. Stop.

(There is a pause in the heat.)

STACI

Thank you.

(Then they're off again.)

STACI

Enough! What are you; a rabbit?

FRANK

I'm a vampire.

STACI

Yeah, we got that.

FRANK

I just .. can't help myself.

STACI

You think this is a joke?

RONNI

I thought he was doing OK.

STACI

I don't want to even ...

FRANK

Should we take our clothes off now?

STACI

No.

(As RONNI is the first to start to disrobe:)

No, just keep the clothes on.

(To Frank:)

And you: what—what do you think you're doing? I mean—how did you become a vampire in the first place?

FRANK

Good question; [you tell me].

STACI

You don't just jump on her like a puppy.

FRANK

I was hungry.

STACI

No, no, no, no, no, no: You have to seduce her.

FRANK

She said it was OK.

STACI

Not like that. That's how a man would write it.

FRANK

Now we're back to the chick flick.

STACI

You have to woo her. You have to make *her* want *you*.

FRANK

You want me, right?

RONNI

... Not so much.

FRANK

(To Staci:)

So, whaddo you suggest?

STACI

First: Don't touch her.

FRANK

That sort of defeats the purpose [here], doesn't it?

STACI

You have to tease her. Make her ... *want* you to touch her. Groping and grabbing is [too] awkward. You want her to anticipate your touch.

(FRANK points his finger in Ronni's direction and moves in closer . . . closer . . . but never touching her.)

STACI

You *are* joking, right?

FRANK

(Continuing all the same:)

This what you had in mind?

STACI

It's more of a dance.

FRANK

Should there be music?

RONNI

It's your record store.

FRANK

Is it? Is it mine; I thought I just worked there?

STACI

She just means you can have a soundtrack if you want it.

RONNI

No, I thought he actually owned the place.

STACI

Getting back to the dance—

FRANK

I've always been partial to the Temptations.

(Singing:)

Papa was a rolling stone—Well, well, well—Wherever he laid his hat was / his home

STACI

It's more of a tango.

FRANK (Continued:)

(Falsetto:)

And when died

(A beat—no reply.)

All he left us

(Pause ... but he has to finish it:)

was alo-o-o-one.

STACI

It's a tango.

FRANK

Yeah: I never learned to tango.

STACI

What is going [on here]? I created you. If I want you to know how to dance the tango then you know how to dance the tango. You know how to seduce a ... And you—you—what are you doing being such a slut?

RONNI

Hey, I'm just following your lead here.

STACI

(Takes this in; chooses the high road:)

Do it right.

RONNI

Are you sure you're not trying to work something out here?

(STACI chooses not to respond. A beat. RONNI and FRANK acquiesce, each taking up tango stances, facing their partner without touching. FRANK moves toward Ronni who counters by stepping back. The space between them remaining throughout the following:)

FRANK

I saw you across the room. Did you need help with a ... record?

STACI

Take it seriously.

FRANK

How?

STACI

Do you want to eat?

FRANK

God ... women.

(FRANK stares at RONNI who prepares herself. STACI waits. Nothing.)

FRANK

I'm not really any good at this.

RONNI

You're doing fine.

FRANK

Really?

(A beat.)

FRANK

I just wanted to talk to you really.

RONNI

Why?

FRANK

It gets lonely.

RONNI

(To Staci:)

You get lonely?

FRANK
(Still to Ronni:)

You ever get ...

(Turns to STACI:)

It just sounds so much like a line.

RONNI
(Turning his head back to her:)

Say it to me.

(FRANK responds to her touch: RONNI pulls her hand away.)

FRANK
It's been such a long time. I really don't want to hurt you.

RONNI
What makes you think you could hurt me?

FRANK
You have no idea.

STACI
[Take it] slowly.

(FRANK moves in slowly but, again, is careful not to touch RONNI. They dance in this manner as music begins to filter in--heating the moment but again never consummating the moment until there is . . . a slight touch: a brush of a finger against the face. RONNI takes hold of Frank's hand and pulls it around her but Frank withdraws and the dance continues as STACI watches on. They draw each other closer to each other and still never touch.)

FRANK
I'm not safe.

RONNI
Maybe I don't want to be safe.

(The dance continues as STACI watches--perched on the kitchen counter. Her involvement in their otherwise private moment moves from innocent bystander to uncomfortable witness to eager and finally frustrated voyeur by the time RONNI bends her head back revealing her neck to FRANK who slowly moves in to her. RONNI melts into him and

they fall into each other. STACI takes a deep breath as the couple separate, both falling to opposite ends of the sofa. There is a long pause.)

Shit.
RONNI

I know.
FRANK

(Pause.)

Shit.
RONNI
(Slightly differently now:)

I know.
FRANK
(Not recognizing a difference in her delivery:)

No, I mean "shit". I feel different. Why do I feel different? Did you ... ? What did you do to me?
RONNI

Nothing.
FRANK

You bit me.
RONNI

You asked me [to].
FRANK

Not like that.
RONNI

Not like what?
STACI

Not like what?
FRANK
(Simultaneously:)

Not like what, whaddo you mean "not like that"?
STACI

RONNI

Did you turn me?

FRANK

I know. It's what you / wanted.

RONNI

I didn't want this. Who would want this?

FRANK

Just let it absorb you.

RONNI

I'm a vampire now?

FRANK

A mistress of the night, actually.

RONNI

A vampire? You made me into a vampire?

FRANK

It's [what you wanted].

RONNI

Says who?

FRANK

You. Every time you looked at me. In every glance. Every stolen breath. Every beat. Every pulse.

(As RONNI and STACI both concentrate on the feelings they have inside themselves FRANK moves in seductively to Ronni.)

FRANK (Continued:)

Moving through you. Inside you. Dancing. To be one with the night.

RONNI

One?

FRANK

One.

(FRANK moves in closer but careful not to touch her:)

One?
RONNI

One.
FRANK

One.
RONNI

(FRANK is now just a breath away from Ronni.)

RONNI
Really: Already? Don't you have to rest or something?

FRANK
Welcome to the world of the dead.

(As FRANK hovers so close to Ronni: CRAIG enters from the bedroom.⁷ Looking on--unaware of the couple on the sofa.)

Babe?
CRAIG

(STACI just stares at him.)

CRAIG
I'm sorry I was a dick. I'm just ... you get me worked up, what can I say? Come to bed I won't ... I won't attack you.

(CRAIG offers his hand to help STACI off the counter.)

(STACI accepts his hand as FRANK offers his own neck now to RONNI.)

Bite me.
FRANK

RONNI
Really?
(As curious as she is nervous:)

FRANK
Yes.

⁷ Clearly an adjustment to be made here if one non-moving set: CRAIG should get up at this point—not earlier (we as the audience will watch the movement as otherwise RONNIE and FRANK flirt soooooo close to each other but never CRAIG enters. ...)

(CRAIG innocently places his arm on STACI's waist as she alights the counter to which STACI responds to by moving in closer and as RONNI accepts FRANK's neck offers STACI pulls into CRAIG and kisses him full on the mouth.)

Really? CRAIG

Really? RONNI
(Before actually biting:)

Yes. FRANK

(But STACI says nothing more than kissing CRAIG back harder.

(The set turns again--to reveal both rooms⁸ as the two couples begin to engaging each other. Music builds. RONNI and FRANK also move their passion on to their feet and as CRAIG and STACI climb into the bed under the sheets RONNI and FRANK find themselves ending up on the kitchen counter:)

For the record: I had no ulterior motives here. CRAIG

Shut up. STACI

Shutting up. CRAIG

(RONNI and FRANK [on the counter] mirror CRAIG and STACI's positions in the bedroom: reminiscent of the opening moments with the women straddled atop the men. Their movements, rather than overtly graphic take on a dance quality, preferably choreographed to the music still playing in the background.

As the scenes naturally progress: RONNI tears open FRANK's shirt while simultaneously CRAIG grips hold of the bed mattress. Both men reach up to grab hold of the woman they are with. Each woman leans down and bites

⁸ And if the set doesn't turn ... then clearly the set doesn't turn. (Enough about that.)

or kisses the neck of the man they are with; both women then arch back into position yet while STACI grips hold of the bed for support RONNI grips hold of the hammer and stake and coming down plunges the stake deep into FRANK's chest as:)

Lights fade.

END ACT 1

ACT II

(At rise:

Both rooms are still in view: The record bins are gone.

STACI, still clad in her nightwear and robe sits on the edge of her bed as CRAIG lies sleeping under the covers.

RONNI is similarly seated on the sofa with FRANK nowhere in sight. RONNI however is covered in what must have been Frank's blood. Both women sit silently in this tableaux a moment in deep thought before STACI breaks the "fourth" wall:)

You still there?
STACI

Still here. You?
RONNI

Same.
STACI

(Pause.)

Frank?
STACI

... Not so much.
RONNI

(Pause. RONNI reaches into her purse and pulls out a new pack of smokes:)

Cigarette?
RONNI

I'm still trying to wean myself off of 'em.
STACI

Suit yourself.
RONNI
(She opens the pack and locates a lighter.)

STACI

I'd appreciate it if you didn't smoke inside the apartment.

RONNI

You've got to be kidding, right?

STACI

If you can taste it then I can taste it.

RONNI

Oh ... right: I'll give you that.

(She puts the cigarettes and lighter away.)

STACI

Thank you.

(CRAIG turns in the bed as if to respond to Staci's last comment. STACI says nothing. She carefully gets up.)

STACI

I'm coming out there; I don't want to wake sleeping beauty in here.

(She gathers and throws on an oversized sweatshirt over her nightwear as RONNI tries to buy time:)

RONNI

No need. I'm not—I'm really not presentable right now.

STACI

It doesn't matter—I don't care if your naked or anything—I'll just clothe you in my mind.

(She exits the bedroom.)

RONNI

No, it's not that: it's just—I

(As the room turns to give us vantage of the living room/kitchenette area of the rental.⁹ STACI is stopped in the doorway at sight of RONNI in all her carnage.)

RONNI (Continued:)

—It's more I don't want you to see me like

(But there she is—seeing her like)

this.

⁹ You know the story by now. CRAIG remains in bed throughout unless noted differently in order to make any entrances and exits.

STACI

(Takes in the sight before responding:)

I wasn't expecting that.

RONNI

Yeah, me either.

STACI

Where—where's Frank?

(RONNI just smiles. No reply.)

RONNI

Gone.

STACI

To where?

RONNI

...Wherever it is they go.

STACI

... You—you ... Is that Frank?

RONNI

I had cause.

As you know he turned me and I thought well, as you may also know, if you kill a vampire then anyone that that vampire has turned into another vampire is released from their curse and returns back to the living. I mean, that *is* the way it's supposed to work, right?

STACI

(Very cautious now:)

If you say so.

RONNI

Yeah, well it didn't work.

I thought you said this was going to be 'Old School'?

STACI

(Moving around the apartment carefully.)

And the body?

RONNI

I don't know. Did you check the bathroom?

STACI

Why; did you put him in the tub?

RONNI

I didn't put him anywhere, he just kind of : ...

(Makes a "poofing" gesture with her hands.)

STACI

But he was my vampire.

RONNI

And what am I; chopped liver?

STACI

You're *his* vampire. He was mine.

RONNI

You really don't know how your own mind works, do you?

(STACI takes hold of the pad of paper and starts reading through her notes:)

RONNI

What is it? All gibberish?

STACI

No, no it's a bit fragmented but most of it's here. Up till the point where you ... uh
....

RONNI

Wacked your dude?

Yeah, well, you were a little bit otherwise engaged at the moment.

STACI

... [Right].

(She begins cleaning up and resetting the room.)

You could help out a little here, you know.

RONNI

Actually, no, I can't. I don't work that way.

STACI

Right ...

(Finishes tidying up then.)

So how do you actually work?

RONNI

Mentally anything you want is open for business but physically ... not / so much.

STACI

"Not so much": you seem to like that phrase.

RONNI

I was going to have T-shirts made; what size do you wear?
Are we still doing the movie? 'Cuz I've got a terrific back story.
(No reply. "I give up":)
Sorry I killed your precious Frank.

STACI

It's not that—it's just ... we've really got nothing in common then, do we?

RONNI

Thanks, girlfriend. Glad you got my back.

STACI

I mean "without Frank"?

RONNI

Seriously?
Seriously?

(Again: STACI is at a loss for a reply.)

RONNI

What kinda pills are you supposed to be on?

STACI

I had questions; I wanted to ask Frank what it was like to be a vampire.

RONNI

Ask me.

STACI

You've been one for ten minutes.

RONNI

Closer to thirty.

STACI

You miss the point.

RONNI

So start a new story: one with me as the central character.

STACI

Have you ever thought that maybe I'd like to be the central character of my own story?

RONNI

Duh. I'm you, right?

STACI

Not so much.

RONNI

So ... Frank? That was you? So I'm—
(Indicating the bedroom:)
—him?

STACI

No.

RONNI

So, who's him?

STACI

Nobody.

RONNI

Uh-hunh.

STACI

This isn't about Craig.

RONNI

So, we're both you?

STACI

No.

RONNI

Then who are we?

STACI

You're you; you're characters in a movie.

RONNI

Ok, but who are we based on?

STACI

You're not based on anybody; you just / are.

RONNI

I don't buy it—we gotta be based on somebody.

STACI

Sorry.

RONNI

Thinking out loud here: So, if we're all you then are we like Freudian? That would make me the Id. Frank would have to be ego (*was* the ego) and you're the Super ego. I never really understood how that works.

STACI

Why're you doing this?

RONNI

I'm helping you understand.

STACI

There's nothing to understand: you're fictitious. You're characters in a story.

RONNI

I'd have to be the Id: because I'm the fun one. Or are we religious? Father, son and Holy Ghost. But that would make Frank the Christ character—and I don't think he fits the mold.

STACI

Stop this.

RONNI

Unless I'm you.

(Finally, directly to Staci:)

Why can't I be you?

What don't you like about me?

STACI

Uh: for starters: you're shallow.

RONNI

You're fault.

STACI

Opinionated.

(RONNI Shrugs: ditto.)

STACI

You're way too sexually active.

RONNI

Again: you.

STACI

And you've got a mouth and / an attitude.

RONNI

You AND you.

STACI

And you killed my vampire.

RONNI

OK, that one's on me. But as I see it you need to deal with the cards you've been dealt here so: I'm the movie's focus here now so: what happens next in our story?

STACI

"Our" story?

RONNI

Yeah, you said you wanted this to be "our" story.

STACI

(Thinking back to where she may have made that comment before:)

When I was talking with Craig.

RONNI

But it's not "about Craig."

STACI

It's not!

RONNI

So now you're talking with me. How do I deal with being a vampire without having anybody to guide me through the basics? How's that for a hook?

STACI

(Thinks on it:)

OK, I give: I admit that might have some interest—some new twists but I can't make any promises.

(She begins to put pen to paper as:)

RONNI

I knew you'd see it my way.

(Climbs up on top of the kitchen counter:)

Can I fly?

STACI

Can you what?

RONNI

(Jumping off to see:)

Can I fly?

(As she lands on the floor: the obvious the answer is:)

STACI

No.

RONNI

Can I turn into a bat or smoke?

STACI

I don't know yet.

RONNI

Well, what do you know?

STACI

I don't kn—I wasn't really ready for this.

RONNI

Well, get ready girl, 'cuz here I am. Girl power!

(Steadying herself to try to fly again:)

It's really a matter of control isn't it?

STACI

This is getting awfully confusing.

RONNI

OK, so sidddown and let me fill you in. As opposed to Frank, who lost it all in the recession (and that was *years* ago), I came from a mid-western blue collar family from ... Oregon—

STACI

Where in Oregon?

RONNI

Put a pin in a map—Where my mom spent all day running a day care and my father sold appliances for a living. I used to have an elaborate tunnel built from refrigerator boxes and the like set up in my back yard but one day—one of the kids from my mother's day care got lost in the maze of cardboard and the cops were called in to find him. Mom almost lost her license and my parents threw the whole thing out the next day. From that point on I knew I wasn't wanted. You with me so far?

STACI

Back up.

RONNI

To where?

STACI

Never mind I think I got it.

RONNI

My parents divorced when I was twelve and my mom's new boyfriend took an un ... uh ... [I can't think of the word]

STACI

Unsolicited? Unsought? Unwanted? Unwelcomed?

RONNI

Yeah; all that: Un—everything you said—interest in me when I was fourteen. So I ran away at fifteen and a half and lived on the streets till I was seventeen—Sixteen?—*Unnatural*: that's the word we're looking for—Almost seventeen. My roommate now is a big Samoan Transvestite / who calls me "Girlie" and I've been—

STACI

You don't have a roommate

RONNI

Why can't I have a roommate?

STACI

You don't have a roommate.

RONNI

(To the unseen "Wanda" somewhere offstage:)

Sorry, Wanda.

(Looking around:)

Hey, why isn't the room changing to match my scenario?

STACI

So, this is all about you?

RONNI

Of course, it's about me. And it's about you; it's about you through me.

STACI

But mostly you.

RONNI

Why do you have a problem with this?

STACI

Did I mention shallow?

RONNI

Like your some total prize?

STACI

I'm not the one begging to be the center of a movie.

RONNI

Aren't you?

STACI

Alright: fair's fair. Have at it: what don't you like about me?

RONNI

(Sincerely:)

Who said I don't like anything about you?

(Slight pause.)

STACI

Like I said: we've got nothing in common.

(There is a groan from the other room.¹⁰)

RONNI

Your better half is calling.

STACI

You like me?

RONNI

Like you said, "what's to like?" Just trying to butter up the writer for a little more screen time.

(Another groan.¹¹)

RONNI

I think he's asking for you.

STACI

(Rises to cross to the bedroom.)

Not now.

CRAIG (Offstage)

What? I'm trying to sleep, babe, I gotta be up at the / crack of dawn.

(Another groan is heard within Craig's comment followed by one more overlapping the end of his sentence--neither of which are obviously coming from Craig.)

RONNI

What the hell was—

(But the answer appears before another word can escape in the form of FRANK dressed now as a Zombie personification of himself entering slowly from through the bedroom doorway.¹² STACI lets out a small scream of surprise upon seeing Frank.)

RONNI

Holy shit.

¹⁰ CRAIG's face is such that we can not see whether or not he is the originator of the groan.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² FRANK would enter through any available door from the bedroom in shortest route to the bedroom door.

CRAIG

(Rushes into the room as best he can¹³--being half asleep himself--stopping in the doorway to address Staci:)

What is it? What's wrong?

(FRANK stumbles through the room to approach Staci:)

FRANK

Why?

RONNI

What happened to you?

CRAIG

Are you alright?

STACI

I'm fine. Why?

RONNI

Are you a . . . Are you a Zombie?

FRANK

Why . . did . . you . . let . . her . . . ?

RONNI

Is he a Zombie? A vampire Zombie? This is kinda cool but I gotta say it also pisses me off.

CRAIG

Who're you talking to in here?

FRANK

(Stumbling through the apartment:)

This . . . isn't . . . fair.

STACI

No one.

RONNI

Damned right it's not fair. She said she was going "old school". I was supposed to revert back to being human; not you turning into / some kind of demon hybrid.

¹³ CRAIG sits up in bed: "What?" then continues the line (as scripted "What is it? What's wrong?") as he jumps pout of bed and hurries to the door.

FRANK

I'm . . . not . . . talking . . . to . . . you.

(Looking around as best he can:)

Where . . . my . . . record . . . store?

(As the record bins return on cue CRAIG crosses to the kitchen and opens drawers till he finds bottles of pills-- through the following he reads the appropriate bottle labels, pours out the prescribed dosages.)

RONNI

(Referring to the oncoming record bins:)

Really? Really? And you couldn't give me one—One freezer box?

FRANK

Have . . . to . . . work . . . now.

(Unable to avoid Ronni:)

You . . . bad . . . person.

(CRAIG collects an empty glass and fills it with milk from the refrigerator. He takes the glass of milk and pills to STACI.)

CRAIG

You're supposed to take the one with milk. The other doesn't say anything so ...

(He holds them out to STACI who is still watching Ronni confronting Frank as Frank tries to go back to sorting records.)

RONNI

Me? I'm not the one who tried to make me into some kind of midnight snack.

And then you get to—

(To Staci:)

He gets to come back—?

(To Frank:)

What *I* did to *you*? Look what *you* did to *me*. I'm the victim here, fella. I was just this little girl from Nebraska; doin' nothing but minding my own business, trying to make my way in this world, when you decide to make me into Vampirella here.

(To Staci:)

Are you listening to this shit?

FRANK

Look . . .

what

you . . .

did . . . to . . .

me . . .

(new thought:)

Leave . . . me . . .

a-lone . . .---

You're . . .

from . . .

. . . Oregon . . . so . . .

there.

(CRAIG sets down the pills and milk onto the counter. No reply. Rather than say anything more he quietly makes his leave back into the bedroom.¹⁴ Pause.)

RONNI

(Waiting for an answer:)

Well?

(FRANK slowly sticks his tongue out at RONNI.)

RONNI

You better watch your way with that tongue or I'll rip it right outta your head and feed it right back to you.

FRANK

You'll . . . have . . . to . . . catch . / . . me . . . first.

(But as FRANK turns to run [at a Zombie pace] RONNI simply reaches out and takes hold of his arm before he even finishes his sentence.

FRANK

Hadn't . . . thought . . . that . . . through . . .

STACI

Alright. Enough. I don't want this.

FRANK

She

RONNI

He started it.

(FRANK just looks at Ronni in contempt.)

FRANK

You . . . did . . . this . . .

RONNI

In retaliation. Don't forget who changed who first!

FRANK

Thought . . . you . . . liked . . . me.

¹⁴ Back to bed. CRAIG may sit a moment on the side of the bed; rechecking his sell phone alarm before one more attempt to climb between the sheets and catch just a little shut eye.

Thought wrong. RONNI

She did—She does. STACI

Not after— RONNI

You do. STACI

Why? Because you like him better than me? Why? RONNI

I don't like him better than / I do you. STACI

Who would rather be that? RONNI (Continued:)

Now. FRANK

STACI
(Reading from her notes:)
"Ronni is still in love with Frank."

How is that even possible? RONNI

STACI
I'm the writer here and if you want to be the center of the story you have to do it my way and if I want you two to be in love with each other: you are.

You don't even know what love is. RONNI

FRANK
(Gesturing to indicate his new image:)
It's . . . certainly . . . not . . . doing . . . this . . . to / . . . somebody . . .

Really? Really? RONNI
(Sticking out her neck at him in response:)
And whaddo you call this?

STACI

(Reading:~)

"Ronni now works in the record store."

FRANK

No . . .

STACI

(Forging ahead:~)

She was hired to replace Frank, who didn't show up for work following the . . . uh . . . incident.

RONNI

(Moving in:~)

Excuse me.

FRANK

Ohhh . . . great . . . now . . . she . . . my . . . job now . . . too.

RONNI

Move over.

(As he reluctantly does:~)

You didn't show up for work.

FRANK

I . . . had to . . . walk.

(To Staci:~)

I didn't . . . have a . . . bus . . . pass . . .

RONNI

You lose.

STACI

But Ronni, all the while, has been pining for Frank.

(RONNI rolls her eyes.)

STACI (Continued:~)

So when Frank finally does show up again for work: Ronni is elated.

RONNI

(Pulling the bare minimum:~)

Oh: you're here.

STACI

She knows she was wrong to kill Frank but she admits that she was desperate and that her only hope now is that they can put their differences aside and move forward together into the story.

(FRANK belches.)

RONNI

You're disgusting.

FRANK

(Focusing in on her sorting records.)

That . . . doesn't . . . go there . . .

RONNI

It's my job now. I'll arrange things the way I want.

FRANK

(Ignoring her response and focusing on the job at hand:)

No . . . no . . .

RONNI

I have a system.

FRANK

Madonna . . . is not . . . an oldie . . . band . . .

RONNI

They are to me.

FRANK

(To Staci:)

You . . . have to . . . make . . . her . . . stop.

RONNI

(Also to Staci:)

If you're going to change things: does he have to talk like this? Can't he be more of a functioning Zombie?

FRANK

Should . . . have . . . thought . . . of that . . . before . . . you . . .

RONNI

(To Staci:)

OK, fine: We're back together: we're in love. So what's the storyline? Who do we eat first? Who's our nemesis?

STACI

You— . . . I don't have a nemesis / for you.

FRANK

You . . . can . . . be . / . . our . . . nemesis . . .

STACI

No, I'm not the nemesis: I'm the writer. The writer is on your side: I'm not the enemy.

RONNI

On his side: maybe.

STACI

I'm on the story's side.

FRANK

What . . . is . . . the / story?

RONNI

Yes, what is the story?

STACI

I'm working that out here: that's what we're doing.

RONNI

Well, if it's open for debate: I don't want to be in love with him. I'm—I'm ready to move on. Or is "love" the enemy?

STACI

Love isn't the enemy. How can "love" be the / enemy?

RONNI

Love knows no wrongs. Love is not vain, nor arrogant, love doesn't bite you and leave you for dead.

FRANK

I . . . never . . . left . . . you . . . for / dead.

RONNI

Love is tender and compassionate.

FRANK

Chick . . . flick.

STACI & RONNI

Shut up.

(FRANK throws his hands up in the air--and holds them there a moment too long before letting them fall back down.)

RONNI

(Indicating the bedroom:)

Maybe sir Lancelot can be our nemesis.

STACI

(Unthreatened--or if she is she doesn't show it--matter of factly:)

We leave him out of this.

FRANK

Why?

RONNI

Why? What're you protecting him for?

(To Frank:)

She says it's not about him: it's about us. So as I see / it—this is more of a contest.

FRANK

Is . . . no . . . us.

RONNI

Exactly. Or maybe we're both her. I would be her wild and exciting self. While you . . . are . . . you.

FRANK

What . . . that . . . / s'posed mean?

RONNI

You really need a speech therapist.

(To Staci:)

Why can't we ask Craig to join us?

STACI

Let him sleep. He's not part of this; it's a / story.

RONNI

He could be. I could . . . bite him. I'm sure he wouldn't mind.

STACI

Back in your cave, Elvira.

FRANK

Elvira . . . Get / . . it?

RONNI

Yeah, I get it.

FRANK

Because . . .

RONNI

I get it; I got it; moving on then.

FRANK

Will . . you . . . Let . . . Me . . Finish . . .A . . . Sent-ence!

(Slight pause.)

RONNI

There aren't enough days in the month.

FRANK

Screw . . . you . . .

RONNI

That's just how we got here in the first place.

FRANK

(To Staci:)

Why . . . did . . you . . . write . . her?

STACI

Not my idea.

(She gives a nod [indicating Craig] in the direction of the bedroom:)

RONNI

That hurt.

STACI

(Trying to be polite about it but:)

I'm sorry; I don't know what to write for you. I was prepared to write a horror story that wasn't stupid. Where nobody goes into basements alone or camps in the woods in a thong or drinks the / kool-aid or opens the closet--

FRANK

I . . . like . . . the . . . thong . . . part / . . .

RONNI & STACI

Shut up.

(Slight pause.)

RONNI

Then why don't you?

STACI

Why don't I what?

RONNI

Write a horror story without being stupid?

STACI

Because you already killed my main character. It's like Bambi meets Godzilla.

RONNI

(Is at first at a loss for words--then changes thought:)

Then . . . Whaddo you want to do?

STACI

[It's] like you said: [I wanna] work with the cards you've dealt me. I accept the challenge.

RONNI

I gotta a game for you: what if you faced a new challenge?

STACI

Like what?

RONNI

What if you took your pills—then wrote it?

STACI

. . . It doesn't really work like that.

RONNI

Why? Why not?

STACI

Because once I take the pills and they take effect—I won't have . . . the drive to write anything anymore.

RONNI

Exactly. Or: Or—hear me out on this—If you do take the pills you will have to force yourself to write fast because you'll only have a limited time to get things done. New challenge. It's like ... having a deadline.

(No reply.)

Oh, that's a good title for you: "Deadline".

FRANK

Sounds . . . like . . . a news-pa-per . . story . . not a . . / . record . . store . . . story.

RONNI

Nobody asked you.

FRANK

I . . . like . . . R . . P . . M.

RONNI

RPM? Revolutions Per Minute?

FRANK

Yeah.

RONNI

Why?

(FRANK just shrugs: "Why not?")

RONNI

(To Staci:)

This was your main character? Girl, I did you a big favor.

(Back to her "challenge" topic:)

Haven't you ever wanted to live life on the edge? You ever play Russian roulette?

(As STACI reaches over the pills on the counter.)

Ohhh, take the blue one.

(But STACI only moves the medicine out of harm's way-- from rolling off onto the floor--a she reaches to refresh her drink.)

RONNI

Good girl.

FRANK

Coffee . . . better . . .

STACI

(Looks at the coffee maker but:)

None made.

(Takes a sip of her drink instead.)

OK. I'm running the show here.

(She focuses on the paper and pen in her hands--obviously aware of being rubbernecked by both Ronni and Frank.)

RONNI

I'm just saying.

STACI

You two go—find something else to do. Get to work.

FRANK

What?

RONNI

Yeah, like what?

STACI

Sort.

(FRANK complies while RONNI hangs back.)

RONNI

'T's all done.

FRANK

(Holding up an album from one of the bins:)

Hollies . . . are Not . . . Heavy me-tal . . band.

RONNI

They have long hair.

STACI

Go. Learn.

(STACI tucks herself into her work at hand while RONNI nonchalantly rifles randomly through one of the bins. Meanwhile FRANK is pulling out record after record to be refiled. At first trying to hold them but letting them drop away as the task becomes too much:)

FRANK

Nope . . . Wrong . . . Not . . .

RONNI

What're you doing? What is he doing? Those are fine. Leave them alone. You're making a mess.

(To Staci:)

Hey, he's making a mess here.

So, sorting—Is that supposed to be a metaphor for something? What're you trying to sort out here? Because if it's not about you and him then it has to be about you and you. Survival of the fittest.

FRANK

(Continued:)

Ha! . . . What . . . you . . . think-ing? . . . Oh--that's . . . right: . . . You . . . don't. . . . Nope . . . nope . . . na-da . . . Wrong . . . again . . .

STACI

(Head still in her papers; writing away:)

Why does it have to be "about" anything—It doesn't have to be "about" something.

RONNI

Of course it has to be about something—

(Back to Frank as he continues on unabated:)

Hey! I'm not cleaning that up.

(The Lights fade as they each continue on their own courses of action:)

RONNI

Are you watching this fool?

(Music fades up as the lights fade out:)

(HOWEVER:

As the lights fade the sound of the scene does not:
In fact RONNI picks up in both volume and intensity to be heard above amidst the darkness to be heard clearly above the music only to be matched (in sorts) by FRANK in response to her: Dialogue overlaps each other and seems to growingly have little to do with each other in the standard response-response format.)

RONNI

Hey, Dust-for-Brains, can you hear me?
Can you look over here? Seriously?
Seriously? What kind of an idiot are you!?
I have a system! Everything was fine till you decided to come in here and fuck it all up. And it is "fuck": it isn't "screw".
Where 'd you get morals all of a sudden?
(Turning her voice to Staci:)
Are you still writing? Make me immortal.
And make him go away. You could have a pallet fall on him or something.
(Back to Frank:)
You hear that? Your days are numbered.
You know why? Because I hate you. You got that? Hate. I hate you!! Do you hear me!? Hate!! Hate!! Hate!! And you call yourself a vampire? What kind of a vampire has to live on food stamps? All the vampires I know are independently wealthy. Yes I do. Yes I do know—And I do know what I'm doing!! I have a system!!
What did you call me!?

FRANK

Do . . . your . . .
. . . own . . . Don't . . .
look . . . then . . .
I'm . . . not . . .
. idiot . . .
You: . . you're . .
idiot!! . . .
YES . . I . . said . . .
you.
Leave . . . me . .
. . lone.
Screw . . . you . .
and Screw . . . your . . .
"sys-tem" . . .
You . . too . . . Hate! . . .
Hate! . . . Hate! . . . Hate . . .
(Hate-more) . .
Not now . . .
Because . . of . . . you . . .
Heartless . . .
(bitch) . . .

Scene 2

(At rise:

As the conversation continues we see that STACI is now at least a pad and a half into her story--with loose papers setting all around her on the sofa--while both RONNI and FRANK are still at work on the bins--though the bins themselves do seem rather neat and orderly. If we look [and this will be pointed out later] the coffee in the kitchen has been made--which probably explains the coffee cup attached to STACI's free hand. There is also the remnants of a cheesecake setting out on the counter begging to be put back in the fridge or tossed into the sink amongst the rest of the mounting dishes. But these things are hardly immediately apparent as RONNI and FRANK have refused to let up:)

RONNI

Because if you mean by "Heartless" that thing that all my blood used to pump out of—I think that would be your fault. Yes, I'm a "Bitch"—do you know why I'm a "bitch"? Look in the mirror: Oh wait—you can't. And neither can I—Do you know what it's like not being able to put on your mascara?

FRANK

That . . . you . . . heard.
You . . . want-ed . . . it . . .
same . . . as . . . me. . . . But . . .
. "bitch" . . . you're . . . OK . . .
with? . . . Ha-ha . . . I . . .
don't . . . care. B-cause . . . I . . .
. don't . . .

STACI

(Standing up:)

Wait.

(Both RONNI and FRANK stop to turn towards her. Half a beat:)

STACI

No, I got it.

(She sits back down and continues writing.)

(And RONNI and FRANK in turn go back to sorting merchandise. Slight pause.)

RONNI

I wish you'd finish already.

STACI

Don't rush genius.

RONNI

That's what I said but Webster over there would rather use the Dewey Decimal system.

FRANK

When . . . I . . . get . . . my - fangs . . . back . . . I'm draining . . you . . dry.

RONNI

That'll be the day.

STACI

(Excited--knowing they can't wait:)

OK, here's what we have so far.

(After a moment to verify their attention she begins reading from her notes:)

We open on a street corner.

The moon is rising over the silhouette of the Detroit skyline.

(To Ronni:)

What?

RONNI

Have you ever been to Detroit?

STACI

No.

RONNI

Do you even know what the skyline looks like? How is anybody going to know it's Detroit? Why would anybody care?

FRANK

Let . . her . . . talk.

STACI

Camera pans across the / midnight sky—

RONNI

Really? Two hours and all you have is, "We open with the moon rising over Detroit"?

(STACI waits patiently as Ronni continues on:)

RONNI

I thought this is supposed to be a horror film not Long Day's Journey Into Night.

FRANK

Again . . . these . . . ref-'rences . . . mean . . . ?

RONNI

Where is the blood? Where's the danger? That's what you're supposed to be writing about. This isn't Little Women.

STACI

(Taking a breath:)

The moon----

RONNI

So what happened? There was no danger when you grew up as a kid?

FRANK

Why you . . . this? ..She / . . . just . . . starting . . .

RONNI

No, there wasn't. So: let me tell you how it goes.

(Pointing to herself:)

Vampire.

FRANK

.. No ..

RONNI

(To Frank:)

Zombie.

FRANK

Can't . . . see?

RONNI

What? An eye fall out?

(Handing him a roll of green tape they've been using to clean the merchandise up.)

Glue it back.

RONNI (Continuing:)

Nobody gives a crap about the moon. If we were werewolves, maybe, but we're not. You're not thinking of adding Werewolves, are you? 'Cuz that's been done: to death. We open on Blood. That: says vampire.

(Loving her own idea:)

Oh: got it. Red moon—I'm giving you back the moon---We open on a red moon. "But why is it red?" we wonder. We pull back slowly to see why—

(To Frank:)

Will you shut up; I'm trying to elaborate here.

(Continuing on then:)

It's red because the moon is not the moon; it's a reflection . . . In Blood.

STACI

What's wrong with what I . . . ?

RONNI

Nothing. Nothing's wrong with it—except for ...

(Looking over the pages:)

Everything. Everything's wrong with it. Can I be candid with you?

FRANK

Let . . . her . . . lone.

RONNI

Quiet.

(Back to Staci:)

You want this to be epic, don't you?

STACI

What's wrong with it?

RONNI

What's wrong? How many pages do you go till first blood?

(As Staci looks:)

Trick question: it should be on page one. This isn't about feelings here; this is about passion.

(Sits down on the sofa with Staci:)

So, you've led a pretty sheltered life, right?

STACI

I don't think so, no.

FRANK

.. No ...

She starting ...

...over ...

(To Staci:)

Right?

(To Ronni:)

From ...

... beginning ...

RONNI

Ok, tell me about your past.

(No reply—as if she actually had given her time to respond:)

See? Sheltered. You have no life. You have no back story because you've had no life. But it's not your fault—It's Bristol Myers'. Now: me?: I'm exciting—or I will be—when you write me: write me exciting.

STACI

. . . That / wasn't what--

RONNI (Continued:)

(Indicating Frank:)

Or this: *This* is your future. This is who "they" want you to be.

STACI

Who's "they"?

RONNI

Everybody. Everybody who ever said you wouldn't amount to anything—Tell me about when your girl scout troupe voted you least likely to succeed.

(No reply.)

Bitches.

(No reply--so she paints her a picture:)

I'll spin it. You see that girl, Marcy Dodgers, all grown up now, with her two point three children and the doctor husband who's screwing his nurse on the side—the one who used to tease you about your braces—remember her?

STACI

(Honestly:)

No.

RONNI

Of course, you do—play with me here. So you see her one day—all grown up now (both of you) and she's still that same bitch—even makes a comment about your teeth. So you follow her. You follow her and you wait—you wait in the alley behind the Walgreen's. The one on the corner of Grant and Emerson. And when no one else is there you reveal yourself: "Oh Staci, you scared me, I didn't recognize you without your braces" And you're like, "I'll give braces" and then you ...

(Bouncing on the sofa:)

Pounce!

(STACI tries to catch the loose pages as they go falling around her in response to Ronni's theatrics. Meanwhile

FRANK silently watches as he tries to resume work moving to another bin.)

STACI

I think I've got a decent story here.

RONNI

No, I scanned thru it while you were writing—It needs violence. Violence and sex.

STACI

No.

RONNI

Action first, remember?

STACI

You said that was a bad idea.

RONNI

It was: the way *you* were writing it. The way I'm going to write it will be brilliant.

Let me give you an example: Moon over skyline: boring. Moon reflected in Blood: Brilliant. You need me. This'll be fun.

(Giving her a pen.)

Take a note. We start: in the middle. The story moves back and forth and forward and backward and "Where are we?": are we in the past? Are we in the future? Where is the end? Frank is a Zombie—It suits him. But how did he get like that? We want back story. Of course, you and I know what happened but put yourself in the audience's lap—make them curious—make them *want* to know. Me? I'm a vampire: I've made my piece with that now.

STACI

(Getting up and crossing into the kitchen :)

But ... what are you saying? I thought this was supposed to be "about something"?

RONNI

That was then; this is now; catch up.

STACI

What?

RONNI

You need a ghost writer. Someone with vision.

(STACI pulls down a can of coffee from the cupboards and goes thru the motions to make a pot of coffee during the following:)

FRANK

Start . . . at . . . the . . . beginning . . .

RONNI

Pay no attention to Quasimodo there. In fact, why do you even need him? Oh, that's right: he turns me. Then I turn him: cool twist, hunh? We keep that.

FRANK

NO . . .

STACI

(Realizing:)

When did I make coffee?

FRANK

An . . hour . . .

RONNI

About an hour ago: who cares?

(Following STACI back to the sofa:)

I want to make this yours: I really do. But we need to dig. There has to be something. Something deep. So this is about you: (Not him—wink, wink).

STACI

It's not about him.

RONNI

But then you have to ask yourself: who are you? Who am I?

(Referring to Frank:)

Who's he? If he

(Meaning Frank)

Isn't him

(Meaning Craig.)

Then who is he?

(Meaning Frank.)

Who is he? He's not me, that's for sure. And if he's not him, then/then he has to be you.

FRANK

I'm . . right . . here . . .

RONNI

(Continuing on unabated:)

But if I'm you then he can't be you. And I have to be you. This is confusing, isn't it?

(Lights slowly, imperceptibly, begin to steadily brighten. They should steadily and unnoticeably increase through the following pages ...)

STACI

... Why are you doing this?

RONNI

Not me: you; you're doing this. I have to be who you want to be. And he's who "they" want you to be.

(To Frank:)

Or *are* you him?

(Meaning Craig.)

FRANK

I'm . . .

RONNI

No, no, no, no, no—I know:

(To Staci:)

You *don't* know. You don't *know*: that's the problem. You don't know who *I* am or who *he* is because you don't know who *you* are, right? Of course, right. That's what they / want.

STACI

I'm trying to write.

RONNI

A wrong.

STACI

No. Write.

FRANK

Who's . . . "they"?

RONNI

Right: "They—THEY". "They" is them. "They" is everyone who wants you to be who "they" want you to be with no interest in who you actually are. So tell them: Who are you!?

STACI

. . . the writer . . .

RONNI

Really? But look what you wrote? You wrote him. He's boring.

(Walks around zombielike imitating Frank:)

haaaAAAaahhhh.

(Back to herself:)

Write me. I'm alive. I'm definitely NOT boring. I'm who you *want* to be. Let's compare--Ok, OK, "this is about you": tell me about yourself then—Quick: Tell me about your childhood.

STACI

You mean ... ? What're you saying?

RONNI

Who hurt you? Human interest stuff: people eat that up. When you were diagnosed—did they give you any experimental drugs? Not this stuff you're on now. Something radioactive maybe? How old were you? Three? No—puberty.. it has to be during puberty. Was the doctor a perv? Izzat why you keep pinhead around?

STACI

No.

RONNI

No? or "No"?

(Sorting through the pages of notes with Staci:)

See? This? Lose it. Nobody cares. People want blood. Blood and sex. This psychobabble bullshit just plays like bad Hitchcock. Not that we don't mind good Hitchcock but "bad Hitchcock" is the worst. "Hitchcock wanna be" is better than "bad Hitchcock". But this? Girl to girl? Is "bad Hitchcock wanna be". But that's why I'm here. I'm going to help you fix it. So let's talk about credits.

(FRANK having had more than enough attacks RONNI by plunging a broken record shard into her back.

[As the shard goes into Ronni's back the increasing lighting levels immediately drop back to their original levels.) and then begin an equally steady decreasing as the scene continues ...]

RONNI

What the hell?

(FRANK--unable to articulate anything--screams or groans at Ronni as they begin to tussle.

[As the two phantoms rumble the overall lighting now begins to steadily decrease in intensity ...]

RONNI

You little freak. Do you know what this coat cost me?

(They continue to wrestle across the room. STACI gathers up her papers as the two would-be monsters slap, bite and kick at each other. Something on a page catches Staci's eye. She reads. She quickly scans another page and another. As RONNIE tries to get away from FRANK, she uses the roll of green tape to try to distract him, wrapping his arm up in the process but to no avail. At the same time STACI is looking at each subsequent page: re they out of order? Is something wrong? Could Ronni be right? FRANK tries to bear hug RONNI who, unable to get away, turns tables and gives in--clinging back onto him. STACI tears up a page of notes. *[Lighting bursts a moment as the paper is torn then returns to it's original level and continues to steadily climb]*. The couple are now in an embrace. Another page is torn *[another burst of light, another trajectory now heading down]*. The passion grows between the young couple who fall into the sofa as STACI continues to tear up all the papers and throw them into the air. *[Lighting continues to pop with each torn page, levels never quite returning to their original levels.]* STACI rises from the sofa and goes again to make a pot of coffee but spills the coffee grounds--stopped again by the realization the coffee's already been made. *[The walls through video projection take on a sepia tone wash—cascading down as the coffee grounds fall]* STACI and FRANK finally take a breath. RONNI rolls FRANK off of her--satisfied in the turning of the tides. RONNI sits up as FRANK slouches in the couch the green tape still attached and the roll dangling off his arm.)

RONNI

Men are so weak.

FRANK

I'll . . . buy . . . you . . . coat.

RONNI

You'd better.

(To wherever Staci is:)

Where'd you go?

I . . . hate . . . my-self.

FRANK

As you should.

RONNI

When did I make coffee?

STACI

(As STACI moves away from the kitchen the walls should slowly fade back into a semblance of neutrality.)

Hour . . . ago . . . when . / . you . . .

FRANK

An hour ago--Jeez—what got into you?

RONNI

. . . After . . . you . . . took . . . pills.

FRANK

(A beat: RONNI is stopped.)

You what?

RONNI

(Trying to stay calm:)

She . . . said . . . she almost . . . done.

FRANK

(To Ronni:)

Your . . . idea. Force . . . Dead-line

(A fog begins to roll in along the set floor.)¹⁵The walls begin to blur now as a fog rolls in across the image if not the floor.)

What the . . . fuck?

RONNI

(Responding to Staci, taking no notice of the physical fog itself:)

No. No, no.

(Looking around at the torn pages strewn about:)

Pick them up. Pick them up. Pick them up.

(To Staci:)

¹⁵ If stage floor fogging is NOT available: the fogginess may be projected in the video.)

STACI

Whatever.

(She starts to gather up the pieces.)

FRANK

Your . . . idea . . .

RONNI

That was a test!: You weren't supposed to *do* it!!

FRANK

Oh . . . well . . .

RONNI

(To Frank:)

Do something.

(FRANK shrugs: "what?")

RONNI

(To Staci:)

Pen. Write.

(But as STACI tries to follow instructions the record bins again begin to move across the floor on their own, if not even themselves begin to rise off the floor itself. All notice. They may also expand or change shape. *[More record bins softly emerge projected via video]*)

FRANK

Cool . . .

RONNI

No. Not cool. Definitely "not cool".

(Dictating to Staci:)

"Open on a red moon".

(A red moon appears to rise via video projection moving up the back wall.)

STACI

Over Detroit skyline.

(Followed by a Detroit Skyline. As Ronni continues to her narrations are added to the video with inconsistent clarities.)

RONNI

Sure. Fine: I don't care. "We pull back to a river of blood". NO: big brush strokes: "Heroine enters record store." "Hooks up with Nerdy record store clerk vampire."

(Including video projections of Ronni & Frank themselves.)

FRANK

Hey!

(And as STACI writes the record bins are no longer moving—they are set in their new positions.)

RONNI

Good. Good. Keep writing.

STACI

What?

RONNI

"Homeboy turns Heroine into vampire." "Her POV." She's the real victim here.

FRANK

That . . . not . . .

RONNI

"So she kills him . . . trying to turn herself back."

FRANK

What . . . a-bout . . . love . . . sto-ry?

RONNI

"But he turns Zombie hybrid." Oh--"and she takes a new lover: someone who understands her need for real life."

(RONNIE is now standing on the back of the sofa, using the video projections as reference while retaining space between herself and Frank.)

FRANK

What?

(As FRANK pulls himself up to his feet RONNI moves further away from him--stepping off the sofa and landing in one of the record bins, and out of our view.)

RONNI

Oh shit.

(To Staci, from within the record bin:)

Keep writing!

STACI

(Resuming:)

Sorry.

FRANK

(Directing his comments to Staci's visual projection:)

You . . . lied?

RONNI

(Both on video and from with in the record bin:)

It wasn't a lie. It was self preservation. It's primal.

(RONNI's visual begins to float about across the projection.)

FRANK

Come . . . back . . .

RONNI

I'm trying to.

(From here on in, all of Ronni's lines and actions are coming from the projection;

Trying to get Staci to see the best of it:)

See? I can fly. I told you I could fly.

FRANK

Green-screen.

RONNI

Write, "she can fly!"

(She scrambles about in the air to try to get her bearings.)

'Can't steer worth a damn but least I can fly.

FRANK

(Standing on couch he tries to reach out to grab at Ronni:)

Green .. Screen.

RONNI

"Heroin gets involved with the elite underground—

(To Frank:)

Get away—from—me, you half twit.

(As RONNI moves across the field of space, FRANK continues to try to catch hold of the projection similar to a cat trying to play with a laser light. Through the following, RONNI continues to move about trying to avoid FRANK's attempts to grab hold of her. STACI in turn tries to write on whatever scraps of paper she can--distracted continuously by the movement of the two in the air:)

RONNI	FRANK
"and starts to roam at night—No, wait: first: she has to deal with all these urges and being a vampire without a mentor. Figures she's the only one of her kind. Until another vampire sees her and knows what she is--takes her under his wing and introduces her to a new world.—Stay away from me—	Don't . . . move . . . Stand . . . still Stupid . . . bitch . . . Why . . . you . . . have-to . . . ru-in . . . every-thing . . .

(By the end of the above sparring, FRANK has essentially given up on his approach and steps down off the couch back to the floor, ripping the roll of green tape off his arm and exits stage. *Only to re-appear on screen, also able to float. He works his way toward RONNI.*)

FRANK
(All of FRANK's lines and actions are too via projection:)

Bitch.

STACI

Keep writing!!
(Trying to get away:)
"Zombies can't fly!" Write, "Zombies. Can't. Fly!"

FRANK

It . . . won't . . . work / . . . this . . . time.

RONNI

"And she stabs him thru the heart and feeds him to the cats on Lexington and Third!"

(To Frank:)

No, you don't—

FRANK

Yes . . . I . . . do . . .

RONNI

No, you—

FRANK
(Finally grabbing hold of her.)

Got-cha!

RONNI

Let go of me.

(But of course he doesn't.)

FRANK
(Reaching:)

Green Screen!!

RONNI

Of course it's greenscreen, you idiot, so what!? It's movie magic.

FRANK

Now . . . I . . . kill . . . you.

(FRANK again has RONNI in a bear hug. As they are all but spinning in mid air: FRANK pulls the record piece out of Ronni's back. RONNI counters by trying to kiss him.)

FRANK

Not . . . this . . . time . . .

(FRANK takes the roll of greentape and begins to wrap it around both their waists as they spin, and of course any areas covered by tape basically disappear. Meanwhile STACI has stopped writing altogether and is watching the scene above her head as the two continue to spin, disappear, and float up higher and higher.)

RONNI

Are you writing? You need to be writing.

(To FRANK who continues to wrap the tape around them both—which will essentially remove them both from the picture.)

What are you doing!!!?

FRANK
(Wrapping, rolling away as they go:)

GreenScreen.

RONNI

Stop that!! Stop it!!

(STACI watches as the two of them in struggle up and out of our view.)

RONNI

(To Staci as they go:)

Are you getting this!?

(Again to Frank:)

You stupid piece of meat.

(And back to Staci:)

Are you?

(STACI watches as they ascend and fade from our view and then beyond hers. She then drops her gaze back to the room she's actually in. The record bins slowly resume their original shapes and roll off as they came. All remaining projections slowly dissolve away. Lighting returns to "normal".)

(CRAIG quietly enters from the bedroom, clad in a robe over his PJs¹⁶. He looks about the mess of the room as well as Staci's quieter disposition and puts it all too neatly together.)

CRAIG

You still up?

(No reply. Nor did he expect one. He crosses quietly to her as the rooms turn a last time. He leads her off the sofa:)

C'mon, let's get you to bed.

(As they travel back toward the bedroom:)

We can [clea]--I'll clean this up later.

STACI

(As Craig escorts her toward the bedroom:)

I can't .. be you. ... Can't be ...

CRAIG

What?

STACI

Can't be you.

¹⁶ Adjust: CRAIG, at this point, wakes, sits up, runs his hands over his face and through his hair, looks at his watch and decides to get up (bathrobe not necessary, however, he should still take his time to rise and then in no rush however without any deliberate pauses either make his way from the bed to the doorway.

CRAIG

Well, that's good, honey: you're not me. You're you. I'm me. You're you.
C'mon.

(As they enter the bedroom setting the living room set
rotates off from our sight until we are back in our original
set positions from the opening of ACT 1.)

STACI

Can't. .. Can't ...

CRAIG

(Pulls back the covers in the bed and helping her in:)
C'mon. Here we go. That's it.
(He tucks her in softly.)

STACI

Work?

CRAIG

You can't work, I know. I'll call your job, don't you worry. You just get some
sleep.

(No reply other than STACI closing her eyes and nestling
in.)

That's right. We'll be fine.

(He kisses her forehead.)

You'll be fine.

(CRAIG reaches over and turns off the nightlight next to
the bed . He then crosses into the bathroom. A beat. He
closes the door. The sound of the shower comes on.)

(Lights fade.)

END