

# FRANKIE AND THE GINGERBREAD BOY

By Bobby Keniston

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## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(5 males, 8 females, extras as desired)*

**VICTOR:** A young man, dressed as a “skater boy” archetype. He jumps into different roles as a member of the CHORUS. He has tremendous energy.

**SHEL:** Dressed somewhat conservatively as an “average teenage girl”. Also a member of the CHORUS and requires great energy and enthusiasm.

**MARY:** Teenage girl, dressed as a cheerleader. She is the third member of the CHORUS, the “popular girl” archetype.

**FRANKIE:** Teenage girl. She is VERY shy and put-upon. She has accepted her role in life. Her escape is baking.

**KEVIN:** Captain of the football type, portrayed as a jock archetype.

**SAMANTHA:** An average teenage girl. Wants to be able to socialize with the popular crowd, and perhaps hurts people unnecessarily to get there.

**KARA:** A new girl at the school, previously an outcast in her old school. She wants to help Frankie, but not at the expense of becoming an outcast.

**GINGER:** The Gingerbread Boy, Frankie's creation. He is the embodiment innocence, a fountain of love of purity.

**JOCK 1 AND JOCK 2:** Archetypes of Kevin's cronies. Cruel.

**CHEERLEADER 1 AND CHEERLEADER 2:** Archetypes of rough, cruel high school popular girls.

**SKATER GIRL:** Tries to be a great nonconformist, but winds up conforming in her nonconformity.

## **PROPERTIES**

School Books (Frankie)

Chairs (Students)

Desk

Pair of Glasses (Shel)

Whistle (Shel)

Paper Airplane (Jock 2)

Benches

2 Folding Chairs

Ugly Tie (Victor)

Large, Rolling Baking Table (Frankie)

Kitchen Products:

Mixing Bowls, Utensils, Bag Of Flour, Etc.

Small Bag with Fedora and Pearl Necklace (Mary)

White Sheet to cover Ginger

Bookbag (Kara)

### AUTHOR'S NOTE

This play is very special for me as a writer. I wanted to write a definitive high school play using high school archetypes, and even stereotypes, all in the hopes of getting across a message of the tragedy that comes from intolerance to that which is different. Do I believe that all "jocks" are bad, cruel people? No, of course not. Do I believe that all cheerleaders are cruel bullies? No, I most certainly do not. I do, however, know that within the social structure of high school, that these very people are often thought of as the oppressive kings and queens of the school, and so I have used that stereotype here to set-up the almost mythological requirements of tragedy.

Frankie is your tragic heroine. The "much buffeted" loner, put through terrible trials and tribulations until she creates a companion for herself. Her tragic flaw, sadly, is that she has created a being who is her idea of perfect, and she refuses to let him be sullied by what she thinks of as a cruel world. Her trust in humanity is so badly scarred, that she cannot even fathom the idea of exposing him to the outside world. Which ultimately leads to her downfall.

Victor, Shel, and Mary represent three very different branches of the school's society, brought together to tell this story. While they all have very unique personalities, they also MUST function as a solid group. The actors must have incredible energy, and pick right up where the other leaves off. The sentences they complete for one another should be unified sentences, not three separate fragments. There is a distinct rhythm that must come across, particularly with the hand clapping. The actors must be able to slide in and out of the small roles they play and back into CHORUS mode seamlessly.

This is a fast moving play in terms of transitions, and very simple to stage. It is a character driven piece, revved up by high theatricality. I encourage keeping the sets minimal and representational, mostly using pieces of furniture as indicated in the script. The scenes should move quickly and transition easily. This is all about storytelling through words and physicality and relationships. There is no need to clutter the stage with decoration.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the following people (friends, teachers and students) who read drafts of this script and offered their valuable feedback: Jon Pratt, Erin Boyer, Mark Chevalier, Tom Lyford, John Levenseller, Gladden Schrock, and, of course, the play's dedicatee, Tracy Sue. I appreciate all of their support and criticisms.

Remember: Theater is all about telling a story. Tell this one with enthusiasm and, (even though it's kind of sad), have fun. The more energy you have, the more riveted the audience will be.

*This play is dedicated to  
Tracy Sue  
for being the perfect Ideal Reader,  
and because, in its humble way,  
this play is everything I have.  
And, at least once, I wanted to give her  
Everything.  
Thanks, Tracy.*

## **FRANKIE AND THE GINGERBREAD BOY**

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### **ACT I**

#### **PROLOGUE**

**SETTING:** A hallway at a school. If desired, there can be a row of lockers to set the scene.

**AT RISE:** *There is a CHORUS of three in the hallway: MARY, a teenage girl, dressed as a cheerleader, SHEL, a teenage girl dressed conservatively, and VICTOR, a teenage boy, dressed in skater-boy fashion. When all THREE speak together, THEY are labelled as "CHORUS". THEY will jump into different roles as necessary. As the lights rise, THEY address the audience directly.*

CHORUS: And so it is:

MARY: Oh yeah!

VICTOR: We present to you, the viewer...

SHEL: What should be the most normal, the least sinister of places...

VICTOR: Ha!

CHORUS: An empty hallway of a high school.

SHEL: A spot for education.

VICTOR: Uh-huh.

MARY: Right.

*(The THREE pause, trying to keep straight faces. Finally THEY burst out laughing)*

CHORUS: Sorry.

SHEL: Education. If only.

VICTOR: You are correct, Shel! Not only education, but HIGHER education.

MARY: *(a sardonic cheer)* Rah-rah-rah! Sis-boom-bah! Goooooooooo Education!

SHEL: Perhaps not education, but training...

VICTOR: ...training for what we call real life.

MARY: Society.

VICTOR: Sobriety.

SHEL: And we shall, one day...

CHORUS: Run the world.

*(CHORUS pauses for a moment)*

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VICTOR: *(straight to audience)* You get that? We're takin' over!

MARY: We would like to introduce ourselves to you...

CHORUS: Hello. *(beat)* My name is the future. *(beat)* Nice to meet you.

VICTOR: Get out of my way!

MARY: *(\* in unison with VICTOR)* You know you want me.

SHEL: *(\*in unison with VICTOR and MARY)* I promise to do my best.

*(Silence. After a good five seconds, CHORUS claps their hands. FRANKIE, a teenage girl enters. Her head is down. SHE clutches a few books to her chest. SHE is shy, dressed conservatively and looks dowdy. SHE has flour smears on her outfit and face. Her hair is a tangled mess. SHE makes her way across stage, walking quickly, not looking around. CHORUS claps their hands once more. FRANKIE stumbles, falls. SHE drops her books. CHORUS claps their hands once more and FRANKIE freezes into tableau.)*

CHORUS: This is Frankie.

VICTOR: No, no, no--- not yet.

SHEL: Why?

VICTOR: *(arms stretched out wide, loud:)* SOCIETY!!!

MARY and SHEL: *(excited)* Society!!!

*(VICTOR grabs one of FRANKIE'S books off the stage floor, hands it to MARY.)*

VICTOR: An experiment! *(to audience)* Mary here...

MARY: *(with a coy wave)* Hi!

VICTOR: ...is a cheerleader.

SHEL: Very popular...

MARY: And hot, thank you very much.

VICTOR: Let's see what happens when Mary drops a book.

*(CHORUS claps. KEVIN, a tough-looking athletic type in a letter jacket enters, walking across the stage. MARY, really playing it up, drops the book. KEVIN immediately bends down, picks it up.)*

KEVIN: Here you go, babe. *(hands her the book)* You got plans tonight?

MARY: Not sure.

KEVIN: Give me a call or something. Maybe we can hook-up, hang out or whatever.

MARY: Yeah, maybe.

KEVIN: Check ya later.

*(CHORUS claps. KEVIN freezes. THEY clap again, and KEVIN turns and exits the way HE entered, robotically.)*

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SHEL: Did you see that?

VICTOR: Simple enough. Mary drops her book, and Kevin, captain of the football team, picks it up for her. Simple.

SHEL: Not even a second thought.

MARY: Happens all the time.

VICTOR: Let's try this again.

*(MARY gives the book to SHEL. CHORUS claps their hands. SAMANTHA enters. SHE is dressed like your average teen girl. CHORUS claps again, and SAMANTHA freezes.)*

SHEL: I'm Shel. An average teenage girl. Maybe not the most popular in the world...

MARY: Uh... that would be me!

VICTOR: But definitely a nice, sweet, average girl.

SHEL: Thank you.

CHORUS: Let's do it!

*(CHORUS claps their hands. SAMANTHA unfreezes and begins to walk across stage. SHEL drops her book. SAMANTHA picks it up and hands it to her.)*

SAMANTHA: Hey, Shel.

SHEL: Hi. Thanks.

SAMANTHA: Sure. Can you believe Mr. Edwards today?

SHEL: I know. Like English is our only class.

SAMANTHA: Right. Has anyone asked you to the dance yet?

SHEL: Ah, only Brian.

SAMANTHA: Could be worse.

SHEL: Yeah.

SAMANTHA: His retainer is kind of cute.

SHEL: Shut up.

*(THEY laugh.)*

SAMANTHA: Your hair looks great today.

SHEL: Yeah?

SAMANTHA: Yeah. I gotta run. See you in biology.

SHEL: See ya!

*(SAMANTHA starts to exit. CHORUS claps their hands. SHE freezes. THEY clap again. SHE turns and exits robotically from whence SHE came. SHEL drops the book back near FRANKIE.)*

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SHEL: Once again, kindness. Friendship. Conversation.  
Commiseration.

VICTOR: High school's not so bad.

MARY: Not even for the average girl.

SHEL: *(hint of sarcasm)* Gee, thanks, Mary.

MARY: You bet.

VICTOR: But let's try this again.

SHEL: Once more.

VICTOR: Places.

*(CHORUS claps their hands. SAMANTHA enters and freezes. KEVIN enters and freezes. THEY clap their hands again. CHEERLEADER 1 and CHEERLEADER 2 enter and freeze. CHORUS claps again. JOCK 1 and JOCK 2 enter, stand next to KEVIN. CHORUS claps again. SKATER GIRL enters and freezes.)*

MARY: Okay!

SHEL: Let's see this again.

VICTOR: Right!

*(CHORUS claps their hands. FRANKIE, as though in rewind, picks up her books, clutches them to her chest, stumbles back to standing and takes a few steps backwards. CHORUS claps their hands and FRANKIE freezes. VICTOR takes a place next to SKATER GIRL. SHEL takes her place next to SAMANTHA. MARY takes a place with the CHEERLEADERS.)*

VICTOR: Ready?

MARY and SHEL: Ready!

*(CHORUS claps. EVERYONE unfreezes. FRANKIE takes a few steps and stumbles again, dropping her books. EVERYONE stops moving. KEVIN and JOCK 1 and JOCK 2 point at FRANKIE.)*

KEVIN: First day on your new legs, loser?

JOCK 1: Get up, uggoo!

JOCK 2: She was just standing, but then she fell! That is funny!

*(KEVIN and the JOCKS walk across stage. JOCK 1 kicks one of FRANKIE's books. The OTHERS laugh. THEY high five in an exaggerated manner. THEY exit. Then MARY walks by with the CHEERLEADERS.)*

MARY: Uh... out of the way.

CHEERLEADER 1: Skank.

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CHEERLEADER 2: Stupid.

MARY and CHEERLEADERS: Stupid skank.

*(The CHEERLEADERS and MARY walk by without helping FRANKIE. The CHEERLEADERS exit, but MARY stays onstage. SHEL and SAMANTHA walk by FRANKIE.)*

SHEL: *(genuinely)* Excuse us. *(stage whisper to SAMANTHA)* What's her name? Isn't it like a boy's name?

SAMANTHA: I think so. Fred or something.

SHEL: I feel so bad for her.

SAMANTHA: Me too. *(beat)* So are you going to the dance with Brian, then?

*(THEY walk by without helping. SAMANTHA exits, SHEL stays onstage next to MARY. VICTOR and SKATER girl walk by FRANKIE.)*

SKATER GIRL: *(to FRANKIE)* Uh... I think you dropped your book.

VICTOR: Yeah.

*(FRANKIE says nothing.)*

SKATER GIRL: There's another one over there. *(points to where JOCK kicked a book. Beat.)* Do you want to buy some... uh... herbal medicine?

VICTOR: It's good for what ails you. *(beat)* Don't you talk?

*(FRANKIE says nothing. VICTOR and SKATER GIRL laugh.)*

Guess she only talks to mommy. Or maybe she's a mute.

*(THEY walk off without helping.)*

SKATER GIRL: Man, I'm glad I'm not her.

VICTOR: Me too. I'd only touch you with a leash.

*(THEY laugh. SKATER GIRL exits. VICTOR stands with MARY and SHEL. THEY watch as FRANKIE quietly scoops up her books, stands, and puts her head down and starts to walk off. CHORUS claps. FRANKIE freezes.)*

VICTOR: And the results of our experiment...

MARY: Well...

SHEL: They speak for themselves.

VICTOR: Because high school is...

CHORUS: ... real life.

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MARY: We tip the pretty wait staff...

SHEL: We keep quiet out of self-preservation...

VICTOR: We do not always help the weak...

CHORUS: And we do not trust the ones who walk alone. *(beat.)* We created them, but we do not trust them.

VICTOR: Society.

CHORUS: *(bowing their heads. An “A-Men”) Society.*

*(A moment of silence. MARY then pops her head up quickly)*

MARY: I mean, we all have cliques...

*(VICTOR clicks his tongue. SHEL clicks her tongue. MARY clicks her tongue.)*

CHORUS: We all have cliques.

SHEL: A support system...

MARY: People to talk to...

VICTOR: People to hang with.

SHEL: To seek comfort from...

MARY: To hold...

VICTOR: To connect with...

SHEL: To find basic HUMAN contact with...

VICTOR: To cry, shout, laugh, and rage with...

SHEL: *(softly)* To understand and to be understood by...

CHORUS: We all have cliques.

*(VICTOR clicks his tongue. SHEL clicks her tongue. MARY clicks her tongue. Pause.)*

Except Frankie.

*(THEY begin to circle around the frozen FRANKIE)*

VICTOR: Ladies and gentlemen, we present to you...

SHEL: Complete and uncut...

MARY: An honest-to-God...

CHORUS: Loner.

MARY: Frankie has no one.

SHEL: No friends. No comfort.

VICTOR: Her parents are always gone.

SHEL: No hellos, no goodbyes, no “have a nice day”'s...

VICTOR: Nope.

SHEL: Nothing.

MARY: No one.

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*(Beat.)*

SHEL: Look at those eyes filled with fear.

VICTOR: For her, this simple high school hallway is the scariest place in the world.

SHEL: For reasons we have just made painfully obvious.

MARY: Look at that face smeared with flour.

VICTOR: That's all she has. The girl can bake.

SHEL: You don't say?

VICTOR: Ah, but I do. But she bakes alone.

MARY: She walks alone...

SHEL: Studies alone...

VICTOR: Eats alone...

CHORUS: Every. Thing. Alone.

*(CHORUS claps their hands. FRANKIE unfreezes and exits in a hurry. SHE keeps her head down all the way. THEY watch her go. Their demeanor is one of curiosity, perhaps even a little sad. Pause.)*

MARY: Do you think she...

VICTOR and SHEL: Yes.

MARY: Why can't someone...?

VICTOR and SHEL: Why couldn't we...?

MARY: *(soft)* Right.

*(Pause. Then, with a certain solemnity...)*

VICTOR: This is a story about Frankie.

MARY: The loser.

SHEL: The loner.

MARY: With only her books and her baking.

SHEL: The unnoticed...

MARY: Except for ridiculing...

MARY and SHEL: Girl. A story we hope you all will enjoy...

VICTOR: This is a story that is all about Frankie.

CHORUS: All about Frankie and her Gingerbread Boy.

*(CHORUS bows to the audience. After a slightly prolonged beat, THEY spring into action: If a row of lockers is used, CHORUS removes them quickly and with great energy and noise from the stage. As THEY do so, SAMANTHA, JOCK 1, JOCK 2, KEVIN, CHEERLEADER 1, CHEERLEADER 2, and SKATER GIRL all enter quickly with chairs to represent desks, set themselves up as a classroom, sit with their hands folded in their laps and freeze into tableau. CHORUS, brings on a small desk to represent the teacher's desk. THEY observe the STUDENTS*

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*frozen in tableau. THEY walk around them a bit, perhaps adjusting the way the STUDENTS sit. CHORUS then goes to the desk.)*

SHEL: This isn't everyone.

VICTOR: You're right.

*(CHORUS claps their hands. KARA, a pretty, but awkward teenage girl enters with a chair and sits, somewhat separated from the OTHERS. SHE is a new student. FRANKIE also enters with a chair, and sits with her head down.)*

SHEL: Good.

MARY: Is everything ready?

*(THEY look at the students sitting there. Hands folded in laps.)*

CHORUS: Strike a pose!

*(The STUDENTS move into poses: FRANKIE keeps her head down. The CHEERLEADERS lean over in a pose of whispering to each other. KEVIN and JOCK 1 go into a tableau of a fist bump, while JOCK 2 takes out a paper airplane and goes into tableau as if about to throw it. SKATER GIRL slumps into a "I hate the world" posture, with a look of disdain and boredom on her face. KARA continues sitting up straight, trying to make a good impression. SAMANTHA leans closer to the CHEERLEADERS, almost longingly, wanting to be part of their conversation, but SHE is not.)*

CHORUS: Better.

VICTOR: Now we are ready.

CHORUS: Scene One:

MARY: SETTING:

CHORUS: Mrs. Turtledove's Home Economics Class.

SHEL: An easy A, or so they say.

CHORUS: AT RISE:

MARY: The students, as always, are restless.

VICTOR: In this scene, Shel will play the part of Mrs. Turtledove...

SHEL: I will?

VICTOR: Uh-huh.

SHEL: Me?

MARY: Come on, Shel, you're so good at it.

VICTOR: You really are.

SHEL: *(pleased)* Thanks. I'll do it. *(SHE takes a pair of glasses out of her pocket, puts them on. SHE musses up her hair. When finished SHE stands behind the small desk)* Ready.

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CHORUS: Show time!

*(The STUDENTS unfreeze. VICTOR and MARY stand off to the side, observing. KEVIN and JOCK 1 complete their fist bump and laugh loudly. JOCK 2 throws the paper airplane, which, if possible, hits FRANKIE in the back of the head. HE laughs loudly. The CHEERLEADERS gossip and babble loudly, while SAMANTHA tries to listen in. It is exaggerated pre-classroom chatter. SHEL, as Mrs. Turtledove, takes a whistle out of one of her pockets and blows. There is quiet, except for KEVIN, JOCK 1, and JOCK 2 getting up quickly into a football pose.)*

SHEL: *(as Mrs. Turtledove until otherwise noted)* At ease, gentlemen.

*(THEY sit.)*

Pavlov's athletes, how 'bout that?

*(SHE smiles. STUDENTS stare at her blankly)*

'Cause you know, the dog, and the bell, and the salivating... *(beat)* No? Nothing? *(beat)* Well, moving on, then! We have a new student in class today, and I want you all to make her feel welcome! *(SHE scans her classroom a moment, then sees KARA. SHE stops scanning and points.)* There she is! Would you like to get up front and tell us about yourself?

KARA: Well... uh...

SHEL: Sure you would! Get on up here!

KARA: *(sighing)* Sure. *(SHE stands up)* Hi, my name is Kara...

SHEL: Louder, dear... PROJECT! Eyes and teeth, eyes and teeth!

KARA: *(slightly louder)* Hi, my name is Kara and I just moved here from Des Moines...

SHEL: Ooooooh! There's a lot of corn in Iowa.

KARA: Yeah, and, um... I'm a junior.

*(Long, uncomfortable pause. Finally:)*

SHEL: Okay, very good. Let's all give Kara a round of applause.

*(SAMANTHA starts to clap, but notices no one else is, so SHE stops. A beat.)*

Well, moving on, then. Thank you, Kara, you may sit.

*(KARA gratefully sits.)*

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As I'm sure you all remember, last class we were experimenting with the fine art of bread baking...

*(JOCK 1 raises his hand.)*

What is it?

JOCK 1: Mrs. Turtledove, can we just watch Martha Stewart again?

SHEL: No, that's only for special occasions.

JOCK 1: Come on.

CHEERLEADER 1: But we like, learn so much from her.

CHEERLEADER 2: It's true. Legit.

SHEL: No, we're talking about bread baking...

JOCK 1: *(chanting)* Martha Stewart! Martha Stewart! Martha Stewart!

*(The OTHER STUDENTS, except for SKATER GIRL, KARA, and FRANKIE join in on the chant. SAMANTHA should be the last to join, and it should be made clear that SHE'S doing it only because EVERYONE else is.)*

SKATER GIRL: *(over the rabble)* SHUT UP, YOU CONFORMIST SHEEP! YOU'RE SO ANNOYING!

*(THEY continue to chant. Finally, SHEL blows her whistle and THEY are silent.)*

SHEL: That's enough! I've sent an entire class to the Principal's office before! I've given an entire class detention! Don't think I wouldn't do it again! I mean it! We are talking about bread baking and that's final! *(beat)* Well, then, moving on. On the whole, I was not very pleased with your bread baking efforts from last class. It was clear to me that you were not taking the assignment seriously, but were having more fun chatting, texting, and making obscene shapes with the dough.

JOCK 2: Boobies!

*(JOCK 1, JOCK 2 and KEVIN laugh and high five each other. SHEL rolls her eyes but moves on.)*

SHEL: But within this sea of mediocrity, one student accomplished the extraordinary. One student made the dough her canvas and created art. One student made me feel like this was truly a worthwhile endeavor. *(beat)* Frankie, why don't you stand up here and tell us about your bread.

*(FRANKIE lifts her head, and her eyes are pure fear.)*

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*(softly and gently)* I know you don't like to address the class, Frankie. But, please. For me. Share with us? Please.

*(FRANKIE, with great effort, stands. SHE walks to the desk. SHE cannot make eye contact with anyone in the classroom.)*

*(to the CLASS)* Standing before you ladies and gentlemen, is a young person who truly understands baking, perhaps even better than I do. *(to FRANKIE)* Frankie, dear, how long have you been baking?

*(FRANKIE moves her lips, but nothing comes out, as though nothing can come out. It should be almost painful to watch.)*

Sweetie? We can't hear you.

*(FRANKIE takes a deep breath. SHE cannot look at anyone. But we finally hear her voice.)*

FRANKIE: I've been baking for as long as I can remember, Mrs. Turtledove.

SHEL: Is it a family thing? Was it your mother or father who got you interested in it?

FRANKIE: No ma'am.

SHEL: What's your secret? How do you bake so well?

*(FRANKIE looks at her, almost pleading. SHE opens her mouth, but, again, nothing can come out.)*

*(oh-so-gently)* It's all right, dear. Close your eyes. Pretend no one is here. No one is listening. It's just you, alone in your kitchen. Tell us.

*(FRANKIE slowly closes her eyes. SHE takes another deep breath.)*

FRANKIE: *(soft)* I bake because I love it.

SHEL: Yes.

FRANKIE: I bake because I love it. And because when I bake, I can feel my hands connected to the dough. *(SHE becomes a little louder, and perhaps mimes with her hands)* I feel that dough in my hands, squeezing between my fingers, and it is as though it is talking to me, telling me what it needs. *(getting louder, losing herself)* And I am creating something, something real, something that in some small way can really affect people, feed people, maybe even save people... and I give this dough a life, I make it live, and everything else just disappears, there is only me and the dough, our own Universe, and nothing else matters, and I'm not alone, and I'm not

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alone, and I'm not alone. I matter. I create. I give life and transform energy. I bake and I am real, there is tangible proof of my existence. *(beat. Her eyes are still closed. SHE drops her hands. Soft:)* And I'm not alone.

*(There is a long silence. FRANKIE opens her eyes, perhaps with a gleam of hope, of maybe having gotten through to people for the first time in her life. SHE looks directly at the CLASS. THEY sit silent, looking at her. SHEL wipes away a tear. Beat. The CLASS erupts in laughter. Loud, mocking laughter. KARA and SAMANTHA are the only two who abstain. Then, slowly, SAMANTHA begins to laugh with EVERYONE else. FRANKIE looks at the CLASS laughing at her. Her body begins to shake slightly. SHE cannot move. SHE cannot look away.)*

SKATER GIRL: *(over the laughter)* Oh, come on, it's just bread!

KEVIN: *(mocking mimicry)* "I'm not alone, I'm not alone!"

*(SHEL whistles. The laughter continues. SHE whistles louder. FRANKIE's shaking grows worse. SHEL whistles louder and then with great force, knocks over her desk. The room goes silent. SHEL is like a mad woman, fierce.)*

SHEL: *(to the CLASS)* You make me sick. Get out! To the Principal's office! Now!

CHEERLEADER 1: What? That's like, totally unfair.

SHEL: GET OUT OF MY CLASSROOM! NOW!

*(The STUDENTS, grumbling, all stand and start to exit, taking their chairs with them. KARA is among them.)*

You may stay, Kara.

*(KARA sets her chair back down and sits, looking uncomfortable.*

*FRANKIE is still shaking. SHEL puts an arm around her.)*

I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. But you're okay. You're okay. Look at me. *(SHE puts her hands on FRANKIE's shoulders and looks deep into her eyes)* You have nothing to be ashamed of. They're the ones who should be ashamed. *(soft)* You are an angel, Frankie, believe me. You make that dough live. You put your heart and your soul into it, and when you do that, you give your creations life. You give them life. *(beat)* I am so proud of you. Thank you for sharing your gift with me.

*(FRANKIE stops shaking and looks into SHEL's eyes.)*

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You can do great things. Remember that.

FRANKIE: Thank you, Mrs. Turtledove.

SHEL: You're welcome. *(beat. SHE gives FRANKIE a hug)* Well, then, moving on. I better go down to the office and explain what's going on. You two ladies can have a study hall for the rest of the period.

*(SHEL walks away, and joins VICTOR and MARY who are watching the scene from distance. SHEL takes off her glasses, and drops the Mrs. Turtledove character as SHE watches the following. FRANKIE sits back down in her chair. There is an awkward silence. KARA looks over to her. More silence. Finally:)*

KARA: I kinda know what you mean, you know.

*(FRANKIE says nothing.)*

I mean, about everything else not mattering. I feel that way when I practice my violin. *(beat)* I play violin. *(beat)* So, yeah, I thought what you said was pretty cool.

*(Long silence)*

FRANKIE: Thanks. *(beat)* And... thanks for... not... laughing.

KARA: *(a small smile)* Hey, you know... yeah. Don't mention it.

*(A pause. FRANKIE and KARA look at one another and kind of smile. THEY look forward. CHORUS claps their hands and move center stage. FRANKIE and KARA stand, pick up their chairs and exit.)*

CHORUS: And so it is:

VICTOR: You did well, Shel.

SHEL: Really?

MARY: Very believable.

SHEL: Thanks. *(slight smile)* Well, then, moving on:

*(CHORUS claps their hands. JOCK 1 enters and removes the desk. CHEERLEADER 1 and CHEERLEADER 2 enter with benches and set them down. FRANKIE, SAMANTHA, and KARA enter and freeze in tableau with the CHEERLEADERS.)*

MARY: Scene Two:

CHORUS: SETTING:

VICTOR: *(playfully)* The girl's locker room. Oooh-la-la.

SHEL: And if you think that it's only the boy's locker room where the weak are attacked, then...

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SHEL and MARY: You've obviously never been in the girl's locker room.

VICTOR: In this scene, Mary will play the most popular girl in school.

MARY: The part I was born to play!

VICTOR and SHEL: A real pain in the...

MARY: *(laughing)* HEY! Watch it!

CHORUS: And on we go!

*(CHORUS claps their hands. The locker room comes to life. MARY joins CHEERLEADER 1 and CHEERLEADER 2. SHEL and VICTOR observe the scene from a distance. The GIRLS all mime getting dressed and so forth.)*

CHEERLEADER 1: And Mrs. Turtledove gave the WHOLE class detention!

MARY: No way!

CHEERLEADER 2: I swear. Legit.

MARY: For laughing?

SAMANTHA: *(trying to join in the conversation)* Yeah, it was so ridiculous.

MARY: Was someone talking to you?

SAMANTHA: No, I was just...

MARY: Forgetting your lot in life?

SAMANTHA: Sorry. *(SHE turns away)*

MARY: I can't believe that! Detention for laughing? It's like a natural response.

CHEERLEADER 1: I know.

CHEERLEADER 2: Right?

MARY: I mean, that's like giving detention for burping or something.

CHEERLEADER 1: Exactly.

CHEERLEADER 2: And burping is way worse than laughing.

MARY: I know!

CHEERLEADER 1: So we can't cheer at the game tonight.

MARY: Are you serious?

CHEERLEADER 2: Legit.

MARY: Well that's just great! We're going to have to use J.V. cheerleaders? This is an important game!

CHEERLEADER 1: Don't blame us.

CHEERLEADER 2: The blame is all...

CHEERLEADERS 1 and 2: *(pointing to FRANKIE)* HERS!

*(FRANKIE feels them pointing at her and begins to mime dressing quickly. MARY approaches her slowly. The CHEERLEADERS follow.)*

MARY: The skank who can't hold her books. *(SHE stops and gets right in FRANKIE's face)* Thanks for ruining the game tonight.

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CHEERLEADER 1: Yeah.

CHEERLEADER 2: Thanks a whole lot.

FRANKIE: I didn't...

MARY: I didn't say you could talk. Who's going to cheer tonight? You?

*(The other CHEERLEADERS laugh. SAMANTHA joins in. KARA stays silent.)*

Well, cow? Are you going to cheer?

*(FRANKIE, finished "dressing," starts to leave.)*

*(to SAMANTHA) Grab her!*

*(SAMANTHA, without really thinking about it, grabs FRANKIE and holds onto her.)*

Don't go. We were just going to play a little game.

*(FRANKIE doesn't even struggle. SHE just accepts it.)*

CHEERLEADER 1: What kind of a game?

CHEERLEADER 2: Yeah?

MARY: It's a little game called "Slap the Skank."

CHEERLEADER 1: Ooooooh!

CHEERLEADER 2: Ahhhhhh!

*(SAMANTHA loosens her grip a bit, but doesn't let FRANKIE go.)*

SAMANTHA: I don't know...

MARY: Come on, Samantha. The skank got you in trouble, too, didn't she?

SAMANTHA: Well, yeah.

MARY: Then what's the issue?

CHEERLEADER 1: Slap the skank!

CHEERLEADER 2: Slap the skank!

MARY: Well?

*(SAMANTHA works up some enthusiasm.)*

SAMANTHA: Slap the skank!

*(SAMANTHA tightens her grip on FRANKIE. KARA looks on in horror, but is frozen. MARY and the CHEERLEADERS line up. MARY steps toward the restrained FRANKIE and raises her hand. VICTOR steps forward from his distant watching space. HE claps his hands together*

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loudly. FRANKIE gives out a little cry of pain. VICTOR steps back. MARY steps out of the way, lowering her hand, as though she just slapped her. The CHEERLEADERS laugh. CHEERLEADER 1 steps close to FRANKIE, and raises her hand as though to slap. SHEL steps forward and claps her hands together loudly. FRANKIE gives out another cry of pain. SHEL steps back. The CHEERLEADERS laugh, and egg each other on. CHEERLEADER 2 steps to the front of the line. SHE acts like SHE is winding up her hand for a huge slap. VICTOR and SHEL both step forward and both clap their hands loudly at the same time. FRANKIE cries out once more. The CHEERLEADERS laugh.)

MARY: What do you say, girls? One more round?

CHEERLEADERS 1 and 2: Yeah!

(THEY line up again. KARA unfreezes and steps forward.)

KARA: No!

MARY: Oh, does the new girl have something to say?

KARA: It's just that...

MARY: What is it, New Girl? You want to be the skank in round two, is that it?

KARA: (trying a different attack) Of course not! She deserves what she got. But, listen, if you keep on hitting her, you're gonna leave marks, and then you'll be in even more trouble. The skank isn't worth it.

(looks at FRANKIE and laughs) I mean, look at her! What a waste!

She has to go around looking like that all day with only her precious bread to talk to. Isn't that punishment enough?

(MARY and the CHEERLEADERS laugh.)

MARY: The new girl is right. Besides, we don't want our hands to smell like skank for the rest of the day, do we? Let's go, girls.

(MARY and the CHEERLEADERS start to exit. SAMANTHA lets go of FRANKIE and follows. MARY looks back to KARA.)

MARY: You coming, New Girl?

KARA: Yeah, I'll be right there. I gotta change my shoes, first.

MARY: Later.

(The CHEERLEADERS and SAMANTHA exit. MARY joins VICTOR and SHEL who are still watching the scene. SHE drops her "witch girl" persona as SHE watches. There is a silence between KARA and FRANKIE.)

KARA: You okay?

*(FRANKIE just nods her head and sits on a bench.)*

Look, I'm sorry. You didn't deserve that. *(beat)* And I didn't mean what I said. *(beat)* Look, it's just that I'm new here, you know? I'm new. I can't be... not like my old school... you know, I can't be the... outcast, okay? *(beat)* I know. I shouldn't care what they think, but... I can't... *(SHE stops. Looks at FRANKIE)* I tried to help, really, I just wanted to keep them from hitting you anymore. Okay? *(beat)* So, you know... I'm... yeah, okay, I'm a coward or something. And I'm sorry. *(beat)* Please tell me you understand, though, please?

FRANKIE: Yeah. I understand. Thank you for stopping them.

KARA: Look, I want to help you, but... I mean... this sounds so awful, I know, but... could I be like your secret friend? I mean, I'll check up on you and try to help you, but not really talk to you here at school? I mean... That's so awful of me to say, it's just that...

FRANKIE: No. I get it. *(softer)* I get it. *(beat)* Secret friend.

KARA: *(ashamed)* Yeah. *(beat)* Well... I'll see you later, I guess.

FRANKIE: Okay. *(beat)* Secret friend.

KARA: Secret friend.

*(KARA exits. FRANKIE sits for a moment, takes a deep breath. SHE touches her face softly where SHE was "hit". It hurts. SHE takes another deep breath, rises, and exits. CHORUS steps forward.)*

CHORUS: And so it is:

SHEL: *(to MARY)* I really hated you in that scene!

VICTOR: Yeah, me too!

MARY: You mean it?

SHEL and VICTOR: Definitely!

MARY: *(touched)* Thank you!

VICTOR: So...

CHORUS: On we go!

*(CHORUS claps their hands. JOCK 1 and JOCK 2 come on and remove the benches, while CHEERLEADER 1 and CHEERLEADER 2 enter with two folding chairs, and set them up facing each other. One has a file folder resting on it.)*

SHEL: Leaving marks.

MARY: Leaving marks.

VICTOR: It gets attention.

SHEL: It sure does.

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*(CHORUS claps their hands and FRANKIE enters. SHE has some bruises where SHE was slapped. SHE sits in the folding chair without the file folder and freezes.)*

CHORUS: Scene three:

SHEL: SETTING:

MARY: The office of Mr. Torne, school guidance counsellor.

VICTOR: If there's one person who needs some guidance...

CHORUS: It's poor, poor Frankie.

MARY: Poor abused Frankie.

*(Long beat.)*

We left marks.

*(Beat. MARY looks upset. SHEL and VICTOR silently comfort her for a moment.)*

*(brightening)* In this scene, Victor will play the part of Mr. Torne.

SHEL: Oh, that's going to be fun.

MARY: Poor guy. Tries so hard to be hip, to try to connect through humor and making light of serious situations.

VICTOR: But he does his best. As will I.

*(VICTOR removes a loud, ugly tie, pre-tied, from his pocket, slips it over his head and tightens it. HE spits in his hands and tries to slick back his hair.)*

MARY and SHEL: Ewwwww.

VICTOR: How do I look?

MARY and SHEL: Ready.

VICTOR: Then on we go...

*(CHORUS claps their hands together. FRANKIE unfreezes. VICTOR picks up the file folder and sits in the chair and opens it. HE shakes his head sadly and sets it aside. HE looks at FRANKIE a moment.)*

*(as MR. TORNE until otherwise noted)* Cough, cough. *(HE chuckles)* Just kidding. It's funny how people use devices like that when trying to prolong what could potentially be an uncomfortable conversation. *(chuckles again)* Do you want to know why I called you down here, Franny?

FRANKIE: Um... actually, sir, my...

VICTOR: I called you here, Franny, because I saw you in the cafeteria. I saw your bruises. *(HE pauses)* Do you understand?

FRANKIE: Yes.

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VICTOR: I saw your bruises, Franny. (*pause*) Is there something you would like to tell me?

FRANKIE: (*soft*) I don't know what you mean.

VICTOR: Oh no?

FRANKIE: No.

(*VICTOR sighs, licks his hand, and runs it through his hair.*)

VICTOR: Tell me a little bit about your home life, Franny.

FRANKIE: Sir?

VICTOR: You don't have to call me sir. In fact, I would prefer it if you didn't. I haven't been knighted, you know. (*HE chuckles*)

FRANKIE: I'm sorry, Mr. Torne.

VICTOR: You don't have to call me Mr. Torne either. It puts up a barrier between our communication, Franny. I'm not a teacher. The respect in this office goes both ways. Why don't you call me Roger, okay? Or, if you like, Rog. There's no need to be so formal.

FRANKIE: My name is Frankie.

VICTOR: I beg your pardon?

FRANKIE: I'm sorry. But my name is Frankie.

(*VICTOR begins to applaud quietly*)

VICTOR: Congratulations, Frankie! You did it! Bravo!

FRANKIE: Did what?

VICTOR: You passed my first test. You corrected me! Well done. (*beat*) You see, the fact that you were willing to speak up and correct me when I was using a wrong name, shows that you are ready to communicate open and honestly. So, please: tell me what your parents are like.

FRANKIE: Well, Mr. Torne... sorry... I mean Roger.

VICTOR: Call me Rog. Go ahead. Just try it on for size.

FRANKIE: Rog.

VICTOR: Good, very good. Continue.

FRANKIE: Well, Rog... I don't really know what to say. My parents go away a lot.

VICTOR: (*nodding in an exaggerated manner*) Uh-huh, uh-huh, go on. They travel? For work?

FRANKIE: No. They don't work. When my grandmother died, they inherited a great deal of money, and they use it to travel.

VICTOR: Ri-i-i-ght. I see. Go on.

FRANKIE: I don't know what else to say.

(*VICTOR sighs, licks his hand and runs it through his hair.*)

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VICTOR: Well, Frankie, you're making me put my cards right on the table. Are your parents home right now?

FRANKIE: Yes. But they're leaving for a trip this evening.

VICTOR: I see. I'm just going to come right out and ask you: Frankie, do your parents hit you?

FRANKIE: No. They don't.

VICTOR: Frankie, Frankie, Frankie: I thought we had reached a point where we could be completely comfortable being honest.

FRANKIE: I am being honest.

VICTOR: (*misguidedly joking to put her at ease*) Are you telling me that your parents don't hit you?

(FRANKIE nods.)

They never just smack you around a bit?

(FRANKIE shakes her head, "no.")

Never go over you a bit with a belt or extension cord?

(FRANKIE shakes her head "no.")

Not even a little "One of these days... to the moon!" action?

(FRANKIE shakes her head "no.")

Where did the bruises come from, Frankie?

FRANKIE: I really don't want to talk about it. It's not a big deal.

VICTOR: Are you scared of someone?

FRANKIE: Rog, really...

VICTOR: That was a good attempt at distraction by calling me Rog, but it's not going to work. If you didn't get the bruises at home, then you must have gotten them here at school. Right? Did someone here at school assault you? Because we have a no-tolerance policy for that kind of happy crappy.

FRANKIE: I'm fine.

VICTOR: Was it your boyfriend?

FRANKIE: I don't have a boyfriend. (*beat*) No boyfriend.

VICTOR: (*with great sincerity*) Please let me help you, Frankie.

(There is a pause)

You don't deserve to be afraid.

(Pause)

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Where did you get the bruises?

FRANKIE: I fell.

*(Pause)*

VICTOR: *(long sigh)* Okay. I understand. *(beat)* Would you do something for me? Do something for yourself?

FRANKIE: What?

VICTOR: If you don't feel comfortable talking with me or connecting with me, it's okay. But talk to someone. Share your thoughts, your fears, your SOUL with someone. Can you try to do that?

FRANKIE: *(soft)* Who?

VICTOR: I'm sorry, what was that?

FRANKIE: Nothing. *(beat)* May I go now?

VICTOR: Sure. *(trying to be funny)* Your bail's been paid, but don't try to skip the country, young lady! *(chuckles)*

*(FRANKIE starts to exit, her head down.)*

Frankie?

*(SHE stops, looks back at him.)*

Could I offer one more suggestion?

FRANKIE: Okay.

VICTOR: Try walking with your head held up. It can be tough, 'cause there's plenty to be scared of. But it's also a lot easier to see the good things, too.

FRANKIE: I'll try.

*(SHEL and MARY clap their hands. FRANKIE takes her chair and exits. VICTOR stands and takes off his tie. MARY grabs his chair and takes it offstage and then returns.)*

VICTOR: Man, am I glad to take that thing off.

SHEL: To share your soul.

VICTOR: Those are the words that go tumbling through Frankie's mind.

MARY: How nice it would be to have someone to share her soul with.

CHORUS: Just like a real person.

VICTOR: And then thoughts connect...

SHEL: As they so often do...

MARY: "Share your soul with someone..." connects with...

CHORUS: "You make that dough live. You put your heart and soul into it... you give your creations life."

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*(FRANKIE enters, walking across the stage with some books, as though walking home from school. CHORUS circles around her as SHE walks, but SHE does not seem to notice them.)*

VICTOR: You give your creations life.

MARY: You share your soul,

SHEL: You give your creations life.

VICTOR: You share your soul.

*(FRANKIE stops in her tracks. CHORUS continues circling her repeating the phrases “You give your creations life” and “You share your soul.” FRANKIE stares straight ahead. CHORUS stops abruptly. There is silence.)*

FRANKIE: When I share my soul, I give my creations life.

*(CHORUS line up behind her as though THEY were a church choir.)*

CHORUS: And we make the world, bit by bit, we harvest the wheat, we grind the grain, we mill and toil. We make the world. Share our souls. *(singing)* World without end, A-Men, A-Men.

*(There is a pause. CHORUS keeps their position as a church choir. FRANKIE, for the first time, smiles a very genuine and excited smile. SHE rushes off. CHORUS breaks their pose.)*

And so it is.

VICTOR: Frankie has made up her mind.

MARY: No more hesitating.

SHEL: The moment is now.

CHORUS: Frankie is going to bake.

*(CHORUS claps their hands. FRANKIE rolls out a large baking table, large enough for a teenage boy to lay on. Right now, it has mixing bowls, bag of flour, etc. SHE stands behind it frozen in tableau.)*

CHORUS: Scene Four:

MARY: SETTING:

SHEL: Frankie's home, in her kitchen.

CHORUS: The kitchen where Frankie creates.

MARY: In this scene, Victor and Shel will play Frankie's parents.

*(MARY runs off stage and comes back on with a small bag.)*

SHEL: Do you want to be the dad or mom?

VICTOR: What a wit you are, Shel.

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SHEL: I do my best.

*(MARY takes a fedora hat out of the bag and hands it to VICTOR.)*

MARY: For you.

VICTOR: Much obliged.

*(MARY reaches into the bag and takes out gaudy pearl necklace. SHE hands it to SHEL.)*

MARY: For you.

SHEL: Thank you.

*(MARY tosses the bag offstage. VICTOR puts on his hat, SHEL puts on her necklace.)*

VICTOR: *(offering his arm to SHEL)* Shall we, my dear?

SHEL: On we go! *(SHE takes his arm)*

*(MARY claps her hands. SHEL and VICTOR enter the scene as FRANKIE's parents.)*

All right, honey, you have the number of the hotel we're staying at, right?

FRANKIE: Yes.

VICTOR: Come on, we have to go. Time waits for no one. It marches on.

SHEL: And you have our cell number... just try not to call between noon and six. Because of the time difference.

VICTOR: We want to enjoy some of our vacation. Hello, umbrella drinks!

FRANKIE: Okay.

VICTOR: We have to go. So long, Frankie Bean! *(HE kisses FRANKIE's cheek. To SHEL:)* Seconds tick by... tick-tock, tick-tock.

SHEL: I'm going to miss you.

VICTOR: She's practically a grown woman. Don't coddle. We're late.

SHEL: Why don't you go start the car, and I'll be right out.

VICTOR: *(throwing his hands in the air)* You'd be late to your own non-denominational memorial service!

SHEL: Yes, dear. I see your lips moving, but I only hear buzzing.

*(VICTOR moves as if to exit, but HE joins MARY where SHE is standing observing the scene. HE takes off the hat and throws it offstage.)*

I'm an absent mother. But the independence must be good for you.

FRANKIE: I'm fine. I'm used to it. It really doesn't matter.

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SHEL: Why don't you have some friends come over? I hate the thought of you being left alone all the time.

*(FRANKIE only stares at her mom, struck by the irony of her statement.)*

It's not good for a girl your age to be left alone all the time. *(beat)*  
Are you going to do some baking?

FRANKIE: Yes.

SHEL: My talented little girl! What are you making this time?

FRANKIE: Gingerbread.

VICTOR: *(from his observation spot)* HONK! HONK!

HOOOOOOOONK!

SHEL: Oh, that man just drives me crazy. I tolerate him so much, but love him so little. I mean... Skip it. Gotta run, sweetheart. Be good. *(SHE kisses FRANKIE's cheek.)* Have fun!

*(SHEL acts as if SHE's exiting, but joins MARY and VICTOR in their observation spot. SHE takes off the necklace and throws it offstage. FRANKIE savors a moment of silence behind her baking table.)*

FRANKIE: Finally. *(beat)* Finally. *(SHE takes a deep breath)* This is crazy. *(beat)* I make my creations live. By sheer will, with every ounce of my soul, I make my creations live!

*(FRANKIE rolls the table offstage. CHORUS steps out front.)*

CHORUS: Once upon a time there was a girl named Frankie.

VICTOR: She found no earthly companions, and so...

MARY: With cries to the Universe...

SHEL: And plenty of flour...

VICTOR: And soul...

CHORUS: She set out to make herself a friend. *(beat)* To make herself a friend, or something more.

MARY: Someone to talk to.

VICTOR: Someone to give her hope,

SHEL: Companionship.

CHORUS: Forever.

VICTOR: She worked late into the night...

MARY: Kneading the dough between her soft, but firm fingers...

SHEL: Almost as though she were massaging muscles.

VICTOR: She sculpted the batter, transferring energy, creating a body...

MARY: A mind...

SHEL: Tendons,

VICTOR: Arms to hold her...

SHEL: To carry her and shield her...

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MARY: Lips to whisper in her ear,

SHEL: Lips to kiss...

VICTOR: To seal promises...

SHEL: And of course,

CHORUS: A heart to give her love.

*(FRANKIE rolls on her baking table once more. SHE is covered with flour. SHE wears an apron. Upon the table, there is a body underneath a white cloth. It is GINGER, the Gingerbread Boy.)*

And as she waited, she spoke to her creation.

FRANKIE: *(softly)* Ginger. I have made you from Ginger. So you will never feel the stomach pains of the nervous and ashamed. You will always soothe and be soothed.

*(FRANKIE pulls back the white cloth, revealing GINGER's face. HE is tan, with brown hair with red highlights.)*

Today I have felt the sting of being constantly on the verge of tears. Damming up my tear ducts with determination. Willing the salt water back into my eyes time and again, denying myself release. And so I have let them run free for you. I seasoned your batter with my tears, so that you will have a sensitive mind and a sympathetic heart to give me comfort and shelter. *(SHE plays with GINGER'S hair tenderly)* And within the mixture, I have given you drops of my own blood, so that our lovely veins may share the same precious cargo. I give you my blood so that you will be bound to me and never leave me.

*(FRANKIE delicately strokes GINGER's face. HE does not move.)*

I have given you amethyst eyes, clear and bright, so that you might never see the darkness that I have seen. So that you shall always reflect light into yourself and into me.

*(FRANKIE leans down and puts her mouth on GINGER's mouth, breathing into him. His chest rises, but HE does not move. CHORUS looks on, fascinated.)*

I give you my breath. So that you might live. *(Beat. A whisper:)* Live. *(beat)* Live. *(beat)* Live.

*(Pause. GINGER does not stir. FRANKIE pulls the sheet down a little bit more, and places both of her flour stained hands on his chest, where his heart should be. SHE closes her eyes.)*

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*(softly)* I do not ask for much. *(pause)* I give you half of my soul to share. Take half of my soul into your body of bread, take this final ingredient so you might live. I give you half my soul, the purest half, the half with still a trace of innocence and wonder remaining. I give this to you freely. I give you my soul that we might share it always and forever. I give you my soul!

CHORUS: The Gingerbread Boy shall rise,  
When you share your soul, your creation shall live,  
The Gingerbread Boy shall rise,  
When you share your soul, your creation shall live,  
The Gingerbread Boy shall rise...

*(CHORUS continues this low chant all through FRANKIE's next dialogue.)*

FRANKIE: I've given you half my soul. So Live. I've given you half my soul. So Live! Live! Live! Live!

*(The lights flicker. CHORUS stops their chant. There is silence. FRANKIE's eyes remain closed, and her lips continue to move in a silent, fervent prayer. Suddenly, GINGER's eyes open and HE takes a huge gasp of breath, and sits up. FRANKIE is startled back. SHE looks at GINGER. GINGER's eyes dart around, confused, innocent, unknowing. HE makes small whimpering sounds. FRANKIE immediately climbs up on the table sitting next to him. SHE takes his hand. HE whimpers, fidgets. SHE looks deep into his eyes.)*

Shhh. Shhhh. Welcome. Shhhh.

*(GINGER tries to move, but is not used to his body, and has no strength.)*

Ssssh. You know me. Look at me. You know me. Ssssh. You know me.

*(FRANKIE takes GINGER's trembling face and holds it in her hands. SHE looks deep into his amethyst eyes. HE returns her gaze. HE quiets.)*

You see? You know me. You're part of me. *(beat)* You are me.  
*(beat)* You are beautiful.

GINGER: *(not quite able to form words)* Bee-you-full.

FRANKIE: *(smiling at him)* Yes. That's it. You... *(SHE points to him)* ... are... beautiful.

GINGER: *(smiling back)* Yee-oooh... *(points at FRANKIE)* ... bee-you-full.

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FRANKIE: *(almost in tears)* No. I'm not beautiful.

GINGER: *(still smiling)* Nnnn-ohhhh. Yee-ooh... *(touches her face)* ...  
bee-you-t-ful.

*(FRANKIE cries. GINGER looks at her tears, confused.)*

FRANKIE: I did it. I shared my soul. I am not alone.

GINGER: *(holding her hand)* Yeee-ooooh. N-n-n-awwt. Looow-nah.

FRANKIE: Never again.

*(FRANKIE slowly leans in and gives GINGER a small kiss on the mouth. SHE then looks at him with such love, and HE returns the gaze with an innocent wonder of discovery. CHORUS steps forward, and FRANKIE and GINGER freeze in tableau. Each of the three in the CHORUS look incredibly lost in thought.)*

CHORUS: And so it is.

VICTOR: A baker creating life from bread and tears.

CHORUS: The Gingerbread Boy has risen.

MARY: And soul. We cannot forget the pieces of soul.

CHORUS: The Gingerbread Boy has risen.

SHEL: And so it is.

MARY: Our loser...

SHEL: Our loner...

VICTOR: At last has created her joy.

SHEL: And now we shall see what will happen.

MARY: I can't wait to see what will happen!

VICTOR: We all soon will see what MUST happen...

CHORUS: To Frankie and her Gingerbread Boy.

*(Beat. CHORUS looks at the audience, almost with a sly knowingness. CHORUS claps their hands. Blackout. End of Act I.)*

**ACT II**

**SCENE 1**

**AT RISE: CHORUS enters onto the empty stage.**

CHORUS: And so it is.

MARY: Once again.

SHEL: Here we are.

VICTOR: To share in the great human tradition. *(beat)* What is love?

MARY and SHEL: Victor?

VICTOR: What is love? *(beat)* Really. What is love?

MARY: Heat, a gentle flame...

SHEL: Longing, passion, desire...

MARY and SHEL: Trust, understanding, affection, adoration...

VICTOR: Mutual vulnerability, taking the risk, yes, risking it all...

CHORUS: And mutual strength, holding each other, holding each other  
each time you fall.

MARY: But how could we know?

SHEL: We're only teenagers.

CHORUS: We are not the present. We are only the future. *(Beat.  
CHORUS stares at the audience.)*

MARY: *(in a burst of excitement)* The Gingerbread Boy is alive!

CHORUS: The Gingerbread Boy is alive.

*(Beat. CHORUS claps their hands. FRANKIE and GINGER enter, and  
stay in the background. THEY are frozen in tableau.)*

SHEL: And for two weeks straight, Frankie teaches him to talk,

*(FRANKIE and GINGER mime GINGER learning to speak. FRANKIE  
tenderly takes his face in her hands, moving his mouth and lips, teaching  
him to form words.)*

MARY: and to walk.

*(FRANKIE takes GINGER's hands and THEY take steps together,  
GINGER very tentative at first, and FRANKIE very supportive.)*

SHEL: And when the boy could master walking, he began to run!

*(GINGER lets go of FRANKIE's hand and begins to run. HE runs very gracefully and quickly. FRANKIE watches him, proud.)*

VICTOR: And can he run!

MARY: So graceful...

SHEL: So swift!

VICTOR: And if he so desired, no one could catch him.

SHEL: Except Frankie.

CHORUS: He always let Frankie catch him.

*(FRANKIE playfully chases GINGER. SHE catches him, and THEY embrace, smiling.)*

VICTOR: Frankie taught her Gingerbread Boy to dance.

*(FRANKIE and GINGER move from their embrace into a gentle waltz.)*

MARY: And they would dance together, feeling each other's heat.

SHEL: The air thick with the smells of love, ginger, and spice...

VICTOR: And Frankie would look into his amethyst eyes and feel whole,  
a completeness like she had never known.

*(FRANKIE and GINGER stop dancing and just hold one another, looking into each other's eyes. THEY kiss.)*

MARY: And her lips would taste of sugar after they kissed.

CHORUS: Love, love, love.

SHEL: Frankie is whole...

CHORUS: Love, love, love.

MARY: Frankie is real.

CHORUS: Love, love, love.

VICTOR: Frankie feels a happiness unknown to most of the human  
race, the joy of two halves of one soul uniting.

*(Beat.)*

CHORUS: Love. Love. Love.

*(CHORUS sighs happily in unison. THEY clap their hands. FRANKIE and GINGER exit, hand in hand. CHORUS watches them go. Beat. THEY look at the audience. THEY are suddenly apprehensive, almost as though THEY do not want to continue. THEY cough collectively. Look around. THEY look at each other. No one wants to go next.)*

MARY: *(meek)* Guys?

VICTOR and SHEL: Yeah?

MARY: Can we just stop? Can we just say “the end”?

*(VICTOR and SHEL look at her sadly. THEY slowly shake their heads, “no.” VICTOR sighs.)*

VICTOR: And when Frankie was at school, the Gingerbread Boy dutifully stayed at home, watching educational television to practice his speech.

MARY: Though when she was away...

SHEL: He felt like he was missing something.

MARY: And when she was away from him...

SHEL: She felt the same way.

VICTOR: And so like the little lamb...

CHORUS: He followed her to school one day.

*(CHORUS claps their hands together. The JOCKS, CHEERLEADERS, SKATER GIRL, KEVIN and SAMANTHA all enter, bringing on lockers if need be. THEY mill about, as though on break in the hallway. FRANKIE enters with her head up for once, with a smile on her face. As SHE walks by him, JOCK 1 sticks out a foot and trips her. FRANKIE falls, dropping her books. The STUDENTS in the hallway laugh. Suddenly, GINGER runs on, running gracefully. HE is dressed in a polo shirt and tan shorts. HE runs to the fallen FRANKIE, and gently helps her up. FRANKIE is shocked to see him, as are all the STUDENTS in the class. When GINGER speaks, HE speaks with complete innocence and sincerity at all times. His vocal patterns are still not complete, but HE does not sound stupid: just like someone still in the midst of learning English.)*

GINGER: You hurt?

FRANKIE: Ginger, what are you doing here?

GINGER: I watched you go. I came after. *(HE leans down and picks up FRANKIE's books and hands them to her.)* Books. *(HE smiles)*

*(FRANKIE takes his arm gently and tries to lead him away from the curious and suspicious gaze of the other STUDENTS.)*

FRANKIE: It's not safe for you here.

GINGER: Why not safe?

FRANKIE: Because you're good. You're sweet and kind and pure. You don't understand, but this place will hurt you. I only come here because I have to. And it's only bearable now because I know you

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are waiting for me when I come home. I think of your smile and the smell of ginger all day long.

GINGER: Hurt. You hurt here? I hurt here?

FRANKIE: Yes. The world isn't safe for my beautiful Ginger. *(beat)* I didn't make you for the world. I made you for me. You should go home and watch some TV, and I'll be back before you know it.

GINGER: When you go away, I feel... only half. We share soul. Let me stay. Let me stay with you.

FRANKIE: I'll try to explain it better later, but please...

*(CHEERLEADER 1 approaches FRANKIE and GINGER. SHE is followed by CHEERLEADER 2.)*

CHEERLEADER 1: Who's your friend, Skanky?

CHEERLEADER 2: And what's he doing with you?

GINGER: *(slowly and carefully)* My name is Ginger. Frankie shares soul with me.

*(CHEERLEADER 1 and CHEERLEADER 2 look at one another for a beat and then burst out laughing. GINGER is confused, so HE smiles.)*

FRANKIE: *(pulling GINGER with her)* Come with me, Ginger. Please.

*(SHE exits with GINGER. GINGER keeps looking back, staring at the PEOPLE who are staring at him. The hallway becomes a buzz of activity, EVERYONE forgetting their social norms to talk about the weird boy.)*

SKATER GIRL: Oh. Wow. I must be totally out of it.

JOCK 1: Who was that guy?

JOCK 2: What was he doing with her?

KEVIN: Hey, maybe she's a wild-child, if you know what I mean. You never know with the quiet ones.

*(KEVIN and the JOCKS laugh. The CHEERLEADERS approach them.)*

CHEERLEADER 1: There's something wrong with him.

CHEERLEADER 2: Legit! Like when he talks... it's like he's not all there.

JOCK 1: That explains it.

JOCK 2: The world makes sense again.

KEVIN: I don't know. Girls that ugly have their ways of showing gratitude. Maybe I should check her out.

CHEERLEADER 1: Gross. Pig.

SAMANTHA: *(to SKATER GIRL)* Did you see him? He's gorgeous.

SKATER GIRL: Eh.

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SAMANTHA: What do you mean, eh?

SKATER GIRL: He looks like a conformist. Like you.

SAMANTHA: I'm not a conformist. I just like people.

SKATER GIRL: Then why is this the first time you've ever volunteered to speak to me?

*(SAMANTHA can't think of an answer.)*

Because no one else in the hall will let you talk to them? You stoop to talk to the stoner? Or are you lookin' to buy?

SAMANTHA: I don't think you're a... *(beat)* Come on, you don't think he was gorgeous?

SKATER GIRL: All right. He was pretty fine.

SAMANTHA: How come I can't get a boy like that?

*(THEY exit. KARA enters with her bookbag. The CHEERLEADERS leave the JOCKS and run up to her. The JOCKS, KEVIN make their way offstage.)*

CHEERLEADER 1: OMG, Kara, you will never believe what just happened.

KARA: What is it?

CHEERLEADER 2: Frankie was just here...

CHEERLEADER 1: Let me tell it, ho.

CHEERLEADER 2: Don't you be callin' me a ho, you ho.

CHEERLEADER 1: Just shut up and let me...

KARA: *(a hint of concern)* What about Frankie?

CHEERLEADER 1: She was just here with a gorgeous guy.

KARA: Really? Who?

CHEERLEADER 1: No one from our school.

CHEERLEADER 2: He was like, not all there, though, or something.

CHEERLEADER 1: I don't know. Maybe he was foreign. He could have been like new to America or something.

CHEERLEADER 2: Hey, maybe he's like going to marry her just to get a Green Card or something, and then dump her!

CHEERLEADER 1: I bet that's it! Why else would he be with her?

KARA: *(soft)* Maybe he really likes her.

CHEERLEADER 1: What?

KARA: Nothing. So no one's ever seen him before?

CHEERLEADER 2: Nope.

CHEERLEADER 1: He said his name was Ginger. And what else?

*(beat)* Oh yeah, he said something stupid like, "Frankie share soul with me" or something.

*(This hits KARA for some reason. SHE is confused.)*

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KARA: Shares a soul?

CHEERLEADER 1: Isn't that weird? And isn't Ginger a girl's name? But I guess if he's from another country, maybe it's okay. Wait a minute!

KARA: What?

CHEERLEADER 1: Isn't it against the law to harbor illegal immigrants?

KARA: I'm sure he's not an illegal...

CHEERLEADER 1: I don't know, it just seems a little weird to me.

CHEERLEADER 2: What's weird is that we're all standing around talking about Frankie of all people. I mean, who would have thought she'd ever give us anything to talk about, other than how pathetic she is?

KARA: Where did they go?

CHEERLEADER 1: I don't know.

KARA: I'm going to find them.

CHEERLEADER 2: What do you care?

KARA: *(trying to brush it off)* I don't... I mean, you know, I just want to see what everyone's talking about. I always miss the good stuff.

CHEERLEADER 1: Well, the mail-order husband was nice to look at.  
*(SHE laughs)*

KARA: *(distracted)* See you later.

*(KARA exits in a rush. CHORUS claps their hands. CHEERLEADERS exit. CHORUS moves center stage. CHORUS claps their hands once more. The JOCKS enter and remove the lockers.)*

CHORUS: Act II, Scene 2.

VICTOR: Setting:

MARY: The Dungeon:

SHEL: A room that leads off downstairs from the cafeteria. A storage room that is off limits to students, but that the janitors sometimes leave unlocked accidentally.

CHORUS: Like today.

*(CHORUS claps their hands. FRANKIE and GINGER enter. CHORUS moves off to the side to observe.)*

FRANKIE: Okay. You wait here. I'm going to go to the nurse's office and tell her I'm sick, so I can get a pass to go home. Then we'll get out of here, okay?

GINGER: Did I do bad?

FRANKIE: No, beautiful Ginger, you didn't do anything bad.

GINGER: Why can't I stay?

FRANKIE: Listen, we're going to go home and have a great day together. I promise. Just you and me. Our own little world. That's

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how it should always be. Our own little world. It will be much better than staying here. Trust me.

GINGER: Please don't leave me here. Alone.

FRANKIE: It will just be for a minute.

GINGER: I don't understand.

*(FRANKIE sighs.)*

FRANKIE: I want you to always be Light. And they will make you dark, no matter how you try, they will make you dark, like they made me dark. Ginger, I was so dark and alone until I made you. I was disappearing, floating off into some kind of vacuum or void. Nothingness. I floated away there to try to protect myself, to keep the pain away. Me, Frankie, disappeared into a little ball inside myself, except when I was baking. I can't let it happen to you. Do you understand?

GINGER: I am trying.

FRANKIE: No, I don't even want you to understand. I don't want you to even recognize concepts like pain and cruelty and darkness. I want to protect you. Let me protect you. You have saved me, Ginger, so let me save you. Please.

GINGER: Why cruelty? Why darkness?

FRANKIE: *(soft)* I don't know. *(beat)* I don't know, Ginger. I don't know why. I just know that it is. And I won't let it destroy you. *(beat)* I promise you, I will be right back, okay? And we can run home, and we can dance. Wouldn't you like that?

GINGER: Yes.

FRANKIE: Good. Just stay here. If you hear anyone come in I want you to hide. I don't want their eyes on you. They don't deserve to see you. I'll be right back. Don't be scared.

GINGER: No scared.

FRANKIE: No scared. *(SHE kisses him on the cheek)* I'll be right back. I love you.

GINGER: Love you.

*(SHE starts to leave, HE gently stops her. HE places her hand on his heart.)*

No more darkness. You and me. Our soul is Light.

FRANKIE: Yes. Our soul is Light.

*(FRANKIE smiles at him, gently touches his face, and then turns and exits. GINGER watches her go. CHORUS observes him. GINGER feels alone and frightened. HE begins to pace. HE makes whimpering sounds like when HE was first created. HE stops.)*

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GINGER: No scared. Frankie come back soon. No scared.

*(There is the sound of footsteps.)*

No scared. No scared.

KARA: *(O.S.: a loud whisper)* Frankie? Are you in here? Frankie?

GINGER: *(to himself)* I hide.

*(GINGER looks around for a place to hide, but clearly doesn't know what to do. HE is frightened. KARA enters, looking around. GINGER turns and sees her. KARA sees him and is startled. SHE lets out a little yelp.)*

KARA: You scared me.

*(GINGER begins to shake a little. HE backs away.)*

Who are you?

*(GINGER says nothing, but begins to whimper.)*

What's the matter?

*(SHE takes a step toward him. HE backs away. SHE stops in her tracks.)*

It's all right, it's all right. I'm just looking for someone. Are you okay?

*(GINGER continues to shake a little, and whimper. KARA seems to recognize something in the way HE shakes.)*

Are you Ginger? Are you the boy who was with Frankie?

*(GINGER stops whimpering. HE looks at her, but still keeps his distance.)*

GINGER: *(soft)* My name is Ginger.

KARA: Hi Ginger. My name is Kara. Where's Frankie?

*(GINGER looks torn. HE doesn't want to say anything.)*

Ginger... it's all right. I'm a friend. I'm Frankie's friend.

GINGER: *(after a beat)* Frankie's friend?

KARA: That's right. Her secret friend.

GINGER: Frankie's coming back. She went to Nurse so we can go home.

KARA: Do you live with Frankie?

GINGER: Yes.

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KARA: You can come closer. I'm not going to hurt you.

*(GINGER takes a few steps closer to KARA.)*

Really, honest... you don't have to be scared. I'm nice. Really. You look so scared, and you don't have to be.

*(GINGER takes one step closer. KARA notices his smell.)*

Is that gingerbread?

GINGER: Yes. I am the Gingerbread Boy.

KARA: *(startled)* What did you say?

GINGER: *(simply)* I am the Gingerbread Boy.

KARA: Oh. *(beat)* That's what she calls you. A nickname.

GINGER: *(simply repeating)* Nick-name?

KARA: *(as if HE confirmed it.)* Right. *(beat)* How old are you? *(beat)* It's no big deal. Just curious. *(beat)* You look my age.

GINGER: Age.

KARA: Sixteen. I'm sixteen. *(beat)* You seem younger, though.

GINGER: *(innocently)* Almost new.

KARA: *(looking at him)* Yeah. *(beat)* Is it true you're not from here? I mean, I guess it must be if no one's ever seen you before.

*(GINGER smiles at her, not really understanding what SHE's saying.)*

So how do you know Frankie?

GINGER: Know Frankie?

KARA: Right.

*(GINGER thinks. His eyes light up, as HE does his best to explain.)*

GINGER: Frankie is with me. Here. *(HE points to his heart)* We share a soul.

KARA: Metaphorically. *(beat)* That's sweet. *(beat)* You metaphorically share a soul because you love her very much.

GINGER: Love her very much.

KARA: Tell me you meant metaphorically. You metaphorically share a soul.

GINGER: We share a soul.

KARA: How? *(beat)* How? I don't understand. *(beat. SHE looks at him. SHE suddenly shivers)* Is it cold in here? I have goosebumps. It shouldn't be. I don't feel cold, I guess. I just have goosebumps. Sorry.

*(KARA'S breathing becomes a little short and rapid.)*

So... tell me... when did you meet her?

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GINGER: When? You mean when did Frankie and I join?

KARA: Sure... okay.

GINGER: Frankie is my Goddess. She gave me life. She gave me half of her soul. Then I breathe, and we were one.

*(KARA looks at him a moment. SHE is fascinated, but frightened. SHE looks as though SHE may swoon.)*

KARA: You mean it feels that way. You are just saying things to be romantic. I mean, she couldn't actually give you life. *(beat. SHE is not steady on her feet)* Just tell me that you are speaking in romantic images, okay. Just tell me that. *(beat)* Because I don't want to think anything else.

GINGER: I only say true things. Frankie is my Goddess. She made me live.

KARA: Of course she did. *(SHE can't seem to catch her breath)* I don't know why I'm shaking. I don't know why.

GINGER: Are you scared?

KARA: *(whispers)* Almost all the time. *(almost pleading)* Where do you come from, Gingerbread Boy?

GINGER: Frankie.

KARA: What does that mean?

GINGER: *(simply)* Frankie made me.

KARA: *(soft, accepting)* Yes.

GINGER: She created me. She made my batter with her tears and blood. She gave me eyes. Light. Breath. Soul. Her fingers put me together. She sculpted me from dough and baked me to make me strong.

KARA: *(almost inaudible)* She made her creation live. *(louder, shaking her head)* No. You are not bread. I am not crazy.

GINGER: It is all right. I am Light. Frankie told me. I am Light. No dark.

KARA: *(to herself)* I cannot make my music live. *(beat)* Tell me you're lying.

GINGER: Lying? I don't know lying.

KARA: My goodness. Your eyes. They're so like hers. Only without the pain.

*(KARA closes her eyes for a moment, as though SHE might pass out.)*

I can't... I'm going to... please... I need air... I can't... too much...

GINGER: *(concerned)* You hurt?

KARA: I need to... get out... it's too much... I'm hot... it's warm... it's too much...

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*(KARA stumbles and almost falls. GINGER holds onto her to keep her from falling.)*

GINGER: I can't go. Frankie's coming back.

KARA: Please... help me... I need air... please. I'm... Frankie's secret friend. Help me. *(SHE faints into his arms)*

GINGER: No. Do not sleep. Wake up. *(beat)* Frankie? Where are you, Frankie? *(beat)* Wake up. You need air? Air? Wake up. *(HE looks around)*

*(GINGER looks torn and unsure. HE is holding onto her to keep her from falling. Finally, HE picks her up, like a groom holding a bride, and exits. CHORUS steps forward.)*

CHORUS: And just two minutes later, Frankie returned with a note from the nurse.

*(FRANKIE rushes on, looks around, and then freezes.)*

Fear.

VICTOR: A fear like no other.

SHEL: Where is her soul?

MARY: Where is her love?

CHORUS: Frankie feels alone. Again.

MARY: *(softly)* Just leave, Frankie. Don't stay here. Just go outside and find him. Just go outside and find him. Run.

SHEL: *(gently)* You know she can't hear you.

*(MARY nods sadly.)*

VICTOR: No more innocence.

*(There is a long pause as the members of the CHORUS look at one another. THEY press on, as it is what THEY must do, and THEY accept this fate with solidarity. THEY hold hands.)*

CHORUS: Frankie feels alone. *(beat)* But she is not.

*(CHORUS simultaneously takes a deep breath. THEY let go of each other's hands and clap. THEY step back into their observation space. FRANKIE unfreezes.)*

FRANKIE: *(calling out frantically)* Ginger!

*(KEVIN enters the space. Watches FRANKIE for a moment as SHE looks around.)*

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Ginger! You don't have to hide anymore! I'm back. Please, come out!

KEVIN: Hey.

*(FRANKIE spins around, startled. KEVIN puts up his hands.)*

Whoa, take it easy. I didn't mean to scare you.

FRANKIE: Where is he?!

KEVIN: Who?

FRANKIE: *(advancing)* What did you do to him?

KEVIN: Cool it, I didn't do anything. I saw you coming in here so I followed you.

FRANKIE: Why?

KEVIN: I don't know. *(beat. HE smiles)* It's not like you to break the rules. *(beat)* I gotta say, there's somethin' awfully different about you today. The new you. *(beat. HE smiles again, charming)* I like it.

FRANKIE: I have to go.

*(SHE starts to leave. KEVIN blithely steps in front of her, blocking her path.)*

KEVIN: Wait. Hold on.

FRANKIE: No, Kevin, I have to...

KEVIN: Just a minute. *(HE takes her arms, not rough, but to hold her in place)* Look, I only came in here to warn you. About your new friend.

FRANKIE: What? Is he all right?

KEVIN: Sure, I guess. I mean, why wouldn't he be? *(beat)* You know, I think it's great that you found someone. Everybody needs somebody, right?

*(FRANKIE says nothing)*

But you shouldn't have brought him here.

FRANKIE: Why?

KEVIN: Come on. You know this place better than anyone. *(beat. HE adopts an attitude of sincerity)* And yeah, I guess I've given you more trouble than just about anyone else here. And I'm sorry. Man, this place, you know? I'm supposed to be this certain guy, and if I'm not, then, well... then I'm the next target, right?

FRANKIE: Kevin, that doesn't matter right now. Have you seen Ginger? The boy I was with?

KEVIN: Everyone's sayin' that he's some foreigner, just with you until you marry him and he gets a Green Card.

FRANKIE: *(hint of fierceness)* They don't know anything!

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KEVIN: Easy, tiger. I'm just tellin' you what people are saying, I'm not saying I believe it. *(beat)* My guess is there's something about you the rest of us haven't seen. Underneath. *(HE looks at her, and FRANKIE, for the first time, becomes uncomfortable)* I just want to help you. Keep people from harassing you.

FRANKIE: Thanks, but I have to go.

*(FRANKIE steps around him and starts to leave. KEVIN quickly spins around cuts her off, and blocks her from leaving)*

KEVIN: Just wait. Didn't you hear me? I want to help you.

FRANKIE: You don't have to...

KEVIN: You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.

*(beat)*

FRANKIE: What do you mean?

*(KEVIN smiles. HE slowly turns his back to her.)*

KEVIN: Come on. You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours. *(beat)* Go on. Just scratch my back. *(beat)* Hey, you're in a hurry. Just scratch my back, and that will be that. *(beat)* Go on. Scratch it. *(a hint of a demand)* Scratch it.

*(FRANKIE looks at KEVIN, who still has his back turned. Slowly, SHE takes a step toward him. Very slowly, SHE lifts up her hand. SHE scratches his back for just a quick moment)*

FRANKIE: There. Now I really have to...

*(KEVIN spins around and takes her by the shoulders.)*

KEVIN: Now give me a little kiss...

*(FRANKIE is struggling, but KEVIN holds on to her.)*

FRANKIE: No!... let go of me!

KEVIN: Come on, I just want to see what's underneath that quiet girl!

*(HE keeps trying to kiss her, and SHE keeps shaking her head away.)*

FRANKIE: Let me go! I'll scream! I mean it.

KEVIN: Don't you want to try something American Made?

*(KEVIN continues to try to kiss her. FRANKIE continues to struggle. CHORUS watches, uncomfortable, from their observation space. Finally,*

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MARY can take it no more. SHE steps forward and claps her hands. KEVIN and FRANKIE freeze.)

MARY: (shouting as loudly as SHE can) DEUS EX MACHINA!

(VICTOR and SHEL step forward.)

SHEL: (softly) What are you doing, Mary?

MARY: Deus ex Machina.

VICTOR: But Mary...

(MARY turns to VICTOR. There are tears in her eyes.)

MARY: Please, Victor. For me. Please.

(VICTOR looks at SHEL. SHEL slowly nods.)

VICTOR: Okay, Mary. (beat) But we can't do this again. The story ends as it ends. Okay?

MARY: Yes.

(VICTOR takes the loud tie of MR. TORNE out of his pocket and puts it on. HE spits on his hands and tries to slick his hair back. When HE is through, HE walks past FRANKIE and KEVIN who are frozen. MARY and SHEL clap their hands. FRANKIE and KEVIN resume their scuffle. After a few seconds, VICTOR, as Mr. Torne runs up to them.)

VICTOR: What is going on here!?

(VICTOR grabs KEVIN and pulls him off of FRANKIE... FRANKIE steps back, in tears.)

KEVIN: Nothing's going on. We're just fooling around.

VICTOR: Are you all right, Frankie?

(FRANKIE tries to catch her breath. SHE looks at VICTOR who still restrains KEVIN. Her dress is torn. SHE runs off.)

Frankie! It's all right! He won't hurt you again!

KEVIN: This is stupid. I didn't do anything! She wanted to, I swear.

VICTOR: (still restraining him) Shut up. This is your last day at this school.

(MARY and SHEL clap. VICTOR releases KEVIN, who exits robotically. VICTOR removes his tie. HE joins MARY and SHEL center stage.)

MARY: (quiet) You were great, Victor.

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VICTOR: Thanks. *(Pause)* Okay. On we go.

*(CHORUS claps their hands.)*

CHORUS: Act II, Scene 3.

MARY: SETTING:

CHORUS: Behind the high school, in the staff parking lot.

SHEL: Where some students...

MARY: ...and faculty

VICTOR: ...sneak out for a smoke.

CHORUS: AT RISE:

*(CHORUS claps their hands. GINGER enters with KARA. KARA sits down, and GINGER looks over her, concerned. THEY freeze.)*

VICTOR: Ginger is looking over the unsteady Kara, who has come out of her fainting spell.

SHEL: And in moments, Frankie will find her Gingerbread Boy.

VICTOR: And later in this scene, Mary, once again...

SHEL: Will reprise her role as the most popular girl in school.

MARY: No.

VICTOR: Mary...

MARY: Please.

SHEL: *(gently)* The part you were born to play. *(beat)* The part that you must play.

MARY: The part that I must play.

*(VICTOR and SHEL each take one of MARY's hands, and squeeze it for encouragement. MARY takes a deep breath.)*

CHORUS: On we go!

*(CHORUS claps their hands, then move to the side to observe. GINGER and KARA unfreeze.)*

KARA: Thank you, Ginger, for helping me. I'm feeling better.

GINGER: You better? You wake up?

KARA: Yes. I'm awake. Help me stand up, I need to try to stand up.

*(GINGER helps her to stand. SHE is a bit unsteady, but catches herself, and is able to stand up straight.)*

There we go. I'm good. I'm all set. Sorry if I scared you, Ginger, but I'm okay now. Everything is fine.

GINGER: Good. I have to find Frankie.

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KARA: Yeah. But first, please listen to me. And try to understand.

Okay.

GINGER: Okay. I listen.

KARA: Good. Thank you. *(beat)* You shouldn't come back here. And please, don't tell anyone else what you told me. That Frankie made you. Don't tell anyone else. Please. Promise.

GINGER: But it is truth.

KARA: I know. I believe you. But it is not a truth that people should know. It is not a truth that people would understand.

GINGER: But...

KARA: Please. Just listen. *(beat)* People will hurt you, and they will hurt Frankie if they know.

GINGER: Why hurt?

KARA: Because people can be cruel. Especially to innocence.

GINGER: Why cruelty? Do you know? I ask Frankie, but she did not say. Why cruelty? Will you say?

KARA: *(after a beat)* Yes. I think I know. I will say. *(pause)* There is cruelty because people are scared. I really think it's that simple.

GINGER: Why scared?

KARA: That's a good question. I've thought about that a lot. At my old school. And now here. I ask myself that question. Why scared?

GINGER: *(soft)* Why scared?

KARA: Because. *(pause)* Because. *(beat)* Because we think we have to be. From the moment we can really start to think, we're taught that we have to be.

GINGER: But why?

KARA: *(More to herself)* It starts because they want to protect us, and teach us to protect ourselves. *(beat)* But as we grow, it becomes deeper. We don't just want to protect ourselves. We want to protect order. *(beat)* Society, I guess. *(beat)* So people become scared when they see something that is different. Because deep down, I think we're scared of someone finding the secret that we can't know. Of being happier. Of being free. *(beat)* And so fear turns into cruelty, indifference, complacency. Scorn. Status Quo. *(pause)* And maybe, I don't know, but I think that the thing we're most scared of is losing our fear and being free. I think we're scared of knowing what real freedom and happiness can be. Because if we did, if we really did, what else is there to know besides that? What is there that could compare with that feeling if we were to lose it? How could we live without getting it back if we lost it? And so, we tell ourselves it is better to be afraid, so that we will never know what it is to lose our fear. We gladly give away our innocence and wonder for the gift of ignorance and blindness. *(beat)* But, really, how should I know? I'm just like everyone else. *(beat)* I'm just a stupid teenager. *(beat)*

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*SHE looks at GINGER*) But if you stay away from here, you can be different. You and Frankie can be different. Do you understand?

GINGER: I feel.

KARA: Good. *(beat)* Go find Frankie. And run home. Fast as you can.

*(KARA hugs him. HE hugs her. FRANKIE enters and sees them in their embrace.)*

FRANKIE: What's going on?

*(KARA and GINGER separate and look at her. GINGER is happy to see her.)*

GINGER: Frankie!

KARA: *(noticing her dress)* What happened to you, Frankie? Are you okay?

FRANKIE: What are you doing with him?

KARA: What?

FRANKIE: *(advancing on her)* What are you doing with him?

KARA: No, I was just looking for you, and I found him in the dungeon.

GINGER: She fell to sleep.

FRANKIE: What are you talking about?

KARA: Listen: Ginger told me where he came from, and I fainted, so he brought me out here to get some air. We were just about to go find you.

FRANKIE: *(fierce, to KARA)* You stay away from him!

KARA: Frankie...

FRANKIE: You won't take him away from me!

KARA: Frankie, no. It's not like that... I'm your friend.

FRANKIE: No. You're my "secret friend." Isn't that right?

KARA: Please, just take Ginger home. Don't stay here. Something bad will happen.

*(VICTOR and SHEL clap their hands. KARA, FRANKIE, and GINGER freeze. VICTOR and SHEL gently motion MARY out. MARY closes her eyes for a count of three. SHE breathes deeply. SHE opens her eyes with a look of acceptance. SHE moves toward the frozen characters. VICTOR and SHEL clap. KARA, FRANKIE, and GINGER come to life. MARY approaches them as the most popular girl in school.)*

MARY: What do we have here? *(SHE looks at them)* Hi Kara. What are you doing here with Beauty and the Skank?

KARA: Why don't you go back inside? I'll talk to you later.

MARY: What? A girl can't come out for a smoke? *(SHE looks at GINGER)* So this is Frankie's new man that I've heard so much about.

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FRANKIE: Don't you look at him. You're not allowed to look at him!

MARY: What did you just say to me?

FRANKIE: You heard me.

MARY: Oh, I can't look at him?

KARA: Come on, let's get out of here.

MARY: I can't look at him? *(SHE walks closer to GINGER.)* Can I talk to him? *(to GINGER)* Hi cutie. *(to FRANKIE)* Can I touch him? *(SHE puts her hand on GINGER's chest)* You're a strong one aren't you? *(SHE sniffs)* And you smell good. Like... *(SHE sniffs again)*... gingerbread.

GINGER: I am the Gingerbread Boy.

MARY: *(flirtatious)* Ooooh. Can I be your sugar mamma?

*(FRANKIE charges MARY and pushes her away.)*

FRANKIE: Stay away from him!

MARY: Don't you ever put your hands on me!

*(SHE slaps FRANKIE. No theatricality this time. SHE slaps her hard. FRANKIE cries out, and steps back touching her face. GINGER springs into action immediately. There is a flash of anger in his eyes. HE grabs MARY by her shoulders and begins to shake her.)*

GINGER: NO! YOU DON'T HURT FRANKIE! *(HE shakes her)*

MARY: Let me go!

KARA: Ginger, stop!

GINGER: YOU DON'T HURT FRANKIE!

MARY: You're hurting me! Stop!

KARA: Frankie! Tell him to stop!

*(FRANKIE says nothing.)*

GINGER: NO ONE HURTS FRANKIE!

*(MARY screams.)*

FRANKIE: Okay, Ginger, that's enough. Stop.

*(GINGER continues to shake MARY. HE lifts her off the ground.)*

Okay. Stop! Ginger, No!

*(VICTOR AND SHEL clap their hands and step forward. FRANKIE, GINGER, AND KARA freeze. MARY is still lifted in the air.)*

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VICTOR and SHEL: And so it is: Protecting his Goddess, he released the most popular girl in school into the air.

*(VICTOR and SHEL take MARY out of GINGER's grasp and lower her.)*

And she fell backwards, twisting in mid-air...

*(MARY falls backward, while VICTOR and SHEL hold onto her. VICTOR and SHEL lower her gently to the stage floor. THEY stand again.)*

MARY: And as the most popular girl in school fell onto the pavement...

CHORUS: There was a snap as her arm broke, and she banged her head, knocking her unconscious.

*(VICTOR and SHEL stomp their feet in unison.)*

MARY: *(with tears)* And then there was only darkness.

*(VICTOR and SHEL move back to their observation spot and clap their hands. MARY closes her eyes. The OTHERS unfreeze)*

KARA: *(kneeling next to MARY)* Oh thank God, she's alive!

GINGER: *(quiet)* You don't hurt Frankie...

FRANKIE: We have to go! We have to go!

KARA: No! We have to get the nurse! Or call an ambulance! *(yelling out)* HELP! HELP!

FRANKIE: No! They'll never understand! They'll take him away from me! *(to GINGER)* We have to get out of here!

GINGER: Did I do bad?

FRANKIE: It's all right... it's all right... we have to go. They'll find us. They'll find us and they'll catch us. We have to run.

KARA: Frankie---

FRANKIE: We have to run... they'll catch us.

GINGER: They can't catch me. They can't catch me. *(HE picks FRANKIE up like a groom holding a bride. HE runs offstage.)*

KARA: *(yelling out)* HELP! HELP!

VICTOR: And then, responding to the screams, the school nurse arrived.

*(SHEL rushes into the scene as "the school nurse". SHE sees MARY there, lying unconscious.)*

SHEL: What happened?

KARA: We came out here to get out of class, and she fell and hit her head.

MARY: *(stirring, but not opening her eyes)* Gingerbread Boy...  
Gingerbread Boy hurt me.

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SHEL: What is she talking about?

KARA: I don't know... uh... she really hit her head hard.

SHEL: Do you have a cell?

*(KARA nods.)*

Quick-- call an ambulance.

*(KARA begins to comply, and then... VICTOR claps his hands. KARA freezes in place, then exits without emotion. SHEL and VICTOR help MARY to her feet. THEY embrace her. MARY is shaken but SHE is all right.)*

SHEL: Mary...?

MARY: I'm fine. *(beat)* Act II, scene 4.

*(VICTOR exits quickly and rolls out FRANKIE's baking table.)*

SHEL: Setting:

MARY: Frankie's kitchen.

VICTOR: At rise:

*(CHORUS claps and FRANKIE and GINGER enter and freeze.)*

CHORUS: Frankie and her Gingerbread Boy.

MARY: Alone.

SHEL: Together.

VICTOR: A world of two. Two halves of the same soul, united.

CHORUS: And Frankie knows what she must do.

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