

FRANKIE AND THE GINGERBREAD BOY

ONE ACT

By Bobby Keniston

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CHARACTERS

(5 males, 6 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.

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 pure 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.

TIME: Present

PLACE: Any high school

PROP / FURNITURE LIST

Lockers (if desired)

Books (FRANKIE)

Desk

Chairs to Represent Desks

Benches

Two Folding Chairs

File Folder (VICTOR)

Ugly Tie (VICTOR)

Large Baking Table

Sheet

*This play is dedicated to Tracy Sae
for being the perfect Ideal Reader,
and because, in its humble way,
this play is everything.
And I want to give her
Everything.
Thanks, Tracy.*

FRANKIE AND THE GINGERBREAD BOY (ONE-ACT VERSION)

by
Bobby Keniston

SCENE ONE

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

AT RISE: *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 labeled as CHORUS. THEY will jump into different roles as necessary. As the lights rise, THEY address the audience directly.*

CHORUS: And so it is:

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

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

MARY: An empty hallway of a high school.

CHORUS: A spot for education.

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

CHORUS: Sorry.

VICTOR: Education. If only.

SHEL: Perhaps not education, but training...

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

MARY: Society.

CHORUS: And we shall one day run the world.

(CHORUS pauses. 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 smears of baking flour on her face and outfit. Her hair is a tangled mess.

CHORUS claps their hands again: KEVIN, JOCKS 1 and 2, CHEERLEADERS 1 and 2 all enter and take their places in their cliques, loitering in the hall. Once in their places, THEY freeze in tableau, as does FRANKIE.)

VICTOR: Ready for an experiment?
MARY and SHEL: Ready!

(CHORUS claps their hands and the OTHERS come to life, chattering. FRANKIE starts to walk across the stage, but SHE trips and falls, dropping her books. EVERYONE starts to laugh at her.)

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. The CHEERLEADERS then walk by FRANKIE.)

CHEERLEADER 1: Uh... out of the way. Stupid.
CHEERLEADER 2: Freak.
CHEERLEADER 1 and 2: Stupid freak.

(THEY exit without helping her. FRANKIE quietly scoops up her books, stands and puts her head down. SHE starts to walk off. CHORUS claps. FRANKIE freezes in place.)

VICTOR: The results of our experiment...
CHORUS: Speak for themselves.
VICTOR: Because high school is...
CHORUS: ... real life.
SHEL: We keep quiet out of self-preservation...
MARY: We do not always help the weak...
CHORUS: And we do not trust the ones who walk alone.

(CHORUS regards FRANKIE for a moment, and begin to circle her.)

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

SHEL: Complete and uncut...

MARY: An honest-to-goodness...

CHORUS: Loner. *(THEY present her with a gesture)* Frankie!

FRANKIE: Look at those eyes filled with fear.

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

MARY: Look at her face smeared with flour.

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

MARY: She walks alone...

SHEL: Studies alone.

CHORUS: Every. Thing. Alone.

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

VICTOR: This is a story about Frankie.

MARY: The loser.

SHEL: The loner.

MARY: The girl who only has her books and her baking.

SHEL: Unnoticed.

VICTOR: Except for ridiculing.

MARY and SHEL: Here is a story we hope you'll enjoy.

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

CHORUS: All about Frankie and her Gingerbread Boy.

(CHORUS bows to the audience, then spring into action: if a row of lockers was used, CHORUS removes them with great energy and noise. As THEY do so, JOCK 1, JOCK 2, KEVIN, CHEERLEADER 1, CHEERLEADER 2, KARA, and FRANKIE all enter quickly with chairs that 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 for a moment, perhaps even adjust the way THEY sit. CHORUS then goes to the desk.)

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. KARA sits up straight, trying to make a good impression.)

Scene one:

MARY: Setting:

CHORUS: Mrs. Turtledove's Home Economics class.

SHEL: At rise:

MARY: The students, as always, are restless.

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

(SHEL takes a pair of glasses out of her pocket and puts them on. SHE messes up her hair. When finished, SHE stands behind the small desk.)

SHEL: Ready!

CHORUS: Show time!

(CHORUS claps. 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. The CHEERLEADERS babble and gossip loudly. Exaggerated pre-class chatter. SHEL, as Mrs. Turtledove, takes a whistle out of her pocket and blows. There is quiet.)

SHEL: *(As Mrs. Turtledove until otherwise noted)* We have a new student in class today, and I want you all to make her feel welcome! *(SHE scans the classroom then sees KARA and points at her)* There she is! Would you like to come up front and tell us about yourself?

KARA: Well... uh...

SHEL: Sure you would! Get on up here!

KARA: 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: Oooh, there's a lot of corn in Iowa!

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

(Uncomfortable pause. Finally:)

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

(No one does.)

Well, moving on then. You may sit Kara.

(KARA gratefully sits.)

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

CHEERLEADER 1: We like, learn so much from her.

CHEERLEADER 2: It's true. Legit.

SHEL: No. We're talking about bread baking.

JOCK 2: Come on! Martha Stewart! Martha Stewart! Martha Stewart!

(HE leads a chant that ALL but FRANKIE and KARA join in. Finally, SHEL blows her whistle.)

SHEL: That's enough! I've sent an entire class to the Principal's office before! Don't think I wouldn't do it again! *(beat)* Well, then, moving on. On the whole, I was not very pleased with your bread baking efforts from last class. But within this sea of mediocrity, one student accomplished the extraordinary. One student made the dough her canvas and created art. Frankie, why don't you stand up and tell us about your bread.

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

I know you don't like to address the class, Frankie. But, please. For me. Share with us.

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

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. We finally hear her voice, soft.)

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

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. Pretend no one is here. It's just you, alone in your kitchen. Tell us.

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

FRANKIE: I bake because I love it. When I bake, I feel my hands connected to the dough. *(SHE becomes a little louder)* I feel the dough squeezing between my fingers, and it is as though it is telling me what it needs. *(Getting louder, losing herself)* And I am creating something that in some small way can really effect people, feed people, maybe even save people... and I give the dough life, and everything else just disappears, there is only me and the dough, our own Universe, and I'm not alone, and I'm not alone. I bake and I am real, there is tangible proof of my existence. *(Her eyes are still closed. Soft:)* And I am not alone.

(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 at the class. THEY all sit silent, looking at her. SHEL wipes

away a tear. *Beat. The CLASS erupts in loud, mocking laughter. KARA is the only one who isn't laughing. FRANKIE looks at the class laughing at her. Her body begins to shake slightly. SHE cannot look away.*)

KEVIN: *(mocking mimicry)* "I'M NOT ALONE, I'M NOT ALONE!"

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

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, looking uncomfortable. FRANKIE is still shaking. SHEL puts an arm around her.)

I'm so sorry. But you're okay. You have nothing to be ashamed of. You are an angel, Frankie, believe me. You put your heart and soul into your baking, and when you do that, you give your creations life.

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

You can do great things. Remember that.

FRANKIE: Thank you, Mrs. Turtledove.

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

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

KARA: I kinda know what you mean, you know. *(Beat)* About everything else not mattering. I feel that way when I practice my violin. So, yeah... I thought what you said was pretty cool.

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

(KARA and FRANKIE look at one another and give each other small smiles. CHORUS claps their hands and move center stage. FRANKIE and KARA stand, pick up their chairs and exit.)

CHORUS: And so it is:

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

MARY: Scene two:

CHORUS: Setting:

VICTOR: The girl's locker room Ooooh-la-la!

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

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!

CHORUS: And on we go!

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

MARY: I can't believe that! You all got detention for laughing? It's like a natural response!

CHEERLEADER 1: I know.

CHEERLEADER 2: Legit.

MARY: That's like giving detention for burping!

CHEERLEADER 2: And burping is way worse than laughing!

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

MARY: 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...

CHEERLEADER 1 and 2: *(pointing dramatically at FRANKIE) HERS!*

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

MARY: Thanks for ruining the game tonight.

FRANKIE: I didn't...

MARY: Did I say you could talk? Who's going to cheer tonight? You?

(The CHEERLEADERS laugh.)

Well, cow? Are you going to cheer?

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

Grab her!

(CHEERLEADER 2 grabs FRANKIE, who does not struggle. SHE just accepts it.)

So, girls, why don't we play a little game of "Slap the Cow"?

CHEERLEADER 1 and 2: Slap the cow!!!

(CHEERLEADER 2 tightens her grip on FRANKIE. KARA looks on in horror, but does nothing. MARY and CHEERLEADER 1 line up. MARY steps toward the restrained FRANKIE and raises her hand. VICTOR

steps forward from his watching space. HE claps his hands together loudly. FRANKIE reacts as though SHE's been slapped. VICTOR steps back. MARY steps out of the way, lowering her hands as though SHE just slapped her. 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 a little cry of pain. SHEL steps back. The CHEERLEADERS and MARY laugh.)

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

CHEERLEADER 2: Someone hold her! I want to slap the cow!

KARA: No!

MARY: Oh, does the new girl have something to say? What is it, New Girl? You want to be the cow in round two?

KARA: *(trying a different attack)* No. She deserves what she got. But, listen, if you keep on hitting her, you're gonna leave marks, and then you'll get in big trouble. The cow isn't worth it! Look at her! She has to walk around all day with only her precious bread to talk to. Isn't that punishment enough?

(MARY and the CHEERLEADERS laugh.)

MARY: New Girl is right. Besides, we don't want our hands smelling like cow for the rest of the day, do we? Let's go, girls.

(The CHEERLEADERS exit. MARY joins VICTOR and SHEL who are watching the scene. SHE drops her "witch girl" persona. There is a silence between KARA and FRANKIE. FRANKIE sits on the bench, her head down. KARA feels guilty.)

KARA: I'm sorry. You didn't deserve that. And I didn't mean what I said. *(beat)* It's just that I'm new here, you know? I can't be... not like my old school... you know, I can't be the outcast, okay? *(beat)* I shouldn't care what they think, but... *(beat)* I just wanted to keep them from hitting you anymore. Please say you understand. Please?

FRANKIE: I understand. Thank you for stopping them.

KARA: I want to help you, but... well, could I be like your secret friend? I'll check up on you, but not really talk to you here at school...? That's so awful, I know, but...

FRANKIE: I get it. *(Beat. Softly)* Secret friend.

KARA: *(ashamed)* Yeah. Secret friend.

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

CHORUS: And so it is:

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

Scene three:

SHEL: Setting:

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

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

MARY: It's poor, abused Frankie. *(Long beat)* We left marks.

(MARY looks upset. SHEL and VICTOR silently comfort her a moment. SHE brightens.)

In this scene, Victor will play the part of Mr. Torne.

SHEL: That's going to be fun! Poor guy tries so hard to be hip, to connect by 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 react, disgusted. When VICTOR is finished, CHORUS claps their hands. FRANKIE enters and sits in the chair without the folder. There are marks where SHE was slapped. VICTOR sits in the opposite chair, holding the file folder. MARY and SHEL clap their hands. FRANKIE unfreezes. VICTOR, as Mr. Torne until otherwise notes, looks in the file, shakes his head sadly, and sets it aside. HE looks at FRANKIE a moment.)

VICTOR: Cough, cough. (*HE chuckles*) Just kidding. It's funny how people use devices like that when trying to prolong a potentially uncomfortable conversation. (*chuckles again*) Do you want to know why I called you in here, Franny?

FRANKIE: Actually, sir, my...

VICTOR: I called you here, Franny, because I saw you in the cafeteria. I saw your bruises. (*Pause*) Do you understand? I saw your bruises, Franny. (*pause*) Is there something you'd like to tell me?

FRANKIE: No.

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

VICTOR: Tell me about your home life, Franny.

FRANKIE: Sir?

VICTOR: You don't have to call me sir. 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. The respect in this office goes both ways. Call me Roger, okay. Or if you like, Rog.

FRANKIE: I'm sorry. But my name is Frankie. Not Franny.

(*VICTOR applauds.*)

VICTOR: Congratulations, Frankie! You passed my first test! The fact you were willing to speak up and correct me when I was using the wrong name shows that you are ready to communicate open and honestly! So, tell me: what are your parents like?

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

VICTOR: Call me Rog.

FRANKIE: Well, Rog... I don't know what to say. They go away a lot. When my Grandmother died, they inherited a great deal of money, and they use it to travel. They're away right now.

VICTOR: (*nodding in an exaggerated manner*) Uh-huh, uh-huh. Frankie, I'm going to put my cards right on the table. Do your parents hit you?

FRANKIE: No. They don't.

VICTOR: (*misguidedly joking*) You're telling me they don't hit you?

(FRANKIE shakes her head “no.”)

They never just smack you around a bit?

(FRANKIE shakes her head “no.”)

Never whale on you with a belt or an 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? If you didn't get the bruises at home, 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: Please let me help you, Frankie. *(Pause)* You don't deserve to be afraid. *(Pause)* Where did you get the bruises?

FRANKIE: I fell.

(Pause. VICTOR sighs.)

VICTOR: I understand. Would you do something for me? Something for yourself?

FRANKIE: What?

VICTOR: If you don't feel comfortable talking with me, that's okay. But talk to someone. Share your thoughts, your fears, your SOUL with someone.

FRANKIE: *(soft)* 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.)

Can I offer one more suggestion?

(FRANKIE stops, looks at him)

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

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

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

SHEL: "To share your soul." Those are the words that go tumbling through Frankie's mind.

VICTOR: And then thoughts connect...

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

CHORUS: You give your creations life.

(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 see them. CHORUS softly keeps repeating "You give your creations life. You share your soul." THEY repeat this at least three times, then FRANKIE stops in her tracks. CHORUS moves behind her.)

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

(FRANKIE, for the first time, smiles a genuine and excited smile. SHE rushes off. CHORUS breaks their pose.)

CHORUS: 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, bags of flour, etc. FRANKIE stands frozen in tableau behind it.)

Scene four:

MARY: Setting:

SHEL: Frankie's home, in her kitchen.

CHORUS: The kitchen where Frankie creates.

(CHORUS claps their hands. FRANKIE unfreezes. SHE takes a deep breath.)

FRANKIE: Finally. *(beat)* Finally. *(Slight pause)* This is crazy. *(Beat)*
No. No. It's not crazy. 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...

CHORUS: She set out to make herself a friend.

MARY: Someone to talk to.

SHEL: Someone to give her hope and companionship.

CHORUS: Forever.

VICTOR: She worked late into the night, sculpting the batter, creating a body...

MARY: Arms to hold her...

SHEL: Lips to whisper in her ear,

MARY: Lips to kiss...

VICTOR: To seal promises...

SHEL: And of course,

CHORUS: A heart to give her love.

(FRANKIE rolls the table on once more. SHE wears an apron that is covered with flour. Upon the table, under a white cloth, there is a body. It is GINGER, the Gingerbread Boy. CHORUS steps to the side and observes.)

FRANKIE: *(talking to the body)* 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)* I have felt the sting of being constantly on the verge of tears. 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, and that you will have a sensitive mind and a sympathetic heart to give me comfort and shelter. And within this mixture, I have given you drops of my own blood, so that our lovely veins will share the same precious cargo, and you shall be bound to me and never leave me.

(SHE gently 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 I have seen. You shall always reflect light into yourself and into me.

(SHE leans down and puts her mouth on GINGER's mouth and breathes into him. His chest rises, but HE does not move.)

I give you my breath, so you might live. Live. *(beat)* Live. *(SHE places her hands on his chest, where his heart should be. SHE closes her eyes.)* Take half of my soul into your body of bread, take this final ingredient so you might live. I give you the purest half of my soul, the half with still a trace of innocence and wonder remaining. I give you my soul. Live! Live!

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

(The lights flicker. CHORUS stops their chant. There is silence.

FRANKIE's eyes remain closed and her lips moved 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. GINGER's eyes dart around, confused, innocent. HE makes small whimpering sounds. FRANKIE immediately climbs up on the table and sits next to him. SHE takes his hand. HE whimpers, fidgets. SHE looks deep into his eyes.)

FRANKIE: Ssssh. You know me. Look at me. You know me. *(SHE holds his face in her hands)* You're part of me. You are me. *(pause)* You're beautiful.

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

FRANKIE: Yes. You... *(points to him)*... are... beautiful.

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

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

GINGER: *(still smiling)* Nnnnn-ohhh. Yee-oooh... *(touches her face)* ... bee-you-t-full.

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

GINGER: Yeee-oooooh. N-n-nawwt. Looooow-nah.

FRANKIE: Never again.

(FRANKIE slowly leans in and gives GINGER a small kiss on the mouth. SHE looks at him with such love, and HE returns the gaze with innocent wonder. CHORUS steps forward. THEY clap. FRANKIE and GINGER get off the table and exit, bringing the table with them.)

CHORUS: And so it is:

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

MARY: Heat. A gentle flame.

SHEL: Longing, passion, desire...

SHEL and MARY: 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.

SHEL: But how could we know?

CHORUS: We're only teenagers.

MARY: The Gingerbread Boy is alive!

(CHORUS claps their hands. FRANKIE and GINGER come out in the background. GINGER wears tan shorts and a polo shirt.)

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

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

MARY: And to walk.

(FRANKIE takes GINGER's hands and THEY take steps together slowly, 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 quickly and gracefully. FRANKIE watches him, proud.)

VICTOR: And can he run! 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. Their embrace turns quickly into FRANKIE teaching him to dance.)

VICTOR: Frankie taught her Gingerbread Boy to dance.

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

(FRANKIE and GINGER kiss.)

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

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, holding hands. CHORUS watches them go. THEY are suddenly apprehensive, like THEY don't want to continue. But THEY have to.)

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

MARY: Though when she was away, he felt like he was missing something.

SHEL: And when Frankie was away from him, 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. JOCKS 1 and 2, KEVIN, CHEERLEADERS 1 and 2 all enter, bringing on lockers if need be. THEY mill about, as though on break in the hallway. FRANKIE enters with her head held high for once, smiling. As SHE walks by, JOCK 1 holds out his foot and trips her. FRANKIE falls, dropping her books. The STUDENTS in the hallway laugh. Suddenly, GINGER runs on. HE runs to the fallen FRANKIE and gently helps her up. FRANKIE is shocked to see him, as is EVERYONE in the hallway. When GINGER speaks, it is with complete innocence. His vocal patterns are still not complete, but HE does not sound stupid: just like someone in the midst of learning English.)

GINGER: You hurt?

FRANKIE: Ginger, what are you doing here?

GINGER: I watched you go. I came after.

(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 sweet and kind and pure. This place will hurt you. I only come here because I have to. And it's only bearable now because I know you're waiting for me when I come home.

GINGER: You hurt here? I hurt here?

FRANKIE: Yes. The world isn't safe for my beautiful Ginger. I didn't make you for the world. I made you for me.

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

(CHEERLEADERS 1 and 2 approach FRANKIE and GINGER.)

CHEERLEADER 1: Who's your friend?

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

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

(CHEERLEADERS 1 and 2 look at each other for a moment 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.)

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... 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 appreciation.

CHEERLEADER 1: Gross. Pig.

(KEVIN and the JOCKS laugh and exit. KARA enters with her bookbag. The CHEERLEADERS go to her.)

CHEERLEADER 2: OMG, Kara, you will never believe what just happened.

KARA: What?

CHEERLEADER 1: Frankie was just here with some gorgeous guy.

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

CHEERLEADER 1: Maybe he was foreign.

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

KARA: So no one's ever seen him before?

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

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

(This hits KARA for some reason.)

KARA: Shares a soul? *(beat)* I'm going to find them.

CHEERLEADER 2: What do you care?

KARA: *(as though dismissing it)* I don't... not really. I just want to see what everyone's talking about. I always miss the good stuff.

CHEERLEADER 2: Well, the mail-order husband was nice to look at.

(KARA exits in a rush. CHORUS claps their hands. CHEERLEADERS exit. CHORUS moves center stage and clap again. JOCKS enter and remove lockers.)

CHORUS: Scene six:

MARY: Setting:

VICTOR: The dungeon.

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

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

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

GINGER: Why can't I stay?

FRANKIE: Listen, we're going to go home and have a great day together. Just you and me, our own little world. That's how it should always be.

GINGER: I don't understand.

FRANKIE: I want you to always be Light. And they will make you dark, no matter how you try, like they made me dark. I was so alone until I made you. I was disappearing, floating off into some kind of void of nothingness. I floated away to protect myself, to keep the pain away. I disappeared into a little ball inside of myself, except when I was baking. I can't let that happen to you. I don't even want you to understand concepts like pain and cruelty and darkness. You have saved me, Ginger. Let me save you from the world.

GINGER: Why cruelty? Why darkness?

FRANKIE: I don't know. *(beat)* I'll be right back, okay? And we can run home and we can dance. Wouldn't you like that?

GINGER: Yes.

FRANKIE: Good. If you hear anyone come in while I'm gone, just hide. They don't deserve to see you. I'll be right back. Don't be scared.

GINGER: No scared.

FRANKIE: No scared. I love you. We will always be light.

(SHE exits. GINGER watches her go. HE feels alone and frightened, and begins to whimper. HE paces.)

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

(There is a sound of footsteps.)

No scared. No scared.

KARA: *(offstage)* Frankie? Are you in there? Frankie?

GINGER: I hide.

(GINGER looks for a place to hide, but doesn't know what to do. HE whimpers. KARA enters, looking around. GINGER turns and sees her. KARA sees him and is startled. SHE yelps.)

KARA: You scared me.

(GINGER begins to shake a little)

Who are you? *(SHE takes a step toward him)* I'm just looking for someone. Are you okay?

(GINGER continues to shake and whimper. KARA recognizes 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 keeps his distance.)

GINGER: My name is Ginger.

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

(GINGER says nothing.)

It's okay. I'm a friend. I'm Frankie's friend.

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

KARA: Do you live with Frankie?

GINGER: Yes.

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

(GINGER steps closer. KARA notices his smell.)

Is that gingerbread?

GINGER: I am the Gingerbread Boy.

KARA: *(startled)* Is that what Frankie calls you? A nickname?

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

KARA: *(as though HE confirmed it)* Right. *(beat)* How do you know Frankie?

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

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

KARA: That's sweet. You mean that you metaphorically share a soul.

GINGER: We share a soul.

KARA: How? *(SHE suddenly shivers)* I have goosebumps. I must be cold. *(beat)* When did you and Frankie meet?

GINGER: 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 like SHE may swoon.)

KARA: You mean it feels that way. She couldn't actually give you life.

(beat) Just tell me that you're saying romantic things. I don't want to think anything else.

GINGER: I only say true things. Frankie made me live.

(KARA starts to have trouble catching her breath.)

KARA: Of course she did.

GINGER: 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: She made her creation live. *(beat)* No, you're not bread. I'm not crazy. *(beat)* I can't... breathe... I need air... it's too hot...

(KARA stumbles and almost falls. GINGER holds onto her to keep her from falling. SHE faints into his arms.)

GINGER: Do not sleep. *(beat)* Frankie, where are you? *(beat)* You need air? Wake up!

(HE looks around, torn. Finally, HE picks her up and exits. CHORUS steps forward.)

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

(FRANKIE rushes on, looks around.)

Fear.

VICTOR: A fear like no other.

MARY: Where is her soul?

SHEL: Where is her love?

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

(CHORUS steps to the side.)

FRANKIE: *(calling out frantically)* Ginger! You don't have to hide anymore! Come out! I'm back! We can go home! Please come out!

(KEVIN enters the space.)

KEVIN: Hey.

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

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

FRANKIE: 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. *(HE smiles)* It's not like you to break the rules. I gotta say, there's something different about you today. The new you. I like it.

FRANKIE: I have to go.

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

KEVIN: Just a minute. *(HE takes her arms, not rough, but to hold her in place)* I only came here to warn you. About your new friend. You shouldn't have brought him here.

FRANKIE: Why?

KEVIN: 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 anybody else here. I'm sorry. Man, this place, you know? I'm supposed to be this certain guy, and if I'm not... well, then I'm the next target, right? *(beat)* Everyone's saying that boy is just some foreigner, who'll only stay with you long enough to get a Green Card.

FRANKIE: *(Fierce)* They don't know anything!

KEVIN: Easy, tiger. Just tellin' you what people are saying, I'm not saying I believe it. My guess is there's something about you the rest of us haven't seen. Something underneath.

(HE looks at her, and FRANKIE, for the first time, becomes uncomfortable.)

I just want to help you. You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours.

FRANKIE: What do you mean?

KEVIN: Go on. *(HE turns his back to her)* 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's back is still turned. Slowly, SHE lifts up her hand and scratches his back for a quick moment. KEVIN wheels around and takes her by the shoulders.)

Now give me a little kiss.

(FRANKIE begins to struggle, but KEVIN holds onto her.)

FRANKIE: NO! LET ME GO!

KEVIN: Come on, Frankie! Don't you want to try something American Made?

(KEVIN continues to try to kiss her as SHE struggles. CHORUS watches, uncomfortable. MARY can't take it. 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: What are you doing, Mary?

MARY: Deus ex Machina.

VICTOR: But Mary...

MARY: Please, Victor. For me. Please.

(VICTOR looks at SHEL. SHE slowly nods.)

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

MARY: Okay.

(VICTOR takes out the loud tie of Mr. Torne from his pocket and puts it on. HE spits on his hands and tries to slick back his hair. When through, HE walks past KEVIN and FRANKIE who are still frozen, mid-struggle. MARY and SHEL clap their hands. FRANKIE and KEVIN resume their struggle. VICTOR, as Mr. Torne runs in.)

VICTOR: What's going on here!?

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

KEVIN: Nothing. 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. SHE runs off.)

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

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

VICTOR: 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: You were great, Victor.

VICTOR: Thanks. On we go.

CHORUS: Scene seven:

MARY: Setting:

CHORUS: Behind the school in the staff parking lot.

SHEL: At rise:

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

VICTOR: Ginger is looking over the unsteady Kara.

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. *(softly, to MARY)* The part you were born to play.

MARY: The part that I must play.

(VICTOR and SHEL each take one of MARY's hands, and squeeze it for encouragement. Then, CHORUS claps their hands, and stand to the side to observe. GINGER and KARA unfreeze.)

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

GINGER: You awake?

KARA: Yes. Help me stand up.

(GINGER does.)

Sorry if I scared you. I'm okay.

GINGER: I have to find Frankie.

KARA: Wait. Listen to me first.

(beat. GINGER waits.)

You shouldn't come back here. And don't tell anyone what you told me. That Frankie made you. Please. Promise.

GINGER: But it is truth.

KARA: I believe you. But it's not a truth people would understand.

People will hurt you and hurt Frankie if they know.

GINGER: But why?

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

GINGER: Why cruelty? I ask Frankie but she will not say. Will you say?

KARA: I think I know why. Because people are scared. It's that simple.

GINGER: Why scared?

KARA: 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. *(almost more to herself)* It starts because they want to protect us, teach us to protect ourselves. But as we grow, it becomes deeper. We want to protect order. *(beat)* Society. *(beat)* So people are scared when something is different, because, deep down, I think we're scared that they've found a secret that the rest of us can't know. Of being happier. Of being free. *(beat)* So fear turns to cruelty, indifference, complacency. Even scorn. *(beat)* I think the thing we're most scared of is losing our fear. We're scared of knowing what real freedom and happiness can be. Because if we knew, and then lost it, and how could we live without it. And so we tell ourselves it's better to be afraid, so that we never know what it will be like to lose our fear. We gladly give away our innocence and wonder in exchange for ignorance and blindness. *(beat)* But how should I know? I'm just a stupid teenager. *(beat)* But if you stay away from here, you and Frankie can be different. Do you understand?

GINGER: I feel.

KARA: Good. Go find Frankie and run home as fast as you can.

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