

NORMA'S REST

By
Jordan Morille

NORMA'S REST

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NORMA'S REST

Norma's Rest was originally produced at The Studio Theatre in San Marcos, TX by the Texas State University Department of Theatre and Dance.

Norma.....Ashely Hildreth
Tennessee.....Joseph Nicholson
Ferret.....Gracyn Lewins
Shae.....Jordan Marie Ford
Tilly.....Camillo Stone
Marshall.....Ryne Nardecchia

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CAST: 3 Women, 2 Men, 1 Non-Binary

NORMA	60s, African-American. Caretaker.
TENNESSEE	30s, Trans. Drug addict. Likes to cook.
SHAE	30s. Norma's daughter. Bright.
TILLY	40s. Caucasian. The biggest man you've ever seen.
FERRET	18. Vandal and thief.
MARSHALL	50s. Well-spoken and calculating.

TIME: Present Day.

SETTING: Norma's Rest – a sober living home near a lake in Mineola, Texas.

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ACT 1

The living room. A sofa sits in the center of the room with a recliner next to it; between one open doorway and another closed door.

NORMA sits in the recliner with a T.V. tray, holding a coffee mug and remote control. She intently watches the television in front of her, from which screams and other unpleasant sounds blare.

TENNESSEE enters through the open doorway wearing a cooking apron and carrying a fresh pot of coffee. She moves to Norma's mug and tops it off, glancing up at the television.

TENNESSEE. Little early for blood and guts isn't it?

NORMA. Whatchu' talkin' 'bout early? Almost eleven o'clock, girl.

TENNESSEE. How do you watch this trash?

NORMA. What I tell you 'bout callin' my stories trash?

TENNESSEE. Your stories? Norma, there's a man with knife-fingers and a burned face killing that poor boy.

NORMA. I can see that.

TENNESSEE. Crotchety old coot.

NORMA. Uppity lil' nag. *(They smile.)*

TENNESSEE. You hungry?

NORMA. Like a hostage.

TENNESSEE. How many you want?

NORMA. How many you think? *(Tennessee turns and exits. Norma laughs at the television. The other door opens and SHAE enters wearing workout clothes.)*

SHAE. You ready, Momma?

NORMA. For what?

SHAE. Power walking.

NORMA. What walkin'?

SHAE. Power. Walking.

NORMA. Since when you power walk?

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SHAE. Since your doctor's appointment yesterday. You need exercise.

NORMA. Got plenty a that.

SHAE. Gardening isn't exercise.

NORMA. Tell that to my back and fingers. (*Tennessee reenters with a plate of pancakes. She sets it on Norma's T.V. tray.*) Where's the syrup?

TENNESSEE. It's on there.

NORMA. Lot less than I'm used to.

TENNESSEE. Cutting back.

NORMA. What we cuttin' back for? Got plenty a' bottles in there, I seen 'em.

TENNESSEE. Didn't say *we*.

NORMA. What's this, power *eatin'*?

TENNESSEE. Norma- (*Norma holds her plate out to Tennessee.*)

NORMA. Try again, Ten. (*Tennessee takes the plate.*) I want that plate brown when you get back. (*Tennessee looks to Shae, turns and exits.*)

SHAE. We just care about you, Momma.

NORMA. Y'all jus' fussin' over me, what you doin'. I don't need all that. Got enough to worry 'bout round here as it is.

SHAE. Like what? (*Norma turns back to the television.*)

NORMA. Like if this girl here gonna' make it out alive. (*Shae turns to the television.*)

SHAE. Don't need to be watching this, either. (*Tennessee reenters with the syrup covered plate. She hands it to Norma.*)

NORMA. Better. Thank you.

TENNESSEE. And?

NORMA. And what? (*Tennessee stares at her.*) And I'm sorry for bein' bossy 'bout it.

TENNESSEE. Thank you. (*She moves to the sofa and sits.*)

NORMA. It's just...ain't nothin' need to change 'round here. I got what I got. Cancer's cancer. Syrup and Freddy Krueger ain't gonna' make it any worse. Matter a' fact. (*She eats.*) They make it better. (*To Shae.*) Now you mind power walkin' yourself away from the T.V., you blockin' it. (*TILLY enters with a stack of mail.*) And that must be Tilly with my mail. Come on with it, child. (*She holds her hand out as Tilly approaches her and gives*

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her the mail. She sifts through it.) Nope, nope, nope, nope, nope, and a magazine on...paper foldin'. I'll be.

SHAE. Origami.

NORMA. *(To Tilly)* What they think I need a magazine on paper foldin' for? *(Tilly shrugs.)* Didn't even know they made magazines on paper foldin'.

SHAE. It's called origami, Momma.

NORMA. It's called junk. *(She holds the mail out for Tilly, who takes it and looks at the magazine a bit before turning to leave.)* Thank you, Tilly.

SHAE. Wait a minute. *(Tilly stops. Shae walks to him, takes the mail, and rifles through it.)*

NORMA. Best ease up, girl. It's a felony goin' through other people's mail. *(Tilly chuckles, Shae glares at him.)*

SHAE. *(To Tilly.)* You can go. *(Tilly turns and exits with the magazine. She continues looking at the mail.)* Some of these might be important.

NORMA. They ain't.

SHAE. Don't know until you open them.

NORMA. I know plenty. Maybe why they sent me a paper foldin' book. Put all this junk mail to good use.

SHAE. See, this is what I'm talking about, Momma. You need to start taking things more seriously. Open your mail. Take every phone call-

NORMA. I ain't answerin' no phone when I'm eatin', gardenin', or watchin' my stories. Everyone who matters knows that and the ones that don't don't matter at all.

SHAE. Everyone matters, Momma. Especially when you're running a business.

NORMA. Business? It's a business I'm runnin'? *(To Tennessee)* Say, Ten, you clock in when you woke up this morning.

TENNESSEE. Nope.

NORMA. Best correct, then. I'm runnin' a business, dammit. And tell Tilly next time I see his Fee-fi-fo-fummin' self asleep on the job I'mma break a beanstalk over his head. *(To Shae.)* Ain't no business here, girl. This is a *home*. A sober living home. Understand?

SHAE. ...Just open your mail, Momma. Or I will. *(She sets the mail down on the T.V. tray.)* I want to get a good sense of what I may or may not be

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inheriting here. Now I'm either walking with you or jogging alone. You tell me.

NORMA. Best start joggin', then.

SHAE. Okay. Be back soon. *(She exits.)*

NORMA. Power walkin'. Girl's outside her mind thinkin' I'm about that noise.

TENNESSEE. I'll say.

NORMA. Don't be talkin' like you any different. Syrup police. *(FERRET enters, panicked and cradling something wrapped in a coat. Norma and Tennessee turn to her.)*

FERRET. I did something! Something bad!

NORMA. What you do?! *(Ferret sets the coat on the sofa next to Tennessee.)*

FERRET. I hit a dog. *(Tennessee springs up from the sofa.)*

TENNESSEE. *(Pointing to coat.)* There's a dog in that coat?!

FERRET. Yeah.

TENNESSEE. There's a dead dog in that Tess Giberson coat?

FERRET. Not dead. Yet. But I...I don't know what to do! Ohmygod, ohmygod.

NORMA. *(To Tennessee.)* Run get Tilly.

TENNESSEE. Okay. *(She exits. Norma moves to Ferret and holds her close.)*

NORMA. Shhh. S'okay, baby.

FERRET. I'm a terrible person.

NORMA. Nah you ain't. These things happen.

FERRET. It just ran right out in front of me. I...there wasn't anything I could do.

NORMA. I know.

FERRET. I didn't know what else to do so bringing it back here just-

NORMA. S'fine. Hey... *(She lifts Ferret's chin.)* You did the right thing.

FERRET. Really?

NORMA. Yeah. You get my tickets? *(Ferret reaches into her pocket and removes a small stack of scratch-off lottery tickets. She hands them to Norma. Tennessee reenters with Tilly following.)* Tilly, you be a peach and take that coat to the back. *(Tilly nods and goes to the sofa. He picks up the*

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dog in the coat, looks down at it and frowns a bit. He looks at Norma.) Go on, now. (Tilly exits.)

TENNESSEE. *(To Ferret.)* Why don't you sit down, darlin'. Can I get you something to eat?

FERRET. No. *(She sits on the sofa and looks at the T.V.)* Nightmare on Elm Street?

NORMA. Part three.

FERRET. Best one.

NORMA. Yup.

TENNESSEE. *(To Ferret.)* You shakin' like a dog crappin' razor blades. *(Norma and Ferret look at her.)* Sorry, I mean a shirt in a hurricane.

NORMA. Go and get her a blanket or somethin'. *(Tennessee exits.)*

FERRET. I've never killed anything before.

NORMA. You ain't kill it.

FERRET. What if that was someone's pet?

NORMA. Then it's on them. *(She sits in the recliner.)* Folks gotta' handle what's theirs. *(They watch the T.V. Tennessee returns with a blanket and drapes it over Ferret's shoulders.)*

TENNESSEE. Think we could change it now, Norma? All this gory stuff might not be best for-

FERRET. No it's fine. I like it. *(She turns and vomits.)*

TENNESSEE. Okay, okay. *(She helps Ferret to her feet.)* Let's just go in to your room for a bit. Settle down in your bed an all.

FERRET. Okay. *(Tennessee leads her out of the room.)* Sorry, Norma.

NORMA. Berber carpet, baby. That mess'll wash right out...after you clean it. *(Tennessee and Ferret exit.)* Poor thing. *(She continues watching T.V. Shae reenters.)* Short jog.

SHAE. First day. Why's my front bumper all smashed in?!

NORMA. Ferret hit a dog.

SHAE. With my car?!

NORMA. Wasn't mine.

SHAE. She drove my car?!

NORMA. Yeah.

SHAE. Why?

NORMA. Was blockin' mine.

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SHAE. Momma, why are you letting these people drive my car?

NORMA. These people? *(She stands.)* Lemme' tell you somethin': so long as you stayin' here, you are these people. And these people drive cars and these people have accidents just like everybody else. This can get fixed.

SHAE. I don't like that girl driving my car. Not with her history.

NORMA. History don't mean a thing here.

SHAE. I keep valuable things in there.

NORMA. Like coats?

SHAE. Yes. Matter of fact, I have a Tess Giberson in the trunk.

NORMA. Not no more. She wrapped the dog in it before she brought it inside.

SHAE. She brought a dead dog in here?! Wrapped in my Giberson?!

NORMA. Ain't dead yet. Tilly's lookin' after it.

SHAE. Oh, that's rich. Have the Neo-Nazi bring a dog back to life in my coat.

NORMA. That's the last time you say that Nazi crap around here, got me? *(She takes her plate of pancakes and turns to exit.)*

SHAE. Where're you going?

NORMA. See if that dog likes pancakes. Tennessee's batter's a common cure-all. Got Pete Smalls' number on the fridge. He'll fix your car right up. *(She exits. Shae lets out an angry sigh and turns to the mail stack on the T.V. tray. She takes it and rifles through it some more, stopping on one. She turns to the direction Norma left and opens the envelope. She reads the letter. She sits in the recliner.)*

SHAE. Goddammit, Momma. *(She looks up at the T.V., takes the remote control, and turns it off.)* Goddammit. *(Ferret enters, spray bottle and rag in hand.)*

FERRET. Why'd you turn it off?

SHAE. Leave me alone.

FERRET. Fine. *(She walks past Shae, picks up the remote, turns the television back on, and goes to clean the carpet. Shae flips the television back off.)* Hey! That's the best part!

SHAE. I'm not watching this crap right now.

FERRET. So leave.

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SHAE. Why don't you- *(She notices the spot on the carpet.)* What the hell is that?

FERRET. My puke. Car accidents make me vomit. *(Tennessee enters as Shae gets up and storms out of the room.)*

TENNESSEE. What's wrong with her?

FERRET. What isn't wrong with her?

TENNESSEE. Glass a' tea? Fresh batch made this mornin'. *(She heads for the kitchen.)*

FERRET. I can't get it out of my head. *(Tennessee stops.)* I keep seeing that dog...writhing around on the pavement.

TENNESSEE. I know, sugar. This one time I hit a bird. Just flew right into my windshield like a suicide bomber. It was awful.

FERRET. A bird? How is that the same thing? Birds are like fish they don't, like, do anything.

TENNESSEE. It was a very large bird. My empathy levels were off the charts. I was...indisposed at that moment.

FERRET. Indisposed?

TENNESSEE. Fancy word for high, darlin'. I was very, very high. What if it wasn't a bird at all? What if, in my indisposed state, what I thought was a bird was actually a human?

FERRET. Can heroin do that? Make you think people are birds?

TENNESSEE. Not in that way, no. I'm just tryin' to...sympathize I guess, I dunno'.

FERRET. Think Tilly'll be able to...you know?

TENNESSEE. Bring the dog back to life? *(Ferret stands.)*

FERRET. It's not dead, don't say that! It's not dead!

TENNESSEE. Easy, tiger-lily. I know. I'm sorry. If anyone can help that dog, it's Tilly. Did all that volunteerin' at the animal facility.

FERRET. It was a dog kennel and he picked up shit.

TENNESSEE. Even so. The man knows more about the great unwashed than anybody else around here.

FERRET. Don't call it that.

TENNESSEE. What do you want to call it, sugar?

FERRET. I dunno'. *(She moves to the couch and sits.)* Don't know if it's a boy or a girl dog, so...

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TENNESSEE. That don't matter. I know plenty of men with women names and women with men's. Names ain't nothin' but letters nowadays.

FERRET. And what's Tennessee? A man's name or a woman's?

TENNESSEE. ...It's my name.

FERRET. And what are you?

TENNESSEE. I'm...I'm very sorry about your dog. (*Ferret smiles.*)
What?

FERRET. You called the dog 'mine'. I've never had a dog before.

TENNESSEE. No way, never? (*Ferret shakes her head.*) Cat? (*Ferret shakes her head.*) Gerbil?

FERRET. No.

TENNESSEE. Hell, a fish?

FERRET. Nope.

TENNESSEE. Eighteen years young and you ain't ever had a pet?

FERRET. Miss Haddie wouldn't let any of us have pets. She was allergic to fur, I think. I heard something about one of the boys, before I got there, had a turtle. Found it outside or something. But he got adopted and his new parents didn't like the turtle so it stayed behind.

TENNESSEE. What happened to the turtle?

FERRET. Miss Haddie killed it. Stepped on it when she was doing laundry one day. Made all the kids really sad and angry. Guess she thought looking after all those kids was enough trouble and pets just...complicated things. But I wasn't there yet so I dunno'. You have any pets growing up?

TENNESSEE. Lots. My mother had a bunch of show dogs. Used to travel all over with 'em for competitions and such. They were pretty but that's about it. Wasn't allowed to play with 'em.

FERRET. Why not?

TENNESSEE. Because 'kids make things dirty'. I don't even remember none of their names. But there was Peaches.

FERRET. Peaches?

TENNESSEE. Little ole poodle I had. Convinced my folks to let me keep her from our neighbors who bred 'em all the time. But she...left us.

FERRET. Sorry.

TENNESSEE. Years ago.

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FERRET. My boyfriend's cat died two weeks ago but I hate cats so I didn't really care.

TENNESSEE. Your what now?

FERRET. ...Boyfriend.

TENNESSEE. Since when do you have a boyfriend?

FERRET. Been going out almost a month.

TENNESSEE. What's his name?

FERRET. Why? *(Tennessee glares at her.)* Avery.

TENNESSEE. Avery Collins?

FERRET. No.

TENNESSEE. From Duke's market?

FERRET. No.

TENNESSEE. Got fired for lifting twelve packs of Dr. Pepper?

FERRET. No. *(She stares.)* And so what if it was? Doesn't make him a bad guy.

TENNESSEE. Hey, I ain't trying to argue against one's character, honey. This is a glass house we live in. it's just-

FERRET. Just what?

TENNESSEE. You being courted by someone who does that sorta'-

FERRET. I know that. You think dogs and turtles have a place to go when they die?

TENNESSEE. I like to think so.

FERRET. Like Heaven?

TENNESSEE. Ferret, I...I don't know if there is such a place.

FERRET. Do you believe in God?

TENNESSEE. I don't know, sweet girl. I...I think it's a lot easier for me to speak on what I don't believe.

FERRET. And what's that?

TENNESSEE. I don't believe in judgement after death. I think we suffer enough in life for the bad things we do. And those who haven't suffered don't deserve an eternity of peace just because they choose to follow rules from a book.

FERRET. Oh. *(Tennessee moves to Ferret and sits on the couch beside her.)*

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TENNESSEE. Hey, I'm not saying we're all gonna' be worm food or anything, I just...look, I'm not the best to be talkin' about all this death and life stuff.

FERRET. Obviously.

TENNESSEE. But...that turtle, and Peaches, and that dog in there they're different. They don't...hate like we do. If there is a place like Heaven, it's full of those who don't even know the meaning of the word. But none a' that matters, 'cause that dog ain't gonna' die.

FERRET. Pickles.

TENNESSEE. What?

FERRET. That's the dog's name. Pickles.

TENNESSEE. Why Pickles?

FERRET. Because it sounds like peaches and pickles are green like turtles.

TENNESSEE. It's perfect sugar. *(She places and arm over Ferret. Shae enters, holding a sheet of paper. The girls turn to her.)*

SHAE. *(To Tennessee.)* Out. *(Tennessee stands.)*

TENNESSEE. Now hold on a minute...

SHAE. This doesn't concern you.

TENNESSEE. What doesn't concern me?

FERRET. It's fine. *(Tennessee looks at Ferret, then back to Shae.)*

TENNESSEE. I'm gonna' go brew some tea. *(She moves past Shae, toward the door, and exits.)*

FERRET. What's up? *(Shae moves to her and hands her the paper. She reads it.)* What's this?

SHAE. What you owe me.

FERRET. Six-hundred dollars?!

SHAE. Six-hundred and twelve dollars.

FERRET. Bullshit, I don't owe you anything. *(She reads the paper again.)* You wrote this? What is this, some made up number?

SHAE. Called the mechanic. Gave me a quote. *(Ferret drops the paper.)*

FERRET. It was an accident.

SHAE. An accident that wouldn't have happened if you hadn't stolen my car. *(Ferret stands.)*

FERRET. I borrowed it.

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SHAE. You screwed up, Ferret. You need to learn to pay for your mistakes.

FERRET. I'm paying for them enough. I don't need to add a mechanic bill to the list.

SHAE. I'm paying the bill but you're gonna' pay me back. I won't expect it all at once. We can work up some kind of payment plan.

FERRET. Payment plan? What are you, the fucking credit union?

SHAE. Watch how you talk to me.

FERRET. I don't have to watch shit I'll talk to you however the fuck I want. You don't mean anything to me. You don't even belong here.

SHAE. I'm here because of my mother, you know that.

FERRET. If you're here for Norma, go be with Norma. You and me don't even have to say two words to each other. You don't know anything about me.

SHAE. I know your past. Your record.

FERRET. So you looked through my files that doesn't make us friends.

SHAE. I'm not trying to be your friend.

FERRET. Then what are you trying to be? A mentor? You hounding me for money as way to, what, teach me values and responsibility? Bet that's what you told all your friends at Yale, huh? Your writer friends?

SHAE. What?

FERRET. "I'm gonna' take some time off to go teach and guide all those poor low-lifes the ways of the world. Might even get a good story out of it".

SHAE. I didn't take time off, I left. Left to take care of this place and my dying mother. I'll forgive you if you don't understand that concept?

FERRET. What's that mean?

SHAE. Look, I'm sorry.

FERRET. What, that I don't understand what it's like to have a dying mother, or a mother period?

SHAE. I didn't mean that.

FERRET. You meant something. I guess I'm just too dumb to figure out what it was. High-school drop-out, but you knew that already because you read my files so you know everything about me. You calling out how

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shitty my life is and how I don't know what it's like to have a mother, is that part of me paying for my screw-ups?

SHAE. ...Just get me the money when you can. *(She turns to leave. Ferret picks up*

the paper and rips it in half. Shae turns back.) Ripping it up doesn't do anything, it's just an invoice.

FERRET. I know, but it felt good.

SHAE. You're gonna' pay me that money. Every cent.

FERRET. And if I don't?

SHAE. I'll handle it accordingly?

FERRET. Gonna' kick me out?

SHAE. I'll handle it accordingly.

FERRET. What's wrong with handling it right now? *(She moves close to Shae.)* Fuck your money. Fuck your car. Fuck you.

SHAE. ...Is that alcohol on your breath? *(Ferret backs away.)*

FERRET. No.

SHAE. Mm-hm. She goes for Ferret's bag.

FERRET. Hey! Stay out my shit! *(She moves to Shae who blocks her with her hand as she opens the bag.)* Stop it! *(Ferret hits Shae with flailing arms. Shae fends her off and lifts a whiskey bottle out of the bag.)*

SHAE. Whiskey? Pegged you for a rum kinda' girl.

FERRET. That's not mine.

SHAE. Used to say the same thing when I got caught.

FERRET. You can't prove anything.

SHAE. It's a halfway house with three residents. I don't need to get all C.S.I here. But I do need to add bag inspections to the list.

FERRET. What list?

SHAE. You're gonna' pay me back.

FERRET. Or what?

SHAE. You're gonna' get kicked out. My mother won't stand for this.

FERRET. You're blackmailing me.

SHAE. No, I'm guiding you.

FERRET. I have enough going on right now.

SHAE. Right. Killing a dog with a stolen car.

FERRET. Pickles isn't dead!

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SHAE. Pickles?

FERRET. Tilly's making sure of that. He used to work at an animal place.

SHAE. Trusting a life with that man. What could go wrong?

FERRET. What's your problem with Tilly?

SHAE. I don't have a problem with Tilly. Tilly has a problem with me.

FERRET. He's not like that anymore.

SHAE. Just like you don't steal or borrow anymore, right? I have a lot going on too, you know. My mom's dying of cancer and no one here seems to care about it. Too busy stealing cars and hiding bottles. After all she's done for you people, this is how you pay her back?

FERRET. We love Norma.

SHAE. Got a funny way of showing it. Six-hundred and twelve dollars or you're gone. *(Tennessee enters. The girls turn to her.)*

TENNESSEE. Ferret... *(Tilly enters.)*

FERRET. What?

TENNESSEE. It's Pickles.

FERRET. *(To Tilly.)* What happened? *(Tilly looks at Ferret, shakes his head. Ferret cries and collapses into Tilly's arms.)*

TENNESSEE. I'm so sorry, baby. *(She looks at Shae and notices the bottle.)* What're you doing with that?

SHAE. It's...it's not mine. *(She exits.)*

TENNESSEE. *(To Ferret.)* It's not your fault, darlin'.

FERRET. Then whose is it?

TENNESSEE. Sometimes it's nobody's. That's how mistakes work.

FERRET. What do we do now?

TENNESSEE. We have a funeral. *(Tilly releases Ferret. He looks at her a moment, wipes his eyes, and exits.)*

FERRET. Norma gonna' be okay with that?

TENNESSEE. Of course. You got any black dresses?

FERRET. Yeah, lots.

TENNESSEE. That ain't all cut up and stitched? Any elegant black dresses? *(Ferret shakes her head.)* Then we'll have to go upstairs and rectify that. *(She takes Ferret's hand.)* Got plenty of dresses that don't fit me no more.

FERRET. Okay.

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TENNESSEE. And afterwords you're gonna' tell me why Shae left here with a bottle of whiskey. *(Ferret lowers her head.)*

FERRET. Goddammit. *(Norma enters carrying a newspaper, small notepad, pen, and Encyclopedia.)*

NORMA. Clean that mess up, Ferret?

TENNESSEE. *(To Norma.)* Dog died.

NORMA. What's that got to do with the carpet?

FERRET. I did.

NORMA. Lemme' see. *(She moves near the spot on the carpet and looks down.)* That'll do. *(She moves to the chair and sits, opening the Encyclopedia and newspaper on her lap.)*

TENNESSEE. We're wanting to have a funeral.

NORMA. For the dog?

TENNESSEE. Mhm.

NORMA. Today?

TENNESSEE. That okay with you?

NORMA. I gotta' be there?

TENNESSEE. Yes.

NORMA. I need to say anything?

TENNESSEE. No.

NORMA. Buy anything?

TENNESSEE. No.

NORMA. Invite anybody?

TENNESSEE. No.

NORMA. Fine with me.

TENNESSEE. Good, thank you. I'm takin' Ferret up for a dress.

NORMA. You ain't say nothin' 'bout no dress.

TENNESSEE. It's a funeral, Norma, what you think you were gonna' wear?

NORMA. My house, I'll wear what I damn well want. *(Stares.)* I'll wear a dress.

TENNESSEE. Much obliged. Come on now, Ferret. *(She and Ferret exit. Norma flips a few pages of the Encyclopedia then looks at the newspaper.)* Hey, now. *(She puts her pen to the notepad.)* Yeah, that works. *(She puts*

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her pen to the newspaper.) Ha, I see you thirty-three down. *(She sets the pen down. Shae enters, open envelope in hand.)*

SHAE. Momma, we need to talk.

NORMA. Not unless you know a nine-letter word for tired and weakened. Got a V in it.

SHAE. This is serious.

NORMA. I know. I don't get this here crossword done by the end of the day I lose my streak.

SHAE. Crosswords?

NORMA. What else? *(Shae approaches her, holding out the envelope.)*

SHAE. You know what this is? *(Norma looks at the envelopes, then back to her crossword.)*

NORMA. ...Run and get me the number five Britannica, please.

SHAE. Momma-

NORMA. Now. Whatever's in the envelope can wait. You can wait.

SHAE. Fine. I'd like to take a look at the books.

NORMA. Britannicas?

SHAE. Finances. Mortgage. Taxes. All that.

NORMA. They somewhere.

SHAE. Where?

NORMA. In a drawer someplace, or cupboard. Box maybe, hell I dunno' ask Tennessee.

SHAE. Where is he?

NORMA. *She's* upstairs. In her room, best not bother 'em now.

SHAE. Them?

NORMA. Her and Ferret. Getting' funeral dresses.

SHAE. Funeral dresses for what?

NORMA. ...Funeral. Ferret wanted one. She's real broke up about this whole dog thing. She's a special one.

SHAE. Damn thief, what she is.

NORMA. Watch it.

SHAE. Cost me six-hundred at the shop.

NORMA. She didn't cost you nothin'.

SHAE. She was driving.

NORMA. Drivin' the car, not the dog.

NORMA'S REST

SHAE. Driving my car.

NORMA. Lemme' tell you somethin'. Before you take a look at whichever books and thinkin' 'bout whatever's gonna' happen around here in the future you need to get rid of that word right there.

SHAE. What word?

NORMA. *My. Mine.* All that. 'Round here it's Our. Us. We. That's the first thing.

SHAE. Okay.

NORMA. Okay, nothin' That's fact. Cold and hard, you ain't ever gonna' figure up in no book. You understand me?

SHAE. Yes.

NORMA. Good. Now where do I stand on that number five? *(Shae turns and exits. Tilly enters. He moves to the couch and sits; lets out a massive sigh.)* There, now. You done all you could. It ain't up to us. Hardly anything is. *(Tilly nods.)* Gonna' have a funeral for it. Pay our respects. Ten's makin' a big ole thing out of it. Sayin' we need to dress nice and all. Still got that coat I bought you? The one you wear on interviews? *(Tilly nods.)* That'll do. And find somethin' to put the body in. We gonna' have a funeral, gonna' have it right. *(Tilly stands and moves to Norma, placing a hand on her shoulder. She reaches up and takes it.)* I'm sorry too, baby. *(Shae enters.)*

SHAE. Momma, there's a man here for you.

NORMA. *(She lets go of Tilly's hand.)* What kinda' man?

SHAE. Pastor. Says he knows you.

NORMA. All of Mineola knows me, child. That don't mean diddly. Getting' me all excited 'bout a gentleman caller.

SHAE. Gentleman caller, Momma? Really?

NORMA. Booty call. That better?

SHAE. Momma- *(Tilly chuckles, Shae glares at him and he exits.)*

NORMA. Relax, girl. Tell him to leave.

SHAE. Why?

NORMA. Not welcome here.

SHAE. He's a man of the church. Can't just tell him to leave.

NORMA. He ain't a man a' nothin'. This my house and I don't want no church people in it.

NORMA'S REST

SHAE. He already is.

NORMA. What?

SHAE. Momma, you can't be up here playing hermit all day turning away people.

NORMA. I ain't playin' nothin'. I welcome all sorts of folk in these walls but-

SHAE. But what? What did the church ever do to you?

NORMA. Nothin' to me personally.

SHAE. He came her for a reason and I don't think that reason deserves your attitude.

NORMA. Watch it, girl. I may be sick as hell and old as dirt but I'm still your momma. Still runnin' things around here.

SHAE. Doesn't mean you can't take a little time for this man. *(Norma sets the newspaper down.)* You want to talk to the pastor now?

NORMA. I don't but...seein' as how he already in here I ain't got much of a choice. You can send him to me though, I ain't movin'.

SHAE. Okay. *(Shae exits. Norma picks up the newspaper.)*

NORMA. Lot to learn, that girl. *(Shae reenters with Pastor MARSHALL who holds a near-empty glass of tea.)*

SHAE. Here he is, Momma.

MARSHALL. And a blessed afternoon to you, Miss Norma. *(Norma looks up at him. She stands quick.)*

NORMA. Get out.

SHAE. Momma-

NORMA. Leave, else you feel my blessed foot up your holy ass.

SHAE. Momma, stop.

NORMA. You ain't say it was *this* man from the church.

SHAE. You know him, then?

NORMA. *(To Marshall.)* You best get up on out a' here. You know good and damn well you ain't welcome.

SHAE. Momma-

MARSHALL. This'll only take a moment.

NORMA. That's a moment too long.

SHAE. Get you some more tea, Pastor?

NORMA. No, Shae.

NORMA'S REST

MARSHALL. *(To Shae.)* I'm fine, thank you.

SHAE. Have a seat.

MARSHALL. I'm good standing.

SHAE. Alright, then. Best sit down, Momma. You shouldn't be getting all worked up like this.

NORMA. I'm fine.

SHAE. Since yesterday, maybe.

MARSHALL. What happened yesterday?

SHAE. Bad coughing spell.

NORMA. Shae-

SHAE. Got too weak to stand up for a good three hours or so.

MARSHALL. Three hours?

SHAE. Mhm.

MARSHALL. How awful.

NORMA. Quit talkin' 'bout me like I ain't standin' right here.

SHAE. *(To Norma.)* You need to be sitting.

MARSHALL. I'm inclined to agree.

NORMA. I'm inclined to shove my foot up your-

SHAE. Momma. Relax.

MARSHALL. I assure you there's no need for that, Miss Norma. I'm here on business and nothing more.

NORMA. What business you got can't be done from your holy tower?

MARSHALL. Hardly a tower.

NORMA. Hardly holy, you ask me. Get on with it, then. *(She sits.)* And make it quick.

MARSHALL. With utmost haste, believe me. *(Shae moves to the couch and sits.)*

NORMA. *(To Shae.)* Whatchu' doin'?

SHAE. Sitting.

NORMA. If you gonna' just sit might as well make yourself useful. Write the eulogy.

SHAE. What?

NORMA. You heard me, girl.

MARSHALL. Eulogy?

SHAE. Funeral today.

NORMA'S REST

MARSHALL. Deepest condolences. Who passed?

SHAE. Nobody, just a-

NORMA. Family acquaintance.

MARSHALL. Be that as it may, prayers be with you still.

NORMA. Okay, then.

SHAE. Why me?

NORMA. You the writer, Miss Yale.

MARSHALL. *(To Shae.)* You go to Yale?

SHAE. Went to Yale.

NORMA. Here. *(She hands the notepad and pen to Shae.)* Got my crossword notes on it, now. Find an empty page, don't want you jackin' with 'em.

SHAE. Do I really have to do this?

NORMA. Yup. *(They stare at each other a moment before Shae relents and begins writing. Marshall reaches into his coat and removes a pocket Bible.)*

MARSHALL. Some great passages in here if you would like to-

NORMA. We wouldn't like to, no. We don't rely on someone else's words for things around here. *(Marshall puts the Bible away.)*

MARSHALL. Well, Miss Norma, I wish my trip here was under better circumstances but unfortunately me and mine are under a great deal of duress.

NORMA. You and yours? Who they exactly?

MARSHALL. My congregation, of course.

NORMA. Oh, of course.

MARSHALL. As you are well aware, even the most righteous and benevolent of folk are beset on all sides by grief and tragedy. It's the will of The Enemy to relieve us of good fortune and make lost our gotten gains.

NORMA. You talkin' 'bout Satan, right? The Devil? That's who you mean when you say 'Enemy'?

MARSHALL. Yes ma'am, it is.

NORMA. Ah.

MARSHALL. See, he employs this tactic so as to provide false guidance. Shield our gaze from everything we hold dear so as to-

NORMA. You see a coloring book in my hand?

NORMA'S REST

MARSHALL. ...I do not.

NORMA. That means it ain't Sunday mornin' and we ain't in your church. You can stop talkin' that way.

MARSHALL. Mrs. Fairfield's dog went missin' sometime last night. (*Shae stops writing.*) I'm leading the search party and...I'm just being thorough.

NORMA. Dog ran off.

MARSHALL. Went missin'.

NORMA. Dogs don't go missin' They either run off or they die.

MARSHALL. We're praying it's not the latter.

NORMA. And you think The Devil got somethin' to do with it?

MARSHALL. Yes ma'am, I do.

NORMA. Think we got somethin' to do with it.

MARSHALL. I didn't say that. Again, I'm just being thorough. I remember a few years back when the Stevenson's cats were found roamin' your front yard.

NORMA. Ain't my fault y'all down in the town proper don't know how to take care of animals. And why you leadin' a *search party*? Matter fact why's there a search party to begin with? Y'all church people got too much time on your hands.

MARSHALL. Just tendin' to my flock, Miss Norma. Surely a...fellow shephard like yourself can understand that.

NORMA. I understand family. I'm too busy with mine to be fussin' over other people's pets. I know Mrs. Fairfield. Grumpy old thing, that dog prolly better off you ask me.

MARSHALL. I'll ensure that remark there is stricken from the record as I know you don't truly mean it.

NORMA. Oh I mean what I say, Pastor. Also mean what I ask and I asked you why there's a heavenly search party instead of fliers on telephone poles?

MARSHALL. Because sometimes fliers aren't enough. I remember when my son lost his-

NORMA. Your son?

MARSHALL. ...He lost his dog when he was small and all the fliers in the print shop couldn't bring him home. Couldn't make him happy.

NORMA'S REST

NORMA. So you doin' this to pay that back? Somehow you findin' the Fairfield dog is gonna' make it right with your child?

MARSHALL. Not entirely but I like to think of it as a way for me to...try again.

NORMA. Bet you like to think that way, sure. We ain't seen no dog around here. Have we, Shae? *(Shae looks at Norma, then to Marshall.)*

SHAE. I...I'm gonna' go write this someplace else. Need to concentrate. *(She stands and exits. Marshall watches her go.)*

NORMA. You can leave too, Pastor. Ain't gotta' be standin' there all slack-jawed.

MARSHALL. Well...*(He reaches into his pocket and removes a small notepad and pen. He writes something down and rips the paper out, handing it to Norma.)* That's Mrs. Fairfield's number. You'll call her if anything crops up?

NORMA. Dunno' what'll crop up 'round here, but I will.

MARSHALL. Thanks. And more thing.

NORMA. Done gave you an inch, already.

MARSHALL. Please. After this, I'll be on my way. *(He reaches back into his coat.)*

NORMA. Don't be pullin' out that book a' yours again.

MARSHALL. I'm not. *(He removes a brochure and hands it to Norma.)* Sarah Tomlin just opened the doors of that place.

NORMA. So I hear. *(Reads brochure.)* 'Haven's Orchard'. Those two words don't make no sense put together like that. *(She sets the brochure down.)* You see vines growin' out my ears?

MARSHALL. How's that?

NORMA. Do you?

MARSHALL. ...No.

NORMA. I ain't no vegetable and I don't need to be put in a place for 'em.

MARSHALL. It's a retirement community. All the comfort and none of the stress.

NORMA. Stress of what? Livin'? Comfort of what? Dyin'?

MARSHALL. Miss Norma-

NORMA'S REST

NORMA. Miss nothin'. My own daughter ain't tryna' put me in no place like that, what makes you think you have the right to?

MARSHALL. It's just a gesture of good will.

NORMA. Gesture of somethin', alright.

MARSHALL. A woman of your age deserves to live out her years in tranquility. Not surrounded by-

NORMA. By what?

MARSHALL. By addicts. Felons. By evil.

NORMA. Ain't no such thing as evil, Pastor. Just folks like you leadin' search parties for it. I'm not goin' anywhere.

MARSHALL. Just figured I'd pass that along.

NORMA. And it's done passed. You can leave now.

MARSHALL. I will. Right after we pray.

NORMA. No.

MARSHALL. Do you pray, Miss Norma?

NORMA. Every day. Just different than you do.

MARSHALL. Prayin' is prayin'. God is God.

NORMA. Not everywhere. Not here.

MARSHALL. Either way, will you pray with me? Pray that Mrs. Fairfield's dog finds its way home. That her heart be made whole once more.

NORMA. I'll pray with you.

MARSHALL. Good.

NORMA. Right after you tell me her name.

MARSHALL. What now?

NORMA. You heard me. Tell me her name.

MARSHALL. Joanne Fairfield.

NORMA. Not talkin' 'bout that old crow.

MARSHALL. The dog?

NORMA. What's her name?

MARSHALL. I don't know if it's a girl or boy dog, Miss Norma.

NORMA. Tell me her name. You keep goin' on 'bout your flock and all that. Lookin' out for you and yours. So come on with it.

MARSHALL. What is this?

NORMA. Say her name.

NORMA'S REST

MARSHALL. ...No.

NORMA. Then I will not bow my head with you. Leave. *(Marshall waits a bit before heading for the door. He stops.)*

MARSHALL. There's a storm comin', Miss Norma.

NORMA. I have eyes and ears, Pastor.

MARSHALL. I will pray for you.

NORMA. Don't need it. But I bet she could use some of your attention. *(She picks up the brochure.)* Take this back with you. *(Marshall takes the brochure and exits. Norma waits a moment before turning back to the newspaper. She continues reading it. After a bit she reaches for her pen, which isn't there.)* Dammit. Shae! Shae! *(Shae enters, notepad and pen in hand.)* You finish?

SHAE. Yeah.

NORMA. Good. Need my notes back. How 'bout that number nine? *(Shae rips out a page from the notepad before handing it and the pen back to Norma.)*

SHAE. Ferret killed Mrs. Fairfield's dog, didn't she?

NORMA. Maybe.

SHAE. What're we gonna' do?

NORMA. Bury it.

SHAE. We need to say something.

NORMA. We are. You wrote it.

SHAE. To the Pastor. Tell him about the dog.

NORMA. I ain't tellin' him nothin' 'bout bothin'.

SHAE. Momma-

NORMA. I say somethin' 'bout that dog and everyone in town gonna' be callin' us murderers and pet-snatchers. There's enough talk of us as it is, I ain't about to add to the list of topics. We bury it. But I ain't doin' nothin' til I finish this here crossword. And I need that number five, girl.

SHAE. Okay. *(She exits. Norma continues working on her crossword. Shae reenters with the open envelope. She moves to Norma and sets it in front of her. Norma looks at it.)*

NORMA. That ain't the number five.

SHAE. Why didn't you tell me the money's gone?

NORMA. What money?

NORMA'S REST

SHAE. Dad's money.

NORMA. What I say 'bout goin' through my mail?

SHAE. Somebody has to.

NORMA. That somebody ain't you. The money ain't got nothin' to do with you or anybody else. 'Sides it ain't gone. Not yet.

SHAE. Damn near. How do you expect this place to-

NORMA. Not now, Shae.

SHAE. Without that inheritance money-

NORMA. Dammit, I said not now! It's my business to handle, so let me handle it.

SHAE. Handle it how? Scratch-off tickets?

NORMA. Don't you worry 'bout it. And not a word of this to anyone, get me? *(Shae turns to leave, but stops.)*

SHAE. Enervated.

NORMA. What?

SHAE. The word you're looking for. Enervated. *(She exits. Norma tries the word on her notepad.)*

NORMA. It fits. *(She goes for the crossword and writes the word in. After, she lowers her head.)* Goddammit. *(Thunder rolls in the distance. Tilly enters, wearing a sport coat and carrying a cardboard box that reads 'Pickles' in thick, black marker. A paper bag rests on top of the box. Norma looks up and reads the box.)* 'Pickles'. *(Tilly nods.)* That girl. *(Norma gathers her things and stands.)* Run and get the card table. Set the casket on that. Take it out back after and bury it. Deep. Imma go get ready. *(Norma exits. Tilly places the box on the ground and sets the bag on the couch. He exits. Tennessee enters wearing a black dress. She moves to the box and looks at it. Tilly reenters with a folding table.)*

TENNESSEE. *(To Tilly.)* Lookin' sharp, sugar. *(Tilly smiles a bit as he sets the table up. He picks up the box and sets it on top. Thunder rolls.)* Hell of a storm barkin' out there. They say it's gonna' be record rainfall for Wood County. I say 'they', I mean Shae. She looked at it on her phone or whatever. Funny you know, I used to dream of bein' a weather girl. Standin' in front of a big ol' map of the world helpin' folks figure out what they was gonna' wear that day. Imagine where I'd be now. Out on my ass, replaced by a little tiny screen. Everyone's a weather girl today. I'm better

NORMA'S REST

off where I'm at, you ask me. Not that no one every really does. Oh, listen to me. Liable to blow a bubble all the gum I'm flappin'. Funerals just make me...chatty. Nerves I guess. Nerves that go with bein' sad about things. Sad and not really knowin' what to say. *(Tilly places a hand on her shoulder. She reaches up and takes his hand with hers.)*

Thank you, sugar. You hungry? You want I could whip you up a turkey-cheese real quick. *(Tilly shakes his head.)* You sure?

(Tilly nods his head.) Okay well if you change your mind, just holler.

(Ferret enters, wearing a hoodie over her black dress. Tennessee and Tilly turn to her.)

FERRET. I feel weird in this thing.

TENNESSEE. Take that sweatshirt off for one thing. *(She moves to take off Ferret's hoodie.)*

FERRET. *(She back away.)* Don't.

TENNESSEE. *(Hushed)* Hidin' a bottle or two in there?

FERRET. *(Hushed)* No. I like it. It's my hoodie. How would you like it if I snatched that wig off your head.

TENNESSEE. Okay easy, girl. I get it. And you look beautiful. For the record.

FERRET. ...Thanks.

TENNESSEE. You hungry?

FERRET. No. *(She approaches the box.)* Oh, man... *(Tilly comes up behind her and places a hand on her shoulder.)* I've never...hurt anything before. *(To Tilly.)* You and me should start a club. Sorry, bad joke. I make bad jokes when I'm sad. Am I gonna' feel this way forever? *(Tilly shrugs.)* This sucks. *(To the box.)* I'm really sorry, Pickles. I'm sorry I couldn't save you. *(Tennessee comes up on the other side of Ferret and wraps her arm around her. Shae enters, not wearing funeral attire. She looks at the box.)*

SHAE. That thing stinks. *(Norma enters in a black dress.)*

NORMA. Let's get on with it, now. Funeral's ain't nothin' but band-aids, Ferret. Gotta' rip 'em off and move on. Trust me, I been to more funerals than you had hot meals, I know a thing or two.

SHAE. Why that dress, Momma?

NORMA. It's black ain't it?

NORMA'S REST

SHAE. You wore that for...that was Daddy's dress.

NORMA. Only one I got. 'Sides this ain't his. Too small in the waist for him. *(Thunder rolls.)* We best do this thing.

TENNESSEE. Okay, everyone. Places please. *(They all gather around the table. Tilly goes for the paper bag and reaches inside.)*

NORMA. What you got in that bag? *(Tilly brings out origami dogs for everyone; passes them out.)* I'll be. Paper folded dogs.

TENNESSEE. Thank you, Tilly. Guess I'll go ahead and start.

SHAE. *(To Norma, hushed.)* We need to talk, Momma.

NORMA. *(To Shae, hushed.)* We need to be respectful.

TENNESSEE. Thank you all for coming. I'm sure Pickles appreciates it.

SHAE. *(To Norma, hushed)* You call Mrs. Fairfield?

NORMA. *(To Shae, hushed)* I don't give a damn about Mrs. Fairfield.

TENNESSEE. We're gathered here today to celebrate the life that was Pickles the dog. A life that some would say got cut too short, but we here at the Rest would argue that it ended when it was supposed to, the way it was supposed to. Pickles

was a dog. A dog that liked to run and...chase cars. Probably enjoyed a game or two of fetch and quite possibly a good long tummy rub. Pickles was...a kind friend to all. Surely had an affinity for nature and an admiration of a well-lived life. With the tongue out and the ears back, Pickles met everything in life head on. A head on collision with life. *(Ferret begins to sob.)*

NORMA. Ten-

TENNESSEE. Sorry I..I didn't mean that I just meant... *(singing)*

Amazing grace. How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now am found;

Was blind, but now I see. *(stops singing)* And now for the moment of silence. *(They all stand a moment. More thunder in the distance.)* How long do we stay silent for, do I just start talkin' when ready or what?

NORMA. Maybe a bit longer, Ten.

TENNESSEE. Alright then. *(Silence resumes.)*...Now?

NORMA. Go ahead.

NORMA'S REST

TENNESSEE. Okay, next up is Shae with the eulogy. *(Shae reaches into her pocket and removes a folded piece of paper. She moves close to the box.)*

SHAE. *(To Norma.)* Here okay?

NORMA. S'fine. *(Shae unfolds the paper.)*

SHAE. *(reading.)* This morning, our lives were deeply impacted by the death of this poor dog.

FERRET. Pickles.

SHAE. *(Reading.)* A poor dog whom we know nothing about. Don't know where it came from, its name, or what its life was like before. We don't even know if it's a boy or a girl. Did anybody look? *(She waits.)* I didn't write that last part I'm genuinely asking. *(Everyone looks around at each other, all shaking their heads. Shae goes back to reading.)* It's so easy for us, as mourners, and as people, to focus on what we don't know. Speculate on what might have been before and what could've come after. The challenge comes in paying more mind to what we do know. Take the dog, for example. We know that it was a very fast dog with the ability to appear out of nowhere in a flash. We also know it was a very strong and healthy dog on account of how much it smashed in my car. *(Tilly chuckles. Shae glares at him.)* That wasn't a joke. *(Tilly stops. Shae goes back to reading.)* We also know that this dog meant something to someone at one point in time. It probably had a good life. We must turn our sympathies to those impacted by its sudden departure. This dog has undoubtedly left a huge hole in the lives of everyone it touched. The blind man it might've led across the street. The little girl with leukemia it may have visited in the hospital. The mother who either lost her children or was never meant to have them at all, so she turned to the dog as a way to fill that void. These are the lives that this dog could've changed, and probably did. This dog gave another chance to those who never thought they deserved one. *(Everyone looks at Norma.)* This dog gave hope. So today we not only mourn the death of the dog but also the death of hope. Of a second chance at a well lived, and well loved, life. Now let us bow our heads.

NORMA. Ain't necessary.

NORMA'S REST

SHAE. My eulogy. (*She bows her head. No one else does.*) Dear God, please welcome this dog into your open arms and please forgive Ferret for bringing it to you in this manner.

FERRET. Hey-

SHAE. She's young, Lord, and meant no harm to anyone.

NORMA. That's enough now, Shae.

SHAE. Amen.

FERRET. The shit was that about?

NORMA. Ferret. Language.

FERRET. What's she throwing me under the bus in front of God like that for?

SHAE. (*Raises her head.*) A ferret under a bus, a dog under a car...

FERRET. Knock it off with that shit-

NORMA. Ferret-

SHAE. You did a bad thing. I was only praying for your forgiveness.

FERRET. I don't need your prayers.

SHAE. You need something.

FERRET. (*Steps to Shae.*) And what's that?

SHAE. What're you doing, little girl?

TENNESSEE. Ladies, please. Not in front of Pickles.

SHAE. Yeah. Not in front of your dog, Ferret.

NORMA. Shae-

SHAE. (*To Norma.*) You didn't tell her?

FERRET. Tell me what?

SHAE. About Mrs. Fairfield.

NORMA. Enough.

FERRET. Who's Mrs. Fairfield?

SHAE. Don't worry about it.

FERRET. (*To Shae.*) Tell me.

SHAE. Or what, you're gonna' hit me? Haven't you hurt enough things for one day?

NORMA. Shae, you best leave her alone.

SHAE. She's the one all riled up, I'm not doing anything.

NORMA. You doin' plenty and you've done enough, now stop it.

FERRET. How about you listen to your mom.

NORMA'S REST

SHAE. How about you have another drink.

FERRET. You bitch! *(She hits Shae. Norma gets in between them as Tennessee and Tilly rush over to help. Tilly pulls Ferret away as she continues to lash out.)*

SHAE. That's it, you're gone!

NORMA. Shae, get inside.

SHAE. Gladly. *(She turns, drops her origami dog on the ground, and exits.)*

FERRET. *(To Tilly.)* Let go of me. *(Tilly lets her go.)*

NORMA. What's gotten into you, girl?

FERRET. Shae, she's a fucking-

NORMA. Language. What's all this about a drink?

FERRET. A lie. Your daughter's a liar.

NORMA. Shae might be a lot of things but a liar ain't one of 'em. Girl too hung up on morals for all that. You drinkin'?

FERRET. Who's Mrs. Fairfield?

NORMA. Answer me, child.

FERRET. ...Yes. But only a little.

NORMA. A little's too much, especially for you. Why? *(Tennessee and Tilly turn to leave.)* You two stay right there. *(They stop. Norma coughs a bit.)* Y'all know about this?

TENNESSEE. No.

NORMA. You lyin'.

TENNESSEE. Am not.

NORMA. You got a big ole nasty vein pop our your head when you lyin' to me. *(Tennessee touches her forehead. Norma turns to Ferret.)* Where'd you get it? **FERRET.** I-

NORMA. You steal it? Rob a counter? Raid a cabinet?

FERRET. No. Someone gave it to me.

NORMA. Who?

FERRET. ...A friend.

NORMA. Don't sound like no friend to me, givin' poison bottles to little girls with big consequences. Where is it?

FERRET. Shae took it.

NORMA. Good. *(She coughs.)*

NORMA'S REST

TENNESSEE. You alright?

NORMA. I'm fine.

FERRET. It was a mistake.

NORMA. You disrespect me.

FERRET. It won't happen again. Honest.

NORMA. I know it won't. One way or the other.

FERRET. What's the other?

NORMA. You knew the deal when I took you in, I don't think you need to be reminded.

FERRET. Please, Norma. I can't go back, there's nothing for me.

NORMA. Shoulda' thought 'bout that. *(She turns to leave.)*

FERRET. Where're you going?

NORMA. To lie down. I'm grief stricken. And Mrs. Fairfield is that dog's owner.

FERRET. What?

NORMA. You killed Mrs. Fairfield's dog. And maybe that's punishment enough for what you done. Maybe not. I'll have to think on it. You'll know by mornin'. *(More thunder. Norma exits. coughing the whole way.)*

FERRET. Fuck this.

TENNESSEE. Hey.

FERRET. I'm going to Avery's.

TENNESSEE. We need to bury Pickles.

FERRET. Not our dog to bury. And its name isn't Pickles.

TENNESSEE. You're upset, I understand. But I don't think seein' that boy is such a good idea right now.

FERRET. Why not?

TENNESSEE. Because he's-

FERRET. I'm not about to take relationship advice from someone like you, okay.

TENNESSEE. And what's that supposed to mean?

FERRET. You have enough problems in your own life to be worrying about mine. Everyone here does.

TENNESSEE. I'm your friend.

FERRET. No, we just live together. Used to, anyway.

NORMA'S REST

TENNESSEE. Norma loves you, Ferret. You messed up, but she loves you. She won't let you go that easily. (*Ferret starts to cry. Tennessee goes to hug her, but Ferret pushes her off.*) Where is all this hostility coming from, baby?

FERRET. Look around. We're all fuck-ups. I'm a stupid kid I don't handle death well.

TENNESSEE. None of us handle it well. Only one who does is dyin' herself. Easier when you're on the other side of it. You just gotta' do what I do.

FERRET. Make pancakes all day?

TENNESSEE. Keep tellin' yourself she's not gonna' die. Power of positive thinkin' and whatnot.

FERRET. 'Cause that worked so well for the dog.

TENNESSEE. Norma's different.

FERRET. How so?

TENNESSEE. Didn't get hit by a car, for one. Norma's not gonna' die. Say it. Norma's not gonna' die.

FERRET. This is stupid.

TENNESSEE. Say it.

FERRET. ...Norma's not gonna' die.

TENNESSEE. Again.

FERRET. Norma's not gonna' die.

TENNESSEE AND FERRET. Norma's not gonna' die.

FERRET. 'Power of positive thinking'

TENNESSEE. That's right.

FERRET. Lot like praying, isn't it?

TENNESSEE. Suppose. But with this you know someone's listenin'.

FERRET. Who?

TENNESSEE. Me. (*More thunder. Really loud this time.*) Right up on us now. Best say our goodbyes and be done so Tilly can bury it quick. (*Ferret looks at the box, then turns to leave.*) Ferret? (*Ferret exits. Loud thunder crash.*) Tilly, I think the burial's gonna' have to wait. 'Bout to rain down Hell on us all. (*She turns and exits. Tilly approaches the box and places his hand on top. He bows his head. Loud winds and louder thunder as the*

NORMA'S REST

storm crashes around the house.)

END OF ACT 1

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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