

GARBIELA. Tell Fantine why you wanted her backstage.

(COLLISTER *attacks!* TAM TAM *restrains her.*)

TAM TAM. Flachra no!

GARBIELA. You wanted her offstage so you could pretend there was an emergency and Fantine would run on, and everyone would yell surprise.

FANTINE. Well it worked!

GARBIELA. Clovis didn't start the fire.

COLLISTER. No one says he did!

(*Again, TAM TAM has to restrain her.*)

TAM TAM. Flachra! I'm going to tie you to a chair.

CARA. (*As maid, British:*) I have totally lost the thread of what's happening.

GARBIELA. I can see Clovis.

COLLISTER. Liar.

GARBIELA. He told me about a box. There's a box in your drawer that he wants.

COLLISTER. (*Perhaps a moment to absorb that:*) Is he here now?

(*He's not, but:*)

GARBIELA. He's right there. He says he loves you.

COLLISTER. That doesn't sound like him.

GARBIELA. It is him. I promise.

COLLISTER. (*To "Clovis":*) I could tell you were still here. I made them let me stay at the school, which was not easy.

GARBIELA. Your son wants a hug. (*Adjusting COLLISTER's position:*) Over a little bit. There.

(*COLLISTER and imaginary Clovis hug: COLLISTER with her arms around empty space.*)

(*CLOVIS bursts in!*)

CLOVIS. What about the box? (*To GARBIELA:*) What is she doing?

(*But then he realizes what she's doing. He enters the circle of her embrace. COLLISTER can sense that this has happened.*)

COLLISTER. I love you too.

(*Finally:*)

CLOVIS. Where's the box?

GARBIELA. He wants to know where the box is.

(*COLLISTER produces the box. CLOVIS reaches for it. Tries to lift it, but he can't because he's a ghost.*)

GARBIELA. Open it.

(*COLLISTER does. CLOVIS looks in and sees:*)

CLOVIS. My tooth!

(*He tries to grab it. It falls. But then, slowly, carefully, he lifts it. People are astonished.*)

CARA. (*As maid, British:*) The tooth is floating in the air!

(*BILLIAM runs off screaming. CLOVIS puts the tooth in his mouth.*)

CLOVIS. Now I can give my speech!

GARBIELA. Now he can give his speech!

COLLISTER. Of course. The speech he'd been working on for the end of the play. I never got to hear it.

GARBIELA. I speak ghost. I'll translate.

CLOVIS. "What I Want in My Future"

GARBIELA. "What I Want in My Future"

CLOVIS. By Clovis Collister

GARBIELA. By Clovis Collister

CLOVIS. With a little help from our birthday girl.

GARBIELA. With a little help from my sister.

(*And now Garbiela's translation becomes assumed.*)

CLOVIS. In my future, I'm going to be a TV producer. There used to be a TV show called *Lassie*, about a boy and his best friend, a collie. Lassie could understand compound sentences, and the boy could understand dog. So the boy would say, "Where's the missing girl?" And Lassie would go, "Arf! Arf!" which meant, "Follow me. She's trapped in a well."

Ten years later there was a rip-off show called *Flipper*, which was *Lassie* on steroids. It was about a boy and his best friend, a dolphin. They were different, but they were both mammals and they had every adventure you can think of that takes place at the end of a dock.

My show is going to be called *Let's Thank an Eel*.

(*FANTINE joins him. One of her arms is an eel, pulled up against her body so that only the head is visible.*)

CLOVIS. *Let's Thank an Eel* is next-level *Flipper*. The show's about a girl, Matilda, and her best friend, a wolf eel named Flossie. It's so hard because neither one can breathe in the other one's world. Plus Matilda can't swim, and Flossie barely peeks out of her cave. They have to go like this to talk—

(CLOVIS puffs his cheeks full; this is Matilda holding her breath. The EEL slowly opens and closes its mouth.)

CLOVIS. —but they do. They're desperate to be friends. In the second season finale, Flossie bolts out of her cave, toward the surface! Matilda dives. She's learned to swim! And right before they touch—Matilda reaching out—we freeze. And we know, right then, **that next season anything could happen.**

(The play drifts away. Perhaps FANTINE's eel-mouth hand becomes a goodbye wave.)

AMICUS. Stauncher, congratulations. That was thrilling.

STAUNCHER. You really think so?

AMICUS. Can't wait to see what you do next time.

BILLIAM. *(Forlorn:)* Don't I get to do my handstand?

GARBIELA. Ruth.

RUTH. Yeah.

GARBIELA. Why don't we head downstairs together?

RUTH. Sure.

GARBIELA. This way. We'll take the elevator.

RUTH. You know I can't do that.

GARBIELA. I know you can. Come on.

(She steps into the elevator. Motions him in.)

RUTH. I've tried so many times.

GARBIELA. Step in. I will not let the doors close until you say so.

(He steps in, is instantly overwhelmed by anxiety. Somehow—verbally or not—indicates that he can't do this.)

GARBIELA. Yes you can.

(She holds out her hand.)

GARBIELA. You just need a friend.

(RUTH takes her hand. This calms him a bit, but he's terrified.)

GARBIELA. Whenever you're ready, just talk to the elevator.

(RUTH lets GARBIELA's hand comfort him, finally manages to say:)

RUTH. Ground floor.

(Nothing happens. In his panic, RUTH has forgotten to say:)

GARBIELA. *(To the elevator:)* Please. *(To the audience:)* And that's the end of the story, everything that happened that fall semester. Then fall became spring became fall became . . . somehow I'm out in the world. On my own, but not.

(DING! A text.)

GARBIELA. I have a longtime best friend.

MOGPIN. Garby, let's grab some pizza!

(DING!)

GARBIELA. And a new best friend.

RUTH. See you soon!

(DING!)

GARBIELA. And an unexpected best friend.

JACKSON. The best project you'll ever work on is you.

GARBIELA. I never saw Clovis again. No one else ever felt *The Chill*. But that spring, after a rehearsal in the restored theatre, I was cleaning up and—

FANTINE. Best friend!

(FANTINE, off to one side, holds binoculars.)

GARBIELA. Fantine! I didn't realize you were still . . .

FANTINE. Still what?

GARBIELA. Still here. In the theatre.

FANTINE. I love it here. It's my favorite place in the world. It's fun to watch people having fun.

End of Play

(As the lights dim, FANTINE points her binoculars at the audience and watches the curtain call.)

(She turns her binoculars back toward the stage just in time to see BILLIAM do the handstand, then she joins the curtain call.)