

A Benevolent Alliance of Mourners

(At rise: ELLIE, leans on a wall, looking at the sky. A guitar sits off to one side. DANIEL enters, looking back to make sure no one is watching. Thinking he is alone, he pulls out a pack of cigarettes, turns, and comes face to face with ELLIE. He screams and recovers.)

DANIEL

Christ. You scared me.

ELLIE

Sorry.

DANIEL

(Berating himself comically.) And I've used the Lord's name in vain in a church.

ELLIE

Technically, we're outside the church, so you're good.

DANIEL

I'm sneaking out for a cigarette, so I'm not *that* good. *(Holds up the pack.)* This has gotta be against the rules, right?

ELLIE

There's a list of ten inside. Didn't see a "Thou Shalt Not Smoke."

DANIEL

(Laughs a bit.) My mother would still disapprove, though. Says I'm killin' mys... *(Stops suddenly at his choice of words.)* Shouldn't be laughing. Not here. Not now.

ELLIE

Beats crying all the time.

DANIEL

It sure the hell does. *(Beat)* Can I say "hell?"

ELLIE

It's fine. They actually use that one inside sometimes.

DANIEL

Not today, I hope. *(Gestures with the pack.)* Want one?

ELLIE

No. Thank you. Just out here to warm up.

DANIEL

(Confused.) It's 35 degrees.

ELLIE

Warm up, *vocally*. (*Points to guitar.*) I'm singing at the end of the service.

DANIEL

Oh. I'll put these away, so I don't mess up your voice. (*A beat.*) You're not going for that smoky jazz singer thing, are you?

ELLIE

Probably the wrong vibe for the venue.

DANIEL

Probably. (*Puts pack away. Pulls out a folded paper.*) I suppose you're listed in the program. I kinda avoided looking at it. Like seeing things in print is going to make this all real. (*Beat*) Program? That even the word? It's not like I'm at a freakin' musical.

ELLIE

Musicals are happier.

DANIEL

Not all of them. (*Beat*) Cabaret. Les Mis. West Side Story. Little Shop of Horrors: Stage version - not screen.

ELLIE

You know your stuff.

DANIEL

Been to a lot of musicals.

ELLIE

Program is fine. Or brochure. Pamphlet. Order of Service.

DANIEL

You know your stuff, too.

ELLIE

Been to a lot of funerals.

DANIEL

Maybe you could mix in a birthday sometime. Birthdays are happier.

ELLIE

Not all of them. (*This thought seems to linger or hold a bit of weight.*)

DANIEL

Right. Things'll be starting soon. I'll let you warm up.