

Joe: Hello.

Florence: Yes.

Joe: You're still here.

Florence: Yes.

Joe: I tried to phone.

Florence: Yes?

Joe: I got disconnected.

Florence: Yes...

Joe: Did the owners come back?

Florence: Yes. No.

Joe: They didn't?

Florence: Ssssort of.

Joe: And these are the places that wonder why they get closed down. How are you feeling?

Florence: Fine. I think.

Joe: Well you must know the owners very well -

Florence: No not at all.

Joe: You don't? (*Florence shakes her head "No".*) But aren't you working at that computer?

Florence: Oh no. (*She jumps up.*) I was just - waiting to see if anyone would come back - who worked here, and suddenly I got the urge to compute - to learn computering - so I just sat down, and started - puting.

Joe: Well you must be very brave.

Florence: Not really.

Joe: And intelligent. I mean to have the nerve to turn on someone else's system - and teach yourself a new skill - well that's - remarkable.

Florence: It's a friendly town.

Joe: I hope so. *(beat) (Joe holds his stomach again.)*

Joe: Well now -  *(together)*

Florence: Well I -

*(They share an small, embarrassed laugh.)*

Joe: Well I have to get my work done, so - now that you've got that up and running, maybe I'll just take a look at their employment records.

Florence: Oh no, I - I don't know how to do that. Really I don't.

Joe: Well I know a thing or two about these business systems - *(He is moving towards the desk.)*

Florence: Oh no look, it's off now. *(She randomly hits keys, trying to turn it off.)* Gone, all done, bye bye. *(She mistakenly hits five keys at once, and turns on the music. It is very loud, head-banging rock: "White Zombie, Astro-Creep:2000, Super-Charger Heaven". Courtesy of Eb. They both look at the boombox for five seconds, then Joe moves around to the shelf unit, and reaches up to turn it off. Before he can, Florence hits five keys and stops the music.)*

*(beat)*

Joe: That's quite the music.

Florence: It's for the plants. *(beat)*

Joe: This is a strange place.

Florence: *(shrugging)* I like it.

Joe: What is your name?

Florence: My name?

*(beat. Over the phone intercom we hear Rose:)*

Rose: Florence? What in God's name was that music? Are you trying to kill us? (*No one moves.*) Florence? Are you there? (*To someone else*) She's not answering. FLORENCE! WAKE UP!

(*Florence moves to the phone, lifts the receiver, begins pushing buttons.*)

Florence: Hello? Hello? (*She tries other buttons.*)

Rose: Florence, to talk back to me, push nine, star, line out. (*Florence takes a breath, then pushes those buttons.*) Florence?

Florence: No one here by that name.

(*beat*)

Rose: What? Florence what are you doing?

Florence: Sorry. Wrong number. (*She hangs up.*)

Rose: Florence?

(*Florence unplugs the phone jack from the wall, places the cord on the counter.*)

Joe: Who was that? (*beat*)

Florence: Kids. Prank callers. They get them all the time.

Joe: It didn't sound like a kid's voice.

Florence: They're old kids. Nothing to do.

Joe: They were calling a Florence. Is that your name?

Florence: Not me.

Joe: But there is a Florence that works here? (*He opens his briefcase, retrieving papers.*)

Florence: I'm not sure.

Joe: My paperwork shows an employee by the name of Florence Blanice, female, worked here for eleven years.

Florence: Oh her.

Joe: Then you know her.

Florence: Nope. *(beat)*

Joe: You're toying with me, aren't you?

Florence: Not really.

Joe: *(Joe turns away and feels his forehead.)* What is your name?

Florence: That depends on what you mean by "name".

*(The street door opens, and Pearl enters.)*

Pearl: Florence. How are you dear? *(Florence ignores her.)*  
Florence - it's Pearl.

Florence: Oh. Do you mean me?

Pearl: Yes dear. Is everything all right?

Florence: Yes of course - Ma'am. But I'm afraid Florence isn't - here right now.

Pearl: She isn't.

Florence: No. *(Joe has turned away, but listens. Florence gestures toward Joe.)*

Pearl: Oh. *(She notices Joe)* Oh, I see. *(She plays along, not really knowing why.)* Yes. Well I hope you can help me. I was downtown, just a while ago, and I heard you say something over the loudspeaker -

Florence: Not me.

Pearl: Oh no yes, I see, - well perhaps it was Florence - *(Pearl starts to laugh.)* the one who works here - who said a big order had arrived.

*(Beat.)*

Florence: You heard that downtown? *(She does not laugh.)*

Pearl: Yes - and I was hoping that my ladybugs might have come.

Florence: *(worried)* Ladybugs. *(Joe wanders, still listening.)* Well, I don't know if I can help you or not - but I would think that these bags - with the bugs on them, might be them.

Pearl: Oh yes, that looks the very thing.

Florence: Yes, well, there you go. *(Florence gives one of the bags marked with a ladybug - her lunch - to Pearl.)*

Pearl: Yes thank you. And how much are they? *(Opening her purse.)*

Florence: Oh - how much? Well, I'd say you'd be looking at about - two dollars.

Pearl: *(A little laugh.)* Only two?

Florence: Oh yes. Two is fine.

Pearl: Well that's quite the bargain. *(She gives her a toonie.)*

Florence: Yes, but you know, I don't really know how to work the cash register.

Pearl: *(laughs)* You don't, do you?

Florence: No. *(She puts the money in the cardboard box, and hides it again.)*

Pearl: *(Loudly for Joe)* Oh, well Ehrhart will be by shortly, to pick up his tree. He's quite happy it's arrived. *(Pearl moves to the door.)*

Florence: Yes it's right over... *(She sees the tree is gone.)* there?

Pearl: Well good. So bye bye Florence - I mean bye bye - "Helper". *(Pearl exits. Florence runs to the spot where the tree was last seen, and spins around.)*

Florence: It was here!

Joe: What was?

*(She runs over to the other trees in the store, stage left, searching frantically.)*

Florence: Where is it?

Joe: Where's what? *(She runs back to centre.)*

Florence: I saw it!

Joe: When was this? *(She runs up a few steps.)*

Florence: Who moved it?

Joe: Moved what?

*(She starts to run in circles, gasping for air.)*

Florence: It - was - a - ginkgo!

Joe: FLORENCE! *(She stops and looks at him. He has shocked her out of her panic.)*  
So it is Florence?

Florence: Oh... yes.

Joe: And you do work here.

Florence: *(pleased.)* Yes - eleven years.

Joe: But you said you didn't.

Florence: Did I?

Joe: Just now. Maybe you hit your head - when you fell.

Florence: Maybe.

Joe: But you're all right now?

Florence: Yes.

Joe: Good. What was that about a ginkgo?

Florence: Oh it's a tree. For Magda.

Joe: Who's Magda?

Florence: Ehrhart's dead tree. Dead wife!

Joe: Dead wife?

Florence: I didn't kill her!

*(Beat.)*

Joe: I'm - sure you didn't.

Florence: I may have - hurt the tree.

Joe: Magda's tree.

Florence: Yes. For the memorial. She was Ehrhart's ex-wife.

Joe: Oh. They were divorced?

Florence: No. She died. And then they weren't - married anymore.

Joe: Because she was dead.

Florence: Yes. She became his ex - when she ex...pired.

Joe: When was this?

Florence: Ten years ago.

Joe: And he's having the memorial now?

Florence: Oh he's had several. He's planted four trees in her memory so far.

Joe: What happened to them?

Florence: *(thinks)* Frozen, sprayed, lightning, stolen. Backed-over.

Joe: That's five.

Florence: You're good with numbers.

Joe: Which one are you?

Florence: Backed-over. But it wasn't my fault. Eb left the truck in reverse, and I went to pull away - and - *(she makes a squishing sound, and demonstrates with her hands.)*

Joe: You drive a truck?

Florence: No. *(beat.)* Do you?

*(Joe moves away and turns to his papers.)*

Joe: I was wondering if I could ask you a few questions - about who works here.

Florence: Well, I'm not sure - I'm not quite clear yet. *(Holding her head.)*

Joe: It'll just take a few minutes.

Florence: Maybe tomorrow?

Joe: I'll be gone tomorrow.

Florence: *(Saddened.)* Oh.

Joe: Just one question?

Florence: Well I just have to call - a friend. *(She moves to the phone. Which is still unplugged.)*

Joe: And I still would like to speak to one of the owners, if possible. A Mrs. - *(Looking at his papers.)* Rose -

Florence: *(Into receiver)* Mrs. Deterra! *(Pushing buttons.)*

Joe: Yes. That's it. A Mrs. Rose Deterra.

Florence: *(More frantic button pushing.)* Mrs. Deterra!

Joe: Yes, I've got her. And the co-owner with Mrs. Deterra, is a Mr....

*(Florence hangs up the phone, resigned.)*

Florence: Hayward Kelly.

Joe: Yes, here he is, Mr. Kelly. And here's you, Florence -

Florence: Blance.

Joe: Is that Mrs.? Miss?

Florence: Ms.