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SF PERUSALS

Dead Ringer

by Gino DiIorio

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

Cover photo by SuzAnne Barabas
Actress pictured: Natalie Wilder

ISBN 978-0-573-69843-9 Printed in U.S.A. #29677

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DEAD RINGER was first produced by the New Jersey Repertory Company in Long Branch, New Jersey on October 15, 2009. The performance was directed by Suzanne Barabas, with sets by Jessica Parks, costumes by Patricia E. Doherty, lighting by Jill Nagle, and sound by Merek Royca Press. The production stage manager was Rose Riccardi. The cast was as follows:

DWIGHT . . . . . Christian Pedersen

TYRUS . . . . . Michael Pollard

MARY . . . . . Natalie Wilder

CHARACTERS

DWIGHT FOLEY – 30. A heavyset man with a thin beard. He has an innocence about him that borders on naiveté. He is not confident and can easily be hurt with harsh words.

MARY COLE – 28. The woman in the hole. She is never seen throughout the course of the play. She has many physical ailments and deformities. Her head is misshapen and she cannot walk. But she manages to feed and clean herself as the strength of her arms allows her to move about her small space. Mary is very intelligent, carrying herself with a hard edge of sarcasm and wit. She has a voice like an angel and at times, displays a mystical quality. Mary has no self-pity whatsoever and one gets the impression that had it not been for her physical defects, she could easily win a fist fight with her brother.

TYRUS COLE – 35. Mary's older brother. He is tall and muscular, clean shaven with hard, angular features. Ty wears the burden of his sister's ailment on his sleeve. His cruelty toward her is born more of self-loathing than sadism.

SETTING

Sunset Valley, Texas

TIME

Spring, 1880

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The set should not be a realistic representation of the Cole farm. Rather, the space should have an "otherworldly" feel to it. The acting style should be reserved as well. For lack of a better term, these characters are much closer to the film *Unforgiven* than, say, the television drama *Bonanza*.

Scene One

(Lights up on the farm of **TYRUS COLE**. *There is a desolate farm house with a porch stage left and a large barn heading back a ways, with horse stalls and such. Adjacent to the house there is what looks like a root cellar. It has a cage door with slots in it that is heavily padlocked.)*

*(***DWIGHT FOLEY** *walks toward the porch. He is heavy-set with a thin beard. His clothes are dusty and he has mud on his face. His blue denim shirt is practically soaked through.)*

DWIGHT. Hey Ty. Ty Cole, you in there?

*(***DWIGHT** *walks up on the porch and peeks in through the window)*

It's me Dwight. Ty? Hello?

(He looks up at the sky and considers whether or not he should wait. He jumps down off the porch and looks out around the house and then speaks quietly.)

Aw shoot. Where the hell are ya?

(We hear **MARY** *call from the root cellar. She is not seen throughout the play.)*

MARY. *(offstage)* Stay right where you are.

DWIGHT. Who's that?

MARY. I said stay where you are or I'll blast your head off.

DWIGHT. Who?

MARY. Stay still!

DWIGHT. Sorry.

MARY. Don't think I won't shoot you cause I will.

DWIGHT. Where the hell?

MARY. Move over where I can see you.

(He moves back toward where he entered.)

The other way, you numb skull.

DWIGHT. I don't know where you are.

MARY. I'm down here.

DWIGHT. Where?

MARY. Here.

*(***DWIGHT** *approaches the root cellar.)*

Don't move. You looking for Ty?

DWIGHT. Yeah, who are you?

MARY. I'm his sister.

DWIGHT. I didn't know he had no sister.

MARY. Well, he does.

DWIGHT. Is he gonna be back?

MARY. Probably by nightfall. What you want?

DWIGHT. I got a mare and I'm having trouble with it. Thought he might give me some advice.

MARY. Not for free he won't.

DWIGHT. I could pay him.

MARY. Really? How much you got?

DWIGHT. Three dollars and some silver.

MARY. Well, why don't you just put it on the wall of the post office?

DWIGHT. You asked me.

MARY. Don't mean you gotta tell me.

DWIGHT. Well –

MARY. And what are you doing showing up here unannounced?

DWIGHT. What do you mean, unannounced?

MARY. Jesus Christ, do you need map to get dressed in the morning? Unannounced. As in uninvited.

DWIGHT. Oh, I wasn't uninvited. Ty invited me here.

MARY. He did, did he?

DWIGHT. Yeah. He said if I ever needed any help taming a horse, that I should come see him. Shoot everybody knows that. Ty's the best horse trainer around.

MARY. He'd like to think so.

DWIGHT. Well, I could sure use his help.

MARY. He ain't here.

DWIGHT. I know, I can see that.

MARY. He went in to town for some feed. He should be back soon.

DWIGHT. Oh. You mind if I wait?

MARY. Suit yourself. Don't think I'm lowering this gun anytime soon.

DWIGHT. I ain't here to hurt you, I just –

MARY. How the hell do I know that?

DWIGHT. I guess you don't.

MARY. You're right. I don't.

(pause)

If you're gonna wait, you may as well sit down.

DWIGHT. On the ground?

MARY. No, I was thinking you might build yourself a table and chairs. Yes, on the ground.

(He does so. There is a pause.)

DWIGHT. Awful hot out here.

MARY. I wouldn't know.

DWIGHT. You know, I could just come back later.

MARY. You already came all this way. I'd hate to see you make two trips.

DWIGHT. It's no trouble. I could just mosey on back –

(He stands.)

MARY. Sit down.

DWIGHT. Huh?

MARY. Sit back down.

DWIGHT. Okay. *(He sits.)*

MARY. We're gonna sit here and wait till Tyrus comes back and finds out if he knows anybody by the name of… What did you say your name was again?

DWIGHT. Dwight. Dwight Foley. My friends call me Dewey.

MARY. Dewey.

DWIGHT. That's right. And ma'am, Tyrus doesn't –

MARY. Don't call me ma'am, I'm not your mother.

DWIGHT. I'm sorry, I was just being polite.

MARY. You were just being stupid. My name's Mary.

DWIGHT. Oh. Hi Mary.

MARY. Hello.

DWIGHT. Uh, your brother doesn't really know me, see? He just, well, I know of him, you could say. He's the best horse trainer in all – (these parts).

MARY. *(overlapping)* – these parts. You said that already. What if I was to tell you my brother doesn't know a horse's ass from his own pecker? What would you say to that?

DWIGHT. Well, I –

MARY. And maybe you just decided to come up here to rob us, take our stallions or something.

DWIGHT. Come on –

MARY. Or maybe somebody told you that there's a great deal of money somewhere's on this property and you come up here to go fishing for it.

DWIGHT. I don't know what you're talking about.

MARY. The hell you don't.

DWIGHT. Even if I did…

MARY. Yeah?

DWIGHT. Well, I wouldn't do that.

MARY. I guess we're gonna find out, ain't we.

(pause)

DWIGHT. Just came up here for some help.

MARY. You'll get your help. In good time.

DWIGHT. Can I ask you a question?

MARY. You just did.

DWIGHT. What?

MARY. Ask a question.

DWIGHT. Oh. Well can I?

MARY. You did it again. You wanna ask another?

DWIGHT. Can I ask another question?

MARY. Did they bring you up on the stupid farm? You did it again!

DWIGHT. Well what am I supposed to say?

MARY. You gotta say, "Can I ask TWO questions?"

DWIGHT. Oh. Can I ask two questions?

MARY. No.

DWIGHT. Damn it –

MARY. All right. Yes, you may ask two questions.

DWIGHT. What are you doing down there?

MARY. None of your business.

DWIGHT. Sorry.

MARY. *(pause)* What's your horse's name?

DWIGHT. Queenie.

MARY. *(She laughs.)* Queenie?

DWIGHT. Yeah.

MARY. What's the matter with Queenie.

DWIGHT. Can't break her.

MARY. No wonder why, you give her a dopey ass name like that.

DWIGHT. Queenie is a good name. I had a dog named Queenie.

MARY. What happened to the dog?

DWIGHT. Died.

MARY. Name probably killed her.

DWIGHT. Shut up.

MARY. What color is Queenie?

DWIGHT. Oh, she's a pretty horse. Kind of a strawberry roan.

MARY. You got yourself a pink horse?

DWIGHT. Well, not exactly –

MARY. She's a red horse with white hair, am I right?

DWIGHT. Yeah, but –

MARY. So what do you get when you mix red with white? You get pink! You got yourself a pink horse!

DWIGHT. I was told she was strawberry roan –

MARY. That's just a polite way of saying pink. You gonna breed her?

DWIGHT. That's the plan, but we had two stallions in with her, but they both ran off.

MARY. Course they did. Who wants to screw a pink horse?

DWIGHT. You stop that now. She scared them off, is what she did.

MARY. Whatever you say.

DWIGHT. See I figured if I can tame her a bit, it might slow her down.

MARY. What's the horse wanna do?

DWIGHT. Run. Won't stay in the stall, just wants to run all the time.

MARY. So let her run.

DWIGHT. I can't let her run. I gotta break her.

MARY. Can you put a saddle on her?

DWIGHT. Hell no. She bucks like crazy.

MARY. How fast is that horse you got there?

DWIGHT. Who, Star? Oh, he's pretty fast.

MARY. Queenie and Star. You sure know how to pick names.

DWIGHT. Forget it. I ain't talking to you.

MARY. All that mare wants to do is run, right?

DWIGHT. I guess.

MARY. So, give her enough rope. Tie one end to the mare and the other to Star. Get on Star and let her run.

DWIGHT. Come on, I'll lose her for sure.

MARY. Maybe you're supposed to lose her.

DWIGHT. What the hell is that supposed to mean?

MARY. Horse is like anything else. You're trying to take part of her spirit away. She don't want to give it to you. You gotta earn her respect.

(There is a pause as **DWIGHT** *considers this.)*

DWIGHT. What's the lock for?

(There is a sudden gunshot offstage. **DWIGHT** *jumps as* **TY COLE** *enters stage right.)*

TY. What you doing?

DWIGHT. Hello Mr. Cole.

TY. Who told you to come up here?

DWIGHT. I heard you knew about taming horses –

TY. Ain't nobody told you to come up here.

DWIGHT. I'm sorry, I –

TY. What the hell you doing talking to her?

DWIGHT. We was just talking.

*(***DWIGHT** *moves away from* **TY** *and toward the cage.)*

TY. Well, who said you could?

DWIGHT. Nobody, I just come by –

TY. Get the hell away from her.

DWIGHT. Yes sir.

*(***DWIGHT** *moves away.)*

MARY. He wasn't doing nothing.

TY. Shut up, you.

(to **DWIGHT***)*

What's your business here?

DWIGHT. Well uh, Ty – Mr. Cole, I saw you a town a few weeks back and you mentioned to me, or I had heard you mention, you were talking to someone else and I over heard – perhaps I shouldn't have been listening, but I heard you say that, uh…well anyway, I got me a mare I can't tame.

MARY. Name's Queenie.

TY. Would you shut up?!

*(***TY** *walks up to the cage and kicks the bars. He then kicks sand in through the space, down into the cage where* **MARY** *sits.)*

Ain't nobody talking to you.

(to **DWIGHT***)*

What's the mare's name?

DWIGHT. Queenie.

TY. *(pause)* What kind of a fool ass name is that?

DWIGHT. Oh hell, I don't know. That's her name, all right? Now you gonna help me tame her?

TY. Sure. Cost you five dollars.

DWIGHT. Aw, come on, I ain't got no five dollars.

TY. Yeah, and you got a horse you can't use.

DWIGHT. Jesus.

(He digs through his pockets.)

I only got but three.

TY. Any silver?

DWIGHT. Uh… *(He digs a bit more.)* …two bits.

TY. Three'll have to do. Two bits will go toward the shells.

*(***DWIGHT** *hesitates, but then hands over the money.)*

Thank you.

*(***TY** *reaches in his pocket and pulls out a shell casing.)*

Let me see your gun.

DWIGHT. I don't have one.

TY. You don't have a gun.

DWIGHT. No sir.

TY. How the hell do you expect to tame that mare without a gun?

DWIGHT. I don't know, Mr. Cole. That's why I came to see you.

MARY. Why don't you just loan him one of yours?

TY. Shut up.

(pause)

Tell you what, I'll loan you one of mine.

DWIGHT. Thank you. That's nice of you.

TY. I need something for collateral.

DWIGHT. Collateral. Okay.

TY. What do you got for collateral?

DWIGHT. I don't think I got much of anything.

MARY. Aw, he's good for it.

TY. Will you shut up? Let me see that hat.

DWIGHT. Sure. *(He takes it off.)* It's almost brand new. I got it this winter.

TY. It'll have to do. Gun's worth a lot more.

DWIGHT. Oh, I know that. Don't you worry. I'll bring it right back.

*(***TY** *takes his gun out and empties it of shells. He begins putting new shells in.)*

TY. Okay, I'll give you six bullets. You probably won't need more than two, but just in case.

DWIGHT. What do I do?

TY. You go home, you go in that stall and you look her right in the eye and say "Queenie, you dumbass horse, you gonna behave." And you keep saying it till that horse starts to act up. And once it does, you take out that revolver and you fire a shot right above her head. Then you smack her right on the muzzle and say something like, "I give the orders around here," or, "What you mean acting like that." And if she rears up again, you fire another shot. Then you take a saddle and throw it over her back. If she rears, you fire another shot. She probably be scared shitless by then, but that oughta solve the problem.

DWIGHT. Oh. Yeah, all right. That makes sense.

TY. Here. *(He hands* **DWIGHT** *the gun.)* You ever used one of these before?

DWIGHT. Oh sure. This is very nice. Very nice gun.

TY. Uh. Bring back the gun and the bullets you don't use and you get your hat.

DWIGHT. Yessir.

TY. Be careful with that thing.

DWIGHT. I will.

TY. Don't go shooting the damned horse now.

DWIGHT. I won't.

TY. And don't make me come looking for you. I want that gun back by sundown.

DWIGHT. Oh don't worry, I'll be here. Thank you very much.

TY. Good, you get on outta here and give that a try.

DWIGHT. Yessir. Thank you.

TY. Sundown, I want to see you riding that there Queenie. You hear?

DWIGHT. Okay.

(As **DWIGHT** *exits,* **MARY** *calls after him.)*

MARY. Hey Dwight. If that don't work, don't forget what I told you.

*(***TY** *watches him leave.)*

DWIGHT. Oh I will. Good talking to you Mary. *(He exits.)*

TY. What'd I tell you about talking to strangers?

MARY. He was looking for you.

TY. How the hell you know what he wants? What if he ripped that gate open and went down there and had his way with you. How would that be then?

MARY. Who'd wanna do that?

TY. Lotsa folks, believe you me. And what'd you go telling him, anyway?

MARY. I told him how to tame the horse.

TY. Oh yeah? And what technique do you employ?

MARY. Nothing you'd understand.

TY. You got that right.

MARY. Where you been?

TY. In town.

MARY. I'm hungry.

TY. You finish your breakfast?

MARY. This morning.

TY. Well. Let me get settled, I'll fry you up some bacon or something.

MARY. Thank you. Can you empty my pot, too?

TY. I will.

MARY. And I could use some water. I ain't washed –

TY. All right, I heard ya. Damn it, can't you give me a minute for you start making lists of what needs to be done –

MARY. Well, what the hell do you want from me?

TY. *(overlapping)* Yeah, Yeah. I know. All day, all night, sitting there alone –

MARY. *(overlapping)* You got me cooped up here all by myself all day long, if you let you roam about the place –

TY. Roam about the place? And how do you expect to do that?

MARY. I get around just fine.

TY. Yeah, and I come back here and you probably have the whole place lit on fire. No thank you very much.

MARY. Well, you took your sweet time about it.

TY. I had business to attend to. If I don't work, then neither one of us eat, now do we? Do we?

MARY. No.

TY. That's right. No.

MARY. What took you so long?

TY. I ran into that mudsill Donelly, he was having some kinda trouble with a filly that had sand colic. He come by all roostered, "Ty, you gotta help me out."

MARY. Why do you bother with him?

TY. He pays cash money. He'd better. Horse damn near killed us, rolling around, trying to loosen herself up. We ended up walking her for better part of an hour fore she cut loose.

(pause)

What do you think of this piker?

MARY. I don't know. He paid you.

TY. Never see him again. Probably shoot hisself trying to tame that mare.

*(***TY** *rises and goes into the house.)*

MARY. Where you going?

TY. I thought I might take a nap, if that's all right with you.

MARY. You mind feeding me first?

TY. Let me catch forty winks and then I'll feed us both. Okay?

MARY. Sure.

*(***TY** *goes onto the porch, enters the house and closes the door behind him.)*

Whatever you say.

(blackout)

Scene Two

(Early evening. **DWIGHT** *moves slowly up toward the house. He looks around tentatively. After a moment,* **MARY** *calls out to him from the root cellar.)*

MARY. Who's there?

DWIGHT. It's me.

MARY. Who is it?

DWIGHT. It's me, Dwight.

MARY. What do you want?

DWIGHT. I came back to return the gun. And the shells, the ones I didn't use.

MARY. Oh.

DWIGHT. Is Ty at home?

MARY. He's sleeping.

DWIGHT. Oh. Can I leave them with you?

MARY. I don't have your hat.

DWIGHT. Well, I guess maybe he can just give it back when he sees me.

MARY. You best wait till you see him yourself.

DWIGHT. I'm sorry. I didn't know he'd be sleeping. Where's your gun?

MARY. I got it right here. Don't you worry.

DWIGHT. Okay. Well. I'll just come back tomorrow.

MARY. How did it work?

DWIGHT. Oh Good. Worked real good.

MARY. Yeah?

DWIGHT. Sure. I did just like he said. Took that gun and fired it once past her ear and just smacked her on the muzzle. And so she reared up and I said, "Queenie, you're gonna do what I say!" And I fired two more shots. One past her right ear and the other past her left. Pow Pow. Just like that.

MARY. And that did it.

DWIGHT. Sure did. I saddled her and everything.

MARY. You ride her?

DWIGHT. No, not yet. But I'll give her a go tomorrow morning.

MARY. Well. Now you got yourself a horse.

DWIGHT. Yeah. Sure do. Can I ask you a question? Oh, I'm sorry. Can I ask you two questions?

MARY. Sure.

DWIGHT. Why does Ty keep you locked up?

MARY. I ain't locked up.

DWIGHT. Oh.

MARY. What makes you think that?

DWIGHT. I don't know, I just figured –

MARY. You figured wrong. I could get out of here if I wanted to.

DWIGHT. Okay.

MARY. I like it down here. People leave me the hell alone. I got time to think, time to do my reading, my thinking. Don't have to answer no fool questions.

DWIGHT. I'm sorry, I –

MARY. It's where I live.

DWIGHT. Fair enough. Ain't never seen anybody live in a hole before.

MARY. Well you seen it now.

DWIGHT. Can you see down there?

MARY. I see all right. I can see you.

DWIGHT. How long's he plan on keeping you down there?

MARY. I told ya, he ain't keeping me anywhere.

DWIGHT. Then why don't you get out?

MARY. Maybe cause I don't want to. Why should I get out for you anyhow?

DWIGHT. Suit yourself.

*(***DWIGHT** *turns to go.)*

Can I get you anything?

MARY. No.

DWIGHT. Good night.

(He stops to notice the stars peeking out over the horizon.)

Ooop…Big Dipper.

MARY. What's that?

DWIGHT. Big Dipper.

MARY. Where?

DWIGHT. Right in front of you. Maybe you can see it, straight ahead?

MARY. That ain't the Big Dipper, that's Orion. Dipper's behind you. Toward me.

DWIGHT. What?

MARY. Face me. That's the Big Dipper.

DWIGHT. Oh. Oh I see.

MARY. Sometimes people do that. They see Orion's belt and think it looks like the Big Dipper. People do the same thing with the Little Dipper. They think it's Pleiades. See, turn the other way, you see Orion, you see the belt?

DWIGHT. Um…

MARY. The three bright stars in a row, that's the belt. That's how you find him. And he's got his bow and arrow and then if you look in the winter, you'll see Scorpius, that's the Scorpion that killed him. And he's up there with his two dogs, still hunting.

DWIGHT. Wait, how do you know that?

MARY. I've seen the sky at night before ya dummy.

DWIGHT. No, but how do you see behind you?

MARY. There's a small window in the back. I can see out. Squat down, you can see right through. See it?

*(***DWIGHT** *squats down so he's looking from front to back.)*

DWIGHT. Oh yeah. There it is.

MARY. You see it low to the ground like that, it looks like somebody taking a drink off the top of them mountains.

DWIGHT. How about that.

MARY. I got Orion in one window and the Little Dipper in the other. The beginning and the end, but nothing in between.

DWIGHT. You see the sun rise and the sun set, but you don't ever see it high in the sky. Is that it?

MARY. Yeah, kinda.

DWIGHT. The middle ain't worth much anyhow. That's where all the work gets done, right?

MARY. I don't know. Be nice to see the sun high in the sky sometimes.

DWIGHT. You ain't missing much. Come midday, it's hotter than a whorehouse on nickel night.

MARY. I wouldn't mind it.

DWIGHT. Thought you liked it down there?

MARY. Just when I start thinking you're okay, you gotta go put a spoke in the wheel.

DWIGHT. I just wanna know why he locks you up like you're some kind of…

MARY. What?

DWIGHT. I don't know. Carrot or something.

MARY. I ain't no carrot.

DWIGHT. I'm sorry –

MARY. You take that back.

DWIGHT. I said I'm sorry. Jeez. Never seen nothing like it.

MARY. Well, you have now.

DWIGHT. You cold down there?

MARY. No.

(pause)

Come closer.

DWIGHT. Why?

MARY. I want you to see me.

*(***DWIGHT** *moves to the front of the cage, but hesitates.)*

Come on closer, vegetables don't bite.

*(***DWIGHT** *moves to the cage, knees down and peeks in.)*

DWIGHT. Where are you?

MARY. Here. You gotta put your head up to the gate.

*(***DWIGHT** *grabs hold of the gate and puts his face through the bars.)*

DWIGHT. *(pause)* What happened to your legs?

MARY. Nothing. They were always this way.

DWIGHT. Can you walk?

MARY. What do you think? Now you're looking at me all funny.

DWIGHT. Sorry, it's just…how come your head's that shape?

MARY. Cause when I was born, my Mama loved me so much, she squeezed me too hard and it stayed that way.

DWIGHT. Really?

MARY. That's what my Pa told me.

DWIGHT. You believe that?

MARY. No.

(pause)

You think I'm pretty?

DWIGHT. Sure. I guess.

MARY. No, I ain't.

DWIGHT. You're okay.

MARY. Tell me about Queenie.

DWIGHT. What about her?

MARY. How did you get her, was she given to you…

DWIGHT. No, she was a barter. I was an apprentice for a Smith, just learning the trade so I wasn't making much. And I did some work for a guy on the side, but then I found out he couldn't pay. So we dickered around a bit and he said, tell you what, I'll give you this mare. And I thought I got the good end of the deal, turns out she was crowbait. At least she was till yesterday.

MARY. You got a saddle on her.

DWIGHT. That I did.

MARY. You shoulda tried my idea.

DWIGHT. Aw, that'd never work.

MARY. How do you know? You gotta earn the respect of the animal. Didn't I tell you that? She's trying to see if you have what it takes to tame her.

DWIGHT. Come on…

MARY. How's she gonna respect you if she ain't seen you run with her yet? You try it. You tie that rope on, let her run, and hold on for dear life. If she finally tires out and you're still with her, she'll come back and be tamed. You'll see. She'll look at you like you deserve to ride her.

DWIGHT. It don't matter no more anyhow. She don't make a fuss at all.

MARY. You mighta ruined her.

DWIGHT. How do you figure?

MARY. You scare the daylights outta that horse she might just fold up and stop running altogether. Then she ain't no use to you either.

DWIGHT. I did what your brother told me to do.

MARY. Who said you had to listen to him?

DWIGHT. Aw, what the Sam hell do you know, you can't even walk.

(pause)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean that.

MARY. You should go home.

DWIGHT. I'm sorry.

(pause)

Why did Ty put you down there?

MARY. He says to protect me.

DWIGHT. From what?

MARY. He didn't see fit to leave me alone, is all.

DWIGHT. I never seen anybody locked up on account of trying to protect them.

MARY. Well, you seen it now, so why don't you just get on outta here and forget it?

DWIGHT. It must be tough.

MARY. What.

DWIGHT. Being left alone like that.

MARY. Like anything else, I guess.

DWIGHT. What do you do all day?

MARY. Read. Sing to my self a little.

DWIGHT. Really? I'd love to hear you sing.

MARY. Nah.

DWIGHT. Oh come on. Let me hear you.

MARY. Don't know you well enough.

DWIGHT. Well, what do you read?

MARY. Nothing you'd understand. Look, can you do me a favor?

DWIGHT. Sure.

MARY. There's a short pan on the porch there, next to the barrel. Can you fill it up with some well water for me?

DWIGHT. Okay.

*(***DWIGHT** *moves to the porch to retrieve the water.)*

MARY. Ty was supposed to bring me some bacon, but I don't think I'm getting any tonight.

DWIGHT. Sure is a sound sleeper.

MARY. He'd beat the devil around a stump to keep from cooking. And once he's been on a bender, you might not see him for a day or so.

DWIGHT. How do you feed yourself?

MARY. I get by.

*(***DWIGHT** *has the pan of water near the front of the cage.)*

Just set it down there. I need to wash.

DWIGHT. Okay.

MARY. You got a girl?

DWIGHT. No.

MARY. How come?

DWIGHT. I don't know. I had a girl. Sorta. But I don't see her much any more.

MARY. What happened?

DWIGHT. It ended.

MARY. That happens. Who was she?

DWIGHT. Can you keep a secret?

MARY. Sure.

DWIGHT. *(pause)* She was married to the guy I was working for.

MARY. Shoot. Does he know?

DWIGHT. Course not. And don't you go telling nobody neither.

MARY. Well, what'd you go telling me for?

DWIGHT. I don't know. Just don't tell nobody.

MARY. Who am I gonna tell? I never see nobody.

DWIGHT. Guess you're right.

MARY. Don't worry. My lips are sealed.

DWIGHT. Okay.

(pause)

You know, I don't know if I could take it in a hole like that. I would start to get the shivers.

MARY. How come?

DWIGHT. I don't know. All dark and tight spaces like that.

MARY. It ain't so bad. You oughta join me some time.

DWIGHT. No way, I couldn't. Be too much like…

MARY. Like what?

DWIGHT. Being buried. I guess. When I was little and I found out that when you died they buried you, I remember I cried and cried. Went to my mama, "Mama don't bury me. I don't want to go down in the ground." Course, I wasn't thinking that you had to be dead first.

MARY. Not always.

DWIGHT. *(laughs nervously)* What are you talking about?

MARY. You ever heard of a dead ringer?

DWIGHT. No.

MARY. In England, the graveyards are real small and crowded. They run out of room sometimes so they would dig up coffins and use em over again. But when they dumped out the bones and looked inside, they found scratch marks on the lid of the coffin. Like people had been buried alive and were clawing to get out. So they started tying the wrist of the corpse to a string and they would lead the string out through the coffin to a bell in the graveyard. And if the person was buried alive, they could save themselves by ringing the bell. Hence the term, Dead Ringer.

DWIGHT. You're making that up.

MARY. It's true. Sure as I'm sitting here.

DWIGHT. I don't believe it.

MARY. Don't worry, nobody's gonna put you in your grave before your time. And even if they did, you'd get used to it.

DWIGHT. I would not. Hell no. I could never do like you, spending all that time alone.

MARY. Believe me, you get used to the solitude. After a while it becomes preferable

DWIGHT. *(shakes his head)* I like having people around. I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have somebody to talk to.

MARY. You go in to town a lot?

DWIGHT. Of course.

MARY. You see people you know.

DWIGHT. Yeah.

MARY. You drink with em, play cards, talk about this and that, and how are things out your way, and this one is marrying that one, and that one doesn't like this one and how is the weather, and I heard so and so might

be passing through and this one died and isn't that too bad and that one had a little girl and isn't that just dandy. And then you go home by yourself and just before you go to bed at night you lie awake and wonder who the hell are those people? Do I know any of those people? Do they know me? Did I show them myself? Or did I just them the face that I want them to see? You think you're with all sorts of people, all day long, all sorts of faces, but they're just like you. All alone. Each and everyone of us. Cause nobody's in your world but you.

DWIGHT. But I can be with people if I want to. What can you do?

MARY. I got lotsa company. I got my two best friends, the wind and the stars.

(pause)

You go on home.

DWIGHT. You need anything else?

MARY. No.

DWIGHT. Okay. Good night.

MARY. Thanks for the water.

DWIGHT. Sure.

(He exits.)

MARY. *(quietly and to herself)* All the company in the world.

(blackout)

Scene Three

(Just past sunrise, the next day. **DWIGHT** *quietly makes his way toward the porch. He carries a small basket covered with a cloth. He looks around for movement and then slips over to the root cellar, kneeling ten feet from the entrance.)*

DWIGHT. MARY.. Mary, it's me, Dwight. *(pause)* Mary?

MARY. Good morning.

DWIGHT. Shoot. You scared me.

MARY. How come?

DWIGHT. I didn't think you were awake.

MARY. I been awake since sun up. What are you doing here?

DWIGHT. I brought you something.

MARY. What?

DWIGHT. You like biscuits?

MARY. I suppose.

DWIGHT. I made you some.

MARY. You did.

DWIGHT. That's right.

(He begins unwrapping the basket.)

MARY. You made me biscuits.

DWIGHT. That's what I said. Don't you think I can cook?

MARY. We'll see I guess.

DWIGHT. I can take em back if you don't want em.

MARY. No, I'll give em a try. Ty never made me no biscuits before.

DWIGHT. I wrapped em up so they stayed warm.

(He hands two biscuits on a napkin to **MARY** *through the bar.)*

They still feel warm to you?

MARY. Pretty much.

DWIGHT. What do think?

MARY. I'm chewing.

DWIGHT. Okay. They any good?

(pause)

MARY. I'm still working on it.

DWIGHT. You don't like em.

MARY. Dwight, these are hard enough to stop bullets.

DWIGHT. I just made em.

MARY. What's the recipe call for, sawdust and pigshit?

DWIGHT. I followed the same recipe my mother used to make. How come you don't like em?

MARY. Have you tried eating one?

DWIGHT. No. I was saving em for you.

MARY. Well, why don't you bite down on one of em.

DWIGHT. All right.

(He begins chewing one.)

MARY. A little tough, huh?

DWIGHT. I don't know, tastes pretty good to me.

MARY. Proves one thing. Your mother couldn't cook either!

DWIGHT. Aw come on now –

MARY. I'm sorry –

DWIGHT. I got up damn near two hours ago to make you biscuits –

MARY. I know –

DWIGHT. And all you can do is insult my mother –

MARY. I'm sorry. I appreciate the effort.

DWIGHT. Just trying to be nice.

MARY. Thank you.

DWIGHT. You don't even appreciate it.

MARY. I do.

(pause)

In the unlikely event that I get into a firefight with some Apaches, I'll be well prepared.

DWIGHT. How's that?

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