

Adult Alice : Billy

SCENE 14

(1945. INT. ALICE'S OFFICE.)

(LUCY and DARYL are arranging Miss ALICE MURPHY's desk. BILLY enters.)

BILLY CANE

Miss Murphy asked me to meet her here. Am I being sent home? It's been twelve weeks and I haven't published anything.

DARYL

She's on her way.

BILLY CANE

That sounded scary.

LUCY

Daryl can make Happy Birthday sound scary. Show him, Daryl.

DARYL

(scary)
Happy Birthday.

(ALICE enters holding a two-page manuscript. LUCY and DARYL leave.)

ALICE

(to LUCY and DARYL)

Thank you.

(to Billy)

Mr. Cane, your latest submission is a bit of a mess. What's going on?

BILLY CANE

I'm sorry, Miss Murphy. I'd sent it to Margo and hadn't gotten it back yet. So I just turned it in. Frankly, I'm getting a little discouraged.

ALICE

Well, don't get discouraged. Work on it with Daryl. He's a fine editor.

(She hands him the manuscript.)

Start

BILLY CANE

Why did my mouth just go dry? How about if I work with Lucy?

ALICE

No, I should keep you out of harm's way.

(He starts to go.)

BILLY CANE

Miss Murphy, what do you think of it?

ALICE

What do I think of it?

BILLY CANE

Yes.

ALICE

Well, first you need to cut out three hundred words...

BILLY CANE

Three hundred?! Which three hundred?

ALICE

The superfluous ones.

(then)

You look shocked.

BILLY CANE

I always thought that was pronounced "superFLUous."

ALICE

And, you should open with your second paragraph, not the first. The action begins there.

BILLY CANE

What do I do with the first paragraph?

ALICE

Turn it into a lullaby because it put me to sleep. Look.

(She shows him the heavily penciled manuscript.)

BILLY CANE

Anything else?

ALICE

You have to cut the word "twixt."

BILLY CANE

Wait, what's the matter with "twixt?" You don't like "twixt?"

ALICE

Use "between."

BILLY CANE

Why?

ALICE

Because a man wrote this, not Tinkerbell.

(then)

And the second to the last paragraph should be cut.

BILLY CANE

What? I cried when I wrote that.

ALICE

Clearly. It's as purple as a baboon's butt.

BILLY CANE

(shocked)

Miss Murphy!

ALICE

Well, it's true.

(then, thoughtfully)

And then there's this last sentence. It flows nicely, but I'm curious.

BILLY CANE

About?

ALICE

Now why...why, Mr. Cane, would you end your essay with a word ninety-nine percent of our readers would have to look up?

(reads)

Dot dot dot, "the longing of the human heart and its search for propinquity."

BILLY CANE

I did that on purpose, Miss Murphy.

ALICE

Why?

BILLY CANE

It's the only five-dollar word in the whole piece. And because of it, I get the impact of the ending twice. The reader lands on a striking word with an elegant cadence. "Propinquity." Then, the reader goes to the dictionary...

(he mimes the action of picking up a dictionary)

"The longing of the human heart and its search for..."

(he opens the pages of the imaginary dictionary)

...closeness."

(There is a pause.)

ALICE

I'll tell you what. If you can sway Daryl, you can sway me.

BILLY CANE

So then there's hope.

ALICE

Let me put it this way. No one has ever swayed Daryl.

(She exits.)

#11B SCENE CHANGE

ENSEMBLE

(moody)

~~BRIGHT STAR
KEEP SHINING FOR ME
SHINE ON
AND SEE ME THROUGH
BRIGHT STAR
KEEP SHINING FOR ME
AND ONE DAY
I'LL SHINE FOR YOU~~

[TRANSITION TO:]