

Nothing to Lose

By

Robin Fulford

(Nothing to Lose #4 – May 2010)

Grade 11 Drama – The Festival Play

Notes: 8 performers, 4 male and 4 female

Death People:

Killer – m – Frank

Victim – m – Billy

Witnesses:

One – m – friend of victim – Guy - also plays cop

Two – f – ex-boyfriend of killer – Kelly - also plays politician

Three – f – classmate of victim – Nina - also plays mother of killer

Four – f – friend of killer 2 – Magdalena - also plays reporter

Elements of Existence:

Life – f

Death – f

Life and Death are attired as befit their high position. They have to be magical, other worldly, yet of this world.

The rest are dressed as regular teens, but particular attention will be paid to what we specifically need for each character or grouping.

Setting:

Bare stage. Centre is stark bright – the death spot; left and right sides are less bright but coloured, one side (stage right) green for Life, and the other side (stage left) blue for Death. The two worlds mingle together in the death spot - the duality that makes up the whole.

Colours: Life – green (growing life, vegetation), Death – Blue (the deep blue of the sea or the sky). Killers – black, victim – white, onlookers – red, blood on their hands too.

And Then There Was Light

Bare stage. Death music begins - Com'u Ventu by Agricantus. Performers file in led by Frank (killer) and Billy (victim) followed by Life, then witnesses, then Death. Frank and Billy go to death spot. The rest line up across the back, Life on one side and Death on the other.

Frank and Billy recreate the death scene with Frank punching Billy to the ground and then kicking him in the head. The chorus at the back react to the beating by mimicing some of Billy's moves eg. raising hand for protection, head snapping back when kicked. Music fades when Billy lies unconscious on the ground.

Death: Life, how do you feel?

Life: Oh Death, it's so brutal. I'm shivering.

Death: Hey, reality sucks, but you only have to witness that brutality. I have to deal with it. Do you think they just arrive on my doorstep and everything is peaches and double whipped cream? They have been killed. How do you think they feel?

Life: Dreadful, devastated, dreary, I don't know how many ways I can say it. (*to audience*) You see, it can happen that fast. And why? For what good reason?

Death: (*to Life*) Oh Life, there are always good reasons. You want to know about good reasons then you come to good old Death. I'll fill you in.

Life: Oh, you'll be the death of me, Death.

Death: But you, you are the life of the party, Life.

(They both laugh, goddesses dance together across the stage.)

Death Dances For Us

Death: Hey, let's see it again. They want to see it again. *(looking at audience)* Don't you? See.

Life: I don't want to see all that pain and suffering. And who knows what that does to us, seeing it over and over again.

Death: Life, my baby. Get a grip on reality. We are only doing this for scientific purposes so that those out there can figure out why they're here with us.

Life: Death, you are such a task master.

Death: Again. Perform the dastardly deed!

(Performers set themselves. Death music. Death spot lit. They repeat the death scene, but Frank shows his fear after his elation.)

Life: It's all so different from this side. Why, that almost makes sense somehow, but how?

Death: Life, you think too much or not enough. It's the balance that counts. There's witnessing and there's witnessing.

Life: Oh, yes. The witnesses. Speak! *(She motions for them to come forward.)*

Come Forth, Give Witness

(The witnesses – Nina, Guy, Magdalena, and Kelly - move forward from the back looking at the body and then away.)

Nina: And we all just looked at him afterward, him not moving, blood all over his face. And...and it was as if it wasn't real. I still can't believe it. I knew him, we all knew him. Things aren't supposed to be like this. And I keep getting these nightmares because that is what can happen out there. What the hell are the cops doing about all this? Do something about my nightmares. Please.

Guy: Why would he do it? He could have just beaten him up or pushed him but not what he did. He crossed the line. If he only hadn't taken that last kick. That one little thing has sent everything over the edge. Like you see this on tv and movies, right, but then you see it for real and it really makes you wonder. I was a friend of the guy who died, not super close, but cool, right? Not any more now.

Magdalena: Lock them up and throw away the key. Get them off the streets. I don't want to have to see them anymore. I hear about someone getting killed like this every time the news comes on. Ya, so there are reasons for this, but you know what? I don't care about reasons. Reality bites harder. Violence leads to more violence, less assholes on the street means less violence on the streets.

Kelly: I know the guy who kicked the other in the head and killed him. I went out with him last year, but just for a month or two. We dated and drifted apart. We were in different crowds so it wasn't working. But I never saw any of that violence from him at any time when we were together. I can't believe he would do that. He was always nice and loves animals. He would actually have conversations with my dog and with dog talk. So why would he want to murder Billy?

Life: We just want to get a few facts straight. Now who phoned 911? (*no response*) None of you. But you all had

cell phones? (*all nod yes*). But you didn't call, even after?

Guy: We thought that someone already had.

Life: But no one phoned at all! Not you, not anyone! Until later!

Death: Life, you're getting all lathered up.

Life: Then what were you doing with your phones? Because you are always doing things with your phones!

Death: Answer her, please.

Nina: I was texting my mother.

Guy: I shot some video.

Magdalena: I got a few pictures.

Kelly: I phoned my boyfriend.

Life: Death, that is so depressing. And the all kept calling him 'faggot, faggot'. That's so hateful. Can't we hope for better?

Death: It's a matter of training. We have a saying on my side and that is this: what you don't get figured out in life, will be shoved down your throat in death. Not pretty, but pretty accurate. Now, Life, the trouble with you is that you depend on hope and desire. I do suggest, however, that you do as I do, depend on inevitability and acceptance. Anyway, there's more to discover here, I'm sure. Don't you find this exciting?

Life: Can I take any more? And if so, how much? Always a riddle, damn you! (*shakes fist at the gods*)

Death Doesn't Stop The Dying

(*Killer and others rush in from death scene. #2 played by Magdalena, #3 by Politician, #4 by Mother, #5 by Cop.*)

Frank: Oh my god, oh my god, did you see that? Boom! (*does the kick again*)

2: Man, that was so crazy. So insane.

Frank: He won't be mouthing off to us now.

3: He was just lying there.

Frank: Well ya. We did him.

4: You did. You got him at the end.

Frank: Hey, man, we all did him.

5: His head just snapped back and-

Frank: He deserved it. You can't be an asshole and not pay.

2: Let's get out of here. Cops will be coming.

Frank: Relax. If you look guilty then you are guilty. If you look innocent then they will pass you by.

3: People saw us.

Frank: They know not to talk. Keep your mouth shut and everything is fine.

4: You shouldn't have done it.

Frank: Don't go sissy on me. He'll be fine and now we'll get respect.

5: What if he tells, or if he's not ok.

Frank: He is. I gave him a love tap. What's the matter with you?

2: Nothing.

Frank: Well get with it then. Let's go get stoned.

3: I'm not feeling that good.

Frank: Another beer will fix that.

5: I need more than one.

Frank: Now you're talking.

5: Man, this is crazy.

(They disperse as Billy comes to the death spot.)

Everyone Wants To Fit In

Billy: Everyone wants to fit in, right? If you fit in then you are liked and you can be yourself. But if you don't fit in, well then anything can happen. When I moved here two years ago it was like moving into a completely different world. I didn't know anyone and it all seemed so cliquey. If you weren't part of the group then you were looked down on. I remember some guys laughing at me cause of the jacket I wore. They were offended, right? I never wore that jacket again, but they kept kidding me all year.

Now with that guy who beat me up, I didn't meet him until this year. I don't know why he didn't like me. I didn't do anything to him. He just hated me cause he don't know what else to do. I wouldn't back down and take what he said. He just did it once too often. No self-respecting person can put up with that forever. But now look what's happened. That guy Frank was always goading me to fight. I knew better than to go where they hang out, but that night after the dance, and we were altogether out behind the school, and then there they were in my face.

Death Party

(Killer and others run in slightly drunk, laughing and carrying on. They are singing Seek and Destroy by Metallica, playing air guitar, high-fiving, doing special handshakes, etc. They stop when they see Billy.)

Frank: Jeez, what a stink. What is that stink? Someone didn't wash. Someone smells like garbage. I should pour a beer on that smell. *(Billy tries to leave.)* Hey, where you going lover boy? That stink of yours, is it getting you any action?

Billy: I just want to go ok?

Frank: Hey, we're trying to be nice, just sociable and you're being the loser that you always are.

Billy: I'm not a loser!

Frank: Faggot!

Billy: I'm not a faggot!

Frank: Faggot!

All: Faggot!

Billy: I'm not a faggot!

Frank: But we don't believe you because you are a loser.

(Frank starts to attack Billy again.)

Life: Freeze – all freeze! I don't want to see it again. After all, it's just another statistic on the evening news. Oh, I can't believe I just said that.

Death: Yes, Life. Just another stat in the rat hole you call existence.

Life: What are we going to do?

Death: Hey, it's your society, not mine.

Life: Things need to change.

Death: Ah, Life, you kill me. One can't change anything unless one cares enough.

Voices From The Social Construct

Reporter: (*played by Magdalena*) Welcome to KROY news, traffic, and weather on the ones, brought to you by Jiffy Pop. Make a difference in your life, just pop some Jiffy. Last night after a school dance in the Bloor Bathurst area, a young man was beaten to death by a gang of thugs. This is Metro's 31st homicide of the year. The names of the victim and the alleged perpetrator are being withheld as they are still minors. This is yet another tragic incident in a series of high school killings this spring. Principal Denise Morley spoke earlier today saying, "we obviously have to do some soul searching over this one. A loss of one is a

loss for all. As a society, we must embrace tolerance." Easier said than done, as you can guess.

Cop: (*played by Guy*) Look, as a cop I deal with these kinds of people all the time. Rule number one is you don't turn your back on them. You look them in the eye and you establish your authority. We are here to serve and protect, but sometimes you have to knock a few heads together to get some sense into them, to get some respect for what's right and wrong. Now these kids are not hardened criminals – yet – cause they just haven't had enough time. But what does it take to buy a cheapo gun and pop some guy. Like that man in the Junction who worked with teens. A cap in the back of the head cause some jerk didn't like him. Never had a chance. So no need to give the killers a chance either.

Mother: (*of Frank, played by Nina*) My boy's not a bad boy. He just made a mistake. If you put him in jail now you throw away every chance he'll have. He can become a good citizen. I'm so so sorry that young man was killed. Frank has to pay for what he did, but not in jail. He has to get the help he needs, and that won't happen there. Don't throw him in with those people. He is not beyond hope. I know you think I'm saying this because I am his mother. But what kind of society is this if we don't take care of our children. He needed direction but never had it. I failed him. I'm a single mom and he is a hard child to manage. I did my best but I'm not going to abandon him now. Help me to help my son.

Politician: (*played by Kelly*) As city councilor for Trinity-Spadina, I have been listening to my constituents and what they tell me is that they are tired of bandaid solutions for what should be major surgery. Bottom line is these kids need something to do after school. They need to have programs that will teach them respect, responsibility, self-

worth, and teach them skills that they can use throughout their whole life. They are left on their own way too much. It's a recipe for trouble. And all the violence and sexualization of the media they consume is a recipe for disaster. When is the mayor going to realize that unless we stand up, unless we roll up our sleeves and wade into the chaos that surrounds us, we will continue to delude ourselves and act as though it is not our fault when we are faced with yet another murder in our school yards. Please vote for me.

Funeral of Wishes

(Billy or the Ghost of Billy processes from the life side to the death side. Procession music is Aarizi R'amuri by Agricantus. He is led by Death and followed by life. Frank stands at the back watching. The others act as pall bearers or as supporters of Billy on his journey. They process in a slow stepping manner.)

Frank: *(as Billy passes him Frank screams out in a heart-wrenching manner)* Nooo!!

Life: *(to Frank who hangs his head)* Why did you do it? Why did you do it?

Death: He doesn't know yet. That is your job now. You have something to teach him.

Trial of Intent

Life: Order in the court!

(Frank stands in the death spot, now the witness stand for his trial. The rest of the ensemble (7) stand in a semi-circle behind him, Life on

her side at the front, Death on her side at the front – they are all prosecutors except Ghost Billy who stands behind Frank; he comes up behind Frank. Frank feels him, is uneasy, but cannot see him.)

1 (Life): Name?

Frank: Frank Leonard

2: Occupation?

Frank: Student.

3: Age?

Frank: Sixteen.

All: You are charged with second degree murder.

Billy: How do you plead?

Frank: Not guilty.

Billy: How do you plead?

Frank: Not guilty!

4: You did not plan, but you intended to kill.

Frank: No, I didn't. Others were there. We were just fooling around.

5: But you kicked him in the head.

Frank: I didn't mean to.

All: You hated him!

Frank: No, I didn't!

6 (Death): Were you drinking the night of the killing?

Frank: Yes.

1 (Life): How much?

Frank: I don't know. We started after school.

2: Were you stoned too?

Frank: Yes, yes, we were drunk and stoned. Things got out of hand. I didn't mean to kill him.

All: Why did you hate him?

Frank: He was different, that's all. He didn't fit in.

3: Have you beaten up people before?

Frank: No.

4: Did you hang out at the park regularly?

Frank: Sometimes. It was just a place to go when we had nothing to do.

5: A number of gays have been bashed there.

Frank: I had nothing to do with that.

6 (Death): You called 'faggot'. Do you consider yourself homophobic?

Frank: No.

6 (Death): You have been suspended from school three times for fighting.

Frank: That was not my fault. I was just defending myself.

Billy: Like the night you killed me? Like the night you killed me?! Look at what you've done.

(Billy reveals himself to Frank to show his wounds and death image.)

Frank: No...I can't.

All: Look at him!

(Frank is forced to look, then drops to his knees crying.)

Frank: You've got to believe me. I didn't mean to do it.

Billy: It's too late. You get five years!!...That's all he gets.

Frank: ...I'll be out in two. *(walks away)*

Life: In two? In two? That's so wrong. And what will happen to him in jail? He'll go from bad to worse.

Death: Well, could be a chance to...ah...develop his social skills. Teach him to kick bad habits rather than kick heads.

Life: And just who in the hell is going to do that?

Death: Oh good old Hell. I know him well.

Life: That killer is going to get out worse.

Death: Maybe.

Life: Ok, maybe. But it's still wrong.

Death: Chill. Life, you take life way to seriously.

Life: Life is hard, Death.

Death: Let's dance. You'll feel better.

Life: I don't want to feel better. I want things to change.

Choices of Living

Reporter: This is Mary Contrary of KROY News. Remember, hop to Jiffy Pop, you'll never be the same. Ok, Sergeant, now that the verdict has come down, how do you feel about the outcome?

Cop: Well, it's one more off the street, at least for a while. The victim impact statements almost made me cry. We've got to get tough on crime. Being soft, they'll take advantage of you.

Reporter: They say that jail just teaches them to be better criminals. Something is wrong there, don't you think.

Cop: That's just liberal gobbledegook. Lock them up for longer. It's pure and simple.

Reporter: Mrs. Leonard, can you say something about the verdict?

Mother: If that is the only thing they can do for a lost boy then what does that say about our society? They've taken him away and doomed him forever.

Reporter: Councillor, what are your constituents saying?

Politician: Well, Mary, they are saying they are going to vote for me because they realize that what I did say does make sense

for me. Maybe they should bring back hanging. Ha ha ha. Only kidding, Mary. Sort of. Vote for me.

Reporter: And this is Mary Contrary in the field saying, Jiffy Pop makes your life hop hop hop.

Death and Life with Billy

Billy: *(to Death)* I want to go back.

Death: Sorry, bud, but you're a tragedy. I can't do anything about that.

Life: See, it's so depressing. And Frank, the lost one. What do you have to say to us Frank? What? Tell us something. Anything.

Frank: Ah, well, there's things about me, inside, that I don't like, but they are there. I want to figure them out so I won't do those things. I can't do it on my own. Don't hate me, help me. I still got a chance to...to get back on the boat.

Death: Ya, Life, a boat party, booty on the boat! That will make us all feel better. It will lighten the load, limber up the joints, tighten up the saggy ass of existence. Come on, oh, ya. You need it, I need it, we all need it. Right, Billy.

(Billy looks at Death and then Frank. He hesitates.)

Billy: Ya, we all need it.

Death: Then let's get on it!

(Music blares – Get on the Boat by Prince. Death leads them all off dancing. Billy and Frank have a moment – some kind of forgiveness on Billy's part, some kind of apology on Frank's part, both unspoken. Life is the last one off. She pauses to look at the audience and share

a “I don’t believe what we go through” moment followed by a shrug, before she dances off.)