

BESSIE. Nervous?

HANK. No.

BESSIE. These are new offices for them. Their old one became infested with bugs.

HANK. Bugs don't bother me.

BESSIE. No?

HANK. They crawl out of the drain in the boys' shower. They hide in the lumber in the wood shop. They float in the soap basins on the sinks. You get used to them.

BESSIE. I wouldn't.

HANK. One dude in my room. There's twelve of us in this room and this one dude catches bugs and puts them on a leash.

BESSIE. A leash?

HANK. A hair leash. He pulls out a strand of his hair and ties it around the bug and the other end he tacks down under his bunk. He had this whole zoo of bugs walking in little circles under his bed.

BESSIE. Hank.

~~HANK. Till this other dude smashed them all with the back of this cafeteria tray. It was funny.~~

~~BESSIE. Sounds funny.~~

HANK. It's not like anybody ate off the tray. It was an old tray. We use it to slide down the mud hill behind the seizure ward.

BESSIE. Uh-huh.

HANK. You get going real fast. This one dude's old man used to clock pitches for the National League East. He clocked me with his radar gun going fifty.

BESSIE. That's fast.

HANK. And my tray shot out from underneath me and broke this dude's windpipe. We had to perform an emergency tracheotomy with a sharp piece of bark and a Bic pen.

BESSIE. Hmmm.

HANK. Man, it was something. You want a candy? (*Offers her a candy from the retirement home.*)

BESSIE. No. Why do you make up these stories?

HANK. What?

BESSIE. These stories. Razors under the tongue, tracheotomies.

HANK. I'm not making anything up.

BESSIE. Why did you pretend you weren't going to get tested? Why did you put me through that?

HANK. I could still walk out of here.

BESSIE. Why do you tell so many lies?

HANK. I haven't told you shit. You don't know anything about that place.

BESSIE. Then tell me.

HANK. You don't know.

BESSIE. Tell me. *(Long pause.)*

HANK. You don't know.

BESSIE. I was in the hospital. It was boring. I was scared and it was boring.

HANK. There's this one dude —

BESSIE. If this is another tall tale I'm not interested. *(She picks up a magazine.)*

HANK. *(Sits.)* Toss me one, okay? *(Bessie gives him a magazine. They flip through them. Looking at a picture.)* Man, what magazine is this? *(He checks the cover and returns to picture.)* That's a human heart. *(Bessie pays him no attention.)* That's a kidney. That's a lung. That's a brain. That's the eye. That's skin. *(Pause.)* I played in a pool tournament in my ward. Did Mom tell you?

BESSIE. No.

HANK. I came in fourth. It's true. She doesn't think it's a big deal.

BESSIE. That's great. *(Slight pause.)*

HANK. I got my toe broken in there.

BESSIE. How?

HANK. Guy threw a garbage can at me and it landed on my foot.

BESSIE. Why'd he do that?

HANK. No reason I know of. Broken toes never heal.

BESSIE. Does it hurt?

HANK. Sometimes. *(Slight pause.)* A lot of drugs float around in there.

BESSIE. Do you take them?

HANK. Most of the time I keep to myself. Most of the time I sit in my room. I've got a roommate but most of the time he's got his face to the wall. Most of the time I think about not being there. I think what would it be like to be someone else. Someone I see on the TV or in a magazine, or even walking free on the grounds. They can keep me as long as they want. It's not like a prison term. I've already been there longer than most. A lot of the time I think about getting this house with all this land around it. And I'd get a bunch of dogs, no little ones you might step on but big dogs, like a horse, and I'd let them run wild. They'd never know a leash. And I'd build a go-cart track on my property. Charge people to race around on it. Those places pull in the bucks. I'd be raking it in. And nobody would know where I was. I'd be gone. Most of the time I just want to be someplace else.

~~BESSIE. Why aren't you?~~

~~HANK. Huh?~~

~~BESSIE. Why aren't you someplace else?~~

~~HANK. What do you mean?~~

~~BESSIE. Do you want to be in there?~~

~~HANK. No way.~~

~~BESSIE. Then why are you?~~

~~HANK. I've got no choice.~~

~~BESSIE. You're the one who told me people only do what they want.~~

~~HANK. Yeah.~~

~~BESSIE. So you must want to be there.~~

~~HANK. No. No way.~~

~~BESSIE. Then show them you don't need to be in there.~~

~~HANK. It's not easy like that. People start thinking of you a certain way and pretty soon you're that way.~~

~~BESSIE. So there's nothing you can do?~~

~~HANK. It's hard, that's all.~~

~~BESSIE. I don't want you wasting your life in there.~~

~~HANK. Neither do I.~~

~~BESSIE. Then why are you still there?~~

~~HANK. They put me there.~~

END