

on the Internet. It's an acute viral infection. It's transmitted through infected saliva. I guess he must have been bitten by something that had it. Maybe a fox or a raccoon. Bats can have it too. It travels from the bite to the spinal cord and the brain. Then the victim gets a really high fever and uncontrollable excitement, then spasms of the throat muscles. That's what causes them to salivate. They can't swallow water. Another word for the infection is "hydrophobia," which of course means "fear of water." Can you imagine not being able to swallow? That must suck. (*Beginning to ramble.*) It's weird. We had him vaccinated when he was a puppy. I guess it doesn't always work. (*Beat.*) We had a funeral for him. Well, my sister and me did. I think I was supposed to say something, but I couldn't think of anything to say. I just stood there, frozen, like an idiot. My brain went numb and that's never happened to me before. I mean, there's always something going on up there, right? Even in the subconscious. People meditate to clear their minds. I don't get that. I don't ever want to have a clear mind again. I guess I was thinking, by burying him, that I'd have some closure or feel his presence there or something and I didn't and that just freaked me out, so I don't know. I mean, have you ever had someone close to you die and you can't stop thinking about them and what's happened to them? It's like you're stuck in this morbid place and there's so much death that you feel like your head is going to explode and it makes you think that you're not even there. That maybe you're dead, too. (*Beethoven slams his fist down on the piano, making a cacophonous chord.*) What?

BEETHOVEN. Well, it's just that you haven't spoken to me in years. Except to call me a "faggot" or to dislocate my shoulder and all of a sudden I get a stream-of-consciousness monologue about your dead dog while I'm trying to spend the only moments of my day that don't truly SUCK. And, you see, there's some missing component to this conversation, other than an attentive listener. A segue, I suppose? Forgive my bluntness. Please don't hit me. But I could give two shits about you or your vacant mind or your morbid curiosities or your dead fucking dog, so why don't you just leave?

CB. I never dislocated your shoulder!

BEETHOVEN. According to my doctor, you did. In shop class last spring, you twisted my arm behind my back and told me that you wouldn't let go until I said that — and I quote — "I like to get it up the ass."

CB. I was just playing around with you.

BEETHOVEN. That makes me feel a lot better! At least I know it was all in good fun. Now I remember. Through my screaming and the searing pain, I definitely recall hearing laughter. Anyway I can contribute to the fun of the group ...

CB. We were just messing with you.

BEETHOVEN. Fuck you, CB! I'd rather you say "we beat the shit out of you because we can't stand you" than to say you're just "messing" with me! That implies light teasing or slightly opprobrious behavior. I haven't had lunch in the cafeteria in two and a half years for fear of going home with some part of it smeared across my shirt! I haven't been in a bathroom on campus since the time my head got slammed into the wall. I believe you were there.

CB. I didn't do that!

BEETHOVEN. Yeah?! Well, you didn't stop it either! And the faculty doesn't care. You know what I'm so sick of hearing? "They only pick on you because of their own insecurities." The classic guidance counselor line! "Oh geez, Mrs. Blank, since you put it that way, my head doesn't hurt so much anymore!" And what really kills me is that everybody wonders why kids bring guns to school and shoot you fuckers down. Maybe you're not the bully, but you stand idly by and watch. In my eyes that makes you even worse. So — Please. Just. Go.

CB. Maybe if you didn't act so —

BEETHOVEN. What? What, CB? How do I act?

CB. Well. Gay.

BEETHOVEN. And how does one act gay? (*Silence.*) By playing the piano? Oh, it must be all those times I ogle the football team. Maybe I'll stop carrying around a pink purse. Or openly sucking dick in plain view of the entire student body! What?! What is it!?

CB. You're being hostile and I'm just trying to talk to you like a civilized —

BEETHOVEN. I don't want to talk to you!!! I just want to be left alone! I don't need social pointers. All I need from you is an apology for the five minutes that you've stolen from my day!

CB. See, this is why you don't have any friends.

BEETHOVEN. I think we both know why I don't have any friends.

CB. Oh, don't be so melodramatic!

BEETHOVEN. You're in here crying about a dead dog and I'm being melodramatic?!

CB. Just shut the fuck up about my dog, okay? (*Beethoven gets up*)

in his face.)

BEETHOVEN. Or what? You'll hit me? Go ahead. I'll show you how people get hurt and don't run away to cry like a big fucking baby. *(Beethoven shoves CB. He's had it. CB doesn't fight back. Beethoven is hitting him as hard as he can but CB isn't budging. Beethoven relents and CB begins to laugh and his laugh is getting bigger and bigger.)* What's so funny, asshole?

CB. I'm sorry. Nothing.

BEETHOVEN. I don't see anything to laugh at.

CB. It's just that I was scared of you for, like, a second. *(Beethoven joins in on the laughter.)*

BEETHOVEN. I'm sorry.

CB. No, it's okay. I deserved it. *(Beat.)* Promise me you won't bring a gun to school.

BEETHOVEN. I don't know where to get one. *(A silence.)* You were one of my best friends. You all were. I just don't get it.

CB. It's no consolation, but — well, can I be honest?

BEETHOVEN. Yeah.

CB. No one knew what to say to you after your dad got arrested. It was awkward.

BEETHOVEN. It was more awkward for me.

CB. I'm sorry that we weren't there for you.

BEETHOVEN. That means a lot.

CB. See, now you're being sarcastic again.

BEETHOVEN. No, I wasn't.

CB. *(Laughing.)* It's hard to tell with you. *(Beethoven laughs as well. CB extends his hand.)* Truce?

BEETHOVEN. I wasn't fighting a war, but okay. Truce. *(He shakes his hand. Their hands are together for longer than expected. CB pulls his away.)*

CB. Are you — ?

BEETHOVEN. I don't know. I've never had sex, so it would be hard to say at this point.

CB. But what about — ?

BEETHOVEN. My dad? I don't think that's considered sex. *(A longer than average silence.)*

CB. Do you remember how my dog used to howl whenever you played the piano?

BEETHOVEN. Yeah. I always found it pretty insulting.

CB. He was singing along. What do you think happens to pets when they die?

BEETHOVEN. They go to heaven.

CB. You believe in heaven?

BEETHOVEN. Sure. There has to be some reward for having to live through this.

CB. And you think there are animals there? In heaven?

BEETHOVEN. "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, and the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest."

CB. But my dog killed a living thing. Wouldn't God be mad?

BEETHOVEN. He was sick, CB. He couldn't help it. *(Was he talking about his father? He looks at CB, who looks depressed.)* You know they say a dog sees God in his master. A cat looks in the mirror.

CB. *(Chuckling.)* I hate cats.

BEETHOVEN. Me too. *(CB stares at him for a long moment, then smiles. He stands up and walks over to the piano. He sits down and begins to play the bass part of a song like "Heart and Soul."* Beethoven stands and joins him at the piano to play the treble part — of course, stylistically. CB stops, prompting Beethoven to, as well. He looks at him again for a long moment. He grabs Beethoven and kisses him, long and passionately. He pulls away. CB stares at him, almost blankly, then he stands and exits, leaving Beethoven a little out of sorts. Lights out.)*

"DRAMA"

Lights up on CB's sister. She performs to the audience. The following can only be described as BAD.

CB'S SISTER. Metamorphosis. Transformation. Evolution. Change. Evolution. Change. Changing evolution. I am a teenage caterpillar. I know of these things. For soon, I'll spin a cocoon. And from the silklike craft that I will create, a magnificent creature will

* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.