

HEARTS ON HOLD

Final Draft

Devised by the 2018 TheatriQ Youth Ensemble

Characters

Poppy - Hanna

Tiramisu - Sam

Buttercup - TJ

Marmalade - Janine

Haze - Brey

Gust - Jaqob

Gale - Patria

Jules - Matt

Sage - Winston

Aster - Michelle

One singing character - Red (A conduit, perhaps, between the 'spiritual world' and current world)

ACT 1 Scene 1

Low light. We first see Marmalade and Buttercup dancing, slowly, to the music. Then, Montage of Tiramisu and Poppy sneaking around Kiki's and Buttercup and Marmalade dancing/flirting. A theme plays as Tiramisu and Poppy find each other and look around the bar. Split stage kind of situation. Marmalade leaves, Buttercup lingers and leaves/hides a letter and stays on stage. Poppy and Tiramisu find the letter and awkwardly stand next to each other as they read silently, Buttercup speaks aloud.

Buttercup

June 3rd, 1940

I miss you.

I guess I'm suppose to start with a "hello" but that's not what I want right now.

I miss you. Miss you in our city. Miss you in my arms. This summer has just begun but it's already dragging and I ache.

Before you there wasn't an ache. There wasn't pain there, wasn't longing there, wasn't anything but an emptiness. You can't miss a limb when you don't remember being born with one in the first place. When I saw you perched on that bar stool drink in hand, pretty as a picture and dressed to the nines- well that's when the aching began. That's when the pain started and I felt it deep down to the point it was suffocating and I thought that there was no cure for this. Thought that this was just how things were. Thought that I was gonna be hurting for the rest of my life until I fell over and died.

But then baby you smiled at me and I never felt more right. It wasn't the emptiness of before. It wasn't the lack of feeling, the absence of sensation, no siree this was something new. I asked you to dance and thank everything above and beyond that you said yes. It was there with you in your arms. Me and you swaying to the music not even on beat, but instead just holding each other close. It was when I could smell your perfume mingling with my cologne that I for the first time felt warmth. My hands on your waist that was a promise. With you sighing into the crook of my neck, oh sugar, you might as well had been saying "I do."

Buttercup exits. Poppy lets Tira take the letter. Tira exits, awkwardly. Then Poppy.

Lights down.

Video of history reel plays and runs into next scene of Tira typing on blog....

Act 1 Scene 2

Lights up, Low light.

(Tira enters, looks at screen and sits at her desk, typing away at her laptop. Looking at her PROJECTED "Gals Town Community blog" she had begun writing a segment on PROJECTED "The Histories of Gals Town: Kiki's". The first sentence on the page being: 'I have made a discovery in the old gay bar, Kiki's...)

Tira

I have made a discovery in the old gay bar, Kiki's. Kiki's was a historical place of community and closed in 2013 due to lack of funds. It had been running since the 1930s, but at that time it was only the basement of the building. Come to find out, Kiki's had a hopping lesbian scene in the basement, when it was still illegal to be out. The building itself closed 5 years ago, but that didn't stop me from investigating. I found way more than I was expecting...

(Lights lower)

BUTTERCUP

Never for a moment did I mourn the fact that we were women. Not even for a second did I hesitate on the fact that this was going to be hard. That this was going to feel impossible at times. That the world was gonna step up and shout and fight and kick and spit and try its damndest to make us regret. Regret the color of our skin being different from one another. How could we ever regret that? How could they ever make us regret the bond that pulls us toward one another. Even in that basement, the looks we get from the others...It's hard to pay them no mind sometimes, darling. The racism. They are afraid of us. It's layer upon layer upon layer.

But we won't just fight back. We will love back.

You in my arms pulling away and smiling coy- not shy never shy- and telling me you'll be back next week.

You made me think of a tomorrow.

Maybe you don't realize what you did, but oh sugar, you gave me that future.

This summer will pass. You'll come home. The ache will be gone.

Love, Buttercup

Act 1 Scene 3 (To be run next to previous scene)

(Setting up Tripod to do vlog)

POPPY

Hey ghouls!! Poppy here again! Today I'm gonna tell y'all about the ghost that lives next door!

I've long suspected that a haunting was about in the bakery and then suspected it was just me being mesmerized by the enchanting smell of bread baking, the spell of which was consistently interrupted by customers coming in.

Turns out that I was closer to being correct than all of your comments led me to believe. The spectral spell was actually coming from the building next door, at KiKi's abandoned bar!

While I was there, another adventurer showed up and we discovered mysterious letters that I'm suspecting were left by ghosts. Something tells me that there are more letters to find...! Next week will be The Letters pt.2 so don't forget to like and subscribe!

Act 1 Scene 4

Poppy is at the counter of the bakery. A warm light covers the area.

store door bell rings

Haze, Gust and Gale enter chatting

Poppy

Hey! Good morning! How's the shop?

Gust

Ya know, it's going.

Haze

Don't make it sound so bad! Every community needs a barbershop.

Gale

True. But we're the only original left on the block

Haze

Which means all these fools have to come to us!

Gust

Fools!

Poppy

Should you be insulting your customers like this?

Gale

None of them are in here!

Poppy

(referencing herself) Umm. I guess I'll reschedule my appointment for a new shop
then...

Haze

SKIP IT, POPPY! You know why we're here

Poppy

To insult my hair line?

Haze

Okay yes, but also I've seen you and Tira hanging out lately, what's going on with that?

Poppy

I really love how blunt you are, not caring for the facade of politeness in daily life. I just
think it's so, well, refreshing!

Gale

Ok ok whatever, you're still avoiding the question

Poppy

Are you gonna buy anything?

Haze

Maybe...

Gust

If we buy something will you tell us what's going on?

Poppy

Maybe...

Gust

Fine. I'll have a banana, please.

Gale

I'll get a cookie.

Haze

I'll have a chocolate croissant, honey sesame roll, earl grey cream puff, ciabatta--sliced, two sodas, whatever this is right here and...and umm... is this strawberry jam? Then this strawberry jam. I've been dying to try it out.

Gust

What? No! First of all, why all the carbs, Haze? and second of all, we have to stop spending money so frivolously!! It's not like things have been going that great for us business wise and we can't just spend on anything we-

Haze

That's no reason to deny myself simple pleasures! If I want jam I'm getting jam!

Poppy

Don't worry! If you're this desperate to get tea from me, I'll let y'all have a discount, just this time.

Poppy gets and bags all the items except the sodas

Poppy

That'll be \$18.75. The sodas are free.

Haze

Uhhh...can you cover this Gust?

Gust

Fine, but you owe me.

Haze

Yeah, I owe u for a lot of stuff. *Nervous laugh*. Anyways, you and Tira! What's up with that?

Poppy

Nothing is up with that. It's just that I had my weekly Ghoul and Gals vlog I had to get done and I was feeling adventurous. I wanted to know more about the neighborhood I guess, so I went into the abandoned bar.

Gale

KiKi's?

Poppy

Where else?

Haze

You went ghost hunting in the super scary and probably dangerous abandoned lesbian bar?

Gust

Why didn't you invite us?

Gale

Yeah! We live for this stuff! We coulda made that excursion so much more exciting!

Gust

I don't know about Haze, but I don't mind getting dirty and covered in dust

Haze

I don't know about all of that, but knocking elbows with some pretty ghosts? ooh

Poppy

I don't know what made me feel so...so...BOLD. It's just that everything in my body was telling me to go in. So I went right in

Haze

You've resorted to Breaking and Entering for more subscribers to your vlog?

Poppy

Oh stop it. You're making me sound like a criminal, not a curious soul. So I was sneaking around in the basement and I heard someone entering upstairs.

Gust

Oohh, did you run? Did you hide?

Poppy

OF COURSE! I was creeped out! I ran under the stairs and sat there, frozen. It felt like ages that the person was wandering around upstairs and then they started coming down the stairs. Trying, really unsuccessfully, to be quiet. I tried to be quiet too but some old plaster was poking into my back and I had to shift my position.

Gale

Oh come on, you could've waited it through!

Poppy

You wanna hear the story or not?

Haze

Ignore Gale, just continue

Poppy

So they said “Hello?” in this really weak voice and I thought, wait; “Was that Tiramisu’s voice? No way. What the hey?”

Haze

More like ‘what the Hey Gurl!’”

Gust

Ha!

Gust and Haze high five. Gale tries, but unsuccessfully

Poppy

(Ignoring them) So I said “Are you Tiramisu?” And Tiramisu said “Who’s asking?”

Haze

Come on, skip to the good parts

Poppy

Ok! Basically we realized both of us were there for similar reasons; Tiramisu wanted to do a history project on Kiki’s for their blog and was looking around for info and memorabilia. We started to look around and we noticed this, like, mailbox in the back next to a phone. The phone had been ripped out, but this box was still there.

Haze

What was inside?

Gale

Dude, you gotta be more patient!

Poppy

I used my pocket knife to pry it open. It took longer than I had hoped so I was embarrassing myself in front of Tiramisu and then the box flew open making us both *scream! (Gale and Poppy Scream and hold one another, briefly) ...And grab each other.*

Haze

Now THAT'S some TEA

Gust

That's the dream...

Poppy

Well I didn't NOT like it....That's not the point though!

Haze

We believe you.

Haze winks.

Poppy

In the box was this letter, a love letter. More than one.

Gale

Oh my god! Cute!!

Poppy

We read it and it was so strange, almost magical. As Tiramisu and I read the letter we could feel the room warming up and, like, sweat? Like I could hear voices and music. I swear I saw something moving out of the corner of my eye. When we finished reading, we both decided we should leave before something creepy happened.

Gaze

Everything you just described wasn't creepy?

Haze

Do you have the letter?

Gale

Yea! We need to see this thing.

Poppy

(poppy presents a letter) I do have one of them here, Tira has the other. But I'm not sure it would be right to share it. I mean, they weren't meant for us. I feel bad enough removing it from Kiki's.

Haze

Oh please, we are paying for tea, we are going to get some tea.

(Haze grabs the letter out of Poppy's hand.)

"July 2nd, 1940. Dear, Buttercup *(they react to the name)* You know what made me feel like a woman, Buttercup? Being by your side, holding your arm, and being picture ready. I know it might sound silly to you. The idea that I feel your words resonate in me. That I relate, even in all my hair and makeup and too high heels, but I do. Maybe it's not

the same and that's okay. Our differences complement each other. Still, will you listen to me ramble for a bit, Buttercup?"

Marmalade enters. They stand down center as the other four read the letter silently behind.

Marmalade

I never liked the way men would look at me. Their stares and sneers and calls and assumptions. I felt that. I felt that in me and it made me sick to the stomach, but I played along as a young one. I dressed the part. I flirted and winked and smiled in their direction. Oh this is embarrassing to admit, isn't it? Am I making you jealous?

But it was never right. Felt like I was wearing a costume. Dressed up for a play in a script I had no control over. Then it changed. When I started to learn what love was. When I started to see that I didn't have to be a piece of meat bitten and ripped open and eaten. When I was with you I was respected. When I was with you - you didn't find me sexy. Or you did, but there was more to it. You found me warm. You found me gentle.

You found me feisty and complicated and complete. I stopped dressing for men. Despite what some of the other girls might say, I didn't start dressing for you butches neither. It was for me and you were just along for the ride and that doesn't mean I love you any less and that doesn't mean you weren't instrumental to my development. But baby I'm for me first and foremost. You understand that, right? I hope you do.

That doesn't mean you didn't help me along the way. Discovering myself. Loving myself. I don't know how I would've done that if you weren't looking for me too. If you weren't loving me too.

You've done so much for me, Buttercup and I can't say thank you enough, but I hope I
can love you enough instead.

Love, Marmalade

Silence. Marmalade exits. Then

Gust

Whoa

Gale

Double whoa

Poppy

I know, right? We've only found two of these so far, Tira and I, but I just know there are
more out there. This could be a big find for Tira's blog.

Haze

And yours.

Poppy

Right right. Mine too.

Gust

So you and Tira realized you shouldn't hate each other anymore and you're best
friends again, maybe even lovers, and this will be your ultimate journey together to that
end?

Poppy

No. Not at all. We just both decided we should try to find out more about who these people were and why they left these letters behind. Whoever left these around must be pretty sentimental.

Haze

Aww I hope it goes well! Where's our sodas?

Poppy

Oh here!

Gust

Great story, let us know if anything happens. We need to get back to the shop

Haze

See ya, Poppy!

Gale

Peace

Store bell rings as Haze, Gale and Gust exit.

Act 1 Scene 5 (Barbershop)

White and blue light. Gust is busy sweeping and organizing their station in the barbershop. Jules sits in one of the waiting chairs.

Gust

You getting into anything today? Or just hanging out here taking up a seat?

Jules

Barbershop has the comfiest chairs in town. Good for studying.

Did you hear who's moving into Kiki's?

Gust

No, someone bought Kiki's? OMG who?

Jules

A cupcake shop.

Gust

A cupcake shop??

Jules

Yep. Heard it from Charlie who told Myzel who told Gale who told the whole town on
twitter

Gust

Are you serious?

Jules

Yeah. I'm not sure why, but I'm sad that the bar's gonna be gone.

Gust

That's what I'm saying! I get that. It's been here all my life, the bar going away is like losing a part of home y'know? It was bad enough when it closed down, now it's being taken over by some bougie Cupcake clowns.

Jules

Exactly! I don't really understand it, but I know Kiki's was a really important part of the community for a long time.

Gust

It was a hot spot for a real long time. The owners of Kiki's actually helped open Queenz Cuts, they apparently supported my boss through some tough times.

Jules

It's weird how a building can hold so much sentimental value and then just go away.

Gust

That's just how it is. If that cupcake shop works out, rent is gonna start rising, a bike lane goes in and white folks are gonna start jogging down the block. As if we never rode bikes before!

Jules

See, that just bothers me, that people move into neighborhoods, hike up the prices and then end up pushing the original residents out. What do they think of us? What do they know about this neighborhood, about you? About me? About the bookstore I work at

and has been here for over 30 years? About Queenz Kutz and the Bakery that is *already here* and making dope cupcakes!! What do they know about KiKi's?

Gust

After KiKi's closed things started to change here. It's been 5 years since KiKi's left us and we are still feeling that gap. So much has changed in this hood already, I just learned to roll with it.

Jules

But we can't let them erase what has been here for generations! KiKi's was an institution, a safe haven, a beacon of light for so many queers to congregate. Not only KiKi's, but this whole neighborhood! We grew up on this block and have seen it change. Do they know whose shoes they are stepping into?

Gust

I imagine not

Jules

What do they think of how things are already changing here? Are they thinking at all?

Gust

Of course they are! They know exactly what they are doing.

And I'm sure they do enough thinking from the comfort of their bean bag chairs at the local tech company...

Jules

(A sad guffaw) Ha

Gust

(Sad) Yea. Lol.

Jules

I have to get to the bookstore. I'm late already. Sage and Aster will wonder where I
am.

Gust

Just tell them you were with me spilling tea. You know they can't resist some good tea

Jules

I'll tell them. See you.

Gust

Later

Act 1 Scene 6 (Bookshop)

Yellow light. Tiramisu is sitting at one of the cafe's tables while Jules packs away books.

Tiramisu

Then she said, her voice cracking by the way, "Are you Tiramisu?" and I said "Who's asking?"

Poppy enters. Jules gives Tiramisu a look.

Poppy

Hi Tiramisu.

Tiramisu

Oh. Hey.

Pause. Tiramisu scrambles for the closest book and Poppy starts looking through their bag, Jules looks back and forth between them.

Jules

Are you here to pick up any books Poppy?

Poppy

Yeah! I'm picking up "Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers".

Jules

One sec, it should be right here. Oh! Wait! This might interest you two. I found this in the basement. It's a box of old stuff that the owners of Kiki's had given to Queenz Cuts when Kiki's closed down.

Tiramisu

This is great! I've been stuck with my research.

Jules picks up the box and puts it on the table where Tira is sitting. Tira takes out a couple of books from the box and starts skimming through them. As Tira opens the third/fourth book, A letter falls out.

Poppy

What's that?

Poppy and Tiramisu

I noticed it first!

Tiramisu

I want to read that!

Poppy

So do I!

Jules

You can both look at it! I can't deal with you two flirting, I'm out of here. I have podcasts to listen to in the back. Come get me if another customer comes in, yea?

Poppy

Flirting? No no no, we're not-

Jules exits. Poppy quickly sits down at the table next to Tira and slaps down her hand on the letter.

Tiramisu

That's a historical paper!

Poppy

You're just mad I got to it first.

Tiramisu

Mad? Please. We're in this together...(pause) Now give me that!

Poppy stands, twirls away from the table, and opens the letter. Tiramisu runs up behind

Poppy and looks over her shoulder. Marmalade enters.

Marmalade

July 10th, 1940.

You don't like to be touched. I see that. I see you try to shrug it off as if you're too hard and too strong to be bothered with something like that. Too cool. Too proud. But that's a

gimmick isn't it? Under all that stone is something fragile isn't there?

How hurt you must've been to startle at a caress. How much pain you must be carrying to shake at a kiss. I just wanna cry and cry when I see you flinch away, but

that's not what you need, is it? You don't need to feel guilty do you?

I never want that for you.

You mumble apologies when you can't let yourself give into love. You want me to know that you're trying, don't you? You want me to know that it's not me, ain't that right?

The only thing I want from you right now is for you to stop being sorry. Stop apologizing. Stop beating down on yourself because the world's too hard already and

you need to save that strength.

I think you might be something like a pillbug. Curling in on yourself and rolling away. They don't do that just for fun you know that right? They do it for protection. They do it because they've been poked with a stick enough times already that they know what comes after. Buttercup, how could I ever blame you for putting up walls to keep yourself safe? How could I ever fault you for being scared?

You have nothing to apologize for.

You let me touch you sometimes though. I see it. I see the way you're trying.

You're trying so hard aren't you, baby?

When we lay in bed and I stroke your hair. I see the way it makes your eyes flutter. I see the way your lip tightens. But I see how when I pull away you stop my hand and tell me to continue. I see how you relax. I see how you melt.

I lied before when I said all I want from you is to not apologize. That's not true. I want you to love me. Stop saying sorry and keep on loving me fiercely. Love me like no one has ever done before. Love me like it's a game and you're trying to win. You're so competitive, aren't you, buttercup? I need those two things and the rest is just fodder.

Something sweet thrown on top like brown sugar on toast.

Can you do that for me?

I know you can.

Love, Marmalade

As the letter is read music starts to play. Pop and Tira react in their own ways. After letter is finished Pop and Tira look at each other. Tension plays between the two

Poppy

This one also has a date; it's only a couple days after that other one.

Tira

How do you remember that?

Poppy

(snaps back) I have a somewhat functioning memory.

Tira

Of course. I didn't mean... Sorry. Can I hold on to that? I want to compare it to the other one.

Poppy

Yeah. But I'll get it back, right? I mean, I'll see you later.

Tira

Of course. No getting rid of each other now.

Store bell rings as Poppy exits.

Act 1 Scene 7

Stage is dark, except where Poppy and Gale are hanging out. Poppy is filming their vlog

Poppy

Hey ghouls welcome to my youtube channel, Ghouls Girls Gals!

As you know the last time we were here together I was exploring the inside of the local abandoned bar: Kiki's. And boy oh boy did we get a sexy surprise. It really set the BAR high. I didn't want to be DRUNK off the excitement from last time so I tried to keep a SOBER attitude. Thankfully, I had Tira, from Galstownninfodump, who may suck at running a successful blog, but at least they're good at killing fun.

Anyways, let's examine this spicy lil boy. I've successfully located several letters that I suspect may contain ghostly energy. BEER with me as I walk us through these experimentations and get ready to share more letters with the masses!

Lights rise up and Gale and Poppy are talking are on stage while looking at Poppy's laptop

Gale

So is it just.... Ten more minutes of this?

Poppy

Yeah kinda. Isn't it good?

Gale

I like it! It's kinda... goofy? Like a satire or-

Poppy

You think my work is satirical?

Gale

No! I mean, there *are* a lot of puns...

Poppy

They're great puns! People *love* puns.

Gale

Totally. Yes. (Pause). You seem a little hung up on Tira.

Poppy

Hung up?

Gale

I mean, why all the digs on them? Seems harsh.

Poppy

I'm just poking fun. They wouldn't mind

Gale

OK. Maybe you're right. But I would mind...

Tira Blogging #2

Low light. Tira is typing on their laptop. Stops to looks at the letters.

Tira

The Histories of Galstown: Kiki's - The Letters A few days ago I started my research on Kiki's, the abandoned bar between Queenz Cuts & Salon and Butches, Books, and Brews. As you know from my last update, a box from KiKi's was unearthed with an old piece of paper stuck inside! A new letter has been found! Here it is, for your reading pleasure: "Dear, Marmalade. I wish I could say that I never wanted to be a girl..."

Buttercup enters

Buttercup

Dear Marmalade,

I wish I could say that I never wanted to be a girl. Wish I could say that all this butch was a rebellion. Something I stood up and shouted down at everyone else with a smile on my face. That's not the truth though and you know how I tell you nothing but the truth, sugar. The truth? The truth is that the world never wanted me to be a girl. It isn't like they wanted me to be a boy neither. Isn't like they wanted to be something in between. They wanted me to be nothing. Wanted me to shut up and go away. It never felt like I should've been born. And oh I tried. I tried to be the girl they wanted. Tried to sit still while my mama combed my hair. Tried to keep my legs crossed. Tried to box myself in. I wanted to be a girl so bad it ached. I wanted to make them proud. I couldn't

do it. Couldn't stop myself from running my fingers over my father's silk ties and nice dress shoes. Couldn't keep myself from wanting my hair short. Wanting my breasts to be gone. From wanting women too. I felt like a failure. Felt like I didn't belong. And well, I guess I was.

It'd be years until I truly felt like a woman. I've never felt more womanly than in a suit. A gift some of the girls pulled together and bought for me on my 20th birthday. Told me I needed to look more clean cut. Never felt more like a woman than with my hair short and slicked back. With a cigarette in my mouth leaning against a wall and having my girl-my woman- having her tell me I look good.

It feels so good to be wanted. It feels so good to be accepted. Like I'm doing something right for once. I'm not a girl, Sugar, but I sure am one hell of a butch, ain't I?

Love, Buttercup

Tira closes their laptop as Jules enters. Lights brighten.

Jules

Writing for the Community Blog again?

Tira

Yeah, that box of stuff really helped out, thanks!

Jules

No problem. find out anything new from that letter?

Tira

Not really, just that there were some sad romantic lesbians in the 1940s. This has gotten me to interact with Poppy a lot more...

Jules

So you're talking again?

Tira

It seems that way. I mean, out of necessity. For our blogs.

Jules

Right

Tira

It's so strange to have them in my life again. We used to be so close...

Act 1 Scene 8

[The part of the stage that was dark lightens on Poppy and Gust. Gale and Haze enter.

Tiramisu and Poppy are both telling the same story in separate rooms. Tiramisu continues to talk to Jules while Poppy talks to Gust and Haze and Gale]

Tiramisu

It wasn't so much that we met

Poppy

It had always felt like we've known each other

Tiramisu

Like I was born as their best friend

Gust

Awww that's so cute

Jules

But when did you meet?

Tiramisu

3rd grade

Poppy

We were both the new kids in school

Poppy and Tiramisu

They were so scared their first day

Gale

So you helped them out and became best friends and fell in love?

Poppy

[laughs] kinda, I'd say so

Tiramisu

So Poppy thought it was a good idea to steal my favorite pen

Poppy

They dropped this pen on the ground and I picked it up and kept it so I could give it back to them at recess. I thought it'd be a conversation starter!

Jules

What was so special about it?

Tiramisu

It could erase ink! I thought it was amazing!

Jules

Could it really?

Tiramisu

Yes!

Poppy

But I waited too long to give it back to them and-

Tiramisu

It was sitting in their cubby! Clear as day!

Poppy

They went through my cubby like an animal!

Gust and Haze and Gale

Nooooo!

Jules

Serious times in 3rd grade.

Tiramisu and Poppy

Yes!

Jules and Gust

What did you do?

Tiramisu and Poppy

Fought of course

Tiramisu

It all worked out. The two of us sitting in the principal's office. Poppy wouldn't stop crying. At first I thought I had hit them too hard, but it wasn't that.

Poppy

I wasn't scared of fighting. We were just kids and honestly the worst we got was an intense noogie, but I was so scared of what my mom would say.

Tiramisu

So I tried to help. Comforted them. Told them it was okay and getting in trouble isn't that bad.

Poppy

They were so gentle. Even though we had fought. She was so kind.

Tiramisu

And that's how the principal found us. With her in my arms.

Poppy

It's was like that ever since. We'd argue and banter and always be in competition with
each other

Tiramisu

But at the end of the day we were never cruel. Never malicious. Always loving.

Tiramisu and Poppy

Well for the most part.

Jules and Gust and Haze and Gale

What happened

Tiramisu

It's my fault

Poppy

I let her think it was all her fault. Tira moved away. She was gone for all of High
School. Before she moved back.

Tiramisu

Remember when my mom was sick and we moved into the guest house?

Jules

Yeah. It wasn't great, but I liked having you there.

Poppy

I needed them here with me. I didn't know how to say that. I didn't know what to do.

Poppy and Tiramisu

We stopped talking, but that was bound to happen

Tiramisu

After I came back it was like we never knew each other in the first place. We left each other alone. I couldn't help it. They didn't reach out that entire time I was gone. That entire time my mom was going through it. Maybe I should have chased them...

Poppy

I didn't chase after her

Gust

This is so sad

Jules

But you're here now...together.

Poppy and Tiramisu

Yeah. But it's not the same

Lights down.

Act 1 Scene 9 (Bookstore)

Yellow light. Poppy and Tiramisu enter bookstore separately. It is quite cozy, but no one seems to be around. Both stroll around the bookstore store strategically avoiding each other and settle into chairs.

Aster enters.

Aster

Oh hello! Have you been here long?

Tiramisu

Hey Aster. No, I've haven't.

Poppy

Neither have I.

Aster

You two ordering anything?

Poppy and Tiramisu

Tea is what I need.

Poppy and Tiramisu look at each other surprised. Sage looks amused and interested.

Aster

What kind?

Poppy

A Lady Grey please.

Tira

I'd like a ginger peach please.

Aster

Are you two here together?

Tira and Poppy

No!

Tira

Though I have a feeling we're here for the same thing.

Poppy

The letters?

Tira

The letters.

Sage

(entering)

Alright, you can start telling me about it while Aster makes the tea.

Tira

Hey Sage. How's your hearing these days?

Aster

Don't worry, their hearing is as great as it has always been. *(They exit to get the tea)*

Tiramisu

Well, should you start or me?

Poppy

I guess I will. Me and Tira found these love letters, one at Kiki's and one here in an old box of stuff they had from when the bar closed down.

Sage

What were you doing at Kiki's?

Tiramisu and Poppy exchange worried looks.

Tiramisu

Just doing research for the community blog. I've wanted to know more about Kiki's for a while.

Poppy

And I suspected there may be a more ethereal presence there that needed my attention

Aster

(Aster enters with two cups of tea) So snooping around?

Tiramisu

Of course.

Poppy

We'd like you to read them and give us some advice on how to interpret them. It seems like somebody left them for us to find..

Sage

I think I can help. It's interesting that you two are so connected already to this.

Tiramisu

Really? We're connected?

Sage hands mugs to Poppy and Tiramisu

Sage

I'm not sure I can tell just yet. Show me those letters.

(Poppy gets letters out of bag and hands them to Sage. Sage skims them. Long pause.)

I'm guessing Buttercup and Marmalade were girlfriends and these were their love notes?

Poppy

We think, but these loves letters are pretty sad though.

Sage

These letters remind of me of my sweethearts before they both passed away.

Tira

How so?

Sage

This is definitely not what you came to hear. What I'm about to tell you, this is not your emotional responsibility, you understand?

Poppy

Yes

Tiramisu

I gotta say yes.

Sage

Me and my sweethearts, we loved each other so much, although not without the occasional tiff. After they both passed away, I went through all that grief and it still lingers. It'll never be gone, but I cope now. Now, it feels that there's no one left in the

world to love me. There's few people around my age who are attracted to queer people like me. Someone who isn't really one gender I suppose. Not many people have survived so long.

Pause.

Now that I live in such a lovely community, I'm quite glad that I don't need to go into a basement to feel at home, but those people who made it home are simply not around anymore. I like to think I've created a place for queer intimacy here in our bookshop, but the struggles from the past still continue in the present. We are fighting for more than our home here, you see, but also for a space to call our own. Things may have changed along the way, KiKi's is gone, but the search for our own queer space is ongoing. The love and attention I wish I could share with someone is left unattended and this situation is exacerbated since I'm not into men or dressing for them. I may have been born and told I was woman, but that is not me. As some would call it, the dating pool, is so small that I continue to see lesbian loneliness throughout the decades. This pains me greatly, As I see folks like you not making space for each other or encouraging love. This is what you two need to be doing; curating queer space and queer love, whether it be as a home, as a romance, or as a friendship. You two are connected so strongly. To these letters and to each other.

Pause.

Tiramisu

Wow, thank you.

Poppy

Thank you.

Sage

I'm sorry I'm not in the right mind to talk to you about these letters today, but I know this; you need to try to figure out who Tira and Poppy were. I will think on this and invite you back. (*Sage turns away*).

Poppy

You mean Buttercup and Marmalade

Sage

Oh. Yes. That's what I meant

Aster

Alright, we'll be in touch.

Have a good day you two. Sorry to have gotten so heavy. Was the tea at least good?

Poppy

The tea and Sage's sharing were both good. No apologies warranted. Thank you.

Poppy and Tiramisu set down their mugs.

Tiramisu

I appreciate this so much. See you soon.

Poppy and Tiramisu exit. Sage is left sitting alone.

Sage

(*To Aster*) Our connections may be deeper than any of us imagine.

Aster

I'm quite sure of it

END OF ACT 1**Act 2****Act 2 Scene 1 (Barbershop)**

The Barbershop. White and blue light. A break between customers. Haze is on their phone and Gust is gazing off into the distance. Gale is just chillin.

Gust

Do you ever get that feeling when your hand touches a customer's hand or a friend leans against you and you get overwhelmed?

Haze

ummm... What?

Gust

I mean, there's this feeling that your skin hasn't been treated kindly and then someone touches your arm and all that warmth spreads on your skin. That feeling sinks into your muscles; like a heat pack you put on when your muscles are sore, but this soreness doesn't go away because it isn't from you getting too into leg day. This soreness is from lack of use.

Gale

Huh. I never thought of it that way. I always thought of it as my body has a meter of the touch it needs, like a gas meter, and this meter never gets full even if I try. I can't make myself approach people and just like.... Touch them.

Gust

Damn...

Haze

Haha, yeah how'd we get here?

Gust

I was just thinking about it. Ya know thinking about how I'm surrounded by people who love me, but I just don't... get touched. It's such a strange thing to focus on

Haze

I mean I think it's not a strange thing, just no one talks about it. Like we don't talk about popcorn lung, but it's still a thing.

Gust

Yeah I guess I'm saying I really need to be touched right now to remind me that I exist and am loved and that's bad for anyone's image.

Haze

It doesn't have to be

Gale

It's just- It's just- you know how whenever we go to queer events? And it's ALL white people

Haze

[*groans*] AKA top reason not to go to queer events.

Gale

I feel like in those communities, the queer ones, that's where I should be able to be touched. Without feeling like I'm going to be accused of weird homophobic things

Haze

Yeah yeah.... But?

Gust

But it's hard to do that when it seems like white girls are all scared of you

Haze

[laughs] Yeah it is

Gale

It's funny I guess, but it still.... Hurts?

Haze

All these white kids hugging each other and saying they love each other and they're

family, but with us?

Gale

NOTHING. But don't worry they're woke

Haze

[mocking voice] As an anti racist I LOOOOOVE black people. They're just sooooo

scary though.

Gust

[same mocking tone] You're so well spoken and funny! It's really intimidating.

Haze

It doesn't have to be like that though! Just be normal!

Gust

Exactly! Be normal. My only advice of color. When did we get this deep??

Gale

Yeah who are we, divers?

Gust

We should change the shop into a surfing and diving shop! H & GG Incorporated!

Haze

In the middle of a landlocked state! Great! We'd be swimming, but not in the
deep, *(mock seriously)* in debt.

Gust

Hey, if we turn up the heat in the water it may feel like we're actually being touched by
a human and not just aching for some kind of intimacy.

Haze

Ooh we can then, with our negative value bank accounts, hire someone to hug us
because apparently we're both too scared of being misconstrued that we won't even
approach others to take care of our needs that aren't even that big of a deal!!

Gust

Yeah! Can someone just hug me and poke me? Like not obnoxious poking, Like that
poking that someone does to check in on you? You know?

Haze

Yeah! Maybe we should start with each other!! DO YOU WANNA HUG?!

Gust

YEAH!

Haze and Gust start to hug really aggressively, Gale is left out, then pulled in. then start to sink into it.

Gust

I'm really glad someone knows how I feel.

Haze

Me too.

Gale snuggles in. Lights down.

Act 2 Scene 2 (Bookshop)

Yellow light. Sage is sitting at the barista counter reading and Jules is packing away books. Aster is helping Jules. Poppy and Tira enter. Store bell rings.

Jules

Oh hey guys! How's the treasure hunt going?

Tiramisu

Stuck again. How's SAT studying going?

Jules

Don't even talk to me about that.

Poppy

It's ok, Jules, we all have those days.

Jules

We don't all have those months.

Tiramisu

Jules, you really need to stop drinking coffee. It makes you hyper and sad. That's the worst combo of emotions.

Jules

I don't know about that. Just let me know the next time you can help me study.

Jules Exits

Aster

I was wondering when you'd come back. I was worried Sage made you too sad to go looking for the letters.

Tiramisu

Not at all! I really appreciate you sharing that with us. To be honest, I kind of related.

Aster

That's not good! You shouldn't relate too much to being a double widow.

Pause. That was humor by the way. Anyhoo, back to those letters! Let me get Sage for

you

They exit

Poppy

(Yelling offstage) We were wondering if you had any advice. What were you saying about Tira and I being connected?

Offstage Aster

My hunch so far is that it's really important for you two to find and read these letters.

Tiramisu

Most def. But what I actually wanted to hear about was Sage's relationships with their partners. I think that might help us.

(Entering) Sage

Way to brush off sagely advice! So you think hearing about my past loves may help, huh? An interesting theory but I can spin an enticing web. Would you like to hear a story?

Aster

Sage loves the sound of their own voice

Sage

Oh stop that, Aster. You know I tell a good story. Would you all like to hear it?

Poppy

Yeah!

Tira

This is sort of our thing, now. We would love to hear it.

Sage

OK. Well. When I first started dating Debbie I hadn't realized how much I missed something I never had. On one of our first dates, (at Kiki's, of course) she wrapped her arm around my shoulders and I turned to stone and melted at the same time. My mind froze but was running free. Her arm was the catalyst for my destruction. I had never been to the basement of Kiki's before, but had heard stories of the kinds of people who hung out down there. The kinds of people my mother warned me about. But all I found there was the community I would call mine for decades to come. I know I'm not the only one who feels that way, who had a memorable first date at the one and only Kiki's.

When I got home, I sat in bed and thought about how my body ached. It ached from missing love, from missing touch. I hugged myself trying to reach all around myself, trying to find retribution from all this missing feeling.

I started to notice how I'd touch my friends with no intention, just to be near them. I'd tap them, push them, hug them. All this time I didn't realize how much I was reaching out for human contact. Later into our relationship, I was sitting on my

bed and Debbie sat down and leaned her back against mine. Fireworks!
 Crumbling!! Water rushing through me!!! I stayed silent, but this was so dear to
 me, so lovely...so lively

It's difficult to let myself invade space like others can, I can't come up to a
 stranger and stand in their space. That's too much, but when someone I love
 comes into my space unexpected, but with dear intentions, I sink into my conflict.
 I appreciate their forwardness. This intimacy, with friends, with Debbie was still
 so intriguing, so surprising, so new every time.

I got used to this. I was tired of my skin feeling hollow and bare. I'm tiring of my
 back aching because all it feels is my burdens and loneliness. I'm getting used to
 touch, love, and care.

Aster

You see, KiKi's meant a lot to so many here. Seeing it close was very difficult. It
 holds so many good, if not complicated, memories for so many. For your star
 crossed letter lovers too, I suspect.

PAUSE

Poppy

Sage, Did you ever get closer to getting used to love?

Sage

Yes I did, it was quite beautiful.

Tiramisu

Jeez. That's a such a specific feeling---

Sage

It's called touch starvation by the way. We're social beings and need attention and love.

Lacking it can hurt a lot.

Tiramisu

I'm glad I know now.

Aster

OK, We're going to stop making you feel uncomfortable and give you some actual

advice. I think checking Kiki's again be a good idea.

Get going you two, y'all need to find some love letters!

Poppy

Thanks, I'll see you later!

Tira

Tell Jules good luck with the studying!

Store bell rings as Poppy and Tiramisu exit. Sage contemplates a little longer...Aster

takes their hand and leads them offstage

Act 2 Scene 3 (Back at KiKi's)

Green and yellow light.. Poppy and Tira are poking around at KiKis looking for something.

Tira

Ugh, this is useless. It's cold and dark and cobwebby and the odds of us finding something else here are slim to none. Why did we ever listen to Aster?

Poppy

You want to find another letter right? This would be the place to come. Come on.

Tira

Yeah, you're right. I haven't been able to stop thinking about them (*quietly*) and about you.

Poppy

What?

Tira

It's nothing! Let's just look for it together ok?

Poppy

Yup, two is better than one

Pop and Tira look around. Lights dim and orange light is added.

Tira

Why did we decide to do this when the sun was setting?

Poppy

Yeah we should be careful.

(Poppy trips and Tira catches her arm, mimicking blocking of M and B in first Scene)

Tira

You should be careful, Sugar. I'm all good.

Poppy

I'll be fine. Did you just call me Sugar?

Poppy gets out a small metal box and hands it to Tira who opens it.

Tira

Ok we have a shot glass, some cufflinks...

Poppy

A tube of lipstick?

Tira looks through box, takes out letter.

This looks like what we're looking for! Another Letter!

Poppy

See! I told you this is where we needed to be!

Dear Buttercup. Can it be an accident we met in basement? Cold and damp, cobwebs
and dirt.

Marmalade enters

Marmalade

Can it be an accident we met in a basement? Cold and damp, cobwebs and dirt. The
light was dim, but you were so bright, love. Bright enough that I could see every other

gal looking straight at you, eyes like darts, seeing what I saw. But I didn't mind it, watching them watch you. I knew you were special. They knew you were special. Everyone still does, when you catch someone looking at you out of the corner of your eye know that they know; you're something special. A bright light in an otherwise dim world. Dim, like that basement. Dim, like so many misconceptions of us. But you're right; you sure are one hell of a butch. One I can rely on, be sweet on, feel safe with. You may have never felt like a woman, but I never felt like much of one either until I met you. When you're trying to be married off, your body doesn't feel much like your own. When everyone in town keeps asking when I'll settle down, when I'll find a husband...if only I could tell them that I already have, and she is as handsome as the day is long. You are mine, and I am yours, but our bodies are our own. Our own to explore with, explore each other with, reach up and yell out "I LOVE YOU" with. Ours, alone, together. When will this town change for us? It's already changing, of course, the bar changing clientele, new folks moving in. I'll find a new job if the bar ends up closing. I promise. Even if I only make enough to keep buying paper and ink to write you with. OH, when will we be able to reach out and yell out "I LOVE YOU" without lookin' round' our shoulders first. The basement bar is one place, but baby I want them all, all them places, all at once. Tell me things change? Tell me we'll be in all those places at once some day? I know this isn't reality, just a question I have that I need some security around. Is that too much to ask? When we'll be in all those places all at once, one day, darling.

Love, Marmalade

PAUSE

Tira

Wow.

Poppy

I know...

Tira

I wish I could contact them

Poppy

Like a seance?

Tira

Ew, too spooky. No. I just wish I could write to them and tell them that one day...one

day...

Poppy

Things will feel different?

Tira

I guess that wouldn't really be the truth, would it?

Poppy

Not entirely, no.

Tira

Things really don't feel that much different, a lot of the time

Poppy

I know. *Pause* We should write a letter and put it in the box.

Tira

Poppy. Really?

Poppy

Look, I know they can't read it or anything, but it would be nice to reach out to them, somehow. Don't you feel connected to them?

Tira

Of course.

Poppy

Then...

Tira

Fine. Yea, OK. Let's do it. Pull out a piece of paper from that box. Ok, hand it here.

Alright. Ummm...Where do we start.

Poppy

I dunno. How about, 'Dear Marmalade and Buttercup

TIRA

Oh, that's good. That's good. Ok ummm...

Poppy

Dear Marmalade and Buttercup. Hi. You don't know us, and you never will, but we have been following your love story. You see, we live in the same town as you, just many many years later. And your letters, they are giving me something. Giving me a purpose here I haven't felt in years. Giving me a reason to keep searching for the

unknown, to dive head first into my life and experiences. They are making me realize how starved I've been for touch, just a little touch. They have strengthened my resolve to fight for this neighborhood. And they have given me my friend back...

Tira

Poppy...

Poppy

What, Tira? You can't deny that this has brought us closer together. Why did we ever let distance keep us so far apart. I know I could have called. I could have reached out. I could have asked how you were doing, checked in on your mom. And the shame I feel around that is still present. I didn't know I was losing the one community member I had, and after you were gone things starting changing here so rapidly, I hung on to whatever community I could find. And didn't look back. And I'm so sorry for that. Sage and Aster are right, Tira. We are connected. Look how we've come back together. Can this be a coincidence? Finding these letters and starting to know these people as intimately as we are? I feel so connected to them, don't you?

Tira

Yes

Poppy

Then?

Tira

Ok. You're right. Let's leave it here and see what happens

Poppy

Great. Now let's get out of here. I'm starting to get a weird feeling... We should put something tangible in the box!

Tira

Your knife?

Poppy

No! This knife is special!

Tira

It's a cheap tinker knife I got for you in the 3rd grade.

Poppy

That's why it's special. Even when we stopped talking, I held onto this in hope.

Tira

We stopped talking, and it was hard. Harder than it should have been, maybe.. I'm glad we started associating with each other again, but I'm still hurt. It doesn't go away.

Tira exits. Marmalade enters and watches them go. Poppy lowers her head and places the pocket knife in the box, then placing the box back where they found it. Marmalade mirrors this motion. Lights lower.

Act 2 Scene 4

Low light.

(Tira is back at it again on her laptop. The same Community blog on her screen. It's nighttime and she thinks about the past ?couple of days? since finding the letters. It's all not making sense, but she gets a feeling of sadness welling in her. She tries to write again, but her fingers shake at the keys. She slumps over and sobs. The heading of the post reads "More Letters: What is happening?")

Act 2 Scene 5 (The Flower Shop)

Pink and yellow light. Tiramisu is at the counter of the flower shop. Store bell rings as

Poppy enters.

Tira

Hello! Welcome to The Flouritory! What can I help you with today?

Poppy

Heey . . .

Tiramisu

Oh hi. What is it?

Poppy

I wanted to apologize.

Tira

About what?

Poppy

I wanted to say sorry for the way things ended up, for the way I left things before.

Tira

We don't have to do this–

Poppy

No, just– just let me say this. We made a promise, and I broke it. It was years and years ago, I know, but I'm starting to understand more and more how the past can catch up with you. And I understand why things are how they are now because of that. I

understand why you're mad, but I miss you. I miss us and how things were before, how close we were.

Tiramisu

What do you want me to say?

Poppy

I know what I want you to say. I want you to say that you forgive me. That we can be friends again. That's not the point though. What do *you* want to say? What are you feeling? I hurt you I want you to call the shots here.

Tiramisu

You think I don't miss you? I do. I miss being able to talk with you for hours about anything, feeling like there's nothing I can't tell you, that you'll always be by my side.

Poppy

You do?

Tiramisu

Of course! But I don't know if I can forgive you.

Poppy

Well, I had to give it a shot right? Just, think about it okay?

Tiramisu

Poppy– I walk through the day sometimes, and my skin is never even graced by the touch of someone's hand. Sometimes when a person bumps me on the bus I hold onto the feel over my skin longer than most, just in hopes of remembering some type of human interaction. And at night I lay in my bed, reach across my body, and hug myself.

I hold my body to comfort me. To remind myself that I am okay in some sense. To remind myself of once familiar touches. To times when the feeling of another person's skin wasn't a radical idea to my body. It's on nights like these when I miss you.

Poppy

Wow I wasn't expecting that.

Tiramisu

Emoting time is over. If you're gonna stay, buy something.

Poppy

A bouquet of asters, phlox, and virginia bluebells.

Tiramisu

Hey, didn't we used to give each other asters as prizes for winning our rivalries?

Poppy

Yeah! I even remember what it means. Asters represent patience and love of variety.

Tiramisu

Huh I taught you well. Do you remember what the others mean?

Poppy

(Excited) Bluebells mean humility and phlox mean harmony and sweet dreams.

Tira hands Poppy the bouquet

Tiramisu

I should've realized you planned that. But I don't know. I don't know how to...

Lights lower. Store bell rings.

Act 2 Scene 6 (The barbershop)

Tiramisu

[Forlorn sigh] Hey Haze. Hey Gust. Hey Gale.

Gust

Oh no

Tiramisu

What? Why are you oh no-ing? Are you also disappointed to see me?

Haze

[Groans] It's happening again.

Tiramisu

What's happening, Haze? Misery? Disappointment? A never ending sense of
loneliness?

Gust and Haze and Gale

Ohhhhh nooooo.

Gale

You are in *A Mood*

Gust

An obnoxious one to be exact

Haze

But a mood nonetheless

Tiramisu

I'm sorry that my saddened state of being is *obnoxious* to you. Should I fake happiness?

Would that be more comfortable for you? Sorry we can't all be neurotypical, Gust.

Haze

Cool it, Tira. You don't know their life.

Gust

That's not the point, Tira. If you have some sorrow if you have some trouble if you have some pain beating down in your HEART! You can just say it

Gale

None of that weird emotionally manipulative crap.

Gust

Just talk to us!

Tiramisu

Fine.... Fine...

Haze

It's just... Tira, there's a difference between trying to find community and help and just- I don't know! Not saying anything and expecting us to just KNOW what you're feeling. Or being upset when we don't. Vulnerability is not weakness, even when we are taught otherwise.

Tiramisu

Okay okay you're right. I'll just- uh- talk then? If that's okay.

Gust

I'm okay with hearing it.

Haze

Yeah I'm in a good place emotionally to support you right now.

Tiramisu

So me and Poppy got in a fight.

Gale

So the same thing you've been doing for the last.... century?

Tiramisu

What? I know it's been kind of ling, but then they.... Apologized. Very nicely.

Haze

Okay....

Tiramisu

So I'm upset!

Gust

You lost me, babe!

Tiramisu

I said I didn't know if I could forgive them and-

Haze

What? Why?

Gale

You're not still mad about it are you?

Tiramisu

I don't know! I was so hurt when they stopped talking to me.

Gust

In tenth grade.

Tiramisu

Tenth grade after what? Ten years of friendship? And suddenly they just ghosted on me!

Haze

I mean if you stopped talking to me, Gust

Gust

That would never happen!

Haze

But it happened to Tira and- I know you wouldn't. I'm just saying imagine it.

Tiramisu

It was scary. Moving away and living in a new town where I don't know anyone except my little cousin and my mom who was sick and-

Haze

I know, honey.

Tiramisu

I just... I felt so alone and Poppy was my lifeline and then they were gone.

Gust

I'm sorry.

Tiramisu

It was a lot of pain and I don't know if I'm ready to let go of that

Gale

Why not?

Tiramisu

Because I was hurt! They hurt me and I don't want to- I mean I- It's just that- I don't want to let go of that. I don't want to act like it never happened.

Haze

Tira, forgiving Poppy isn't gonna make what happened go away. They still hurt you and that's real

Gust

You're so frickin' valid, Tira

Haze

Yes they are. But you can't just keep hurting yourself. They made a mistake and I'm not gonna tell you how to feel about it, but if you like them and you wanna be with them then you need to let that happen.

Tiramisu

I guess so... Maybe you're right.

Haze

I'm always right

Tiramisu

I don't want them to hurt me again.

Gust

They might. It happens. Friends hurt each other.

Tiramisu

Yeah... friends...

Haze

"Friends"

Tiramisu

Oh my god not this again.

Gale

You like each other! Just admit it!

Tiramisu

I'm not denying that I... like Poppy... Oh no.. I like Poppy. [*deep breath*] Anyways. I just don't know if they... like me?

Haze

Really? You're REALLY doubting that?

Tiramisu

How could I know! I mean sometimes they're flirty but like that's just gay culture!

Gust

You know what else is gay culture? BEING SINGLE

Tiramisu

I'm just scared of... being wrong. Of telling them and having them react- I don't know.

Gale

This isn't your high school straight girl crush, Tira.

Haze

They're not going to- God they're not going to be disgusted by you.

Tiramisu

Maybe... Maybe.

Haze

So, what kind of cut are you getting slayed by the gods today?

Tira

Well, I was hoping to get an undercut today. Y'know change up the look abit.

Haze

Sure, give me something simple. Over here and I'll sit you down. so...you and

Poppy...again?

Tira

I...don't know, Haze, maybe...something is there. I feel-I feel something happening.

Act 2 Scene 7**BUTTERCUP**

I was walking home today. There wasn't anything particularly special about it, except for this really beautiful sunset that I thought you would like. Purples and oranges and hues of red, all coming together in this weird way that made the sky look like it was on fire.

Like the dying embers on a log after a campfire's been burning out for hours.

Then it was just dark, but it was filled with darker shades of purples. Navy blues and just the faintest hints of green. You're always telling me to appreciate the smallest details of that kind of stuff. That the magic is in the details.

All of it reminded me of yesterday, but lonelier. It made me miss you, and I started scolding myself for it - it was just a short while ago that we saw each other - before I remembered how many times you've told me that it's okay. I'm allowed to. It made my hand twitch, walking home, like it was searching for yours.

Your skin was so soft, Sugar, it felt like flower petals . . . It was cool too, without being cold. I could feel the lines on your hand, on your palm and your fingers, the part where your knuckles are.

I remember counting them, in the darkness, with just the faint sound of your breathing lulling my ears. I counted fifty lines between both of your hands. I remember the feel of the deeper ones against my lips as I kissed them softly. You just laid next to me while I traced them, until my fingers curled with yours and we held on to each other, not being able to see each other.

Your palm against mine, that tiny heartbeat thrumming against my flesh, I never knew it
could feel like such a lifeline.

Act 2 Scene 8 (The Bookstore)

Aster and Sage are reading the most recently found letter, written by Buttercup, that Poppy and Tira have brought into them.

Sage

Reading this letter, it's like I feel a presence in this room. Actually... *gets very close to Tira* ... I feel her in you. It's like she's hidden in your very soul, and she's been awoken by the words of her lover spoken aloud again. It's like...

(Sage runs to a shelf and grabs a worn book. They speak as they return, flipping to the page.)

Aster

We've spent years with these books, studying their contents, learning things as they come and go. But we've never been able to sell this one, I've always been drawn back to it, this page, like I always knew it would come up some day.

(Sage shows them the book. Some sort of music/lighting change to show they've touched on something important?? Whatever the effect, it causes Sage to see

Buttercup in Tira.)

Sage

Oh. Yes. There she is. Hello Buttercup.

Tira

(confused) Um... I'm Tiramisu?

Sage is distracted by Tira so Poppy takes the book.

Poppy

(Reading) “Some say a soul in longing never ceases. I believe, with absolute certainty, that this is one of few things in life that must be true. We talk of the permanence of love as though it is just a fairy tale, and not an absolute. But it must be an absolute, it is what souls long for more than anything in this world. Love is spoken of as fleeting because the soul doesn’t bother itself with the limits of human lifetimes. The soul will pass from body to body, from life to life, to be touched again. If two or more souls are in love, they will stop at nothing to be reunited.” *(There is a moment while everyone takes in the information. Tira takes the book and reads it over again)*

confused, to Sage) So like... reincarnation? That’s what it’s saying?

Sage

(Distracted, still focused on Tira) Mm-hmm

Tira

(distractedly reading) “To be touched again.” Like the thing about touch starvation. It’s like, down to the very soul.

Aster

Mmmm-hmm

Poppy and Tira share a moment of realization.

Poppy

So, wait. If we’re talking reincarnation, then...

Poppy reaches for the letter from the beginning. As soon as they touch it, another music/light cue happens maybe to indicate that the letter was written by Poppy/Marmalade, essentially.

Sage

Seeing Marmalade in Poppy Ah! Yes! Of course you're here as well. It all makes sense now. (Poppy and Tira share a look)

Yes, I believe you two have much to discuss.

Aster

I think I'll get you some tea. You may be here a while. Aster and Sage exit, holding hands.

Poppy and Tira sit down and look at each other for a moment. They take hands.

Poppy

Baby?

Tira

Sugar?

(Dance moment with full song)

Poppy

(Pause) I really don't wanna lose you again.

Tira

I know. Me neither. I have an idea though. What if we wrote each other letters? The way Marmalade and Buttercup did? Or, I guess, we did. Okay to be honest I'm still really

confused about this reincarnation thing. Like, was it us? Or some weird old version of us? Are we like the unnecessary 2018 remake? I dont-

Tira is cut off by Poppy laughing.

Tira

What?

(Poppy, still laughing, reaches down under the counter and pulls out an envelope that says "Tiramisu".) Is that-

Poppy

Honestly, I started drafting this after that first day in Kiki's.

Tira

(Laughs, reaches into bag and pulls out a letter with Poppy's name on it.) Me too.

Act 2 Scene 10

Montage with Music (KIKI'S)

We see Poppy and Tira sneaking into Kiki's, with all letters in hand, including the ones they have written to each other. They find the old box. They pause. Taking in all they have been through with the letters, before putting them inside and walking away, hand in hand.

ACT 2 Scene 11**Poppy**

Hey ghoulish friends! If you can hear the sound of my voice, that means that you are streaming, live, the Galstown voices podcast. As always, alongside me is my best friend, Tira.

Tira

Hey ya'll! Today on Galstown voices podcast we will be talking about phantoms, but not the ones you find in old ghost stories. These phantoms are the ones left behind. The leftovers from time gone by. These phantoms exist when people move into neighborhoods under the guise of improving them, but really leave behind the phantoms of what was

Poppy

But like phantom limbs, we can still feel the aftermath of them being gone. We can still feel their presence, and fight for their existence

Tira

Today's podcast is all about celebrating and learning from the past, working on the present, and looking towards the future with clear eyes and a resolve to 'do more'. Join us.

Lights down on Poppy and Tira. We see Marmalade and Buttercup upstage. Buttercup extends their arm to Marmalade who takes it, twirls, and lands in Buttercup's arms. They have a moment, sweet and brief, and then walk off hand in hand.

END