

EXT. Coroner's Office - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT (NJ,2002)

JOAN, FRANKIE, and GHOST MOM stand center stage in front of the large locked door to the coroner's office, facing up stage. The stage is mostly dark, cast in deep blue lighting. Joan holds a flashlight and Frankie messes around with his lock picking kit.

JOAN

(hushed)

Why do you have a lock picking kit?

Joan says this while messing with the flashlight, which seems a little faulty and flickers a lot. She's TRYING to help Frankie see what he's doing.

JOAN (CONT'D)

(frustrated)

Goddamn it- Ugh...

FRANKIE

(laughs)

Don't even worry about it, Joan. How do you think I get my shit back from the principal?

Frankie says this while fumbling with bits of metal. Jangly metallic noises can be heard. Joan just nods, like yeah, that checks out.

GHOST MOM

(amused)

Well, it comes in handy, doesn't it?  
But don't be getting into trouble at school, Frankie.

Ghost Mom's voice is echo-y, because she is a ghost. She moves closer to Frankie and peers over his shoulder to see what he's doing. She is visibly older (and dead-er) than the kids.

JOAN

(to herself)  
Doesn't this count as breaking and  
entering?

GHOST MOM (CONT'D)

I don't mean to rush you, but we don't  
have a *ton* of time.

Joan glances at her wristwatch.

JOAN

Oh, yeah, we're kind of trying to solve  
a murder here.

FRANKIE

(kind of struggling)  
Um, no disrespect or anything Ma'am,  
but couldn't you just like, phase  
through the wall and unlock it for us?

GHOST MOM

I'm an *apparition*, Frankie, not a  
poltergeist. I can lead you two to the  
morgue once we're inside, though.

Ghost Mom says this with crossed arms.

Perfect timing, the lock clicks and the door swings  
open, revealing a dark tiled hallway. Also perfect  
timing, Joan's flashlight flickers off again.

JOAN

(deep sigh)  
Christ almighty.

GHOST MOM

Too soon.

FRANKIE

(teasing, echoing Joan's tone)

C'mon, we've got a murder to solve,  
right?

Frankie twirls his keychain around his finger and holds the door open for the ladies, before heading inside. The door shuts with a heavy thud.

**BLACK OUT - END SCENE**

**INT. CORONER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

The stage is still entirely dark, until Joan's flashlight comes on again- YES! It illuminates the space just in front of the two. We hear the sound of heels clicking on tiles in an empty, echoing hallway.

GHOST MOM

I believe the morgue is just this way..

Ghost Mom walks ahead of the two teenagers and acts as a guide. The two trail behind hesitantly.

FRANKIE

(whispers)

Yo.

JOAN

(whispers)

Yo?

FRANKIE

Are you gonna be like, okay...?

JOAN

What do you mean?

FRANKIE

I mean, your Mom's ghost just helped us break into a morgue and she's leading us *to her body*. To prove she was *murdered*. You're gonna be good to take pictures?

JOAN

I don't know, we'll cross that bridge  
when we get there. I guess.

Frankie throws his arms up like, DUDE? ???

FRANKIE

(harsh whisper)

We're literally about to cross that  
bridge!

Joan shrugs. She's been nonchalant about this whole  
murder thing this whole time anyway.

GHOST MOM

(calls behind her)

It's just around this corner! Or,  
coroner, I should say. Hehe.

FRANKIE

(Normal volume)

Haha, good one!

(harsh whisper to Joan)

How is this not *kind of fucked up*?!

JOAN

I mean, you know my mom... She's got jokes.

Joan says this with a shrug.

FRANKIE

(muttering at the floor)

Some joke this is...

Joan, Frankie and Ghost Mom walk quietly for a little  
while, and get ready to turn the corner. A dim red light by the  
ceiling does a shitty job of lighting up the stage, so we're  
still relying on Joan's flashlight. They keep walking, until  
Ghost Mom FREEZES in place.

OFFICE WORKER (Off Stage)

(to cellphone)

Yeah, I'm *just* now leaving the office..  
I know!

GHOST MOM

(harsh whisper)  
*SHIT*.. Hide!

Joan and Frankie freeze for a second too, and exchange confused glances, but the approaching footsteps are getting louder! Ghost Mom waves them off like, don't worry about me! And the two quickly duck (flashlight turned off) into a dark alcove.

The OFFICE WORKER is now coming down their section of the hallway, his face is lit up by the light of his phone screen.

OFFICE WORKER

(to cellphone)  
No, I'm not stopping on the way home..

Ghost Mom nervously backs up against the wall, but the Office Worker walks right by her- He can't see her. She breathes a sigh of relief.

OFFICE WORKER

(to cellphone)  
It's midnight! Nothing's gonna be open-

Just before he passes by Joan and Frankie's hiding place, one of them drops something (maybe a key or a flashlight falls.) and the employee glances behind him, holding his hand against the receiver. We can't see this, but Joan and Frankie are dead still and holding their breaths. The worker scans the hallway for a second before shuddering.

OFFICE WORKER

(to cellphone)  
...Sorry, thought I heard.. I don't know, this place is creepy! Haunted or something.

He continues down the hallway quickly and resumes his tired, but casual tone with his cellphone before he leaves the building. The door slams shut. It doesn't lock automatically like it usually does, but he's too anxious to get out of there to care.

Joan clicks her flashlight back on and the two stumble out of the dark alcove where they had been pressed against the wall. Frankie sits on the floor and takes a few deep breaths.

FRANKIE

Jesus. *Christ*. That was *insane*.

Joan wipes the back of her hand across her forehead and sighs shakily.

JOAN

(wearily)

Insane...Let's just get this over with already...

At the end of the hallway, Ghost Mom calls after them and waves her arms around, and then points at the hallway adjacent to her.

GHOST MOM

Kids! Over here!

Joan extends an arm to Frankie and helps him up. This is visible through the dim red emergency lighting (you know how it is after hours at schools and offices) and by the light of her flashlight. The two quickly shuffle down the hallway and turn the corner.

**BLACK OUT - END SCENE**

**INT. MORGUE - CONTINUOUS**

A loud WHOOSH is heard as Joan flips half of the sheet covering Ghost Mom's body down. The body is on a metal shelf pulled out from the wall like in movies (or on a

stretcher/observation table if this is too much to ask). The lighting in the morgue is sterile, and a little nauseating. Frankie awkwardly glances at it and sort of turns away. Ghost Mom stands next to Joan, who stares blankly ahead of her.

GHOST MOM

(smiling proudly)  
You found it! Good job!

Ghost Mom claps her hands quietly. She then starts circling the room absentmindedly.

GHOST MOM (CONT'D)

So, after you take the pictures, we can go home and develop them... Then, we can call the news or the FBI or whoever and show them the evidence! Foolproof.

Ghost Mom has a youthful personality despite being murdered in her mid-40's.

JOAN

Yeah, yeah...

Joan says this distantly and reaches for her camera at her side. There's a weird juxtaposition between Mom's playful attitude and Joan's reserved one, and Frankie is caught in the middle. He sidled up to Joan. Ghost Mom pokes around the morgue.

FRANKIE

(softly)  
Hey.

JOAN

Hey.

FRANKIE

'You crossing that bridge yet?

JOAN

Ha. Yeah.

(pause)

It's weird. It shouldn't be like this, you know? Getting told 'Good job!' by my Mom for finding her corpse? I don't like it.

FRANKIE

Yeah. I get it- kind of. But, y'know, you get to spend time with her still, and I know this means a lot to both of you...

Frankie puts his arm around her and gives her a side hug, resting his chin on her shoulder since he is short.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

And I don't even have to say "she'd want you to do this" or "she'd be proud of you", cuz she's right there and she is proud of you! If you don't wanna do this part specifically, then I can take the picture for you, but this is a really cool thing you're doing. Uh, not cool, like I'm not saying the murder is-

JOAN

I know what you mean. It's alright. Let's just get this over with so we can like, get justice and Mom can go into the light, or whatever.

Joan kind of mumbles that with a tired smile.

GHOST MOM

(grinning)

He's right, by the way.

Ghost Mom snuck up on Joan too. They both exchange nervous smiles, and Mom steals her away from Frankie to give her a proper heartwarming Ghost Hug. She tilts her head at Joan curiously, and Joan takes a breath and nods (with a smile). Joan

then turns around to the cadaver and peers at the strangulation marks through the lens. CLICK. FLASH!

**BLACKOUT - END SCENE**