

Pen Pals for Life
By Daniel Mitzimberg
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Stage: Two cell rooms – one on each side of the stage with a recreation area between.
One park style bench in the middle.
Cell door at the rear of each cell. Man in cell stage right / woman in cell on stage left.
In each cell is a bunk and a writing table and mirror on wall (picture or imaginary)

Characters:

Maggie Smith / Rose Lynn Chateaus (pen pal name) – age 30
Johnny Dumont / Maurice B. Morris (pen pal name) – age 25
Male Guard – Richard
Female Guard – Barbara
Prison Shrink – Dr. (doc) Clemmons
Several extras as prisoners – male and female

Scene opens: Each are sitting at their desks one is writing while the other is reading.
They will take turns – when the male is reading he hears the female voice / vice versa.
They are in the same prison but do not know they are writing each other.

SCENE 1

(Rose opens letter from Marcel and holds it up to read)

MAURICE: *(reading the letter - she is looking at- while writing)*

My dear Rose,

I'm so sorry it 's taken so long to write this time. I'm still out of the country and may not return as quickly as I'd planned. We'll have to postpone our meeting for a while.

ROSE: *(reacting quietly while reading)* Oh, no.

MAURICE: I know we've been planning this for some time. There honestly nothing I can do about it. I just remember when we met last year. It was so magical.
I knew right away you were the one. I'm not sure how, but I knew.

There you were standing in your costume by the street light, waiting. Your hair was being lifted by the wind.

Your silhouette against the moonlight. You were stunning.

I long to see you by the moonlight once again. I'd like to meet you in the same place we once shared that first kiss. We shared ourselves so completely.

When I'm writing I get so lonely, I miss you.

My job takes me so far away from you. At the end of the day I just sit and stare out the window and think of you.

I'm going to hurry and finish so I may get this off to you. I wanted you to know I hadn't forgotten about you and I think of you all day, every day.

Make sure you send all your letters to my brother. I am not sure where I will be each week, he'll make sure I get them. Hurry and write.

Love always, Maurice.

(Rose holds the letter to her heart and sighs)

GUARD: *(stands at the cell door – holding the letter - teasing)* Hey lover boy!

While you were in the hole - got a letter from your sweetheart. *(Maurice stands and hurries to door - the guard pulls the letter back)* You'd better cool your jets or you'll spend another 30 days in solitaire.

(Guard teases a little and hands the letter through the door)

(he hurries to open it and sits at the desk and reads)

ROSE: *(reading while writing another letter)*

Dearest Maurice,

I've not heard from you for such a long time. I'm very worried your job may have taken you so far away you could not write.

I hope that is all it is.

I've been just laying here at my sister's house reading your last letter.

But it's been almost a month since I've heard from you.

I sure hope nothing has happened.

I know you said you are out of the country but you have never told me where. I was thinking you may be in a war zone and some bomb has injured you. I pray that is not what happened.

MAURICE: *(quietly responds)* I'm in a war zone

ROSE: Since we met last year I've not been able to get you out of my mind. I know it was only one night but it was the best night of my life.

Why do I always have to fall for those guys who I can't have?

In this case guy. I want you so bad, I ache for you. It's been so very long.

I've gotta go now. I'm going to finish this letter in the morning. My sister has lights out early this evening. We all do it so her kids 'll get right to sleep.

They're great kids, I'll tell you about them later.

Wish I could kiss you goodnight again.

MAURICE: Me too.

ROSE: I will finish this in the morning. *(pause - still reading same letter)*

It's me. Did you miss me? Of course you did. We just got up and had some breakfast. My sister is a horrible cook. Almost the same thing every morning. I'll have to teach her how to cook something different.

I was going to tell you about her kids. Jimmy and Jerry. They're little hell raisers. Jimmy is the oldest, about 12 and Jerry is a couple of years younger. They have to go to school now.

I stay at home with my sister.

Once a day we go outside and visit with the neighbors.

They're nice but I don't like most of them.

My sister will be moving in a month or so. I'll make sure you get her new address.

Always send mail to her in care of me.

We also may be getting a phone. I could call you from a pay phone, if I knew where to call.

Get me a phone number and I will go to the little store on the corner and call you, it'll have to be collect. I don't have a job yet. I just help around the house.

I have to go now.

We're going to visit with the neighbors in a little while and I want to make sure this letter gets off to you.

Always thinking of you,
Love Rose.

MAURICE: *(puts the letter away under his cot with dozens of other letters)* I am always thinking of you as well, my dear Rose.

GUARD (Female): Hey sweet cheeks, your sister is here to see you. Come-on get up.

(The guard escorts her off stage)

MAURICE: *(goes to the cell door)* Guard! Hey Guard!

GUARD: Whatcha need?

MAURICE: I'm out of paper. Can I get some.

GUARD: I'll see what I can do. You sure use a ton of paper.

MAURICE: I like to write.

GUARD: It's time for your weekly.

MAURICE: All ready. I just had one a couple of days ago.

GUARD: Tell it to someone who cares.

MAURICE: I'd rather get some more paper. I'm all out.

GUARD: Just sit still.

(guard open the door and Doc enters)

DOC: *(sits on the end of the bed)* So Johnny, how are we today.

MAURICE: We - are just dandy.

DOC: Great

MAURICE: I just saw you a couple of days ago.

DOC: You just spent 30 days alone, with no lights, music, no . . .

MAURICE: *(interrupting)* Paper!

DOC: Paper? I just want to make sure you're doing OK.

MAURICE: I'm fine doc. Honest. I just need some paper.

DOC: Doing a lot a writing?

MAURICE: *(smiles from one side of his mouth)* Ya, I got this girl I write to.

DOC: Tell me about her.

MAURICE: Not much to tell. I've been writing her for 'bout a year now.

DOC: Go on.

MAURICE: Where? That's about it. *(beat)* It's personal.

DOC: You're in prison, not much is personal here.

MAURICE: Well this is.

(He turns away from Doc)

DOC: Tell me a little more about her. It won't hurt and I can't tell.

(PAUSE)

MAURICE: Promise not to tell. *(doc crosses his heart – Maurice looks and thinks for a second)*
She's beautiful. We met on the coast about a year ago. It was Halloween. About a week before

I got picked up. There she was - standing in the moonlight. *(beat)* She was made up like the bride of Frankenstein.

DOC: Sounds like you hit it off.

MAURICE: *(talking like a dream)* Boy did we ever. I ain't never felt like that before. She just looked in my eyes - couldn't help but kiss her. She kissed me back. It was perfect. *(pause – out of dream state)* Now I'm stuck in this hole and may never see her again. *(getting a little angry)* She is so damn beautiful she'll find someone else and move on.

DOC: Does she come to visit? Out of costume.

MAURICE: That's the thing, Doc. *(beat)* She don't know I'm in prison.

DOC: How does that work?

MAURICE: She sends me mail to a PO box - my buddy Mikey picks it up - brings it here every week.

DOC: You've been doing this for a year?

MAURICE: Ya, I don't think she'd understand if she knew.

DOC: You'd be surprised what love will understand.

MAURICE: She's just too classy. Sides I only was with her the one night.

DOC: Tell me some more.

MAURICE: Well, she lives with her sister - very strict. I tell her to move - but she won't. She feels obligated at least for another year or until she gets back on her feet. *(beat)* She's looking for work.

DOC: What do you tell her about yourself?

MAURICE: I tell her I'm overseas - have to send all my mail to my brother, Mikey. She's never really asked about him so I think it's working.

DOC: You really like this one, don't ya?

MAURICE: She's everything.

DOC: But your relationship is based on a lie.

MAURICE: (upset) I knew you'd find some reason to mess it up.

DOC: No reason. Just think it's better to be truthful

MAURICE: Maybe someday. But not today. (*beat*) Don't mess this up.
(*pause*) Hey Doc can you get me some written paper. They've been real stingy with it.

DOC: I'll see what I can do. Let's talk about your 30 days.

MAURICE: What's to talk about. 30 Days. It's over - I'm happy.

DOC: You upset about it?

MAURICE: Damn right. I never started that fight. That scab didn't spend 5 minutes in the hole.
(*pause*) He'll get his. Some time - some day when he's not looking.

DOC: That's the issue

MAURICE: (*upset*) What issue?

DOC: The reason I'm here. You cannot seek revenge. You know, you'd have done the same thing if the table was turned. Right?

MAURICE: Ya, I guess so.

DOC: No guessing, you know it.

MAURICE: So.

DOC: So. Until you come to terms with this you may have trouble getting paper. You may not be allowed in the yard. You may have other privileges' taken away.

If you continue to create problems you may spend more time in the hole - not be able to write your girlfriend. What's her name?

MAURICE: Rose. That's her name. ain't that a beautiful name?

DOC: It is.

MAURICE: *(half hearted)* I'll work on it.

DOC: You've got to do more than that – you have to do it.

MAURICE: Ok. please get me some paper?

(Doc leaves – Maurice goes to desk and sits)

DOC: *(returns with some paper only seconds later)* Guard was on his way with this.

MAURICE: *(takes the paper and sits down to write)* Thanks

ROSE: *(returns to her cell with a letter – she opens it)* My dear Maurice
Last night I was lookin' out the window at the stars. There is one I named Maurice.
It's so sparkly and bright, just like you. I stared at it for hours just thinking 'bout you.

MAURICE: *(responding)* She is so sweet

ROSE: I was having some problems with the girls next door. They like to pick fights
And I like to stay away from fights. It ain't lady like to fight.
But sometimes you have to take matters into your own hands and make a statement.
My sister and I made sure they would not bother us again.

MAURICE: *(responding)* That's my gal

ROSE: I hope you don't mind, but I could not take it any longer.

MAURICE: *(responding)* Heck no.

ROSE: Time is getting short to write letters.
They have me running around all day and my sister makes me turn out the light at sundown.

You know the kids and all. It is important to make sure they get enough sleep.*(pause)*
I know my letters get shorter and shorter but that doesn't mean I don't care.
When you get back from overseas I know we'll be able to see each other every day
And not have to worry about no letters. I am going to go before sis gets too upset.
(pause) Love forever - Rose

MAURICE: I love you too babe.

GUARD: *(Off stage - yelling)* Lights out in five minutes. Get your business done now.

(Maurice folds his paper and puts it under his bunk)

(Rose does the same with the letter she just read)

(They both lay on their bunks and look longingly at the stars in the sky)

(lights click off – room is dark)

END OF SCENE

SCENE 2

(Maurice and Rose both sit up and stretch at the same time)

(They do morning things as a guard comes to each cell and lets them out)

(They both meet in the middle of the stage – the recreation area and mill around with other prisoners – they break into groups and become the center of attention in each of their groups)

MAURICE: Ya, I can't wait to get out of this hole. I got me a sweet woman just waitin' for me out there.

(prisoners mumble)

ROSE: My man is sumpin' real special. He has one of those real important jobs and travels. When I get out of this shit-hole we will be travelin' together.

GUARD: *(enters the yard - yells)* Dumont you got company.

MAURICE: Great, see ya later.

(he leaves with the guard)

(everyone mingles around chatting about nothing)

(Audience cannot really hear)

GUARD: *(Enters the yard)* Smith, Doc wants to see ya. *(several people pipe up and walk to the door)* Maggie, has to see the Doc, not you guys.

(Guard takes her to her cell as the rest of the population leaves the area)

ROSE: *(enters her cell and sits on the bed and waits – guard leaves)*

(yells at the guard) How long is he gonna be? I got important shit to do.

(she pulls out a letter and starts to open it when the Doc is let in by the guard)

DOC: Hi Maggie, how are we today.

MAGGIE: We are still in jail. You?

DOC: I guess I am doing ok.

(sits on other end of bed)

MAGGIE: Good, wouldn't want you ta do bad.

DOC: It has been a while since our last meeting.

MAGGIE: If you say so.

DOC: You been doing ok?

MAGGIE: You tell me.

DOC: *(pause)* Anything new.

MAGGIE: I'm in prison, nothing new.

DOC: You want to talk about it.

MAGGIE: What do you want from me?

DOC: I just wanna talk, that's about it.

MAGGIE: So talk.

DOC: You talk.

MAGGIE: Got nothing to say. So I guess we are done. Good! I got some letters to write.

DOC: Oh ya, who ya written to.

MAGGIE: My parole board, maybe I can get an early release.

DOC: How's that goin'?

MAGGIE: Shitty.

DOC: Then why write just to get more upset.

MAGGIE: Aw Doc, I met this guy and I've writin' him.

DOC: He been writing back?

MAGGIE: Ya, he sure has. *(she purks up)*

DOC: Tell me about him.

MAGGIE: Not much ta tell. He is just your average wonderful hunk of a man. When I get out we're going away together.

DOC: Has he been here to visit?

MAGGIE: He doesn't know I am in here.

DOC: Where does he think you are?

MAGGIE: I tell him I am at my sister's house. But she is real mean and has kids and stuff like that.

DOC: What happens when he goes to your sister's house?

MAGGIE: He is overseas for the next year and a half.
I'll be out before he gets home and he'll never know.

DOC: *(he just got the connection)* Really.

MAGGIE: Unless you tell him.

DOC: I won't say a word, honest. *(pause)* How'd ya meet?

MAGGIE: It was so romantic. We met on the coast about a year ago. It was Halloween. The day before I got busted for hookin' at that casino. *(pause)* He was so handsome standing in the moon light. He was dressed like the Phantom of the Opera. *(Eyes glaze over – beat)* So sexy. He was everything. He took me in his arms, we looked into each others' eyes and he kissed me. I ain't never been kissed like that.

DOC: Sounds like you hit it off

MAGGIE: Boy, did we ever. He is so strong I couldn't resist him.

DOC: What do you tell him about yourself?

MAGGIE: I tell him I am living with my sister and her kids.
She is a real bitch and has rules and regs I have to follow for the kids sake. He buys it.

DOC: Do you have a sister?

MAGGIE: Sure, she doesn't have kids. She's in high school.

DOC: You really like him.

MAGGIE: He's it.

DOC: But your relationship is based on a lie.

MAGGIE: *(upset)* I knew you would find some reason to mess it up.

DOC: No reason. Just think it's better to be truthful

MAGGIE: He's way to classy to bother with an old whore like me.

DOC: So he thinks your this special person.

MAGGIE: *(daydreaming)* Ya, I'm Rose. *(pause)* He loves me and he's gonna take me away from this crap.

DOC: What if finds out later.

MAGGIE: He won't. He trusts me.

DOC: I guess I'd better make my rounds.

MAGGIE: Thanks Doc.

DOC: *(signaling for the guard)* You may wanna let him know the truth. The lie will always haunt you.

MAGGIE: Thanks, but no thanks. I'm doin' just fine.

DOC: *(guard opens the door and lets him out)* Give it a second thought.

MAGGIE: I have already thought about it every day. I'm fine.

(Johnny enters his cell upset)

DOC: *(He turns around and hands a letter through the cell)* I almost forgot. This was dropped off earlier.

MAGGIE: *(She grabs it and holds it to her face)* It's from him. *(she sits on her bed and opens it)*

JOHNNY: *(lays on the bunk- talking to self)* Maybe Doc's right, I should tell her.

(Rose sits at her desk and begins to read)

MAURICE: *(writing while reading)*

My Dear Dear Rose,

I have had a real tough time over here. Things are not going well at all.

No need to be concerned. I am sure I will be home like I promised.

How are things with you? I hope you are OK.

ROSE: *(responding)* They could be better.

MAURICE: The guys I have to work with are real jerks. They won't leave me alone.

All day long they hound me about one thing or another.

I can't let that get to me. When it starts to get me down, I just think about you and when we are going to be together. It seems like a long time but it will pass quickly and we can stand at the ocean once again.

(pause)

Please forgive me, my letters have been getting shorter and shorter. I can't help it. I have so much to do, I barely have time to write at all.

But I am always thinking about you. Every day.

I will write you again right away, I promise.

Love always, Maurice.

(she sits back on the bed with the letter clutched to her chest)

ROSE: *(talking to self)* He is such a special person, I'm going to have to tell him.

Damn it Doc! Why did you spoil this for me?

MAURICE: I hate myself sometimes. I can't tell her the truth.

ROSE: How do I tell him?

MAURICE: What would she think of me?

ROSE: If he knew the truth about me he'd die.

MAURICE: This is bullshit.

ROSE: I love him.

MAURICE: I love her.

(they both pick up paper and pen and start to write)

ROSE: Dear Maurice,
I just got your last letter. I really do enjoy reading them.

MAURICE: Dear Rose, I read you last letter yesterday and thought I should write you.

ROSE: I thought I should right you right away

MAURICE: The past year has been very happy for me.

ROSE: I have been so happy this last year.
Writing you has been the best. You are so special.

MAURICE: I can't wait to get your letters. I start new ones even before I get yours.

ROSE: I am always writing to you, even before I get your letters.

MAURICE: I really hate to write you to tell you bad news.

ROSE: There's been something that's been bothering me for some time.

MAURICE: Things aren't going well over here. The people I work for are demanding so much more from me.

ROSE: My sister has been having so many more issue then I could have imagined.
She is getting so much more difficult to deal with.

MAURICE: They are making it impossible to keep our relationship going.

ROSE: I am going to have to spend my full time taking care of her and the kids.

MAURICE: I am afraid I will have to stop writing you.

ROSE: I am going to have to end our long distance relationship.

MAURICE: I have to focus on my time at hand. Your distractions are getting in the way.

ROSE: I just can't make time in my life for you, not right now, maybe never.

MAURICE: It's been just so difficult dreaming of you and not focusing on what I need to do.

ROSE: Please don't take this too hard. I won't be able to live with myself.

MAURICE: If there were any other way. I have to end it with this letter. *(pause)* I'm so very sorry.

ROSE: This will be the last letter you'll get from me. Please do not write back, I can't take it thinking I may have hurt you. I know I hurt more than ever.

MAURICE: I hurt so much right now. I can't stop crying. We'll always have the ocean. We'll always have Halloween. Goodbye – I love you.

ROSE: I will always remember you in the moonlight. I do love you. Goodbye.

(they both fold their letters and put them in the envelopes)

(they both stand and go to the door)

ROSE / MAURICE: Guard, can you come here please?

(the guards come to the cells and take the letters)

GUARD 1: *(opening his door)* You still have some yard time, get out there.

(He heads for the yard)

GUARD 2: *(opening her door)* You got yard time, get going.

(She leaves for the yard)

(they are both upset and wiping their eyes from crying)
(they both head for the table in the center and sit)

JOHNNY: *(noticing her)* You OK?

MAGGIE: Ya, I'm fine. You?

JOHNNY: I guess. just broke up with a very special girl

MAGGIE: Tell me about it, had to end it with my man today.

JOHNNY: Never easy - is it?

MAGGIE: Never.

JOHNNY: Wanna walk around the yard before chow?

MAGGIE: Sure.

(they walk around the stage)

JOHNNY: C Block

MAGGIE: E Block

JOHNNY: Ya, I know. I seen ya around

MAGGIE: I seen ya too.

JOHNNY: How'd ya meet?

MAGGIE: Who?

JOHNNY: The guy's heart you just broke.

MAGGIE: Last Halloween.

JOHNNY: Me too.

MAGGIE: Really?

JOHNNY: I was dressed like the Phantom of the Opera

(They stop and look at each other closely)

(pause)

MAGGIE: I was the *(together)* Bride of Frankenstein.

(They stood stunned for a few seconds – then hug – then pushed each other away)

JOHNNY: You are supposed to be with your evil sister.

MAGGIE: You are supposed to be working overseas.

(They look at each other confused – thinking about the lies)

JOHNNY: Wanna sit together at chow?

MAGGIE: I'd like that.

(They walk off stage)

CURTAIN