

The UNDEADLY THEATER Co Presents:



THE
AUGUST CORPSE PROJECT
2014

Another Play about stuff

By

Luke Palmer, Peter Zimmermann, John Bickerstaff, Mike Puckett, Paul Lazo, Jamie Hovis, Camille Fowley, Jacob Davison, Emily Pojman, Eli Barraza, Katy May Hudson, Melissa Jesser, Sam McArthur, Dan Robert, Samantha Evans, Travis Amiel, Jack Placidi, Yolanda K Wilkinson, Adam Cecil, Tierra Bonser, Eli Lutsky, Jamie Sanders, Marc Hecht, Ringa Sunn, Trixze Smith, Charlie Makary, Anna Thorup, Elyssa Budd, Shon ArieH-Lerer, Sarah Morrison and Jackson Birnbaum

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AN AUTHORS NOTE

I didn't start the August Corpse Project with some sort of grand intention or really much thought other than 'hey, this could be fun!'. It began with me borrowing the ideas from 2 different projects (31 Plays in 31 Days) and Olde English's (The Exquisite Corpse Project). That was it. No grand master plan other than to give people a reason to write.

What astounded me was how genuinely entertaining the project became to myself and the people involved. It became a mad monthlong jazz Odyssey, I was thrilled to see the curveballs I was sending people and what was sent back.

In following this year's August Corpse Project as it developed I've found a 4 major flaws inherent in theater in general.

I tend to find that theater is more often than not too: **Insular, precious, self-serious, predictable.**

Here we have 31 authors (Including myself) building on eachother, having fun, and making a nonsensical roller coaster that whether we liked it or not would come to an end that wasn't our own. A true experiment, with no expected outcome. Confusion became the tone of the project, glorious, exciting, and life creating confusion.

It was an exhausting delight to help this project and I hope you enjoy it too,

-Luke Palmer

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Paul
Marge
Giuseppe
Billy
Bernie
Pithy
Herbert
Grass Goblin
Mover 1
Mover 2
Kandinski
Carl the Painter
Delivery Boy
Rosa
Carl

TENEBOUS AUGUSTUS MAXIMUS

James
Grandma
Sparko
Sly
Waitress
Mackey
Old Woman
Old Man
Reporter
Jessinia
Whitney
Mary
Young Bill
Domniferous
Madam Daniella Blavasky
Jane
The Child
Jane's Mother
Man
Woman
Clarence
Rachel
Phillip
Robyn

RAPIST/MURDERER/POT-KNOCKER-OVER-ER

Marcel
street man
Donald
The Clown

ACT I

cape cod. PAUL a 56 year old balding man in pajamas sits on the edge of a bed looking out at a glowing red sunset coming from an near by minute. He stares wistful, bittersweet. MARGE 50 also wearing pajamas enters.

MARGE

Are you enjoying it Paul?

PAUL

Yeah.

Silence as he stares. He points out the window.

PAUL

There's Murphy's hallow. and Birch lake where I rode my first canoe. That's the rickety dock... When I was 6, I kept calling it the 'Ricky D' dock. Thought it just belonged to some guy named Ricky. I kept asking pop if we could go down to Ricky's to fish he played along before he realized I actually didn't know what the word meant... that it meant, feeble, bearily standing.

Silence. Marge comes to his side and lovingly cups his hand.

PAUL

It all... It all feels like it didn't happen.

MARGE

Well it did. And I think your Father was proud of you.

PAUL

I'll be sure to talk to him about it.

They sit there just holding hands. the sun has begins to slowly go down.

MARGE

This, this day has been so wonderful. and what about that dinner huh? I've, I've never eaten cod that good.

PAUL

Yeah. That was great.

MARGE

I guess that what you get when you have it so fresh to the sea.

PAUL

Getting to eat here everyday spoiled me. You don't realize how special the little things are. Except this day. I, I couldn't have asked for a more perfect day with a more perfect lady.

MARGE

I'm glad you liked it.

PAUL

... I used to look out this window at the sunrise and think a new day was beginning, and now....

MARGE

You get to see one more.

Silence

PAUL

Marge... coming back here has meant a lot. I want you know that.

MARGE

Well, aside from the black flies, it's meant a lot to me too.

PAUL

...Marge.

MARGE

Paul.

PAUL

.. I'm getting tired Marge

MARGE

I.. I want to hold you.

*Paul, Marge also lies back It begins to get Dark.
She tightly holds Paul*

PAUL

...Marge. You don't mind that you'll be waking up next to a corpse do you?

MARGE

I'll be waking up next to my husband, like I've done for the last 30 years.

Long Pause

PAUL
... I love you Marge.

MARGE
I love you too.

after a Moments pause

BLACKOUT

LIGHTS UP

Morning. Birds chirp and faint light comes from the window. Paul yawns and gets out of bed. Half asleep he walks to the bathroom. Audible sound of him peeing. Marge is fast asleep. Paul starts to shuffle back when he stops. Something is wrong. He looks at his hands. He looks at his feet. 'It's... normal?' Marge yawns and turns and is shocked.

MARGE
P... PAUL?

PAUL
...Marge...

MARGE
You're... You're.

MARGE GOES UP AND EMBRACES HIM.

MARGE
How do you feel?

PAUL
I... I feel fine.

MARGE
No, no pain or?

PAUL
Actually... I feel great!

MARGE
Oh my god...

She Kisses him.

MARGE
It's a miracle... It's a miracle!

PAUL

I'm just.. so so... happy.

The phone rings. Marge answers it.

MARGE

(On the phone)

Hello... WHAT?!! Well whoever is running your filing should be sacked. DO YOU KNOW WHAT WE'VE BEEN THROUGH?!!!... We're, we're going to have a talk about this later but for now... Now I'm just glad he's alright.

MARGE HANGS UP THE PHONE

MARGE

MARGE There was a mixup at the clinic, you're fine Paul!!! You're better than fine. There's nothing wrong with you. You didn't have that rare cancer that kills in 24 hours. We've got our lives back!

PAUL

...Yeah... Um... Marge, can I talk to you?

PAUL SITS MARGE DOWN ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BED.

PAUL

Now... Now Marge. You realize that I was ready to accept death?

MARGE

Oh yes, and we've been granted this beautiful wonderful blessing.

PAUL

Well, I didn't just accept death... I sort of... planned for it.

MARGE

What... What do you mean Paul?

PAUL

You know how we just had the most amazing 24 hours of our lives, and got first class tickets fly to the cape to spend in my childhood home, and rented out the entire amusement park to ourselves?

MARGE

And the string quartet played as we gazed out from the top of the ferris wheel, oh it was so wonderful!

PAUL
Yeah... Well... That stuff... Didn't come cheap.

MARGE
What... What do you mean?

A Knock pounds the door from the outside.

A VOICE
PAUL... IS THAT BASTARD PAUL DEAD YET?

MARGE
Paul... Paul dearie who is that.

PAUL
That's Giuseppe.

GIUSEPPE
WHERE THE FUCK IS MY MONEY PAUL?!

MARGE
Who... Who is Giuseppe?

PAUL
Well, when I got the news that I only had a day left to live. I wanted to give you the best last day ever... and I had to bankroll that... with Giuseppe.

MARGE
PAUL, WHO THE FUCK IS GIUSEPPE?!

PAUL
HE'S MAFIA MARGE! OK?! HE'S FUCKING MAFIA. I TOO MONEY FROM THE MAFIA

MARGE
OH MY GOD. Is... Is this man going to to kill you?

PAUL
No, that would have been redundant... He's just... going to cut out my eyes take my kidney.

MARGE
WHAT?!!!!

GIUSEPPE
(OFFSTAGE)
YOU PROMISED ME ORGANS PAUL. I WANT MY ORGANS AND MY FUCKING MONEY.

PAUL
I... didn't think it'd be a problem, since you know, I'd be dead. And I just wanted you to be happy. And if that meant selling some of my organs well-

MARGE

BULLSHIT. I... I KNOW ABOUT YOU AND RUTHIE

PAUL

What?

MARGE

I know you fucked Ruthie after we got here. I didn't want to say anything because we didn't have time, I love you Paul, I do, but.. that's the real reason you came back isn't it? Even at 56 with 24 hours left to live you just couldn't keep it in your pants could you?.

GIUSEPPE

(Offstage)

YOU'VE GOT UNTIL THE COUNT OF THREE BEFORE I COME IN THERE AND CUT YOUR FUCKING KIDNEY AND EYES OUT.

PAUL

Why are you-?

MARGE

Well what else are we going to do Paul? Hm? What?

Paul, pauses. Opens the window he was looking out at the beginning of the scene and climbs out.

MARGE

...Paul?

PAUL

Your problem now.

PAUL exits and runs away out the window.

MARGE

PAUL!

GIUSEPPE

1...2...3!!!!

Giuseppe breaks down the door. He is wearing a surgeon's gown and holding a scalpel and a small black doctor's bag.

GIUSEPPE

Dr. Guiseppe you're needed in the operating theater!

MARGE

What the FUCK?

GIUSEPPE

No, you what the fuck? You're not Paul!

MARGE

No I'm-

GIUSEPPE

A woman, I know! Paul's a man. And *Man* Paul promised me his *man* organs via a gentleman's agreement and a large briefcase of money. Now, where is he?

Marge points to the open window.

GIUSEPPE

I don't suppose Paul just left to briefly appreciate the beauty of a sunset before voluntarily coming back to have his eyeballs cut out?

MARGE

No, I'm pretty sure he's gone for good.

GIUSEPPE

Fuck a duck! This is why I'm not a fan OF GIVING THEM THE MONEY UPFRONT!

Giuseppe flips over a table. Pause.

GIUSEPPE

I'm sorry I'm not mad at you...

MARGE

Marge.

GIUSEPPE

I'm just mad at this whole black market organ trading system, it's so broken.

MARGE

What's so broken about it?

GIUSEPPE

The Pauls, man! Everyone's like Paul, I give them the money and then they try to skip out on the bill by escaping through a window. Like I don't have kids to feed? Ungrateful assholes.

MARGE

I mean I agree that Paul's an asshole, but can you blame him for running? You are trying to sell his organs on the black market.

GIUSEPPE

Hey, hey, HEY! Introduction to Ethics, cool your jets. I'm the underdog here. I'm the Katniss Everdeen of this whole freaky fuck up rigmarole.

MARGE

Katniss Everdeen?

GIUSEPPE

Yeah. I read to my kids at night, I'm an illegal transplant surgeon and a great Dad, sorry to blow your mind.

MARGE

No I was just expecting-

GIUSEPPE

What? A seven foot tall syphilitic morphine addict who can only get an erection against the sound of skin peeling under a hot knife?

MARGE

And also maybe the kind of guy who has a collection of baby organs in antique bell jars.

GIUSEPPE

Ew no! Where would I even get antique bell jars? Why couldn't I just use like jam jars or I don't know, modern bell jars? It's not worth the effort.

MARGE

If you say so.

GIUSEPPE

Look, Marge, my favorite band is Vitamin C, I'm the victim here. I'm less of a creepy organ abductor and more of a black market "Make A Wish" sponsor.

MARGE

How are those two things similar at all? Why do you even need to explain this to me?

GIUSEPPE

Because I'm a good person and I enjoy peace of mind! So look let's say you have a brain tumor.

MARGE

But I don't have a brain tumor.

GIUSEPPE

I've had a long day, Marge. It's a hypothetical brain tumor. Your brain is tumor city, population soon to be zero. What do you do?

MARGE

I dunno, that's a tough situation.

GIUSEPPE

Exactly! And that's where I come in with my big briefcase of money! I give you 50,000 dollars and a week to live the good life and leave something behind for the wife and kids, with the knowledge that your organs will be used to save numerous lives!

MARGE

Wow, I guess you're not a bad guy after all.

GIUSEPPE

That means a lot Marge, I mean that.

MARGE

So...what now?

GIUSEPPE

Well now I'm in a tricky position, because Paul-

MARGE

My husband.

GIUSEPPE

Right, because your husband decided to be a coward and skip out on the bill, apparently being dissected under the knife for a well compensated greater good lost it's romantic appeal.

MARGE

I can try calling him and see if he'll come back, but I've been married to him long enough to know that probably won't work.

GIUSEPPE

This has been a good talk, I've told you about my kids and how much I love the band Vitamin C, so you know when I say "I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to take your organs instead." I reaaaaaally mean it.

MARGE

What?! My organs?! What about Paul?

GIUSEPPE

There's not enough time, super sorry.

MARGE

But the deal was with Paul! They're expecting Paul's organs.

GIUSEPPE

Hey kidneys are kidneys, past that, my bosses really don't give a shit.

MARGE

No, no, no! What about Ruthie? That piece of shit that Paul fucked? Take her instead!

GIUSEPPE

Come on! We both know a brain in the hand is worth two in the...in the... ahhh fuck it.

Guiseppe injects Marge with a butt load of morphine. She is instantly paralyzed and falls to the ground.

MARGE

buuuguguguu

GIUSEPPE

(sarcastically)

Dynamite last words, Marge.

Guiseppe begins cutting off Marges clothes to begin transplanting her organs. Suddenly his phone rings, the ring tone is "Smile" by Vitamin C.

GIUSEPPE

Hey Billy! Yeah! I'm just running a little late at the office pal, but I'll be home lickey split.

Guiseppe starts cutting into Marge while on the phone.

GIUSEPPE

Lasgna Night? Far out!

Pause for Billy's phone reply.

GIUSEPPE

I'm from a different generation, Billy. "Far out" is like the 70's version of "LOL."

Pause for Billy's phone reply.

GIUSEPPE

Hey you're going to be a "lame Dad" too someday, so watch out for that. Love you little man.

Pause for Billy's phone reply.

GIUSEPPE

A father telling his son he loves him isn't "gay." I don't like that kind of talk.

Pause for Billy's phone reply.

GIUSEPPE

Then you should get some more open minded friends!

Billy hangs up on Giuseppe. He continues to remove Marge's organs, she puts up a light struggle.

GIUSEPPE

Buhh. *That age.*

Giuseppe removes Marge's heart. Starts fiddling around with it.

GIUSEPPE

(DOES IMPRESSION OF NARRATOR FROM THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS)

"And after talking to his homophobic son Guiseppe's heart became two sizes two small"

Guiseppe puts heart into ice cooler.

GIUSEPPE

Ohhh *Black Comedy*, I don't know how I could survive as an illegal transplant surgeon without you.

Guiseppe removes bloody gloves, clasps hands together.

GIUSEPPE

Family lasgna night, here I come!

ACT I

BILLY, Giuseppe's 16 year old son, stands alone at front stage right, isolated by a spotlight. He's just hung up on his dad. He's wearing only pale blue boxer briefs and a bluetooth earpiece, which he taps twice to return to another call. He is teenager-skinny with jet black hair that hasn't been cut in 2 months. He speaks with a terrible Woody Allen-esque affectation.

BILLY

Sorry about that, it was my Dad. No, I mean, my biological father, not you, yes, right now, currently yes, you are my Daddy, Daddy.

As Billy speaks he walks to center stage, and the lights raise to reveal his bedroom, a slum, the walls lined with maps and Die Antwoord posters. In the center, twin bed, and across from it, a large computer monitor topped by a webcam.

The contents of the monitor are projected over the stage. Billy is performing on a live-cam site for BERNIE, a morbidly obese bald man in a gilded bed. (Think Gary Oldman in Hannibal meets the Gluttony Murder Victim from Se7en). A tiny, disgusting dog sits in Bernie's lap. Billy sits down on the bed and addresses the monitor.

BILLY

Oh no no no no no Bernie, what did I say - if Pithy wants to watch, it's a 10% surcharge on everything.

The dog, PITHY, perks up when it hears it's name, while Bernie bursts out in a tirade in Affrikaans, which Billy somehow understands. (Translation could be provided for the audience via subtitles on the screen, at the discretion of the director.)

BERNIE

You know damn well she doesn't *want* to watch! But I can't reach it myself, we've been over this.

BERNIE (AFRIKAANS)

*Jy weet damn goed sy nie * wil * te kyk! Maar ek kan myself nie bereik nie, het ons reeds oor hierdie.*

At "it" he gestures meekly to his crotch.

BILLY

Well that is a shame cause I was just about to
take-these-off

*He slides his boxers down milimeters at a time and
then quickly back up. Bernie grudgingly shoos
Pithy from the bed.*

BERNIE

I do for you, you do
in kind. Show me your
hole.

BERNIE (AFRIKAANS)

Ek vir julle doen,
doen jy in soort. Wys
my jou gat.

Billy flops onto the bed.

BILLY

OOH. Softly softly, catchee monkey. All in good time.

*Billy strips off his boxers, and starts jerking
himself. While Bernie can see everything, Billy's
dignity with the audience is guarded by convenient
placement of the computer monitor.*

Billy continues jerking but his mind is elsewhere.

BILLY

I mean it's not what my dad - sorry, Daddy- what
Giuseppe does that bothers me. It's that he acts like
I'm stupid, like I couldn't hear that woman gurgling on
the other end of the line as he patters on about Family
Lasagna Night. Do ya want somma of this?

*He reaches under the bed and pulls out a huge
dildo. Bernie grunts his approval and Billy puts
the dildo to use.*

BILLY

Oooohhhh - (heavy breathing) - but I'm not gonna play
retard Walt Jr. to his 2nd rate Heisenberg - ahhhhhh -

BERNIE

Junior wasn't retarded
he had the palsy-

BERNIE (AFRIKAANS)

Junior is nie
vertraag hy het die
gestremdheid-

BILLY

(continues uninterrupted)

it feels like the bad FX knockoff, Dexter revival
hybrid -eeehhhhhh, oohhhh- speaking of knocking off -

He cums, much too soon for Bernie.

BILLY

-but you know, disbarred surgeon moonlighting as a
blackmarket organ harvester is just uninspired in a
post-Breaking Bad culture, have some originality, Dad-

BERNIE

(mutters)
Organs?

BERNIE (AFRIKAANS)

(mutters)
Organe?

BILLY

If he could see me how I am now - not *right* now- but,

He extracts the dildo.

BILLY

-working hard, hehe, literally - supporting the family.

He walks to the window and lights a cigarette.

BILLY

I've even been buying his stock off him through a
fence, to make the sad fucker feel good. It's not
entirely unuseful - there's a bloke in Beijing that
likes me to do it with intestines tied around my neck -

He turns back to the monitor and blows a kiss.

BILLY

Sorry Bernie-boo, but that's how I make the real geld.

*On screen, Pithy the dog jumps back on Bernie's
bed as there's a knock on Billy's door.*

GIUSEPPE

(off-stage)

Hey there Billy-boy! The lasagn-ya is almost upon-ya!

BILLY

Fa fucks sake Dad, I know! Family fucking lasagna
night, elke fricking fucking verdomde Sondag!

*Billy exits and we hear a shower come on. On
screen, Bernie tries to turn the webcam off, but
he can't reach it. As he shifts, we hear a
disturbing rumble from his massive, discolored
gut. He grimaces in pain as Pithy starts barking
at the noise. When it stops, Bernie considers...*

BERNIE

...Organs.

BERNIE (AFRIKAANS)

...Organe.

Ain't No Party Like a Sausage Party

On screen, BERNIE begins to frantically glance around the room. Breathing heavily, he convulses as he is wracked with another spasm of pain. His eyes fall upon a small porcelain statue of a gnome on the bedside table. Struggling against his handcuffs, he is finally able to reach the gnome with the tips of his fingers. He inches it closer to himself, and just as he is about to pick it up it swivels out of his grasp and crashes upon the floor.

BERNIE
Fuck!

PITHY barks. In a rage, BERNIE picks up the lamp and smashes it in frustration. The light goes out, but the room is still bathed in moonlight. We see BERNIE, broken lamp in hand, his fingers a mess of blood and shattered glass. PITHY whines. After a bit of trial and error, he manages to unscrew the broken lightbulb with just his right hand. He limply tosses the lightbulb onto himself and it lands on his belly, rolling onto the mattress. He picks up the remaining metal base of the lamp and brings the weight down upon the bed post, smashing it over and over again until he is able to work the other end of his handcuff free. Winded, he lets the base of the lamp fall from his hand onto the floor, before collapsing into the bed, exhausted. After a moment he sits up and finds the broken lightbulb.

BERNIE
(struggling to catch his breath)

Billy! I know you can hear me! One of you. One of you can hear me. It needs to come out! I can't...not any longer...doctor, please! Don't make me I'll do it! I...you have five seconds to answer me Billy, I'll...four! Three...one! Billy! One!

BERNIE stabs his engorged stomach with the broken lightbulb and lets out a scream. This continues as he makes a foot-long incision down the length of his gut. PITHY barks, then growls. BERNIE sticks his hands inside of his stomach and pulls out an astounding length of fermenting, black intestines.

BERNIE
Oh God...

BERNIE passes out in shock. PITHY, still barking, comes over to him and begins to chew on his

intestines. On stage. BILLY enters from the bathroom amid a cloud of steam, wearing nothing but a towel.

BILLY

(singing)
Everybody wants my baby
But my baby
Don't want nobody
But me!
Nobody but me!
(Speaking, to the screen)
You know, that song has been sung so many times, but
the perfect version is still the-

BILLY sees the screen.

BILLY

Bern-aby, what's happening there? Oh, fuck. Oh my God.
You stupid sack of- PITHY! No! Stop it! No!

BILLY runs out of his room.

GIUSEPPE

(Off-stage)
Hey Billy, you want to put some clothes on before we
eat?

BILLY

(Off-stage)
Shut the fuck up Dad, something's happening in the
guest room.

GIUSEPPE

(Off-stage)
How would you know anything about-

BILLY

(Off-stage)
No time!

*We hear a door slam. On the screen we see BILLY
enter the room. He turns on a light*

GIUSEPPE

(Off-stage))
You can't go in there! Open this- Billy! You unlock
this door right now!

*On the screen we see BILLY kick PITHY THE DOG away
from the unconscious BERNIE. He goes to BERNIE and
begins assessing the damage.*

BILLY

(On screen)
Bernie Baby, Bernie Baby, get up. You're going to be alright honey, wake up! You sweet, sweet son of a bitch, open your eyes.

*BILLY realizes that BERNIE is dead.
Onstage, GIUSEPPE enters BILLY's room.*

GIUSEPPE
You get out of there right now!

BILLY
(On screen)
He's fucking dead, Dad!

BILLY picks up the statue of the gnome off the floor and hurls it at the wall. It shatters.

GIUSEPPE
What did you do that for?

BILLY
(On screen)
Is that really the most pressing issue at hand?

GIUSEPPE
You know you're not supposed to be in that room! And this camera! What is this camera doing here?

BILLY
(On screen)
Maybe if you didn't try to turn all of my friends into a five-course fucking meal then I wouldn't feel the need to keep an eye on them.

GIUSEPPE
I'm getting you out of that room right now.

GIUSEPPE exits. On the computer screen, BILLY begins to push the night stand in front of the door. Off-stage, we hear a loud banging sound, while on the screen we see GIUSEPPE kick open the door to the guest bedroom. BILLY picks up his laptop and webcam, and so on screen we see the image rapidly shift as BILLY pushes past GIUSEPPE, and walks down the hallway to the kitchen before turning around to face GIUSEPPE, who is following him.

BILLY
(On screen)
Now we have to get rid of that fat fuck's body.

GIUSEPPE

Can we eat first? The lasagna's getting cold.

BILLY

Human intestines are not meant to be turned into
sausage, Dad.

GIUSEPPE

We'll discuss this over dinner.

LIGHTS UP

GIUSEPPE and BILLY drive in a car.

BILLY

Did you really have to take that to-go?

GIUSEPPE

Well I said I was hungry.

Billy sighs as they pull up to a sketchy pond.

BILLY

Well, here goes nothing.

GIUSEPPE

Nothing? That dude is like 300 pounds!

BILLY

DAD! That man was one of my best friends. And you're eating him right now.

GIUSEPPE

You really ought to try this.

GIUSEPPE force feeds BILLY a spoonful of lasagna. BILLY spits out.

BILLY

Why?

GIUSEPPE

You look thin.

BILLY

You hit a new low Dad.

BILLY and GIUSEPPE exit the car and open the trunk where FAT FUCK's dead body lies.

GIUSEPPE

How does this work.

BILLY

We just get rid of him I guess.

GIUSEPPE

You got any final remarks to make.

BILLY

You were a good friend, you fat fuck.

GIUSEPPE

You tasted phenomenal.

BILLY

I wish I was as cool as you.

GIUSEPPE

But then we warmed you up and OH MAN, was that smart.

BILLY

Sometimes you kind of smelled though.

GIUSEPPE

You could have used some seasoning...

BILLY

And boy were you funny, sweet... sensual.

GIUSEPPE

To my stomach!

BILLY

And I guess, that too... I'm going to miss picking each other brains. The occasional sleep over. The long walks on the beach. And biggest on the list - the sex. Actually, no. The sex sucked. You were so fat. I almost died at least twice.

GIUSEPPE

You're gay?

BILLY

Bad time?

GIUSEPPE

I mean... probably could have been a better time for a bomb like that. Kind of getting rid of bodies here, mate.

BILLY

Speaking of bombs, let's get rid of this one before someone sees us.

GIUSEPPE and BILLY struggle to pick up the body from the trunk. They move it over the pond and trash it into the water. It sinks in the most ungrateful manner. A young child named HERBERT walks onto the scene while the situation is happening sucking on a lollipop.

BILLY

Goodbye, my fat fuck.

GIUSEPPE

We're in the clear!

HERBERT

My daddy says that if you use the f-word a birdie loses it wings and free falls a bigillian feet into the ground.

BILLY & GIUSEPPE

Fuck.

HERBERT

Stop guys, he's not kidding. It happens. I've seen it happen.

BILLY

Hey there, kiddio. What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be home with your mommy and daddy.

HERBERT

My daddy said that I should just drop dead and go away forever. So I did.

GIUSEPPE

Hey, I bet your daddy didn't mean it.

HERBERT

He left me on the corner of the street.

GIUSEPPE

Well then, who am I to judge your dad. Mr. Father of the year?

BILLY

God knows that if you were that it would have been revoked after tonight.

GIUSEPPE

What's your name kiddio?

HERBERT

Herbert Hancock Hornberg the 14th. My father was Herbert Hancock Hornberg the 13th named after his father's father...

BILLY

Stop. We get it. Your family like to alliterate.

GIUSEPPE

Well, i would like to think that Herbert Hancock Hornberg the 14th here needs some guidance and who better to give it to him than me? Herby how would you like to come home with us?

HERBERT

Oh boy, would I!

GIUSEPPE

Probably make a better son than Billy over here.

BILLY
Dad.

GIUSEPPE
What?

BILLY
Dad, you better not be doing what I think you're doing.

GIUSEPPE
Herbert, what did I say? Can you get in the car. We're bringing you home, you delectable delicious treat you.

HERBERT
Okay. hehe. Daddy.

HERBERT giggles his way to the car even kicking his heels on the way over STAGE LEFT.

BILLY
Oh Jesus. Dad. What are you doing?

GIUSEPPE
A new victim of our delectable new Italian restaurant.

BILLY
I don't like where this is going at all.

GIUSEPPE
I'll give you the quick pitch. Here's the plan to end all plans and puts us on the map! That lasagna was AMAZING. And it got me thinking... what a good idea a cannibalistic franchise would be! A chain where we sell our special recipe featuring your good friends and I guess now Herbert over there and make ourselves a FUCKING fortune!

BILLY
Herbert's a child dad.

GIUSEPPE
So what. My case has been made - humans are delicious.

A pigeon falls onto the ground from the sky.

BILLY
Huh... I guess the kid wasn't kidding.

GIUSEPPE
Let's go home Bill-athy. We got some children to cook!

BILLY stares at the pigeon.
LIGHTS OUT.

*SUPERSCRIP*T PROJECTED OVER THE STAGE: PLEASE OPEN YOUR PONCHOS NOW.

Lights up on a New York City rooftop. Pigeon coops and a small shanty upstage, a barrel fire off to the side. Someone has spray-painted thirteen tally marks on the side of the shanty.

A GRASS GOBLIN (a tiny, mottled, grotesque creature covered in shaggy grass hair) sits on an aluminum stool downstage, holding a pair of binoculars, gazing out over the rooftops. HE has a referee's whistle around his neck.

The GRASS GOBLIN lifts the whistle to HIS mouth, blows a long shrill note. Beat. Nothing. The GOBLIN lifts the whistle and blows again. Nothing.

GOBLIN:

Well fuck.

The GRASS GOBLIN scans the horizon through HIS binoculars. Blows long and hard on HIS whistle one more time.

HE stands resignedly and walks upstage to the wall of the shanty. Produces a can of spraypaint from a ripped-up pink zebra-stripe wheeled suitcase in the corner. HE walks to the wall and sprays a fourteenth tally mark.

GOBLIN:

Ba-da-dum-dum-dum. Another one bites the dust.

*SUPERSCRIP*T ABOVE STAGE: PLEASE PUT ON YOUR PONCHOS NOW.

HE rummages through the suitcase, pulls out a very large map and pencil. Scribbles some calculations in the margins.

GOBLIN:

If my calculations are correct...Pigeon number nineteen...Code name Charlton Heston, must have gone down somewhere...Here. Salt Lake City? No.

HE pulls out the pencil again and writes a note to HIMSELF in the margins.

GOBLIN:

Note to self: get smaller map.

HE circles a spot on the map.

GOBLIN:

Here.

The superscript above the stage begins to flash in red: PLEASE PUT YOUR PONCHOS ON NOW.

HE lifts the map and walks with it upstage. HE holds the map so that all of the pigeons may view it.

GOBLIN:

See this spot? Memorize it ladies. Get a good look.

HE tosses the map aside.

GOBLIN:

Good.

*SUPERSCRIPT ABOVE THE STAGE, FLASHING: ENSURE THAT THE HOOD IS **SNUG**.*

HE walks to the coops, unlatches one of the doors, reaches in and pulls out a pigeon. HE reads the tag on its ankle.

GOBLIN:

Ah. Yes. Number thirty-seven. Code name: Tom Felton.

HE pulls out a notepad and scrawls a note, rips it out, rolls it up, and ties it to the pigeon's ankle. HE sets the pigeon down, walks up and down the coops, flinging open all of the doors.

GOBLIN:

Now go. Fly my pretties! Don't stop until you've found your fallen sister. Peck her body to bits! Destroy the evidence! I don't want anyone to know she was ever there!

All of the pigeons fly out of their coops up over the GOBLIN's head, out into the house, shitting all over the audience, who by now should have put on their ponchos.

GOBLIN:

And then I want you to go after the sick gut-munching sonsabitches who caused her death.

Lights down.

Lights up on the outside of a small diner-style Italian restaurant in the middle of construction. A SIGN PAINTER stands on a ladder, painting the finishing touches on a sign painted in gold on the restaurant window that reads: BAMBINO DELIZIOSO. Two MOVERS stand holding either end of a piano in front of the restaurant door.

SUPERSCRIPT ABOVE STAGE: PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE YOUR PONCHOS.

MOVER 1:

Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck. It's not gonna fit!

MOVER 2:

Sonofabitch I think you're right. What're we gonna do?

MOVER 1:

Well we're gonna have to take a sledgehammer to the edges. 'S the only way the fucker's gonna get through.

MOVER 2:

Man I don't know, 's gonna be a bitch knockin' down all that doorframe and everything.

MOVER 1:

You got any other fuckin' ideas?

MOVER 2:

I think we're gonna have to gut the bitch. Slice her right down the middle.

MOVER 1:

Now you're fuckin' talking. I'll get the fuckin' hacksaw right out the truckin fuck...Fruckin' trick...Frickin' fruck...Fuckin' truck, there we go.

MOVER 1 exits stage right.

BILLY enters carrying a mobile comprised of random trash. The center of the mobile is the dead pigeon from the previous scene, tacked onto a crucifix and painted gold. HE bumps into MOVER 1.

MOVER 1:

WATCH WHERE YOU'RE FUCKIN' GOIN!

BILLY:

Oh man, sorry mister.

BILLY walks to the PAINTER on the ladder.

BILLY:

Look what I made Carl. Don't you think that'll just go swell hanging right over the bar.

THE PAINTER looks down briefly, shoots BILLY a non-committal nod, goes back to painting.

BILLY walks toward the piano and MOVER 2. Halfway across the stage, he trips and falls – pratfall, hold for laughter.

MOVER 2 stares at BILLY, doesn't find HIS incompetence funny.

MOVER 2:

This bitch ain't gonna fit. And you're straight-up trippin' you think we're gonna haul it all the way back to the van.

BILLY gets up, dusts HIMSELF off.

BILLY:

Oh man. She's way bigger than she looked in the ad.

MOVER 2:

Not my problem, bitch. All's I know is we're s'posed to get it inside, so it's comin' in in pieces.

BILLY:

What? No! You can't do that! This piano is sixty years old!

MOVER 2:

Just another reason'ta put the bitch outta her misery.

BILLY:

You sure swear a lot.

MOVER 2:

Bitch ain't a swear word.

BILLY:

I think it is.

Enter GIUSEPPE, leading a MORTICIAN by the hand.

GIUSEPPE:

And see here buddy?

HE gestures to the street parking spot in front of the restaurant.

GIUSEPPE:

Right here's where we'sa gonna put a big sign: "HEARSE LOADING AREA – NO PARKING." That way you can just pull up right in front, 24/7. No muss, no fuss.

BILLY:

Oh Christ dad, what now?

GIUSEPPE:

Billy boy! Come over heres! Meet my new friend. This is Mr. Kandinsky, from Smoldering Dawn Funeral Home down the other side of town down there.

KANDINSKY:

Hiya kid.

Mover 2 recommences trying to shove the piano through the door.

GIUSEPPE:

Mr. K here is very smart, very invested. He's ready to help us out on our new business.

KANDINSKY:

I'll admit it, Giuseppe, I wasn't sold on the idea until I tasted that parm, but man let me tell ya it was...I guess you would call it bellissimo, right?

GIUSEPPE:

Very good Mr. K. Very smart.

KANDINSKY:

Thanks.

Mover 2 kicks the piano very hard

BILLY:

Hey! Please stop that.

MOVER 2:

Make me...

GIUSEPPE:

So, Special K, how much product have we been talking here.

MOVER 2:

...Ya little bitch.

BILLY:

Dad, this gentleman is going to destroy my piano.

GIUSEPPE:

Quiet child! The adults are engaging in business transactions.

KANDINSKY:

Typically, in a good week mind you, maybe some kind of outbreak, within the age range we discussed, we'd get two or three.

GIUSEPPE:

Two or threes?! This is all?

BILLY:

You said I could have one thing for the restaurant. You promised.

GIUSEPPE:

I will not tell you again boy.

KANDINSKY:

Well yeah, but listen you gotta figure in BMI. You gotta factor in the size of the kid. I mean how much, pound for pound, how much meat would you say you're likely to go through, just on the human dishes?

GIUSEPPE:

I don't know. Let me think about it? Depending on the specials it could be as much as fifteen pounds a day, considering prices and portions.

BILLY:

How am I gonna play my songs with no stinkin' piano?

GIUSEPPE:

Carl! Please, would you deal with my son? I am in a meeting.

The PAINTER looks down from HIS painting wearily. BILLY looks very afraid, but HE stands, obediently awaiting HIS punishment. CARL slowly descends from the ladder while the two men continue to talk. HE makes HIS way to where BILLY is standing, grabs HIS face in a wrinkly hand, smacks BILLY very hard back and forth across the face, slowly walks back to the ladder, ascends, resumes painting. BILLY sits on the ground, commences weeping.

KANDINSKY:

So what I'm sayin' Gus, is that you get one of those two or three with some meat on his bones, you're cookin' with gas.

GIUSEPPE:

Yes, yes.

Enter MOVER 1 with handsaw. HE crosses to the piano.

MOVER 2:

It's about time, you sonofabitch! You will not believe what I've had to put up with.

MOVER 1:

Fuck off. Hold this thing still.

MOVER 2 grips the piano and leans against it, steadying it for MOVER 1. MOVER 1 spits in HIS hands, rubs them together, gets ready to commence sawing (a surprisingly elaborate process)

KANDINSKY:

And of course I wouldn't be offended if you supplemented your supply elsewhere. I mean St. Sebastian of the Terrible Heart does a fine bit of business uptown, there's a lotta real nice schools up there. Good area to raise kids. Plus I'm sure you could get scraps, bits and pieces here and there, from the local hospitals.

GIUSEPPE:

This is a good good idea Mr. Kandinsky!

KANDINSKY:

We've gotta think big picture here.

Just as MOVER 1 is about to start sawing:

GIUSEPPE:

WOAH WOAH WOAH! Just what do you think you rascals are doing?

MOVER 2:

We gotta saw the bitch to fit her through.

GIUSEPPE:

Like hell! I paid top dollar for them ivories!

MOVER 1:

How the fuck else you expect us to get it in?

GIUSEPPE:

Have you no will power? Are there not cranes? This is America, no? We can do anything here. We put a man on the moon, we invented checkers. Can you not surmise a solution to your pitting dilemmas, sad men?

MOVER 1:

Fine. Fuck! I'll think of fucking something. Here help me get the fuckin' ramp out the truck.

Exit MOVERS 1 and 2.

GIUSEPPE:

Well Mr. K, let me make this an opportunity to say sincerely thank you.

KANDINSKY:

Oh please, Gus. Like I said, it's all very exciting. You can expect me and Ethel here opening night.

GIUSEPPE:

It would be my pleasure to serve you the heart of a small child from a low-income family, sautéed perhaps with some broccolini and paired with a nice sangiovese.

KANDINSKY:

Or maybe a chianti? And fava beans?

KANDINSKY laughs at HIS own joke.

GIUSEPPE:

I do not think the fava beans. But yes, sangiovese is chianti.

KANDINSKY:

Ah...Well then. I look forward to it.

GIUSEPPE:

Good! I will look forward.

GIUSEPPE grabs KANDINSKY and kisses HIM on both cheeks. KANDINSKY blushes.

KANDINSKY:

Oh my. How European.

GIUSEPPE laughs

GIUSEPPE:

Yes, my friend! I am from Europe.

HE slaps KANDINSKY on the back. Exit KANDINSKY.

GIUSEPPE:

Ah! Billy my boy, my baby boy. You and me'sa gonna make-a some big money, yes?

GIUSEPPE crosses to where BILLY sits crying on the ground.

GIUSEPPE:

Oh shush. Shush. Husha little bambino, don't you say a word. Papa'sagonna buy you the whole world.

BILLY:

Why are you speaking with such a thick accent daddy?

GIUSEPPE:

Now that we have such nice restaurant, it's important: gotta keep up appearances. Let me say to you Billy...I came to Americas with nothing. Only a parmesans and the shoes on my back, yes? So when people, they come to me, they say, "Giuseppe you'ra gonna be rich. You know how to cook with the finest meats," I say to them, "why not?!" And why not?

BILLY:

Okay. Yeah dad. Whatever you say. Just don't have Carl hit me again please

GIUSEPPE laughs.

GIUSEPPE:

Oh Billy boy. You're funny. Now here play me a song on this piano you love so much. Play me one of your songs that you write so well.

BILLY:

Aw gee dad. I don't know if it's ready. I was gonna play it at the opening.

GIUSEPPE:

YOU PLAY IT FOR ME NOW! And then we see if it's good enough.

BILLY:

Okay, okay dad, whatever you say dad.

BILLY hurries over to the piano.

Enter DELIVERY BOY. HE runs up to GIUSEPPE and hands HIM a package.

DELIVERY BOY:

Hey mister! I got yer antique mason jars!

GIUSEPPE:

Ah! Magnifico! We will use these to preserve our pickled child's liver and display it around the restaurant!

DELIVERY BOY:

Sign here please.

BILLY:

Can I start pop?

GIUSEPPE:

One moment, beautiful, succulent son of mine. I want to give you my full attention.

GIUSEPPE looks the DELIVERY BOY over.

GIUSEPPE:

Before I sign this little delivery baby, can I ask, are you hungry?

DELIVERY BOY:

Boy am I!

GIUSEPPE:

Good. That's very good. Here, Billy, help me move the piano.

BILLY:

Oh man dad, I don't know.

GIUSEPPE:

Do it now, my child before this little lad gets any skinnier.

BILLY reluctantly helps HIS father push the piano and bench center stage.

GIUSEPPE:

Now, boy, run along inside, into the kitchen and await me in the meat locker. I will cook you up a fine and dandy treat.

DELIVERY BOY:

Holy fuck! Thanks a lot mister!

DELIVERY BOY scampers off into the restaurant. GIUSEPPE opens the box the DELIVERY BOY delivered. HE pulls out an antique mason jar and holds it to the light.

GIUSEPPE:

Yes! Magnifico! Ah, these are just perfect.

HE sets the jar on the top of the piano.

GIUSEPPE:

Now, my child, you may begin.

BILLY, frightened, walks to the piano, sits, glances nervously about, and begins to play. Lights fade down to a spotlight on BILLY.

BILLY:

A bottle of white, a bottle of red
Perhaps a bottle of rosé instead
We'll get a table near the street
In our old familiar place
You and I, face to face

BILLY:
(CONT'D)

A bottle of red, a bottle of white
It all depends on your appetite
I'll meet you any time you want
In our Italian restaurant

While BILLY was singing, CARL THE PAINTER has descended from the ladder and produced a saxophone, spotlight up on CARL as HE plays a moving sax solo. Solo over, BILLY begins to sing again.

BILLY:

Things are okay with me these days
Got a good job, got a good office
Got a new wife, got a new life
And the family's fine

Lights up inside the unfinished restaurant, we see this silent scene take place behind the glass window while BILLY continues singing: GIUSEPPE dragging the DELIVERY BOY out of the kitchen by HIS hair. The DELIVERY BOY is screaming, terrified.

BILLY:

We lost touch long ago
You lost weight I did not know
You could ever look so nice after
So much time

GIUSEPPE presses the DELIVERY BOY's head against a table, is screaming at HIM, produces a pistol and holds it against the back of the DELIVERY BOY's head.

BILLY:

Do you remember those days hanging out
At the village green?
Engineer boots, leather jackets
And tight blue jeans

GIUSEPPE seems to be screaming something along the lines of "I'll do it, don't think I won't, boy, I will blow your head off and cook you into cacciatore!"

Oh! You drop a dime in the box play the
Song about New Orleans
Cold beer, hot lights
My sweet romantic teenage nights

GIUSEPPE throws the DELIVERY BOY off of the table and up against the windowglass, proceeds to pistolwhip the shit out of HIM against the glass. The two MOVERS emerge from the wings with tuba and clarinet, engage in a playful medley with CARL and BILLY.

Piano solo.

BILLY:

Oh-oh oh-oh oh-ohohohoh

BILLY, MOVERS, and CARL:
(In harmony)

Oh oh-oh oh-oh oh-ohohohoh

Exit MOVERS. Inside, GIUSEPPE presses the gun against the DELIVERY BOY's head and pulls the trigger, blood splatter, DELIVERY boy falls, GIUSEPPE withdraws, sobbing uncontrollably, collapses in restaurant booth, staring at HIS hands.

BILLY:

Brenda and Eddie were the
Popular steadies
And the king and the queen
Of the prom
Riding around with the car top
Down and the radio on
Nobody looked any finer
Or was more of a hit at the
Parkway Diner
We never knew we could want more
Than that out of life
Surely Brenda and Eddie would
Always know how to survive

Lights down inside restaurant. Enter MOVERS, pushing a ramp.

BILLY:

Oh-oh oh-oh oh-ohohohoh

BILLY, MOVERS, and CARL:
(In harmony)

Oh oh-oh oh-oh oh-ohohohoh

The MOVERS wheel the ramp in between the piano and the window.

GUNSHOT. The music abruptly stops, full lights back up on stage. GIUSEPPE stands in the doorway of the restaurant, holding a smoking pistol.

GIUSEPPE:

STOP IT! JUST STOP IT!

HE staggers toward center, everyone else watches HIM, dumbfounded, shocked out of their shared musical enthusiasm.

GIUSEPPE:

Can't you see what this is doing to me? I can't live like this. I can't pretend to be someone I'm not, killing kids? Acting like it's no big deal? It is a big deal. It's... I mean *Jesus-s-s-s-s*. You read in books or you see in movies all these acts of violence and you think, "Sure those characters are acting all broken up about it, but would I really feel that way? If it was me pulling that trigger would I really give a fuck?" I mean I never feel anything. I pretend I do. I go through life pretending to feel sorry when your mom dies of cancer or feel good for you when you get knocked up. I didn't feel shit until I killed that first kid. Oh my god. I've killed *kids* man. I mean think about that. I've killed fucking *kids*. It's not like I think I'm goin' to hell. I mean we're all fucking going to hell. But it's a real feeling. It's a feeling like you can't even imagine. I mean Christ, I've killed *kids*. Plural.

HE stares back and forth between BILLY, the MOVERS, and CARL.

GIUSEPPE:

You don't know what it's like. None of you do. You're just here to pick up the checks.

The superscript begins blinking above the stage: PLEASE SECURE YOUR PONCHOS NOW.

GIUSEPPE:

My God.

GIUSEPPE sinks to the ground, weeping.

BILLY, CARL, and the MOVERS stare at GIUSEPPE, unsure of how to proceed.

BILLY clears HIS throat, nods up at the control booth. Lights begin to fade down, MOVERS look around awkwardly. BILLY noodles around for a bit on the piano, then breaks right back into song.

BILLY:

Brenda and Eddie were still going
Steady in the summer of '75
When they decided the marriage would
Be at the end of July
Everyone said they were crazy
"Brenda you know that you're much too lazy
Eddie could never afford to live that
Kind of life."
Oooooh! But there we were wavin' Brenda and
Eddie goodbye

BILLY stands, CARL removes the piano bench off stage, the MOVERS each grab a side of the piano and wheel it up the ramp while BILLY walks behind, still playing.

BILLY, MOVERS, and CARL:
(In harmony)

Oh oh-oh oh-oh oh-oh

Lights back up on the inside of the restaurant, covered wall to wall in little kids' blood, the DELIVERY BOY's limbs sit stacked neatly by the cash register.

The MOVERS look up, point to the sky. CARL enters at a run, carrying two machine guns, hands to the MOVERS

SUPERSCRIPT PROJECTED OVER THE STAGE: HERE COME THE BIRDS FOLKS!

BILLY:

They got an apartment with deep
Pile carpet
And a couple of paintings from Sears
A big waterbed that they bought
With the bread
They had saved for a couple
Of years
They started to fight when the
Money got tight
And they just didn't count on
The tears

The flock of pigeons descends over the audience, CARL picks up HIS sax. THE MOVERS start gunning them down, a rain of feathers, dead birds, and blood showers down on the audience.

Dueling sax and piano solo.

BILLY, MOVERS, and CARL:
(In harmony)

Oh oh-oh oh-oh oh-oh

The onslaught continues, seemingly endless.

BILLY:

They lived for a while in a
Very nice style
But it's always the same in the end
They got a divorce as a matter
Of course
And they parted the closest
Of friends
Then the king and the queen went
Back to the green

BILLY
(CONT'D)

But you can never go back
There again

The wave of pigeons seems to have died out. The MOVERS are panting, shellshocked. They walk out into the audience, occasionally firing bullets into the birds that lie on the ground.

BILLY:

Brenda and Eddie had had it
Already by the summer of '75
From the high to the low to
The end of the show
For the rest of their lives
They could go back to
The greasers
The best they could do was
Pick up the pieces
We always knew they would both
Find a way to get by
That's all I heard about
Brenda and Eddie
Can't tell you more 'cause I
Told you already
And here we are wavin' Brenda
And Eddie goodbye.

The MOVERS return to the stage, kick in the restaurant window, continue pushing BILLY through, into the restaurant, and into the corner where a space has been cleared for HIS piano. The spotlight follows.

BILLY:

Oh-oh oh-oh oh-ohohohoh

BILLY, MOVERS, and CARL:
(In harmony)

Oh oh-oh oh-oh oh-ohohohoh
Oh oh-oh oh-oh oh-ohohohoh

The back curtain rises, revealing a full orchestra. CARL and the MOVERS gather around BILLY's piano for HIS final verse. Each MOVER holds a dead pigeon in HIS hand. Their sleeves are soaked through with pigeon blood. Though BILLY is only a child, HE plays the piano with the emotional depth and maturity reminiscent of a young ELTON JOHN or BILLY JOEL.

BILLY:

A bottle of red, a bottle of white
Whatever kind of mood you're in tonight
I'll meet you anytime you want
In our Italian Restaurant.

CARL steps forward out of the restaurant, down to the front of the stage, playing a rousing last sax solo.

Applause break.

Lights up on the stage, including inside of restaurant. MOVER 1 produces a bread roll from HIS back pocket, stuffs it in the mason jar on top of BILLY's piano.

MOVER 1:

Man, what are you doin' here?

CARL, MOVERS and BILLY all turn to the audience and wink.

Lights fade down to a spotlight on GIUSEPPE, still weeping on the ground, covered in blood, then out entirely.

SUPERSCRIPT PROJECTED OVER THE STAGE: YOU MAY NOW REMOVE YOUR PONCHOS.

SCENE 1

(We see the dark RESTAURANT. BILLY sleeps soundly on the piano bench, an empty bottle of wine beside him. A FIGURE enters stage left, face covered.)

The FIGURE, lit by SPOTLIGHT, tiptoes into the restaurant before tripping over a CHAIR, knocking it to the ground.

A LIGHT appears on BILLY he STIRS.

BILLY

Hnng... nuuh

BILLY sits up and takes a look around, the figure freezes.

BILLY

(hums)

A bottle'a red, a bottle'a white... Whatever kinda...kinda..?

BILLY rests his head on the piano and nods off. He goes dark again.

The FIGURE sneaks through the restaurant and reaches the KITCHEN. He approaches four massive OVENS and pulls each of them open before retrieving a large jug of cooking oil.

The FIGURE empties the jug into all four ovens then shuts them again. He tosses the jug and exits stage left.

Scene 2

(BILLY and ROSA sit at a table in the empty RESTAURANT.)

BILLY slouches over the table, head resting in his arms. ROSA sits across from him working on PAPERWORK.

BILLY

(Groans)

ROSA doesn't respond.

BILLY

I said-

(Groans again)

(CONTINUED)

ROSA

You're complaining to the wrong person, serves you right.

BILLY

We were just having a little fun.

ROSA

Is that what fun looks like these days? You probably traumatized poor GIUSEPPE.

BILLY

GIUSEPPE? He'll be fine, lets worry about me.

CARL enters stage left, a grin on his face and a spring in his step. He walks up behind BILLY and gives him a hearty pat on the back.

CARL

Oi! There he is! Last night was great, completely mental.

BILLY

Don't remind me. Oh my head.

BILLY drops his head back on the table. CARL pulls a chair up and joins them.

ROSA

I hope that wasn't my good wine Billy sprayed over half my bathroom last night.

CARL

That bad huh?

BILLY groans, CARL gives him another pat on the back.

CARL

You know what you need? A nice big, eggy, meaty, covered in grease breakfast. You got any eggs Rosa? Sausage? Bacon?

ROSA

I've got better things to do than cook for you boys.

CARL

I'll make it then you grumpy old bat. This'll get you fixed up right quick Billy boy.

CARL stands and walks towards the KITCHEN.

ROSA

Haven't opened yet so the pilots are all off. Switch is by the door, don't go burning the place down.

CARL

Right, right.

CARL enters the kitchen and pulls out a FRYING PAN he sits it down on one of the OVENS and FLICKS the PILOT SWITCH by the door.

Just as he starts to walk back SMOKE and FLAMES erupt from one of the OVENS quickly climbing up the wall behind it.

CARL

Fire.. FIRE!

CARL frantically searches the kitchen. ROSA and BILLY run in.

ROSA

What did I just-- What did you do?!

BILLY snatches up a DISH TOWEL and tries batting at the flames.

ROSA

That won't help a grease fire. Carl what the hell are you doing?

CARL

Where is your extisguisher?

Billy grabs an exstinguisher and tosses it to CARL. CARL points it at the flames but it only lets out a small puff before it stops.

CARL

When the hell did you buy this thing the depression?

The flames spread to the other ovens, climbs up the walls and out of control at alarming speed. Billy and CARL try to fight it back to no avail.

ROSA

We should call the fire department, everyone out!

CARL, BILLY, and ROSA abandon the burning kitchen and make their way stage left. BILLY stops at the PIANO.

BILLY

What about the piano?

CARL

What about it? The fire department will take care of it, lets go.

BILLY

We can't leave it behind. The Fire department isn't gonna give a shit about a piano.

CARL

At the moment I'm inclined to agree with them.

ROSA motions impatiently to stage left.

ROSA

Boys lets go, everyone out now.

CARL grabs BILLY's arm and drags him stage left. The FIRE rages in the kithchen, spreading into the RESTAURANT proper.

CARL

You heard the lady, lets move.

BILLY

But-

BILLY looks from the piano to the spreading fire. After a moment he gives in and follows CARL.

CARL, ROSA, and BILLY exit stage left.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The fire continues to spread throughout. Tables, dinnerware, paintings being consumed in the inferno. The blaze reaches the ornate obsidian piano.

The fire licks and peels the wood. A large dark claw BURSTS from the keys!

INT. ROSA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rosa SLAMS the door behind her, extensively setting every lock upon it. She sits on a couch next to a calm Carl and shaking Billy.

Carl sips from a freshly opened beer.

ROSA

Okay. All we need to do now is lay low until the heat goes down. In every sense of the word.

CARL

Can do.

He finishes the current bottle. He pops the cap off another and continues drinking.

ROSA

Did you raid those out of my fridge?

CARL

Did we in part burn down Billy's ancestral home and restaurant? Let's all just relax and forget who's drinking who's booze and who burned down what.

BILLY

That restaurant was in my family for generations... my grandma would kick my ass if she wasn't already dead!

Carl pats Billy on the back and passes him a beer.

CARL

On the plus side, I'm sure she'd be very happy that you and your best friends weren't scorched to a crisp.

Rosa looks intently into her smart phone.

ROSA
They're saying the fire's already
being contained on Twitter. Who
knows, maybe they saved that family
piano of yours!

Billy takes a gulp of beer, wipes the sweat off his brows.

BILLY
Oh... thank god. Maybe this'll work
out after all.

Rosa's eyes widen.

ROSA
Okay, now there's some tweets
saying a couple of firefighters
were stabbed to death by a
mysterious figure during the blaze.

Beat

CARL
Coincidence I'm sure. Maybe they
owed money or were caught in the
crossfire of something.

ROSA
How do you get in the crossfire of
a stabbing in the middle of a fire?

CARL
... They did somehow.

Carl chugs his beer while Billy's look of anxiety returns to him.

BILLY
Grandma always did say we had to
protect that piano. Or else.

ROSA
Or else what?

Billy sips his beer.

BILLY
I don't know. She was... very
vague.

BOOM! An explosion of smoke and cinders before them. From the smog, TENEBROUS AUGUSTUS MAXIMUS emerges.

Classically demonic in form, with horns, bat-wings, claws, and red gleaming eyes. Holding an axe in one hand and his right wrist a stump wrapped in piano wire.

The trio sit in silent fear.

CARL

Gonna guess or else 'that.'

MAX

Kneel before me mortals and know fear! After eighty-eight years I am free from that musical prison! I am the duke of despair, the infernal key of shadows, Tenebrous Augustus Maximus!

CARL

Can we call you Max, for short?

The demon shrugs.

MAX

I don't see why not. Gonna be killing you three anyway.

The trio GASPS.

BILLY

The hell is going on!?

The demon points his axe at the trio.

MAX

Exactly. Your grandmother, Barbara, trapped me in that damned piano for decades to steal my power!

He holds up his stump.

MAX (CONT'D)

She even lopped off my right claw!

ROSA

(to Billy)

Did you know about this, Billy?

BILLY

No! All I knew was she immigrated to America, started that restaurant, and chewed out the family 'till she died!

MAX

She's dead? Barbara's dead?

CARL

Yeah. Last year. The reception was delicious.

Max slams his axe into the ground.

MAX

Shit! I was going to kill you guys, then your parents, then work my way up to her... but so much for that! I don't suppose you guys know where she kept my claw. I kinda need it back. Now.

Rosa eyes a CROSS of Jesus hanging on the wall next to the couch. She skooches over slowly...

BILLY

Even if I knew, I'm not going to tell you after you said you were going to murder me, my friends, and my family.

MAX

Come one man, don't make me use the axe on you. Or yes. Let me use the axe on you until you tell me.

CARL

But he doesn't even know! I don't know! Rosa doesn't know!

The demon's eyes turn to Rosa, who lunges for the cross on the wall, clutching it.

ROSA

Eat Jesus, you infernal bastard!

She throws the cross like a ninja star, cutting through the air until hitting Max right in the face. Steaming burns billow off the demon.

MAX

Ow! Sweet lord of the flies, that fucking hurts!

Carl and Billy get up and pelt the blinded demon with their beer bottles, shattering against him as he tries swatting them away with his axe and stub arm.

MAX (CONT'D)
That's enough!

Carl jumps for the cross on the ground, grabbing it just as Max swings his axe and slices the top half and Jesus clear off.

CARL
Holy shit.

The demon unfurls his wings and grabs Carl with his good claw, holding the axe to his neck. Rosa and Billy hold their hands up in surrender.

MAX
Okay, that's the game you wanna play, Billy and friends? Find the claw that your grandmother stole from me and return it or I kill...

CARL
Carl.

MAX
Or I kill Carl!

The demon drags Carl onto the couch next to him.

MAX (CONT'D)
And trust me, I can hold a blade to someone's throat for a very long time. My last record was 8 months.

Beat

BILLY
You're just going to stay here?

MAX
Yeah. I figured, we're already here, and you two are the ones who'll have to find my claw.

ROSA
Just don't stink up my couch with sulfur.

MAX
No promises.

Billy and Rosa back away slowly to the door, unlocking every latch.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Rosa SLAMS the door, exiting from her hijacked apartment.

ROSA

Great. Our best friend is captive by a demon in my apartment, we have to find the claw your witch grandmother ripped off him decades ago, and they're probably drinking all my beer.

Billy rubs his forehead.

BILLY

I know. I've been thinking... we kept a bunch of Grandma Barbara's stuff in a storage locker after she died. Maybe it's somewhere there.

Rosa SIGHS.

ROSA

Worth a shot. I can only imagine what unspeakable torture Max is subjecting Carl to...

INT. ROSA'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME.

Tenebrous Augustus Maximus sits next to Carl on the couch, towering over him, still holding the axe to Carl's throat.

MAX

Uh, can you turn on the TV? I'd do it myself, but, y'know...

The demon holds up his right arm stub. Carl GULPS and clicks on the remote. He shakily grabs another beer from the six-pack and drinks slowly, careful of the blade on him.

MAX (CONT'D)

Mind passing me one?

CARL

... Sure. They ain't even mine.

Carl holds one up. With lightning speed, Max lops the top off with his axe and leans the bottle into his mouth with his stubbed right wrist. Carl takes another sip as the TV plays in the background. Max's bottle, emptied, falls to the floor.

MAX

Carl, you're cool. For a meatsack.

STORAGE WARS

(A large walk-in storage locker. Lights up on BILLY and ROSA sorting through boxes of junk once belonging to BILLY'S late grandmother.)

ROSA

(Picking up a crossbow)

Your grandmother was into some really weird shit, huh?

BILLY

She was a survivalist.

ROSA

That's kind of an understatement.

(ROSA continues digging through a box marked "Bomb Shelter")

ROSA (CONT.)

This place is like a freaking old lady mausoleum. There's got to be 40 years of crap in these boxes. Was Grandma Barbara an animal person by any chance?

BILLY

Yeah, you're gonna find a lot of cat skeletons.

(ROSA opens another box and looks inside. She grimaces.)

ROSA

Found them. Any other surprises I should be aware of?

BILLY

Nothing you wouldn't expect from your garden-variety, eccentric old lady who also happened to practice the dark arts. Remember, we're looking for a dehydrated demon claw here. But other than that, I don't think anything crazy is going to jump out at you.

(A loud crash sounds from the back of the room and a stack of boxes falls to the ground. BILLY and ROSA jump.)

ROSA

(Shouting into the darkness.)

Who's there? You better fucking show yourself right the fuck now. I have a crossbow!

BILLY

Rosa...don't be dumb.

(Rosa glares at Billy. A figure steps out from the shadows. Rosa aims the crossbow.)

BILLY (Cont.)

James?

(JAMES, a disheveled and heavily bearded man steps into the light. He has clearly been living off the grid for a very long time.)

JAMES

(Putting his hands up at the sight of Rosa's crossbow)

Hey man, don't shoot!

(To Billy)

What's up, little brother?

ROSA

Billy, who is this?

BILLY

It's my brother...James. Are you living down here?

JAMES

Guilty as charged. I needed to lay low for a bit, loan sharks are tricky bastards. I figured with Grandma Bab's gone and all, it was up for grabs.

BILLY

How long have you been living here?

JAMES

Like 2 years, on and off.

ROSA

(Sarcastically)

Homey.

JAMES

It's not so bad, you just gotta watch out for the bigger rats. Speaking of which, want to meet Checkers?

ROSA

I'm good.

BILLY

Look James, there's not a lot of time to explain but apparently Grandma got into it with a hellish demon named Max. And now he's holding our friend, Carl hostage until we find his hand which is supposedly hiding in this storage locker and...

JAMES

Is it this thing?

(Points to a box labeled "Demon Claw")

ROSA

Well that was easy.

JAMES

Yeah, I found that about 6 months ago.

ROSA

So, back to my place to rescue Carl?

BILLY

That's probably not a bad idea.

JAMES

Right on. I'll grab Checkers!

It's dark. There's a streetlamp or whatever to imply they're on the street. Rosa leads the way while Billy and James follow. James lags behind as he carries the box with the demon claw.

JAMES

Shouldn't we call someone? I mean, my car's just sitting there, crumpled against an impressively sturdy fence.

BILLY

Well, if SOMEONE hadn't let their tires go balder than Grandma's ex boyfriend, then MAYBE we wouldn't have gotten into a car accident and PERHAPS we wouldn't need to be asking that question, *James*.

Billy turns to glare at James who adjusts his grip on the box.

JAMES

And suddenly my act of kindness turns on me.

ROSA

Billy's just mad because he hates walking the streets at night.

JAMES

None of these places have bars on their windows. I'd hardly call this "the streets."

BILLY

That's what Carl said before Max took him.

ROSA

I highly doubt Carl said--

BILLY

Shhhh, details, details.

James stops, resting the box on his knee.

JAMES

Can one of you at least take the box for a second? I am not a strong person.

Rosa and Billy turn around to face him.

ROSA

You crashed the car so you carry the demon claw.
Sorry, I don't make the rules.

JAMES

But you did. You literally said I was the one--

Rosa snatches the box out of his hands.

ROSA

Fine. On the condition no one gets to whine for these
last few blocks, got it?

*The guys nod. Rosa walks but stops after a few
steps.*

ROSA

Why is the box wiggling?

JAMES

Demon hands, man. Maybe they get jumpy.

*The box wiggles and Rosa drops it. James tries to
catch it but fails as it crashes to the ground
offstage. A few squeaks are heard.*

BILLY

WAS THAT YOUR FUCKING RAT?

JAMES

His name is Checkers and I shall neither confirm nor
deny.

*Rosa grabs the box and brings it back to James
and Billy. She holds up the demon hand. It's
covered in bite marks.*

ROSA

Well there's no denying that stupid rat thought it was
snack time.

BILLY

No way Max is gonna take his hand back like that.

JAMES

Maybe he'll like the new look?

Rosa looks up at James.

ROSA

Why the fuck would you think it was a good idea to put your feral pet rat in the same box as a demon hand?

JAMES

I couldn't just leave him the car.

BILLY

You could have left him at home!

JAMES

He gets lonely.

BILLY

Well now he gets to die a lonely death in suburbia because there is no fucking way I'm gonna go look for a rat while Carl gets tortured.

JAMES

Fine, I don't know Carl. I don't give a shit about Carl. I do give a shit about Checkers. So, you two run off and deal with whatever Grandma pulled you into this time while I go find my pet rat. Good. Night.

James stomps off to find his fucking rat.

ROSA

Asshole. He makes it sound like we dragged him into this.

BILLY

James has always had his own worldview.

ROSA

Lucky for us, I might know a guy who can fix...this.

She holds the hand up higher, a "this is fucking gross, why am I still touching it" look on her face.

BILLY

I just hope Carl can hold out that long.

AUGUST CORPSE: Can you lend me a hand?

ROSA: He will. He has to. Let's go!

(Rosa puts the severed hand in her purse and charges forward to lead the way, which happens to be through the audience, with a new found vigour.)

(The lights flicker on and off. Grandma appears. Her eyes are now black. She opens her mouth and blood spews out. Then, she is gone. The lights return to normal.)

BILLY: Wait!!! *(Billy grabs her arm- an impending fear has come over him)*. Did you hear something?

ROSA: Huh? No, hurry up, this hand ain't gonna reattach itself...

BILLY: I thought I heard...

ROSA: Look, buck up, bro. This is happening. No more skittish nerves and pussy footin' around. This is our one clear shot at proving we can do this. To prove that we aren't dumb stupid babies that don't know anything about nothing. We have one short life to live and we damn well better live it.

BILLY: That's not why...

ROSA: Now, listen. There's this thing. This thing called Carl and he is missing a hand and that hand has been nibbled at by a rat named Checkers. A highly domesticated rat, that I suspect, has no chance of surviving in this here precarious situation. Shit is real, you hear? You get what I'm saying? You picking up what I'm putting down? Paving what I'm laying? Beating what I'm boxing?

BILLY: Snacking what I'm packing?

ROSA: Puffing what I'm passing?

BILLY: Sipping what I'm drinking?

ROSA: Hitting what I'm pitching?

BILLY: Scribing what I'm saying?

ROSA: Sniffing the cheese I'm cutting?

BILLY: *(sincerely)* Waxing what I wish I could drive around on weekends?

ROSA: putting on the outfit that I've laid out for you?

BILLY: *(kindly)* watching the documentary that I recommended about Wall Street and corporate greed?

ROSA: Drinking out of the Pepsi bottle that I purposely backwashed in to prevent you from guzzling?

(There is a dramatic change of lighting from above. A voice is heard, it is Grandma's. Her voice is sweet and musical. Rosa and Billy sway in a trance, as though listening to a lullaby.)

GRANDMA (Off): Grandma loves her little babies. What funny little babies she has! If her little babies find Carl, that would make Grandma so happy. Don't worry about silly little baby James and his lies about little old me. He's just sad about losing his rat. But that's okay. Grandma loves all her babies. Even that little rat, Checkers.

(The lights come back up to normal and Rosa and Billy snap out of their stupor).

ROSA: We must find the man who can reattach this hand

(Rosa pulls out the severed demon hand from her purse and raises it high)

ROSA: and we must do so quickly. I suspect that when we find the man who can help us help Carl, than we can find the thing that is torturing that thing Carl.

(Rosa and Billy begin to wade through the audience and ask audience members if they have seen a man, a guy who might be able to fix the hand and help them find Carl. They meet in the middle of the audience.)

BILLY: That wasn't helpful. I thought you knew where to find this guy.

ROSA: No. I said I might know a guy!

BILLY: So, you don't know a guy?

ROSA: I know James and Carl and Checkers.

BILLY: Oh...

ROSA: And I also know you. And you are the guy.

BILLY: I'm the guy?

ROSA: Yes. You're the guy that is going to help us help Carl.

BILLY: Yes, but I've always been the guy that is going to help us, help Carl.

ROSA: Exactly.

In an uber. The driving is sporadic. Almost as if this driver is learning how to drive stick shift for the first time.

BILLY. So where exactly are we going? I'm not sure that we...

ROSA. The West Side. His name is Sparko. My grandma had this friend who had a cousin who had a German exchange student who had a cat. He had these herbs that really helped...

BILLY. *(Notices the blood from the demon hand is spurting out. This is only exacerbated by the uber driver's crazy "stop and start" driving.)* OHHHHHHH SHIT. Gross, get the away from me. So fucking nasty, dude.

ROSA. *(Without thinking twice, she takes her scarf and wraps the base of the hand to quiet the bleeding. She cradles the hand as if it was a newborn. Taking time to look at each finger. Silence. After a long pause and a pothole. Almost to herself)* was too scared to tell him.

BILLY. What?

ROSA. I'm going to tell you something right now and then I never want to talk about it again. Not until we un-demonize this hand and reattach it to Carl, but I'm in love with him. I'm in love with Carl Jobrowski. And I know I'm not supposed to say that because how long have we been dating? Not long, I mean not that long. And I'm supposed to play it cool and not seem attached, but FUCK IT. I LOVE HIM AND I NEVER GOT A CHANCE TO TELL HIM. Now he's being tortured by those zombie fuckers and we may never get a chance to bring him back to normal Carl. *(Hysterical)* I didn't mean for this to happen. I should have never made him get me coffee this morning. I should have listened to Grandma and just minded my own business. It's my fault.

BILLY. Shhhhh come on now. This is not your fault. Carl sold his soul to the zombies and they were going to find him no matter what. Luckily it was when he was getting coffee. Or else maybe you'd be a goner too. I know you love him, I could tell from day one...

ROSA. It's been said. The rest is silence.

UBER DRIVER. Here we go! Hey, do you need help with the door? Uhhhhh.. can you give me a good rating man? I had these three drunk girls yesterday and they all thought I was creepy or something so my ratings are down and...

They are already gone.

Inside Sparko's studio. There is a large metallic object with pointy needles sticking out. A neon light up SPARKO'S SPARKS sign, and a black cat stares at them with beady green eyes

ROSA. *(Still cradling Carl's bloody demon hand)* So.. can you help us?

SPARKO. *(Inspecting Carl's bloody demon hand)* I don't know. I haven't had a case like this for a while. Zombie blood, right? *(whistles)* Zombies are a tough breed. I've gotta bring out the big guns. Mugwort. Oil of oregano. And a little taste of zombie saliva to build up an immunity. I think I've got some stuff, but you've gotta give me at least 24 hours.

BILLY. That's the fastest you can do?

SPARKO. The fastest.

ROSA. All right, we'll take it. *(Turning to Billy)* It's our only option now. *(Back to Sparko)* How

Out of the corner of her eye, Rosa spots a rat dressed in a checkerboard shirt running from the feral cat. Rosa swoops in and grabs Checkers

ROSA. CHECKERS. You can't run away like that.

BILLY. So this is the little rat? How did he get here?

SPARKO. The cat brought him in the other day. Thought I'd roast him and use him in a soup. Speaking of, I bet he'd be great in this medicine for Carl's hand. Rat bone can really be a good binder. Hold the good stuff in, keeps the zombie poison out.

BILLY. Should we...

ROSA.....Do it?

BILLY. What are we going to tell James? Sorry we had the power to find your checkerboard shirt wearing pet rat, but we decided to crush his bones up to help un-zombify Carl's hand and rescue him from his torturers?

ROSA. Um. We can just say that Sparko's cat ate him.

BILLY. Works for me.

SPARKO. The rat bone is free of charge. You want to keep his shirt?

ROSA. *(Reaching for the doll sized rat shirt)* Sure. Rest in peace, little Checkers. You've done good.

BILLY. Alright, lets go find James and Grandma. We've still got a war to wage tonight and I'm not going to battle the zombies with no weapons or armor.

ROSA. Yeah, you're right. Let's go find them. Thanks Sparko, we'll be back.

They leave

(All characters leave scene, full fade-out)

Lights up on the interior of a small diner. It's mostly empty, save for the middle-aged Waitress, a Man wearing a Checkerboard Shirt, and an Old Couple at a table. The quiet sound of a radio tuned to a channel of Easy Listening plays in the background.

Breaking the silence, private investigator Sly enters stage right wearing a trench coat, followed by police officer Mackey.

Sly

Listen, Mackey, you know I'm not about this Spooky Scary pseudoscience, I'm a down-to-earth man. But when you come to my office talkin' about zombies? It gets my interest.

The two sit at the bar, a couple stools away from the Man wearing a Checkerboard Shirt.

Waitress

Welcome to Betsy's! What can I get you boys?

Mackey

I'll have the usual. And a coffee, black.

Waitress

Right on it, chief. And you?

Sly

Bacon and eggs, and a coke, if you've got it.

Waitress

Sure thing. Nothing like a full breakfast at 10 PM.

The waitress walks to the kitchen.

Sly

So, about those 'zombies'.

Mackey

I ain't seen 'em myself, just heard the stories from a few counties over. I would've passed it off as crazy if it weren't straight from O'Grady's mouth, and you know him, (imitating a large jowled man) 'no-nonsense, no nothin'.

Sly

(chuckles) I'm surprised the old man hasn't hung up his hat yet. Maybe he is seeing things.

Mackey

(nods) maybe you're right. I guess it's a little hard to believe a bunch of undead hooligans running around the countryside, causing chaos and the untold suffering of thousands.

The Man wearing a Checkerboard Shirt looks over at them nervously, takes his wallet out and places a few bills on the table, then stands up and quickly makes his way towards the door.

Waitress
(carrying plates to the two men) You take care now!

Man wearing a Checkerboard Shirt exits stage right.

Mackey
What's his beef?

Waitress
He came in here an hour ago, looking like six kinds of crazy. Ordered 'every kind of meat you got' and put the whole plate away in about five minutes. Then he just sat there until the two of you showed up. Anyway, here's dinner. We got bacon and eggs, and a Double Classic cheeseburger, hold the lettuce.

The waitress slides the plates and drinks to Sly and Mackey. Sly wastes no time pulling a flask from his coat pocket and pouring some of the contents into his coke.

Sly
I don't deal with crazy hitchhikers, and Mack's off duty.

Mackey
I've been out of town for the last couple months, working up in O'Grady's precinct on a case that we had to close after a call from the FBI. Now, I don't know about you, but that sounds mighty-

The conversation is interrupted by a loud clanging of metal. Mackey and Sly turn around simultaneously to look out the windows upstage. Two people dressed in makeshift suits of armor run by in the unlit forward stage, entering stage left and exiting stage right.

Sly turns back to the Waitress.

Sly
...They locals?

The waitress just shakes her head.

Mackey
What a week.

The two of them eat for a short while as the waitress cleans up.

Sly
So much for an uneventful night out.

Waitress
I'll be honest with you boys, This place's been crazy.

Sly

You mean, more than just kids running around with trash cans on their heads?

Waitress

I guess a lot of stuff's gonna sound crazy when you live in the middle of nowhere.

Mackey

It's all relative, I guess. We better get going now.

Waitress

Been good seeing you boys again.

Officer Mackey hands her a couple bills, and he and P.I. Sly leave, stage right.

The Waitress returns to cleaning, then looks up. The old couple is still sitting at the window.

Waitress

You enjoying your shakes?

Old Woman

Oh, yes, it's wonderful.

Old Man

Just like old times, isn't it, Margaret?

Old Woman

It's Mary, you old sod.

(Full fade-out, all actors off)

What happens after we eat together
by Dan Robert

*The OLD WOMAN and OLD MAN from before are in a small living space.
The OLD WOMAN is tidying up. The OLD MAN sits before a flickering TV.*

[NOTE: a '/' marks an overlap in dialogue. When a '/' is arrived at in a cue line, the next actor with text should begin speaking.]

OLD WOMAN. *(a dramatic sniffle)* I felt a little sick in there, you know, like maybe I was getting a little sick in there! They've got to clean those windowsills better the dust I mean Lord!

OLD MAN. Maggie I'm looking at the TV and I'm thinking... Where's Snoopy?

OLD WOMAN. I don't think Snoopy, *(laughing at him)* Oh honey, well, this is that, what is that *(she squints at the TV)* Oh that Toddlers in Taras program, I don't much care for that, oh Lord, can you imagine if Beth or John spoke to us that way well / then I don't think I would even have the – I mean I would go straight for the wooden spoon, a real good old fashioned spanking!

OLD MAN. Sally and Linus and Charlie didn't know what to do with the footballs, you know, that's part of the – what? Are you talking to me, Mar-

OLD WOMAN. *(throwing the remote his way)* Have fun surfin!

(The remote goes flying up and over his head, a crash and an explosion of batteries. No one seems to notice this)

OLD MAN. *(pointing at the TV)* She's dressed like a little Madonna.

OLD WOMAN. She's dressed like a little slut is what she's dressed like. Fake eyelashes!?!?!? On a four year old!?!?!? Call the police! I mean really! Call child services! I always feel so gassy after a milkshake don't you just bopping around gassing up the place –

OLD MAN. Oh, look. *(Beat. His eyes widen at the program. He covers his mouth)* Oh, no, oh, she's crying in there –

OLD WOMAN. You know what I think is just a nasty new thing everyone seems to be doing these days that I just, well, I can't stand it is people telling you when you showed up in one of their dreams! *(she shudders)* Ooh! I don't like that kinda stuff! No thank you, Cousin Dot, thanks for the call but *(she shudders)*

(The OLD MAN is crying. OLD WOMAN doesn't notice)

OLD MAN. Turn it off. She didn't win. Look at her. She didn't win the play there. Turn this off.

OLD WOMAN. Suit yourself!

(The OLD WOMAN goes to the set and flicks the switch OFF manually. Silence. OLD MAN just stares off. OLD WOMAN looks at him, worried. Then, after a beat

The sound of 8 gunshots offstage. OLD WOMAN looks up, puzzled at something –)

REPORTER *(offstage)*. What we do know is that he was unarmed. What we do know is that he was shot multiple times. What we do know is that he was shot in the head. What we do know is America is very sick. What we do know is an ambulance wasn't called for four and a half hours. What we do know is America is very sick. What we do know here is that America is very sick. What we do know is that they are tear-gasing people standing in their own yard and so what we do know here is that they have gotten sick now what we do know here is you don't do a dog like that America is sick what we know here what I know here is America is *very* sick.

OLD WOMAN. *(she remembers)* Oh! dag nabbit did I pay the internet bill? Bill, did I pay the internet bill?

(She looks over to OLD MAN for an answer who is like, still very much not with us)

OLD WOMAN. *(laughing)* Perfect person to ask, Mary! *(sarcastic)* Uh, Bill, honey, do you happen to remember if I paid the gardener or if I, well, did anything the last year? *(Cracks herself up. To no one in particular)* He has good days and he has bad days!

(Beat)

OLD WOMAN. Right. Let's look.

(OLD WOMAN goes over to a messy table of stuff. She sifts through. We should imagine above this table is a window. The window is open.

WHITNEY, JESSINIA, and MARY – three black teen girls, 13-15 enter)

JESSINIA. Where's your sister?

WHITNEY. I don't fuckin know.

JESSINIA. SHAKAILA!!!!!!

(OLD WOMAN looks out the window. Spots the girls)

MARY. Where the fuck are we?

WHITNEY. Don't swear.

MARY. You just the fuck swore.

WHITNEY. I'm older than you. We been walking for like, shit, miles / like

JESSINIA. Call her.

MARY. My phone's dead.

OLD WOMAN. *(from out the window)* Well hello there, can I / help you?

(The girls are startled)

MARY. Don't fuck with us.

OLD WOMAN. Oh God, of course I won't, I'm, Hi, I'm Mary I'm not – *(laughs uncomfortably)* I'm just an Old Woman in The Middle of Nowhere!

MARY. That's my name. Mary.

OLD WOMAN. There's a lot of us.

MARY. Wish there wasn't.

OLD WOMAN. Well. It's nice not to be alone.

JESSINIA. You got an iPhone 5 charger?

OLD WOMAN. Oh no I'm afraid I use an Android! Imagine that!

WHITNEY. Let's go.

OLD WOMAN. Are you ladies lost?

MARY. N/o

WHITNEY. Ye/s

JESSINIA. It's cool-

OLD WOMAN. Oh! Well, I'm. *(she looks like she's about to say something, her face frozen like that for a few beats)*

(The ladies all look at the OLD WOMAN like: Uhhh, any day now...)

OLD WOMAN. Would you like some snacks?

MARY. What kinda snacks.

OLD WOMAN. I have, let's see what I have. *(goes to investigate the snack sitch)*

JESSINIA. *(whispering)* We don't need this whack bitch's snacks!

MARY. I'm hungry.

OLD WOMAN. *(head in a cabinet)* A bag of Lay's. Sorry, they're the Low Salt kind, Mr. High Blood Pressure over there, let him at the regular kind and he just goes right to town, you can see him start to dry up like a California raisin! *(She walks downstage onto what we should imagine is a porch so that she is now outside with the girls)* It's actually quite horrifying! You ever see someone go so white in the face, just li- Well, I mean, or... not that I'm, saying, you, white, like, or what, I'm, if you guys go, white, it's not - I'm, It's, an expression! Oh God. Alright. Well-

(JESSINIA cracks her knuckles and walks up to the OLD WOMAN, threateningly, slowly, and the OLD WOMAN tenses up. She has trouble making eye contact with JESSINIA. JESSINIA and the OLD WOMAN are face to face. It's so fucking tense and awful. A long beat, then:

JESSINIA grabs! the bag of chips from the OLD WOMAN's hands and bursts out laughing with MARY and WHITNEY cackling too)

JESSINIA. You see that lady's face! Like I was gonna slam her ass!

MARY. *(rolling with laughter)* I can't - I can't -

WHITNEY. *(hysterically laughing)* Shut up! Oh my God no, shut the fuck up!

(THE OLD WOMAN laughs uncomfortably)

OLD WOMAN. Oh! Ha! That was a good one!

(The girls try to stop laughing for two seconds, they kind of succeed, then back in they go. The OLD WOMAN isn't laughing anymore)

REPORTER *(offstage)*. If there is no justice, there will be no peace, protestors and rioters say.

OLD WOMAN. Alright-

(WHITNEY impersonates the nervous OLD WOMAN. Laughs, a snort happens - This sets the girls off into a larger fit of laughter)

MARY. *(losing her breath)* I can't-

OLD WOMAN. Well this was very nice, but maybe you should-

JESSINIA. *(whipping toward OLD WOMAN)* YOU: Shut the fuck up!

(WHITNEY throws the unopened bag of chips in the OLD WOMAN's face. Hard. A beat.)

WHITNEY. We don't need your fuckin' charity chips.

(WHITNEY, JESSINIA, and MARY exit.)

The OLD WOMAN stands, in a stunned, sad silence on the porch. Moments pass. She tucks stray hairs behind her ears. She tries not to cry.

What she can't see is that the OLD MAN's body has been becoming limper and limper very slowly behind her.

The OLD MAN's head drops as YOUNG BILL enters, a man in his late 20s. He stands behind the OLD WOMAN. He wears a 1950s Catholic school-boy outfit. He's so sharp and so handsome.)

YOUNG BILL. Mary?

OLD WOMAN. Yes, Billy *(turning around. She jumps)* Oh God-

YOUNG BILL. It's alright, Mary.

OLD WOMAN. *(teary)* No. No it's not. *(She stares at him for a moment. Then, softly)* Bill. Look at you so young and- *(Beat)* We mess it all up, I'm afraid. That's what I have to say to you, Bill From the Past, I hate to say it, but we mess it all up. Not us, only, and not, y'know, *us* I'm not saying that we mess us up, at least not really, but we do, all of us, mess it up. For the kids, I mean. We don't fix much. I'm realizing, ok?, we - is what I'm out here realiz... I'm. I'm seeing that it's all just, well, kind of... Yes, *Fucked!* I said that! I know! It's, yes, it's that bad! It is! The world! And you and I will dance under the moon and we will dance with our children and take them to lakes but it's all wrong, I think, now, and I didn't. I didn't try. Like I should have. I didn't try to be better and now I'm just. I'm just an Old Woman in the Middle of Nowhere and you don't remember. You try so hard Billy but you don't. You don't remember, not much. And I try so hard but sometimes at night I just scratch and my hand till it bleeds I do that all night I can't sleep I just scratch and they're all out there fighting I can't stand it they're all fighting for whatever it is and it doesn't matter because kids

are dying! Not our kids, though, they're not dying but they don't help they just do whatever on their, their iPads no grandkids but iPads, I mean what IS that, like HELLO!? What is that!!!

(A long beat. YOUNG BILL doesn't really know what to say)

OLD WOMAN. America is sick right now, Bill. America is very sick.

(Beat)

YOUNG BILL. You, uh. You mind if I have those?

(OLD WOMAN looks confused. YOUNG BILL points to the potato chips on the ground.)

OLD WOMAN. *(shocked)* Oh. Is that why you... Is that what? Oh. Sure.

YOUNG BILL. Sorry, honey, I'm just hungry. I've been so hungry.

OLD WOMAN. Oh... Okay.

(YOUNG BILL grabs the chips. He walks offstage incredibly casually for a ghost.)

Beat.

SHAKAILA, a young black girl, 20, walks onstage. She sees OLD WOMAN)

SHAKAILA. Hey. Have you seen three girls walk pass here? Actin loud n' stupid?

(THUMP! The sound of the OLD MAN, dead, falling to the ground inside. The OLD WOMAN runs into the frame of the door, sees this, and lets out a massive scream)

SHAKAILA. Oh shit.

BLACK OUT

AUGUST CORPSE PROJECT 8/15

CPR

Lights come on slowly to a rise.

SHAKAILA

(Re: Lights, looking up)

Okay..

(To Old Woman)

You alright lady?

OLD WOMAN

(Screams again)

My LOVE!

She begins to shake and hyperventilate, harder and harder. SHAKAILA watches for a few moments.

SHAKAILA

Uhm.

SHAKAILA walks over to the doorway and sees the OLD MAN lying there.

SHAKAILA

Uh-- Is he alright?

OLD WOMAN is still shaking/breathing heavily. She grabs onto SHAKAILA.

SHAKAILA

Holy shit. Uh... Is um. Should I call somebody...?

OLD WOMAN

America has collapsed. Sick and contagious. Crumbled. I knew it. I told him. I warned them all. Wake up. Wake UP!

SHAKAILA

Yeah, okay. But like, you really haven't seen three girls? One's kinda skinny, one's a lil' chubby, the other one has a big mouth and kinda looks like a jackrabbit. All three of 'em, they're looking for me-- I'm just looking for a place to hide.

OLD WOMAN

(Resisting sitting. Shaking SHAKAILA more violently)

FESTERING. ROTTING. I KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN. But not today.

(CONTINUED)

SHAKAILA

Whoa okay lady, sounds good. You sure you haven't seen anyone come by here?

OLD WOMAN

(to OLD MAN)

You sick BASTARD.

OLD WOMAN goes over to the house. She reaches in and drags the OLD MAN's body out of the house.

(to OLD MAN, while dragging)

It is NOT the time for this. Get. Up. Get UP. GET UP I SAY. You're a liar. You big fake. Don't you remember our pact? You said that you would never leave me alone here, you asshole. This awful place. These ghosts.

SHAKAILA

You talkin' real ghosts, or metaphor ghosts?

YOUNG BILL enters, crosses the stage and exits eating his potato chips. Neither woman notices, but remain in a relatively still pause until he exits.

OLD WOMAN

Real.

SHAKAILA

Oh, you're crazy.

OLD WOMAN

(to OLD MAN)

I said get up, SIR.

SHAKAILA

Lady, lady, lady! Sit DOWN. Back offa him. Let go of me. Sit down there. Let me look at him. You keep breathing and we'll see what's going on with him.

SHAKAILA kneels next to OLD MAN. She taps one of his shoulders and then the other. Speaks as she taps.

Are you okay? Are you okay?

(TO OLD WOMAN)

Don't worry, I'm CPR certified.

Okay. No answer. So this. means. that I. Check the surroundings! Hm. Anything dangerous or causal to your current predicament. Do I need to remove you from this area? Mmmmmmm nope. Aright. So, now-- Mouth to MOUTH... Okay, wait-- back it up. I didn't check your pulse. I gotta check your pulse first.

(CONTINUED)

She puts two fingers on his jugular and tries to figure out where to put her other two fingers and lands them on her own jugular. Stops to listen.

Nope. Yours is not like mine. There is a clear lack of any anything in you, but mine is like a beedee dump ee dump ee dump. And yours is like a ----- . I'm pretty sure that means that you're dead.

(To Old Woman)

Hey listen, I'm gonna say he's dead. I *could* do mouth to mouth, but if I do, I might be found responsible. And if the cops show up, chances are I really will be found responsible for all this somehow, so Imma leave it as is. I think he's dead. I'm sorry.

OLD WOMAN

Dead. For certain?

SHAKAILA

Maybe? I'm no doctor, but like, yeah. No breathing, no pulse. But like you saw, I didn't kill him. He was already dead and then I did a double check and he is indeed dead. Forreal.

OLD WOMAN

Search his pockets.

SHAKAILA

What?

OLD WOMAN

The key. Now's our chance. Look in his pockets.

SHAKAILA

What key? I'm not stealing anything from a dead white guy. Talk about fucking ghosts.

YOUNG BILL enters unseen again. Lurks in the background and eats the rest of the potato chips in the bag.

OLD WOMAN

Look with me. Help me find the key.

SHAKAILA

Listen, lady. I kinda have to get out of here. These girls might be here any minute. Somehow they always know where to find me.

OLD WOMAN

You can stay here. I need your help.

SHAKAILA

If I help you look for this key, lady, will you make sure these three girls don't find me? They're crazy dangerous, but in the like fuckin screw balls I-don't-know-what-you're-capable-of-because-you're-a-nut kinda way. Loud and obnoxious. I'm telling you- these girls are bananas.

OLD WOMAN

I'll protect you.

SHAKAILA

You swear?

OLD WOMAN

Swear on my life. Or his. Or what used to be his. I just need your help.

YOUNG BILL is standing in the background, licking his fingers clean of the last potato chips. He remains unnoticed by SHAKAILA, who can't see ghosts. All three of them stare at the body of the OLD MAN lying on the ground.

SHAKAILA

You sure it's in his pocket? His pants pocket?

OLD WOMAN

It has to be on him somewhere. Now's our chance.

SHAKAILA

What is this key for anyway?

The Key

OLD WOMAN

It's for a room in my house.

SHAKALIA

Why don't you have a copy of it?

OLD WOMAN

My husband had the copy. I had mine.

SHAKALIA

I don't think it's here.

YOUNG BILL

Did you look in the front zippered breast pocket?

OLD WOMAN
(Shocked at the voice)

Here it is.

SHAKALIA

What's in the room?

OLD WOMAN

Nothing.

SHAKALIA

Is that a place where I can be safe?

OLD WOMAN

No.

SHAKALIA

Okay. So where do I go to be safe.

OLD WOMAN

Anywhere.

SHAKALIA

What? No. Please, where do I go, you swore I would be safe.

OLD WOMAN

You are.

I don't feel safe.

SHAKALIA

Take her out of here.

YOUNG BILL

Okay. Let's go this way. Take a flashlight.

OLD WOMAN

Blackout. They turn on their flashlights.

Will the girls find us?

SHAKALIA

I can take care of them.

YOUNG BILL

No we're fine.

OLD WOMAN

What's going on?

SHAKALIA

Do you have any potato chips?

OLD WOMAN

Why would I?

SHAKALIA

Just wondering.

OLD WOMAN

Are you okay?

SHAKALIA

I am fine. We should head this way, towards my house.

OLD WOMAN

Is there something I'm missing here?

SHAKALIA

Have you ever been lawfully wed?

OLD WOMAN

No I haven't. SHAKALIA

The girls are gone now. YOUNG BILL

You don't have to worry about those girls now. OLD WOMAN

How do you know? SHAKALIA

We can go to my house. OLD WOMAN

And then what? SHAKALIA

Do you like to play the piano? OLD WOMAN

No I do not like the piano. SHAKALIA

I have to go now. YOUNG BILL

No, don't leave! OLD WOMAN

Excuse me? SHAKALIA

Goodbye for now. YOUNG BILL

I'm fine without you, but I'm happier. OLD WOMAN

I'm not going anywhere! SHAKALIA

You don't see ghosts do you? OLD WOMAN

SHAKALIA

I don't see ghosts and I don't like piano.

OLD WOMAN

At my house I can make you a cup of hot water and I can show you the room I have access to now.

SHAKALIA

What's there?

OLD WOMAN

Potato chips.

SHAKALIA

I don't really like potato chips.

One of the three girls enters

JANE

I like potato chips.

SHAKALIA

OHMYGOODNESS.

JANE

Didn't we have lunch plans Shakalia?

SHAKALIA

We did. My schedule got changed around at work, sorry.

JANE

It was rude.

SHAKALIA

Absolutely.

YOUNG BILL

(Coming up behind the old woman, since Shakalia and Jane obviously can't see ghosts)

Turn off the lights.

The stage stays pitch black as the audience hears a loud gunshot! There is screaming from onstage from everybody except SHAKALIA.

OLD WOMAN

Quick! Someone turn on the lights!

JANE

I'm on it!

The stage illuminates as we see JANE near the light switch, the OLD WOMAN center stage, and YOUNG BILL still struggling to "get inside" of the dead SHAKALIA lying on the ground.

YOUNG BILL

Come ON! Don't deny me this one chance at mortality!

OLD WOMAN and JANE run over to the now deceased SHAKALIA in a panic, not being able to see YOUNG BILL due to him being a ghost.

JANE

Shakalia!! NO!

OLD WOMAN

Oh my God!

YOUNG BILL

Oh sure, she gets attention when she dies, while I just get thrown in a ditch for dog food.

JANE and OLD WOMAN continue to grieve over the recently deceased SHAKALIA while YOUNG BILL watches them in frustration.

YOUNG BILL

Why the hell didn't that work?! The gun was angled perfectly on the piano and I used so much energy to get the gun to fire!

DOMNIFEROUS

Well that's because you're doing it wrong dim dum.

DOMNIFEROUS enters stage right. He looks ghostly just like YOUNG BILL. He wears clothes from various cultures (a Chinese robe, an African scale necklace, etc.)

YOUNG BILL

Might I ask who you're suppose to be.

DOMNIFEROUS

I am the mighty and powerful Domniferous!

YOUNG BILL

So...is that like a play on words between Dominic and omniferous?

DOMIFEROUS

How did you...Nevermind. It's totally not. But what is clear is that you're trying to get your mortality and you're completely failing at it. You don't just shoot relatives with your ghostly abilities! It doesn't work like that!

YOUNG BILL

Oh wow, great tip coming from someone who's dead with me. So how would you, in all your expert knowledge, go about gaining your mortality?

DOMNIFEROUS

Not how...but WHEN! [DOMNIFEROUS puts his finger over YOUNG BILL and cuts him from speaking] Shh-shh-shh-shh. Being an experienced time traveling ghost has made me realize being the joys of being dead. Maybe I can convince you of the same. If not, it's still the right way to go about getting your mortality back! Might even be able to change this outcome.

DOMNIFEROUS points to JANE and OLD WOMAN crying over the recently deceased SHAKALIA

JANE

[Crying] What the hell happened?! Who could've shot her?! My gun was all the way by the piano!

YOUNG BILL

Ummm...yeah. Sure whatever. I don't want this death to be unnecessary if I can't use SHAKALIA's body to live once more.

DOMNIFEROUS

Excellent my boy! Now I'll teach you to use your ghostly powers to travel back in time! Grab a hold of my robe!

YOUNG BILL

S-sure. But where do we go?

DOMNIFEROUS

Back to before this happened of course! Oh I know! Let's go back to New York City. 1920!

YOUNG BILL struggles in protest as the lights flicker. FADE TO BLACK

CPR: "Madame Daniella Blavasky"

By: Yolanda K. Wilkinson

A dark back room of a speakeasy known as, "This Place" New York City 1920. It is Midnight and there are nine people sitting with their hands on a table with pinky fingers touching and their eyes closed.

Madame Daniella Blavasky is guiding them into a meditative state in a faux Eastern European accent.

MADAME DANIELLA

Breathe deeply. Fill your whole body with your breath. See your breath as light. A light that fills the entire Universe. A light that transcends time.

She reaches under the table for her string that triggers a door opening.

MADAME DANIELLA

SPIRITS OF THE WORLD BEYOND! HEAR ME! WE CALL TO YOU AT THIS HOUR WHEN THE MEMBRANE BETWEEN OUR TWO WORLDS IS AT IT'S THINNEST! COME! JOIN WITH US! SHARE YOUR NEW FOUND WISDOM! PERHAPS YOU HAVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS! I WILL BE YOUR VESSEL!

She stops speaking and puts her foot on a pedal that will produce a knocking sound in another part of the room.

MADAME DANIELLA

Is anyone here? Are you present with us? If you are, make a sound. Give us a sign!

Just at that moment Dominiferous and Young Bill "materialize" behind Madame Daniella. No one can see or hear them...yet.

MADAME DANIELLA

I am here at the request of this woman.

She touches the "Old Woman" who is now young to her right.

MADAME DANIELLA

Can you feel her life force? She is yearning for something. She is filled with desire. Fulfill her deepest wish. Are you here?

She presses down on the pedal with her foot and a soft knock is heard.

She presses again harder and a sharp knock sounds. Muffled gasps from the participants are heard around the table.

MADAME DANIELLA

Welcome! You are most welcome to our circle!

DOMNIFEROUS

Oh my goodness, not this hogwash again.

YOUNG BILL

"Hogwash"? What is this?

DOMNIFEROUS

My friend, we have fallen ass backward into a seance. One of the biggest cons known to humankind.

YOUNG BILL

Wow! A real seance! I've heard about these but I've never been to one.

DOMNIFEROUS

Yes they were all the rage in the 1920s. Bored rich people needed something taboo to do with their time. They usually chose one of two things to entertain themselves; drinking bootleg alcohol or trying to contact the dead. Curious folk.

YOUNG BILL

You don't believe seances work?

DOMNIFEROUS

Not in the slightest. Mortals cannot contact the dead.

YOUNG BILL

But we're here. We came just as she called out.

DOMNIFEROUS

We came here on our own volition remember? I decided we would come to 1920 New York City. That fraud in the crushed velvet dress did not summon us.

YOUNG BILL

Are you sure that you *decided* to come here? Maybe you were obeying her command like a slave.

DOMNIFEROUS

I AM NOONE'S SLAVE!

MADAME DANIELLA

(to "Old" woman) Speak child. Give voice to your deepest desire. The eternal spirits are here to help us. Tell them what you want.

OLD WOMAN

I...I...I don't know what to say.

MADAME DANIELLA

Pour out your heart child. Think. What do you want for yourself? For your future?

OLD WOMAN

Success.

MADAME DANIELLA

That's not enough! Success in what? What do you want to do with success? Think big! Think of your family.

OLD WOMAN

I have no blood family to speak of; just the people who help me run This Place.

MADAME DANIELLA

SEE! TOO SMALL! We are contacting beings who transcend time and space!

YOUNG BILL

Well she is right about that. You are a time traveller.

DOMNIFEROUS

She is pulling all of this from her over-wide posterior. She has no idea how our world works!

MADAME DANIELLA

So what if you don't have family to speak of now! What about the future? What about your progeny, the generations that will come from you?

OLD WOMAN

I don't have any children.

MADAME DANIELLA

You don't have any children now. You must think beyond the now!

OLD WOMAN

But I'm not married. I don't even have a steady guy.

MADAME DANIELLA

UGH! You are wasting my time! You are stuck in the now. Beings who aren't shackled by time are waiting to hear your deepest desire and you are WHINING!

YOUNG BILL

What a bitch. She's right but she doesn't have to be so mean about it.

Madame Daniella begins to breathe deeply and rhythmically. She seems to go into a trance. After a moment, she speaks.

MADAME DANIELLA

Benevolent spirits, help me to make her understand. Give me the knowledge of her heart in order to connect with her.

DOMNIFEROUS

Oh this is absolutely grotesque. I'm sure that the "knowledge" this crook receives is going to require the woman paying large sums of money.

Madame Daniella instantly goes still, her breathing is shallow and a low airy voice comes from her.

MADAME DANIELLA

Shhhhhhhhh...

YOUNG BILL

Yes be quiet.

DOMNIFEROUS

I wasn't speaking.

MADAME DANIELLA

Shhhhhhh...Sha...Sha...ka...lia. Sha...ka...lia. Shakalia.

The "old" woman, shocked sits upright, opens her eyes and looks at Madame Daniella.

OLD WOMAN

How do you know that name?

YOUNG BILL

Did she just say "Shakalia"?

DOMNIFEROUS

Yes, I think so.

OLD WOMAN

How do you know that name?

YOUNG BILL

"Shakalia" is NOT a common name, especially in 1920.

DOMNIFEROUS

Very interesting.

YOUNG BILL

It's more than *interesting*. We just left Shakalia's dead body. I shot her!

DOMNIFEROUS

Yes I know.

YOUNG BILL

Of all the names to say, why say that one.

Young Bill moves closer to Madame Blavasky and looks in her face.

YOUNG BILL

How do you know that name?

OLD WOMAN

Answer me! How do you know that name?

MADAME DANIELLA

(breathlessly) It is your name. Your's in the sense that you created it.

OLD WOMAN

It was the name I gave my favorite doll when I was little. I just liked the sound of it. I always thought that I would name my daughter, if I had one, "Shakalia".

YOUNG BILL

Oh my god! Did you hear that?!

DOMNIFEROUS

Yes I'm standing right beside you.

Young Bill moves closer to the woman and studies her face.

YOUNG BILL

You know, she kinda looks like the Old Woman from before.

MADAME DANIELLA

(in her normal fake accent voice) So you have thought about having children. Use that childlike imagination to visualize your future and tell our guest what you want!

OLD WOMAN

POWER! I want power! I want to never be hungry or scared again. I want money! I want everyone to come to This Place and love it! I want them to love me!

MADAME DANIELLA

What are you willing to give for these things?

OLD WOMAN

Give?

MADAME DANIELLA

Yes. Give. Everything has it's price.

DOMNIFEROUS

See? I knew it. Charlatan.

OLD WOMAN

What do they want?

MADAME DANIELLA

Life. They want life.

YOUNG BILL

THAT'S ME! SHE'S SENSING ME!!! YES! I want life back! Give it to me and I'll give you anything!

Madame Daniella goes oddly still again, and she starts to gyrate in her chair. A new voice comes from her. Domniferous and Young Bill recognize it immediately.

MADAME DANIELLA

Which of your children will you give?

OLD WOMAN

I have no children.

MADAME DANIELLA

Which of your children will you give.

YOUNG BILL

Domniferous, who does she sound like to you?

DOMNIFEROUS

Jane. She sounds like Jane. But how?

Jane walks out from the shadows across from Madame Daniella. She is obviously puppeting her.

JANE/MADAME DANIELLA

I want your great grandchild. Give her to me and you will have all you wish.

OLD WOMAN

I give her to you.

YOUNG BILL

NO!(to Domniferous) Still don't believe? I shot her great granddaughter so I could live again and now we're here to witness this! **Blackout**

AUGUST CORPSE - ADAM CECIL

Lights up. Madame Daniella stands in the center of the stage.

MADAME DANIELLA

I will drink the blood of the child.

The stage turns red.

MADAME DANIELLA

I will consume the blood of the child.

The lights pulse, oozing in and out.

MADAME DANIELLA

My blood will become her blood.

Lights back to neutral. Young Bill enters.

YOUNG BILL

That was meant to be mine.

MADAME DANIELLA

My life will become her life.

YOUNG BILL

You stole my future.

Jane walks from the shadows. Madame Daniella collapses.

JANE

You had no future.

YOUNG BILL

You took my chance.

JANE

I saved you.

We hear the cries of the Old Woman from some far-off place.

I gave you everything. JANE

I am unsatisfied. YOUNG BILL

You are holy. JANE

I have nothing. YOUNG BILL

Don't you feel it? Don't you understand it? How free you are? You are free to do anything, William. You are free to take anything. You are free to become anything. JANE

I am a ghost. YOUNG BILL

You are free of limitations. JANE

I am free of nothing! YOUNG BILL

Old Woman wanders on stage, crying. Domniferous follows her.

She is my chain. I wish we had taken her life instead. YOUNG BILL

She had no life to give. JANE

With her still around, I have no life to live. YOUNG BILL

Don't be dramatic. JANE

The Old Woman weeps. Domniferous sits on Madame Daniella's lap.

I want to give it back. YOUNG BILL

JANE

Give it back? What do you mean, give it back?

YOUNG BILL

My life. What's left of it. I want to give it back to the child.

JANE

You have no blood to give to the child. Besides, it's too late. She is ours now.

The Old Woman continues to weep. Domniferous takes out a vial and starts to collect her tears.

YOUNG BILL

I'll find blood.

JANE

You'll take it from someone else?

YOUNG BILL

I'll find it. I won't have to take it from anyone.

JANE

You are always taking blood from someone, William.

YOUNG BILL

Not me. I don't have to. You told me. No limitations.

JANE

There are some limitations that hold back even the most free.

Young Bill walks off. Domniferous seals the vial of tears and follows him off-stage.

The Old Woman has stopped weeping. Madame Daniella sits motionless.

Jane flicks her hand. Madame Daniella rises. The stage turns red.

END SCENE

ACT I

1

Jane remains sitting motionless, Madame Daniella at her side. Jane waves her arm about in front of her gracefully, as if her fingers are the finest ballerinas and Madame Daniella's body jerks in seizure-like jolts of electricity. This disjointed movement somehow coincides with a strong wind and a blast of heat--the skies are boiling.

A thick fog slowly tumbles into the red-washed stage and mixes in a sulfurous, noxious cloud of deep red atmosphere. The VOICE OF THE CHILD is heard from everywhere in the space. Jane and Madame Daniella are silhouetted in the background; they are watching everything unfold, but they are separated from the cloud of red fog.

THE CHILD

(in a child's playful manner, drawing out the vowels and fidgeting awfully)

What is it called? How big is the sky? Do you know what skin is made of? Can you tell me where wind comes from? What is it called when you see a man out in the dark, dark, in the dark and he scares you but you can't say, say, he scares you and you can't yell? What is that called? What's it like to lose your favorite thing? Does rain always fall down? How do I know you are real? What's it like to die?

Suddenly she is snapped up into mid air as if he was tied by the ankle and someone just pulled the rope with a violent jerk. As she is whipped into the air blood spurts out of his throat and makes a river across the stage that keeps dripping, pouring as the body disappears in the rafters. The stream of blood continues burgeoning until it is a river.

The Old Woman is horrified. She screams and drags her old, weakened body off stage.

YOUNG BILL and DOMNIFEROUS enter and kneel down next to the blood river, scooping up water to refresh their faces. The moment the water hits their faces, the blood river is water. Real water.

YOUNG BILL

Water is everything.

(CONTINUED)

DOMNIFEROUS

(holding the vial of The Old Woman's
tears, eying it covetously)

Yes, yes it is. But some water is better than other
water.

YOUNG BILL

As with all things, Dom.

DOMNIFEROUS

Then why do you risk yourself for this child? She's
practically gone and you have nothing to give her.

YOUNG BILL

A child is a pure thing. Their hearts are the hollows
in which hope unfolds. Some hearts are better than
others, more worthy of saving.

DOMNIFEROUS

But who are you to say whose is more worthy and whose
is not?

YOUNG BILL

A heart can never lie about itself. It always finds a
way of revealing its strings.

DOMNIFEROUS

And so...you would judge a man's heart by what means?

YOUNG BILL

By the fruits of his efforts. A man with nothing to
show, a lazy man, has the heart of stone; it is slow
and unmovable.

DOMNIFEROUS

And a man who is gainful, hard-working, what is his
heart?

YOUNG BILL

It is a strong tree. Growing. Firm. Producing many
leaves.

*Young Bill stands and unwraps his belt. He is
struggling, but still firm in his purpose.*

DOMNIFEROUS

And a bad man? A man who is greedy, opportunistic,
hedonistic?

YOUNG BILL

His heart is the wind. It howls and grasps for
everything in its path, but holds onto nothing.

Domniferous can tell where this is going. He relents and does not try to fight back only because he knows he can never beat Young Bill.

DOMNIFEROUS

A good man?

YOUNG BILL

No such thing.

Young Bill quickly and deliberately wraps Domniferous' neck in his belt, strangling him. Domniferous fights to remain calm, to be dignified.

DOMNIFEROUS

(strained)

A heart for a heart.

His body twitches, an instinctual response.

YOUNG BILL

(as the life leaves Domniferous)

Some hearts are better than others.

Young Bill removes a vial or container of some kind from his pocket, pricks Domniferous' wrist with his knife and collects some blood, caps it off and stands to leave without hesitation. Then he stops, goes back to the body and rummages around until he locates the vial of tears, which he pockets. He bows sadly and walks off stage.

Jane motions Madame Daniella in the same way and the fog is sucked backward and into a small box at Jane's feet--it is as if a universe has been contained and wrangled back into Pandora's Box. Maybe it is Pandora's Box.

JANE

You see. Even the freest, even the noblest can be reduced to the lowest, evil instinct. It is simply a matter of motivation.

MADAME DANIELLA

(in a trance-like voice)

Yes.

JANE

And now, William will bring me what I want.

MADAME DANIELLA

Yes.

JANE

Shut up.

MADAME DANIELLA

Ye.....ss...s.

Jane's head snaps toward Madame Daniella. A long moment. Is Jane going to lose it? The silence is ripped by Jane's terrible cackling laugh.

Blackout.

2

Young Bill enters to find Jane and Madame Daniella entangled on the floor. They are struggling and it seems like Jane is hurting Madame Daniella. Young Bill stands by and watches stoically. He will not interfere, not while he has something else to do. Madame Daniella screams out in pain and Jane untangles herself as if her task has been accomplished. She looks up to see Young Bill, as if expecting him. Madame Daniella remains curled up on the floor; she cannot move.

JANE

William.

YOUNG BILL

Yes.

Jane smiles and hands Young Bill a lock of Madame Daniella's hair.

JANE

Here. I just found this.

YOUNG BILL

Found it or ripped it out?

JANE

Same thing.

YOUNG BILL

Here. I found this.

He hands her the vial of Domniferous' blood.

JANE

Found it or ripped it out?

YOUNG BILL

Same thing.

JANE

Ah, but no. Not the same at all.

YOUNG BILL

No limitations, Jane. How often must I remind you of our agreement?

JANE

William, how often must I remind you of the rules?

YOUNG BILL

The two cannot coincide.

JANE

Correct.

YOUNG BILL

Enough. Here's the blood. Now give me the girl. I'm done here.

JANE

Well, as we discussed, I'll give you what's left of your life and you may decide to give that to the girl to possibly save her life. If that's really the best thing to do.

YOUNG BILL

Give. It. Back.

JANE

If you really insist on giving her a broken heart, you may.

YOUNG BILL

Mine is not a broken heart.

JANE

Isn't it?

Madame Daniella sits bolt upright. She has finally come back to herself. All the events hit her at once. She knows what Young Bill has done. Madame Daniella sees Young Bill now, truly, for the first time. She screams a deep, mournful, guttural cry in his direction.

Young Bill is startled and when he meets Madame Daniella's eyes, something inside him does breaks. He sees her for the first time, too.

JANE (CONTINUED)
Isn't it, William?

Madame Daniella's cries are growing louder and louder. Young Bill cannot think.

JANE (CONTINUED)
William?

Young Bill is somewhere else in his mind. His eyes are glossed over.

Madame Daniella in her great despair lashes out at Young Bill's knees and in that very moment he disappears. The vial of The Old Woman's tears falls and shatters on the ground into a million particles.

The Old Woman comes crawling back on stage, wiping up her evaporating tears.

END SCENE

SCENE 1

The Old Woman lies on a couch, asleep. Jane sits at a table, writing in an enormous tome. The Old Woman mutters in her sleep.

OLD WOMAN
....Mmm... Shells...

JANE
What was that?

OLD WOMAN
...Rrr... Shells...

JANE
Oh, I'm just adding the new tears to my journal.

The Old Woman snores loudly.

JANE (CONT.)
My tear journal! I have an entry for every tear I've ever cried, along with the cause and a brief description of the tear's consistency, speed, whether it stuck to my face or fell to the floor, things like that.

OLD WOMAN
Fffrffffrff... Shells... Mm...

JANE
Yes, well, today has been a good day for tears. It seems as though our good days very rarely overlap. Me and tears, that is.

OLD WOMAN
Grrf, tears.... Tears...

JANE
Sure, I'll see if I can find one...

The Old Woman shouts and flails her arms for a moment, then returns to sleeping semi-peacefully. Jane flips to a page toward the beginning of the journal.

JANE (CONT.)
Oh, here's an old one.

As Jane begins to read the entry, a figure appears behind her. As it approaches, we see that it is Jane's Mother. She is in a bathrobe and appears to be a bit drunk. Jane reads silently as her Mother berates her.

JANE'S MOTHER

How could you do this to me? How could you do this to me? Do you have any idea what I could've been? What I could've been if I didn't get all knocked up with you? Do you have any idea how good a dancer I was? No, of course you don't have any idea. You don't have any ideas about anything, do you?

*Jane shuts the journal. Her Mother disappears.
Janr holds back tears.*

JANE

Better not read too much of it if I don't want to add a whole nother entry, right?

Jane pauses to allow the Old Woman to respond. The Old Woman snores loudly. Jane forces a laugh.

OLD WOMAN

Shells, tears.....

JANE

A more recent one? Sure, let's see...

Jane flips through the journal, eventually stopping at a page toward the middle.

JANE (CONT.)

Hm...

As Jane reads, a Man and a Woman appear behind her. They appear to be mid-conversation, until the man turns and looks at Jane.

MAN

(to Woman)

Did... Did you hear that?

WOMAN

What?

MAN

I think that lady just farted.

WOMAN

Really?

MAN

Yeah, I- Oh man, that lady *definitely* just farted!

WOMAN

Oh my God, who does that?!

MAN

(yelling to Jane)
Hey lady! Why did you fart!?!

WOMAN

Yeah, lady! Why!?

MAN

You farted! You totally farted! Why!?

A crowd starts to form around the Man and Woman.

WOMAN

Like *nobody* farts anymore! What's your deal, lady!? Why did you fart!?

(to crowd)

Hey everybody! This lady farted!

The crowd murmurs and laughs.

MAN

(to crowd)

Everybody, come laugh at this lady! This farty lady! This lady who farted! Ha!

The Man and Woman point and laugh at Jane. Some people in the crowd also laugh.

WOMAN

What is wrong with you people!?! She fucking *farted!* Point and laugh! Point and laugh like you mean it!

The Man and Woman lead the crowd in pointing and laughing at Jane. The laughter quickly grows.

Jane closes the journal. The Man, Woman, and crowd all disappear.

JANE

Looking back on it, that one was kind of silly.

OLD WOMAN

Mmm.... William...

JANE

What?

OLD WOMAN

William...

JANE

I don't, I don't know...

OLD WOMAN

Read one about William...

JANE

I, uh...

The Old Woman snores loudly.

JANE (CONT.)

...Alright.

Jane flips through the Journal until she finds an entry about William.

JANE (CONT.)

Here's one.

As she reads, Young Bill appears behind her.

YOUNG BILL

I loved you. I really did.

Jane looks up from the journal.

JANE

We don't have to read this-

OLD WOMAN

For Christ's sake, just read it.... Shells...

The Old Woman snores. After a moment, Jane continues to read.

YOUNG BILL

I really did. More than anything. But what are we doing? ... I'm just so tired of us hurting each other. And sometimes it seems like that's all we do anymore. ... I loved you, I really did, but we're just not who we were.

Jane looks up from the journal.

JANE

I think I can skip ahead a bit, it seems like a lot of filler...

Jane flips ahead a page or two.

JANE (CONT.)

I'll keep reading if you want me to, but in case you couldn't already tell, this one is sort of boring.

The Old Woman snores aggressively.

JANE (CONT.)
Alright, alright, calm down.

Jane takes a moment to prepare herself. She reads from the journal.

YOUNG BILL
I can't fix you.

Jane looks up from the journal, holding back tears.

JANE
Alright, it's alright, we're all okay here. We're all okay here.

Jane takes a few deep breaths, puts on her best "I'm not gonna cry" face, and continues reading.

YOUNG BILL
So... Goodbye, I guess.

Young Bill begins to walk away.

JANE
No. Don't leave.

YOUNG BILL
I'm sorry.

Young Bill takes one last look back, then exits.

JANE
Please. No.

Silence for a moment. Jane begins to cry. She flips to the very end of the journal.

JANE (CONT.)
(to the Old Woman)
Thanks a lot, now I have to add a whole nother entry...

The Old Woman snores loudly. Jane tearfully begins writing.

JANE (CONT.)
Oh, save it. I'm in no mood, lady.

END SCENE.

Jamie Sanders- Scene title: "Clarence"

Lights up on a sparsely decorated restaurant. A mirrored, unmanned bar sits upstage. Down slightly stage right is a table. At that table sits CLARENCE, a friendly but ultimately unimpressive car salesman with thinning hair and an intense but ambiguous Middle American accent. He is looking around nervously.

JANE enters up stage left, clutching the journal in her shaky hands. She has been crying again, as evidenced by the streaks of badly applied mascara leaving trails down her face. She pulls a newspaper clipping out of her pocket and reads it, scanning the room.

Jane and Clarence make eye contact. He stands, awkwardly. They wave. It is extraordinarily uncomfortable, as they are too far from each other to speak, but have seen each other and therefore must acknowledge each other's presence. They maintain eye contact as Jane closes the gap. Eventually, Clarence move towards her, then realizes that he is already at her destination and doubles back. Because of this, he is facing away from Jane when she arrives at the table.

Jane: Hi! Sorry I'm late.

Clarence: It's fine.- *turns, sees makeup smears* – are you okay?

Jane: Yeah I'm fine. Just a slow cabbie on the way and I- *looks over at mirror, sees face* – oh. Oh goodness, that. I didn't even think about that.

Clarence pulls out a handkerchief. Jane takes it and wipes her face as Clarence pulls out her chair for her.

Clarence: Usually people don't start crying until AFTER they go on a date with me.

Jane has sat down, does not react.

Clarence (CONT'D): That was much funnier in my head.

Jane: What? Oh! Oh no! HAHAAHAHAHA! It was funny!

Clarence: Now you're just trying to make me feel better.

Jane: No! I promise! It was very cute. You're cute. I like you.

Clarence: We've only just met.

Jane: I draw a lot from first impressions.

Clarence: Seems like. But actually though- are you okay? I don't know a lot of people who prep for blind dates by crying.

Jane: It's a long story.

Clarence: Isn't that kind of what dates are for?

Jane: It's a long story about another guy.

Clarence: Ah.

Jane: Yeah.

Clarence: ... does it have anything to do with that notebook?

Jane: What makes you think that?

Clarence: Well, you showed up here crying, which isn't normal for a date, and you were holding a random notebook, which also isn't normal for a date... odd ones out go together, right?

Jane: Normal for a date? How many dates do you go on that you can say what's "normal" for a date?

Clarence: A good number.

Jane *goads*: How many?

Clarence: A lot! Okay? A lot. I go on a lot of dates.

Jane: With who?

Clarence: All sorts of people. Anyone who walks through that door with my ad in their hands.

Jane: How's that working out for you?

Clarence: I go on a lot of FIRST dates.

Jane: Yeah?

Clarence: Yeah. But I'll tell you; nobody has ever showed up crying into a notebook.

Jane: I wasn't crying INTO the notebook.

Clarence: You know what I'm saying.

Jane: I do. We should order.

Clarence: But do you want to talk? About him?

Jane: We should order.

Clarence gives her a long look, then slides her the menu. Jane places the notebook on her lap, then lays her napkin over it. She smiles at Clarence. After a moment, he smiles back.

FADE OUT. END OF SCENE.

JANE'S APARTMENT, a cozy little one bedroom. There is a photo of an attractive man in a frame sitting on the kitchen table.

(Jane enters followed by Clarence)

JANE

Well, this is it. Are you still hungry?

CLARENCE

Yeah. I swear, I feel like we never ate dinner at all.

(Jane places her notebook next to the photo)

JANE

Oh, right. Clarence, this is my roommate, Robert.

(Jane gestures towards photo)

CLARENCE

It's very nice to meet you, sir. So this is the guy, huh? I didn't think he'd be so... well, I guess I hadn't really formed a picture. We haven't spoken about him at all, I mean.

JANE

If I didn't want to talk about it in the restaurant, why would I when he's right there?

CLARENCE

Don't you think that's a little superstitious?

JANE

I don't get what you mean.

CLARENCE

I'm not sure I do either.

JANE

Ugh, never mind. Let me get us some drinks.

(Jane moves off to grab drinks, Clarence picks up photograph)

CLARENCE

Robert, I don't know what it is, but things have gotten much worse since you came into my life.

(Jane drops the drinks, glass shatters)

JANE

Put him down!

CLARENCE

Okay, okay, I'm sorry!

(He puts it down, she picks it up)

JANE

I'm sorry, are you all right?

CLARENCE

Why wouldn't I be?

JANE

I wasn't speaking to you. And while we're on the subject, you should probably not just go around manhandling people.

CLARENCE

Who did I manhandle? I've never manhandled in my life. I don't handle anybody, really, and even if I did, men would not be the place I would start.

JANE

Well, let's see. You laid your greasy mitts all over Robert without even so much as asking his permission first.

CLARENCE

Jane, I really don't understand what is going on.

JANE

You don't? I thought you would have figured it out by now.

CLARENCE

Clearly not.

JANE

I guess it's time then. Clarence, I haven't been entirely honest with you tonight. And that's terrible of me, I know, to begin a first date with a lie, to ground a relationship in deceit. So I'm going to come clean. Just promise me this... you will forgive me.

CLARENCE

That depends on the content of the lie.

JANE

Fine, I thought you might say that. But the truth is that I am married. I'm married. That's all there is to it. Robert is my husband. I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner.

CLARENCE

Wow. That is quite the thing to leave out on a first date, you know.

JANE

I know. I'm sorry.

CLARENCE

Where is he then? Why isn't here? Is he... you know, off in the war?

JANE

What? Of course not. What do you mean? First of all, we support Rhodesia in the war. Secondly, he is right here.

CLARENCE

The photo?

JANE

What photo? This is my husband, Robert. What's that, Robert? Oh, Clarence, he says he likes you, in spite of your rudeness.

CLARENCE

Is this some kind of joke? You invite me out on a date, you show up crying while reading some mysterious notebook, and then you tell me you're married to a framed photograph. What am I supposed to be thinking here? How am I supposed to react to all of this?

JANE

You know what? Robert is right. You are being very rude. And if you're so fucking curious about the notebook, why don't you open it up and read it for yourself? I don't think you'll find it very enlightening, but at the very least you can finish judging me for all of my choices.

(Jane storms out holding photo. Clarence picks up notebook and opens it)

CLARENCE

Exterior, sandy beach, night. Noah Calhoun enters, looking sad... wait, wait, wait. This is the screenplay to the Notebook.

(Jane enters without photograph)

CLARENCE

You keep the screenplay to *The Notebook* in your notebook? That's why you were crying?

JANE

Well, it's a very sad movie. And it reminds me of Robert. It's the first movie we saw together. God, we were so young then. That was before he was even framed, you know.

(Clarence stands up and walks to the door)

JANE

No, don't go. I know this night hasn't exactly turned out as we expected, but Robert needs you to stay. He has a... proposition.

CLARENCE

I'm not sure I can trust a man who exists in two dimensions.

JANE

It involves money.

CLARENCE

What kind of money?

JANE

American. He will pay you two thousand dollars to sleep with me.

CLARENCE

What? Why? And how do you feel about all of this?

JANE

Look, I'm not happy about this either. We don't exactly have the easiest sex life, him being differently abled and all that. The only condition is that you staple him to your face, you know - during.

CLARENCE

And if I refuse?

JANE

He's not a man you want to refuse.

(Clarence stares at her, thinking long and hard)

FADE OUT. END OF SCENE.

The Ant Problem

The lights come up on Clarence in his apartment. He is lying on a couch staring at the ceiling and twirling a pen around in one hand. He continues doing this for a few beats and then sighs heavily. Without sitting up, he stretches his arm out to reach the coffee table across from him. Upon the table is a laptop (closed), an opened can of Sugar Free Redbull, a short stack of books, and a cell phone. He drops the pen and grabs the phone. He taps at the phone a few times before holding it up to his ear.

CLARENCE

You busy? *(pause)* I got something to ask your advice on. Someone made me an offer. It's in my best interests to say yes. But the job is... it's a woman. *(pause)* I know. It's been a long time since I did anything like this. But I'm just not sure I can pull it off. It has to be good, and I think I'll only be uncomfortable. She's gonna know. Good pay, but I'm afraid if I get involved with these people I won't be able to get out. *(pause)* I have until tonight to let 'em know. But it's all in. No negotiations. If you were still-

There is a sudden knock at the door. Clarence turns his head quickly, a confused frown forming on his lips. He sits up quickly.

CLARENCE

Hey listen, I'm gonna call you back. Somebody's here.

He ends the call and drops the phone to the couch as he stands. He crosses to the apartment door and looks out the peephole cautiously. He visually relaxes but scrunches up his eyebrows as if confused. He opens the door anyway. A woman in her late 20s is standing there wearing a purple dress and holding a small purse. She smiles as she sees him.

CLARENCE

Can I help you?

RACHEL

Hi! I'm here about the ant problem.

She winks and makes a move as if to walk into the apartment, but Clarence blocks her and holds up a hand.

CLARENCE

Hold up. Ant problem? You must have the wrong apartment. And also, no offense, but you sure as hell don't look like an exterminator.

RACHEL

Exterminator? What? *(she laughs)* I think you're confused. Let me in and we can get started.

She ducks under his hand and slips past him to get inside. Once in, she flops onto his couch and picks up one of the books on the coffee table, flipping through the pages absent-mindedly.

RACHEL

Come on, shut the door, we don't have all day.

CLARENCE

(shuts the door and takes a few steps toward her, crossing his arms) I'm sorry... who are you and what's going on here?

RACHEL

(stares at him blankly for a moment) Rachel. From the agency. Katherine sent me. You requested me personally. You know... *ant problem?* Get it? ANTS! *(she flashes a huge grin as if the joke is quite obvious)*

CLARENCE

I... honestly can say that I have no idea what you're talking about.

RACHEL

(squints at him then tosses the book down and pulls a piece of paper out of her purse) This is the Sky High-Rise Apartment Complex on Marigold Street, right?

CLARENCE

Yeah. But I don't work with any agency. I don't know anyone named Katherine, and I definitely don't know anything about ants. I don't even have ants in here- they keep the building pretty clean.

RACHEL

(continues reading from the paper as if he hadn't said anything) And this is apartment D-30? And you're Andrew Hayward?

CLARENCE

Yeah. Wait. No, what? My name is Clarence. I told you this is the wrong place. The rest of that's correct, but you got the wrong guy. And I don't really have time to figure this all out with you, okay? Sorry you wasted your time, but you better go ask Ant Man for a new address and find this other guy.

He heads back to the door and opens it, standing by impatiently. Rachel stands up, makes a dramatic display of fixing her dress, then crosses to him.

RACHEL

How disappointing. I was looking forward to working with you. *(shrugs)* Oh well, I suppose only the platypus gets everything he wants in life.

She walks past him and down the hall, striding purposefully. He watches her go, more confused than ever, and shuts the door. After rubbing his face and letting out a frustrated noise, he walks back to the couch and sits down. He picks up his phone and taps at it again, calling his friend back. He puts the phone up to his ear and puts his feet up on the coffee table.

CLARENCE

Hey, sorry about that. It was really bizarre. Some girl talking about ants or something. And she totally had the wrong guy, was looking for someone named Hayward or Haystack or something. She had my address though. But I guess she- *(pauses, listening)* No, I've never seen her before in my life. Everything about the whole interaction was without a doubt in the top three weirdest interactions I've ever had. Anyway... did you get a chance to think about that offer I was talking about? I have no idea what to do, and I know it's kinda lose-lose. But I don't wanna piss anyone off. And if this guy's really gonna-

He stops suddenly, looking down at the laptop in front of him. His mouth opens and his eyes widen. He takes his feet down off the coffee table and leans forward.

CLARENCE

Shit. Hold on a second.

He puts the phone down on the table and picks up the laptop, looking all around the table surface before setting it down again. He picks up the stack of books, then the can of Redbull and shakes it a little, his breathing coming in faster. He gets down on the floor and feels around on the ground, looking under the couch last. Then he stands up, pulls all the cushions off the couch in a frenzy, and runs his hands all along the inside. Frantically, he grabs the phone.

CLARENCE

I gotta go. She got the flash drive!

He punches a button to end the call then sprints to the door, opening it and slamming it behind him as he runs down the hall. The lights come down and the scene ends on his empty apartment.

Int. Clarence's Apartment

Sames apartment as in previous scene, but it looks as if it had been ransacked. Papers and debris litters the floor. Philip and Robyn, enter through the front door.

PHILIP
Well, it's pretty messy, but it will do.

ROBYN
(Teasing)
Will do for what? Huh?

PHILIP
Oh Robyn, don't pretend you're not a little tramp!

He grabs her affectionately and brings her on the couch. They begin to kiss. Suddenly Robyn stops him.

ROBYN
Did you hear that? Something's in the other room.

PHILIP
No one is here. I come here all the time.

ROBYN
Excuse me? All the time? For what?

PHILIP
Just for pit stops and stuff. Don't worry, you're the only lady I bring here. I take the other girls to the Four Seasons.

ROBYN
ha, ha, ha.

They go back to kissing.

ROBYN
Oh my god, I heard it again. Please Philip, go check around.

PHILIP
its probably just a rat or something.

ROBYN
WHAT!

PHILIP
Well, It's not a serial killer...

Philip gets up and goes in to the other room. He comes out holding a

cat.

ROBYN

Aww... I didn't know Clarence has a cat.

PHILIP

He didn't. He doesn't.

ROBYN

(To the cat)

Who's a sweet purr face?

PHILIP

This is actually pretty freaky. How did it get in here?

ROBYN

Do you think anyone else has stopped by? Maybe it was here all along. Or maybe a window was open.

PHILIP

We are on the 11th floor.

ROBYN

So... cats can climb and stuff. He's so cute.

PHILIP

How do you know it's a "he?"

ROBYN

Because he's nice.

PHILIP

Seriously, how did it get here?

ROBYN

I have no idea Philip. How would I know? You are starting to scare me.

Philip puts the cat down and grabs Robyn's hand to pull her up from the couch. She stays put.

PHILIP

Let's get out of here.

ROBYN

Why? I thought you were allowed to be here.

PHILIP

I am.

ROBYN

Well, what are we going to do with him? We can't just leave him trapped in this apartment. Maybe we can put some fliers up near the mailboxes.

PHILIP

Why do you care? A second ago you thought it was a rat for me to kill.

ROBYN

No. I thought it was a rapist murderer hiding in the dark. Let's at least contact the landlord or something.

PHILIP

Robyn, it's none of your business.

ROBYN

We can do it anonymously. I'm not leaving without knowing the cat is going to be ok.

She walks over towards the cat.

PHILIP

Fine. I'll talk to you later.

ROBYN

I don't get it. What is wrong? What's going on?

Philip takes keys out of his pocket and hands them to Robyn.

PHILIP

Lock the door on the way out.

ROBYN

Are you really serious? What the fuck Philip?!

Philip leaves. Robyn stands alone, bewildered, in the center of the room.

ROBYN

You really just left me alone?

END

Robyn sits on the floor alone.

ROBYN

Asshole.

The cat, which Robyn sees now only actually has 3 legs comes hobbling over to her, dragging its useless 4th nub-leg across her favorite carpet. Oh god. Is it bleeding from the nub?

ROBYN

Nonononono! Stay over ther- ahhh fucking Christ.

The cat curls up next to Robyn and begins licking its nub. Not blood. Jelly? It takes a minute, but Robyn gets over its hideous deformity. Perhaps...this cat is a metaphor for her own inability to attract decent men. A missing leg, or a missing piece to the unsolvable puzzle of love? Perhaps...the cat is like her in more ways than she ever could have imagined.

ROBYN

So what's your name little guy?

The cat purrs. Outside, a siren passes. All is quiet. Robyn looks more alone than she ever has before. She finds the cat's collar and nametag: PUDDING.

ROBYN

You'll listen to me, won't you Pudding? You won't just walk out and leave me alone in a dark apartment. Or pass me by in a bar...pretending not to have seen me. Or forget to do your- your dishes and leave them in the FUCKING sink for days on end and attract flies?

Robyn sobs.

ROBYN

You'd never do that, not to me, no no Pudding. Not to me. Because we understand each other, yes we do. Yes. Yes. We're broken, and the world doesn't like broken toys.

The cat begins to gnaw dutifully on its other leg. The complete one. What a pair these two are.

ROBYN

I honestly don't know what I'd do without you, Pudding.

CRASH! From the darkened kitchen of the apartment, a clatter of pots and pans. Robyn leaps to her feet, sending Pudding flying. Her face is frozen in silent terror.

RAPIST/MURDERER/POT-KNOCKER-OVER-ER (OFF SCREEN)

Sorry! Sorry!

Enter Rapist/Murderer/Pot-knocker-over-er, a stereotypically dressed robber. Black ski-mask and gloves. Bag of money or something slung over his shoulder.

RAPIST/MURDERER/POT-KNOCKER-OVER-ER

Just gotta grab my-uh, my cat. (kiss kiss noise) There ya go.

Pudding leaps into the robber's arms.

RAPIST/MURDERER/POT-KNOCKER-OVER-ER

Sorry bout the mess in your kitchen. Uhh...I heard what you said. Y'know, about being alone and all. Just wanted to say I understand. Anyways...uh, bye.

Exit the Rapist/Murderer/Pot-knocker-over-er, backing up once again into the dark kitchen, taking Pudding with him.

Robyn just sits back down on the floor, in sensory overload.

Robyn's phone rings. She jumps.

ROBYN

Hello? No no. No. Yes. Ok. Of course. I'll be down in a minute, Philip. Yes Philip. I'll lock up.

*She hangs up and continues to sit. After maybe 2 minutes, she stands and enters the kitchen. Pots and pans lie strewn about everywhere...but there on the wall, written in jelly: CALL ME
617-567-01>6*

That 9th digit could be a poorly drawn 7...or maybe the top of the jelly 5 fell off...Robyn grabs a pen and writes down the number for safekeeping, then wipes the jelly from the wall, a smile on her face.

She turn the lights off, leaving the pans scattered on the floor.

Exit Robyn.

“SOMETHING NOTHING”

PHILLIP stands on the city sidewalk, outside Robyn’s apartment building. Dressed in a long heavy coat and bowler, he looks like some “Deep Throat”-knock-off; the guy you’d meet in a vacant parking lot and hand off a suitcase of money to traded for dark secrets.

ROBYN heads his direction.

PHILLIP

I thought you’d forgotten about me.

ROBYN

You? Never.

She smiles and maintains her stride. Her hand is gripped tightly around the slip of paper with the scrawled phone number. Phillip glances down and sees it. She catches his eyes and sends her hand deep into her coat pocket.

PHILLIP

What’s that?

ROBYN

It’s nothing.

PHILLIP

It’s something.

ROBYN

It’s a nothing something. Do you want to walk or take a cab?

PHILLIP

You’re holding on pretty tightly to a something that’s nothing.

ROBYN

It’s a to-do list. Let’s walk.

The two begin walking.

ROBYN

Call the bank, call the insurance company, call the locksmith --

PHILLIP

-- You still haven't done that?

Robyn shakes her head.

PHILLIP

I swear, if I wasn't here, I don't know what would happen to you.

ROBYN

I wasn't always this forgetful. Do you remember what I said to you when I first moved here?

PHILLIP

That you were going to be the Mary Tyler Moore of our generation?

ROBYN

And you said --

PHILLIP

"You are, baby -- you're gonna make it after all!"

Robyn laughs.

ROBYN

And then we ate Chinese food on the roof and threw eggrolls at that car whose alarm wouldn't stop going off.

SILENCE.

PHILLIP

Why did we walk? It's so hot tonight.

ROBYN

It's nice out.

PHILLIP

It's humid.

ROBYN

You're wearing that coat.

PHILLIP

I like this coat.

Phillip's stride picks up. He doesn't notice that he's walking a few paces ahead of Robyn who seems lost in thought.

ROBYN

Have you ever thought of getting a cat?

PHILLIP

A cat?

ROBYN

Yeah. Like an older cat -- one whose well-behaved and wise.

PHILLIP

Cats aren't wise -- they're pointless.

ROBYN

They're not pointless -- they just exist -- they just are. We're pointless too.

PHILLIP

We're less pointless than cats.

ROBYN

I met one that I think I like. It just kind of fell into my lap -- like it wasn't sure where it was supposed to be going, but it seemed pretty confident it wanted to get to know me better.

PHILLIP

You got all that from a cat?

ROBYN

I think so. Anyway, I'm thinking of getting one. You're always telling me to go with my gut, right? To grab the world -- or the cat -- by the tail -- literally, I guess in this scenario. It just felt like.. Maybe I should try this.

PHILLIP

Get a cat if you want to get a cat. Just don't expect me to come over -- I think I'm allergic.

Phillip is about to exit SL when he stops and turns to Robyn.

PHILLIP

You coming?

ROBYN

Yeah -- you go ahead. I'm actually going to call the locksmith before I forget.

PHILLIP

Isn't that what the list is for?

ROBYN

Yes, but if I forget about the note, this whole thing could become disaster.

PHILLIP

Okay -- I'll be inside.

Phillip exits leaving Robyn alone with her thoughts. She takes out her cell phone and the scrawled note and dials quickly before putting the phone to her ear.

ROBYN (into phone)

Hi... Hey... hi. You don't know me -- or maybe you do. I guess you know me better than I know you -- oof. I hope this is your right number. The jelly had melted a little when I saw it -- I'm sorry I didn't have any paper handy in there -- I've been meaning to pick up a new pad for groceries and call my insurance company and call the locksmith -- which, you of course know, that I haven't done. Anyway -- I'm not going to pretend to know what I'm doing or if this is even a good idea or not or -- anything, but I liked your cat and you seem friendly too. Maybe... maybe sometime we can talk. We can get food or drinks or you could use my front door that I open for you after you knock. Just -- just give me a call. Or stop by. Either. Okay. Okay, I have to go.

She hangs up and takes a deep breath before following in Phillip's direction.

In an old apartment complex in the heart of a major city sits Marcel's studio. In the early autumn morning, the streets are quiet save for a handful of cars and angry construction workers. Marcel wanders from his closet-sized bedroom into the kitchen wearing only a heavily stained white t-shirt, and blue and white pinstriped boxers. His hair is nearly shoulder length, light brown, and greasy.

The kitchen walls are a yellowing white, despite being freshly painted not long ago. The paint is beginning to chip off from years of being slathered over with what Marcel assumed to be, millions of other coats of paint. No matter how many coats were dumped onto the decrepit kitchen walls, the outlines of poorly drawn penises never seemed to disappear.

The white floor tiles are speckled with dirt and grime that have lived there for so long that it is now one with the tiles. The appliances are white but rusting and there is a pile of black particles swept under the cabinets that Marcel has refused to acknowledge for the past two years of him living there.

Diagonal from the stove is a large window with a fire escape to the left of it. Outside is a view to an identical brick apartment complex. A man sits on the edge of the fire escape outside of his window, directly across the street from Marcel's studio, for an early morning smoke. Leaves of brown, amber, and yellow fall softly, catching on Marcel's fire escape.

Marcel grabs a questionable looking pan from the sink filled with dirty dishes and tosses it onto the stovetop. He grabs a match from one of the cabinets and lights the stove. While grabbing a handful of eggs from the refrigerator with one hand, he punches the blinking answering machine sitting on the eight inches of empty space he refers to as his counter.

The machine crackles and coughs for a bit like an old man waking up from his usual poor night's rest. While cooking his eggs, Donald, Marcel's brown and white tabby cat, stretches and rubs against Marcel's legs. After at least two minutes of coughing, the answering machine sputters out its message.

ROBYN [anxious]

Hi...Hey...Hi. You don't know me – or maybe you do. I guess you know me better than I know you – oof. I hope this is your right number. The jelly had melted a little when I saw it –

Marcel burns himself on the stove and Donald jumps up and hisses.

MARCEL
Fuck!

He runs his hand under some water while the remainder of Robyn's message plays out unheard.

He turns off the faucet and starts pacing around.

Marcel tries to shake it off but something inside of him feels off. He opens the window and leans over the ledge, allowing himself to get some air.

His body starts to feel stiff and the words from the answering machine keep ringing in his head.

ROBYN

[via answering machine]

The jelly had melted a little... The jelly had melted a little... The jelly had melted a little... The jelly had melted a little

His body stiffening with each passing moment, Marcel frantically moves about the kitchen looking for something.

MARCEL

She was here. How did she know?

Tensing up and barely able to move, Marcel comes to startling realization.

He throws himself out of the window and onto the fire escape. His body betraying him, Marcel is barely able to move.

Donald jumps onto the fire escape and meows wildly on Marcel's paralyzed body.

Marcel attempts to wave at the man across the street.

MARCEL

[Nearly inaudible]

Help! She's been following me! She took my prescription!

The man across the street continues smoking. He pays no mind to Marcel.

Marcel continues to lie paralyzed on the fire escape with Donald balanced on his head.

STREET MAN

I love what I do.

MARCEL

Will you love me?

STREET MAN

I only love what I *do*. No *people* allowed in the love club.

MARCEL

You can hear me?

STREET MAN

What I hear is words. Are you the same as words?

MARCEL

No.

STREET MAN

Then I can't hear you.

MARCEL

If you heard me instead of my words would you love me and help me?

STREET MAN

I would love you with the fullness of my chest-area. I would help you with the fullness of my chest-area.

MARCEL

If you heard me instead of my words would you find her and ruin her and get me back my prescription.

STREET MAN

I would ruin ever flower she smells. I would go to Duane Reade for you and tell them she took your prescription.

MARCEL

Then listen! Listen to *me*!

STREET MAN

Tell me how. I'm open to everything. I love what I do cause I make bang, not cause I'm closed minded.

MARCEL

I don't know how! That's crazy. I'm not going to solve the problem of the failure of language. I'm paralyzed on a fire escape – that's the worst time to solve the problem of the failure of language.

STREET MAN

Shame on you and shame on this whole situation.

MARCEL

Who do you think I am? The Genie of solutions?

STREET MAN

You told me you would teach me how to love you.

MARCEL

Yes, I promised the world to you.

STREET MAN

Make good on your promise, teach me how to love you and your prescriptions will be yours forever. What do you have to lose?

MARCEL

But what can my promise mean to you if you can't even listen to me?

STREET MAN

If you don't teach me love now, I'm going to want to go back to what I do and keep making bang.

MARCEL

A promise can only be kept if the man behind it can be listened to. I can promise to teach you how to listen to me all I want, but that promise is empty unless I've already made good on it.

STREET MAN

Then shame on logic, and same on everything that caused logic to be how it is at this moment.

DONALD

Did somebody say "logic"? I'm Donald, the logic cat. Another way I could say that is "I'm Donald, the logic cat" is a proposition with a Boolean truth value of "true."

STREET MAN
What the fuck?

DONALD
(singing and dancing)
I'm Donald, the Logic cat!
The validity of an argument is determined
By its logical form, not its content!
I'm Donald, the Logic cat!!

MARCEL
But.... Um, Mr. Logic Cat.... sir... don't you see that a cat singing about logic is inherently...

DONALD
(singing and dancing)
I'm Donald, the Logic Cat!
Don't be satisfied by what you are already inclined to think!
In order to learn, you must desire to learn!
I'm Donald, the Logic Cat!

STREET MAN
I get it now. I get it now.

MARCEL
What?

STREET MAN
This is Baby D's fault. He must have put something in my drink.

DONALD
(singing and dancing)
I'm Donald, the Logic Cat!
A statement is false
If you can deduce a contradiction from it!
I'm Donald the Logic Cat!

STREET MAN
I'm tripping balls, man.

MARCEL:
I don't remember seeing you take anything.

STREET MAN
I can't handle this. *(Sitting down)* Marcel, are you seeing this too?

MARCEL
Do you even exist? Is any of this real?

DONALD

(Singing and dancing)
I'm Donald, the Logic Cat!
The ultimate nature of reality is unknowable
Because human experience is subjective!
I'm Donald, the Logic Cat!

STREET MAN
CAN YOU SHUT THE FUCK UP, LOGIC CAT?

MARCEL
You need to work on your rhyme schemes, Donald.

DONALD
(Sarcastically) Meow.

MARCEL
Please. Just give me the prescriptions. I can't solve any of your problems, okay? I don't know how to teach you how to love me.

STREET MAN:
You said you would. You said you would teach me.

MARCEL:
I can't fix your life!

DONALD
(singing)
I'm Donald, the Logic Cat!
The initial love responses of the human being
Are those made by the infant to the mother or some mother surrogate.
I'm Donald, the Logic Cat!

STREET MAN
DON'T YOU TALK ABOUT MY MOTHER!!!! Don't you dare... You don't get it... you're just a hallucinated cat... *(He begins to cry)*

MARCEL
(Getting a handkerchief from his pocket) There, there.

STREET MAN
(Bawling)
MOMMYYYY! Why did you have to leave me? Why did you have to go? *(loud sniff)* Wasn't I good enough for you? Wasn't I your squishy little boy? Mommy mommy mommy... I remember the way you smelled of cinnamon and Newport cigarettes. I remember you held me in your arms and showed me the ponies at the ice cream farm! *(Nasal explosion into the handkerchief)*

MARCEL
What happened?

STREET MAN
(Incomprehensible sobbing)

DONALD
(Singing and dancing)
I'm Donald, the Logic Cat-

MARCEL
-I'm not sure this is the right time, Donald...

DONALD
Maternal neglect and abandonment
Will stunt the emotional growth of her child
I'm Donald, the Logic-

STREET MAN
FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU!
(He starts viciously beating and kicking Donald the Logic Cat.)

DONALD
(Cat yowls)

STREET MAN
I'M....NOT....EMOTIONALLY...STUNTED...YOU....STUPID...SINGING...CAT!

DONALD
Hisssssss!
(He scratches Street Man in the face)

MARCEL
Please! Stop it! Both of you!

STREET MAN
(Runs offstage and returns with a baseball bat.)
WOOF WOOF MOTHAFUCKA!!!
(He continues furiously beating Donald)

DONALD
(To Marcel) Help me!

MARCEL
I can't! I'm paralyzed! Don't you see? I can't help anybody!

(The violence continues. A pool of blood spreads across the stage. Donald the Logic Cat dies. Street Man takes a few steps back, then throws the baseball bat down, anger spent. He curls into a ball)

STREET MAN
Mommy....

The clown pulls out a revolver.

CLOWN
Time to die, of course.

The clown shoots Marcel in the head, then Street Man. The clown then pulls out a straight razor and slits his own throat. He dies laughing through a mouthful of blood.

LIGHTS OUT.

beat.

SPOTLIGHT RISES on Street Man and Marcel as they stir, faces bloody. Street Man sits up and Marcel rises from her wheelchair. Street man stars at his hands, then looks up to Marcel.

STREET MAN
You're standing.

MARCEL
Yes. Yes I am. Are you still crazy?

STREET MAN
I don't know. Wait, wait... No, no I'm no - wait!
(Beat)
Nope, definitely sane.

MARCEL
Well, thank heavens for that.

Street Man stands.

STREET MAN
So, are we -

MARCEL
Seems that way.

STREET MAN
Shit.

They stand in silence for a beat.

STREET MAN
I'm sorry I killed your cat.

MARCEL

Hardly matters now, does it? it's all coming apart.

STREET MAN

To be fair, he did bring up a sore subject.

MARCEL

Right. I'm sorry about your mother.

STREET MAN

What's done is done. It's just... I was her flesh and blood, a reflection of her self. And she loved herself. I guess you never really care about a mirror, no matter what you see in it.

MARCEL

All kind of a moot point now, isn't it?

STREET MAN

Right, the end of all things.

(beat)

Won't be long now.

MARCEL

Do you think it hurts?

STREET MAN

I think it's pain and pleasure, and sorrow and joy. All things, all at once, for never and always. or maybe it's just nothing. I don't know which frightens me more.

MARCEL

So, what do we do now?

STREET MAN

I don't know...

Marcel looks at Street Man with pitying eyes.

MARCEL

I want to give you something.

STREET MAN

Is it crack? Cause I could definitely go for some crack. So I guess I'm still addicted to crack. Yep. Sane, but definitely still love crack.

MARCEL

I'm going to give you what you've wanted more than anything else.

STREET MAN
So, like, a lot of crack?

MARCEL
I'm going to give you a loving mother.

Marcel opens her shirt, exposing her breasts. Street Man stares at them, then looks to her face. She smiles and nods.

Street man falls to his knees and hesitantly begins to suckle. Marcel runs fingers through his hair as the lights FADE TO BLACK.

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(who I decided are the same character)

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