

Belladonna: A Grotesque

By Seth Beagh

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CHARACTERS

Margaret (58): Was once beautiful.

Julian (60): Was never beautiful.

Sam (22): Is beautiful.

Penny (21): Is not beautiful.

SETTING

Present. Los Angeles. In a world parallel to ours.

NOTES

The key word is grotesque. Embrace cartoonish-ness.

There are only a handful of settings. Each setting shouldn't be discrete from the other; rather, each locale should be fluid, bleeding into the other, so the boundaries between each place are blurred. Much like the logic of a dream...or a nightmare. Presiding over all of this, however, should be a gleaming white Greek *kouros* standing upstage, never moving.

A forward slash (/) indicates overlapping dialogue. The next line of dialogue starts where the slash appears.

ACT I

SCENE 1

MARGARET and JULIAN together in their kitchen. Julian slumps over the dining table, morose, underwater. Margaret bustles around behind him, putting away dishes.

MARGARET

Julian, did you hear me?

JULIAN

Yes.

MARGARET

Okay. Have you found anything else worth reading?

JULIAN

I already sent you some scripts last week.

MARGARET

And I hated them. They were too strange.

JULIAN

That's the only thing coming across my desk these days. The strange stuff.

MARGARET

Well, I don't like the strange stuff and you know this. That's why you need to go out and find the writers I do like.

JULIAN

What's wrong with the strange stuff?

MARGARET

Because everything being written now is strange, vulgar, graphic. It assaults my senses. I want something with a more classical sensibility. I want to do what the Greeks did, but my way.

JULIAN

The Greeks were also strange, vulgar, and graphic.

MARGARET

Yes, but they were so poetic about it. That's the thing: there's no poetry anymore.

JULIAN

Eh...No one really cares what the Greeks did anyway.

MARGARET

Julian! That's absolutely not true. Don't speak like that.

JULIAN

It is true, Margaret. Audiences don't want to see that stuff.

MARGARET

So what you're really saying is that audiences don't want to see the things I'm interested in? They don't want to see me?

JULIAN

No...

MARGARET

Yes, it is. You're saying they're sick of me. That I'm washed-up, old news, ancient. That's what you're saying.

JULIAN

No, I-

MARGARET

Shut up. You've made it abundantly clear how you really feel, Julian. What a wonderful husband you are.

JULIAN

...I'm sorry.

MARGARET

Honestly. Get up! Go do your job. I want to get back to work again, and I don't want to wait any longer because you're in one of your "moods."

JULIAN

But you have been working. A lot. What's wrong with taking a little break? Haven't you had enough? Why do you need more?

MARGARET

I need more because I want more. There are no breaks for me, for women my age. The moment you decide to take a hiatus, the world forgets about you.

I will not be forgotten, but I can't ensure that unless you find me some writers worthy of my attention and do your damn job!

Julian cries.

MARGARET

(soft)

Oh, darling. It's alright. Please don't cry, my love. You're doing wonderfully, darling.

JULIAN

No...Nooo! You're right. I'm a failure.

MARGARET

There, there, darling. Quiet now. No more tears. You're just sad. It will pass. It always does.

JULIAN

No! I'm hopeless. Deteriorating. Neutered.

MARGARET

That's not true, darling. We need to cheer you up a bit, that's all. Some work might get you in better spirits. Right? I know that when I'm working, everything else seems to fall away, and I feel so energized. Focused. And then when I'm finished for the day, I'm satisfied. Ebullient even! So, let's take a walk to your office and-

JULIAN

Oooh...I can't. I don't have the resolve. And I'm incompetent too. An idiot! Terrible at my job. I have failed you. I can't do it.

MARGARET

Now now. That's not true. Hmm...maybe we start with a little walk at the park first? That always brightens your spirit.

JULIAN

Perhaps...

MARGARET

Of course you do! Let's go for a nice stroll and enjoy the trees and breathe in the sun for a little while.

JULIAN

Maybe...yes, that does sound nice...

MARGARET

It does, doesn't it? Up you go.

SCENE 2

The park. Margaret enters, mumbling.

MARGARET

...just one lap around...calm yourself Margaret...

A young man--SAM--enters, running. He's shirtless and sweaty. He doesn't notice Margaret right in front of him. Margaret doesn't notice him either and yells behind her.

MARGARET

Julian!

Sam bumps into Margaret as he runs by.

MARGARET

(terrified scream)

SAM

Sorry! So sorry!

Sam exits, continuing on his run.

MARGARET

EXCUSE ME!

Julian enters, trudging along.

JULIAN

Stop yelling at me. I'm right here...

MARGARET

Did you see that? That man ran right into me with all of his force! And then strolled away as if nothing happened. He almost broke my back!

JULIAN

I didn't see-

MARGARET

Well, of course you didn't. You were too busy galumphing over here, feeling sorry for yourself.

JULIAN

Oh...you're right...I'm so sorry, dear...I am a failure of a man.

MARGARET

(soft)

Darling, darling...it's all right...I know how hard it was for you to even make it here today.

JULIAN

No...No! You're right. I'm pathetic. You were assaulted, and I stood by and did nothing! Too wrapped up in myself to apprehend the brute who harmed you before he could get away. God, I'm so weak. When did I become so weak?

MARGARET

There there, Julian. You're not weak.

JULIAN

I'm worthless. Surely not the man you deserve.

MARGARET

That's not true-

JULIAN

It is true. I am a pathetic husband. There is no testosterone running through my veins anymore. My muscles have atrophied beyond use. I am weak...oh...

Julian lies down.

MARGARET

Now honestly, Julian. That's enough! If there's one thing more pathetic than a pathetic man, it's a man who constantly points out his own pathetic...ness. *(she helps him up)* Start walking. We're here to find some joy, dammit!

Sam runs by again, then stops at a nearby bench, cooling down and stretching at the end of his run.

Julian stands upright and regards Sam intently, like a meerkat.

MARGARET

Walk, Julian!

Julian stares at Sam.

MARGARET
Julian?

JULIAN
Heh...what? What, dear?

MARGARET
What are you looking at?

(*beat*)
Him? That's the man who stampeded over me just a moment ago! Oh, Julian. Now is your chance. Go teach him-

Julian is already walking away from Margaret and toward Sam.

JULIAN
Excuse me. Hi.

SAM
...Hello?

JULIAN
Yes. Hi, there.

Julian stares at Sam for a beat.

SAM
...Do you need something?

JULIAN
I, uh...I was wondering...is that your Thunderbird out in the lot?

SAM
What? Uh...oh, the car? No, that's not mine. I drive a Nissan.

JULIAN
Yes, of course. Well...I guess a Thunderbird would be a bit before your time, ha ha...a little too dated for a fine young man like you.

SAM
Yep...

(*beat*)
Have a good day.

JULIAN
My name is Julian.

He extends his hand. Sam shakes it.

SAM

I'm Sam. It was great to meet you. I-

JULIAN

Do you live around here?

SAM

I do. I'm a ten minute drive away.

JULIAN

Wonderful! We're only down the street. My wife, Margaret, and I--Margaret! Come meet this young man.

Margaret turns and looks but does not move.

JULIAN

Margaret, please. Don't be rude now!

Margaret reluctantly approaches them.

JULIAN

Anyway as I was saying, my wife and I come down here frequently for walks. We love it. This is Margaret, my lovely wife. Margaret, this is Sam.

MARGARET

We've already met.

SAM

So sorry again about bumping into you earlier. Sometimes I-

MARGARET

"Bumped"? You nearly bulldozed me!

JULIAN

Oh, Margaret. Don't be so dramatic. You're completely fine.

MARGARET

Jul / ian-

JULIAN

She's an actress. A lovely one at that, but, as such, she has a flair for histrionics. She likes to embellish sometimes. Ha ha. Right, darling?

MARGARET
(*scowls*)

SAM

Um...I'm also an actor.

JULIAN

Of course. A handsome young man like you deserves to be on stage. I thought you were a fitness instructor at first with that body of yours!

SAM

Ah ha ha...thank you. Actually, I thought you looked familiar.

Her mood shifts.

MARGARET

So, you recognize me?

SAM

I do, but I can't place where-

MARGARET

Most people know me for a TV program I did-

JULIAN

The Toxicologist!

MARGARET

Yes, The Toxicologist. Have you heard of it?

SAM

Hmmm...it sounds kind of familiar.

MARGARET

It was an enormous hit. I'm shocked you didn't immediately recognize the name.

JULIAN

It was about this forensic toxicologist--whom Margaret played--named Dr. Catherine Yew, who--

SAM

Wait a minute. Yes! I know that show. The doctor, like, used her knowledge of poisons and her intuition to solve homicide cases.

MARGARET

I see we have a fan.

SAM

Well...My grandmother babysat me a lot as a kid, so like, she was always watching reruns of *The Toxicologist* when I was playing next to her. It was her favorite show way back when.

MARGARET

...Way back when?

JULIAN

What projects have you been involved with?

SAM

Recently, I've been working on this show for HBO called *Golden Boy*. We just wrapped on the second season.

JULIAN

Ah, yes! I know it. Jeremy Heinrichs is one of the executive producers, isn't he?

SAM

Yes. You know him?

JULIAN

Jeremy and I go way back. He helped us produce a little indie about ten years ago that Margaret starred in. Didn't do so great at the box office...but the critics loved it.

SAM

You're a producer?

JULIAN

Producer, agent, manager...yes, I work in the industry. Mainly on my wife's projects. Representing her, pushing the projects she wants to work on through the development pipeline. Basically making sure her work still sees the light of day...You know, I hope this isn't too forward, but would you like to come over for dinner tomorrow? I, we would love to talk to you more about your journey in the industry.

MARGARET

Dinner?

SAM

Sure! I'd love that.

JULIAN

Excellent! We'd love to have you. Right, Margaret?

Julian nudges Margaret. She smiles tightly.

SAM

I can't wait.

JULIAN

Here's my card. It has my cell on it. Text me when you can and I'll let you know the details.

SAM

Alright. Will do. Uh, I should get going, though. I need to wash up.

JULIAN

Yes, you are...quite sweaty. Haha.

SAM

Haha! Well, it was lovely to meet you, Julian and Margaret. I'll see you at dinner tomorrow!

JULIAN

Likewise, Sam! See you tomorrow.

Sam exits.

JULIAN

What a nice young man.

Margaret hits Julian in the arm.

JULIAN

Ow!

MARGARET

What are you doing?

JULIAN

Inviting a new friend over for dinner.

MARGARET

Did you not hear him? He called me old! "The Toxicologist was my grandmother's favorite show." He basically called *me* a grandma! He might as well have asked me if I'm incontinent / as well.

JULIAN

Oh, come on, Margaret.

MARGARET

I don't want him coming over to our house.

Julian hunches over, returns to his pre-Sam state. Sad. Morose.

JULIAN

I see...I thought I had made a new friend, and it filled me with...I don't know. Joy. Life! For the first time in a long time...but I guess you're right...he's probably another young, entitled opportunist...and I don't have time for that...I must focus on your career, my love, and your projects...Once I regain my energy...

MARGARET

Julian...If having Sam over for dinner will make you feel better, darling, then...let's do it.

Julian perks right back up.

JULIAN

Really?

MARGARET

Yes.

JULIAN

Wonderful! I love you, my sweet.

Julian briskly starts his walk.

JULIAN

Come on! Let's start walking. I feel like I could stroll a hundred laps with you. Haha!

Julian exits. Margaret stands stunned for a moment, then hurriedly catches up to him.

SCENE 3

Sam and his girlfriend, PENNY, arrive outside of Margaret and Julian's apartment with a bottle of wine.

PENNY

You sure you don't want to, um...leave?

SAM

It'll be fine, Penny.

PENNY

We can...you know, turn around right now and, um, go back home...

SAM

We're already here.

PENNY

I just think, you know, it's like, um...I feel kind of creeped out that this random stranger you met at the park suddenly invites you over to dinner...it's weird...

SAM

It is weird, but I have to network to keep advancing my career, and sometimes this is just how it happens.

PENNY

So gross...

SAM

It is what it is, Penny. And this could help you too, you know. These are, like, really important people. You could show them your writing. Don't you want people to, you know, eventually read your scripts?

PENNY

Yes...but...I don't think I'm ready...yet...I don't have anything good enough to-

SAM

It doesn't need to be that good. Just showing up and smiling can make doors open for you.

The door opens a little too quickly. Julian stands at the entrance, beaming.

JULIAN

Sam! I thought I heard you!

SAM

Julian!

JULIAN

Oh, it's so great to see you!!

Julian grabs Sam in a tight embrace for a beat too long.

SAM

Uh...haha. So, this is Penny. My girlfriend.

JULIAN

Good to meet you.

Julian gives Penny a perfunctory handshake.

JULIAN

Please come in. Margaret!

Margaret enters begrudgingly.

MARGARET

There's no need to yell, Julian.

She shuffles to the dining table and sits, facing away from the group.

JULIAN

I thought it would be nice if you came to meet our guests.

Margaret grumbles to herself.

SAM

Hi, Margaret. Great to see you again.

She keeps grumbling.

SAM

...What was that?

JULIAN

She talks to herself sometimes without realizing it. It's one of the many things I...*adore* about her. Margaret, Sam said hi. Now, it's your turn to acknowledge our guests.

MARGARET

Hi.

SAM

Um, this is my girlfriend, Penny.

MARGARET

Hi.

Margaret sits at the table.

JULIAN

Ah...yes. Thank you, dear. Please sit, you two.

Penny and Sam sit at the table.

SAM

I brought some wine for you.

JULIAN

How thoughtful of you, Sam.

MARGARET

Let me see that.

Sam hands Margaret the bottle.

MARGARET

I hate Merlot. And this is only...two years old, I see. I thought it looked cheap.

Julian snatches the bottle from Margaret.

JULIAN

Darling, I'm sure it's delicious. Besides, I've never known you to be so picky about wine, considering how many bottles I see you bringing back from the corner store every week. Haha!

Julian laughs and looks at Penny and Sam, who laugh forcibly. Margaret seethes.

JULIAN

Anyway, we will save this (*re: the wine*) for later.

Julian brings the platters of food to the table and serves Sam. He dollops extra roast beef on Sam's plate. Julian then sets the platters on the table...without serving Penny or Margaret.

JULIAN

Time to eat.

Julian digs into the roast beef. Penny picks some green beans and puts them on her plate. Margaret goes to the counter and brings an already opened bottle of wine to the table. She pours herself a glass.

SAM

Oh...wow. This is delicious!

Sam looks at Penny.

PENNY

Scrumptious!

JULIAN

Thank you. Oh, I'm so glad you enjoy it. I do love the culinary arts. I cook often and, indeed, at this point, I do fancy myself quite the adept home cook. I think of it a lot like surgery.

PENNY

...Surgery?

JULIAN

Yes, of course.

PENNY

...How so?

JULIAN

Why, it's all about the care and precision you must take while preparing your meal. Either when cutting your vegetables, putting flame to your meat, or plating your entree, it all requires the utmost attention to detail and an enormous amount of focus.

SAM

I guess I should pay more attention the next time I make a sandwich.

JULIAN

Ha. Ha! HAHAHA!

PENNY

...I don't think I ever would have, um...compared...cooking to surgery.

JULIAN

Really? I think the relation is obvious.

Penny and Sam nod. They don't see it.

MARGARET

My husband used to be a surgeon.

SAM

Oh, really? How did you make the transition from, like...surgery to show biz?

JULIAN

Well, it wasn't exactly planned...by me. I would have loved to stay a surgeon, but of course, family first. So, as my wife's career started to blossom, she uh...it became evident that, perhaps, the smarter, more economic move, at the time would have been to combine our forces, or rather, ah, have one of us absorb the other's--

MARGARET

I made him quit surgery and move into the industry is what he's trying to say. I was making more money than him during my fantastic run on television, and numerous offers came my way afterward. I wanted to capitalize on all of them, and I needed help. With all that money, Julian didn't really need to work, so I hired him to help me.

JULIAN

That is the story. Sometimes I dream of returning to surgery, which I truly loved...but, alas, it's too late now. We also used to live in a nice, big house, which I also truly loved, but the financial opportunities available to us in Margaret's career were not as numerous as I, we had been, ah...led to believe...so we had to downsize.

MARGARET

Well, these "financial opportunities" could have been more numerous had someone done their job better.

Pause.

PENNY

Uh...what...which TV show were you on?

SAM

The Toxicologist.

MARGARET

His grandmother's favorite.

PENNY

Oh, I love The Toxicologist!

MARGARET

Do you?

PENNY

Yes! Oh my God...I can't believe I didn't make the connection before. You're Dr. Yew! I-I knew I had seen you before. I've seen every episode about three times.

Margaret warms up.

MARGARET

That is such a joy to hear. I do think of myself as somewhat of a trailblazer for women.

PENNY

Yes! Dr. Yew--you!--and your show, inspired me to be a writer.

MARGARET

A writer? Might I know any of your work?

PENNY

Uh...I wrote a play for um...a little theatre company here in town...it was my first commission...but that's really it...

MARGARET

Really? Which theatre company? What was the play about?

PENNY

Uh...it was for um...The Eastside Players-

MARGARET

Oh! They do such fascinating work.

PENNY

Yeah! Yeah...and the play was an adaptation of the myth of Artemis and Orion...

MARGARET

The story of how Orion became a constellation? I love that tale.

SAM

Yeah, Penny is, like, pretty obsessed with Greek myths haha.

PENNY

Yeah...it all started when I was a child-

Julian stands, having heard enough of Penny speak.

JULIAN

Sam, why don't we have a drink and let the women talk?

Julian walks away.

SAM

Oh, but I'm not done-

JULIAN

Come with me.

SCENE 4

Split scene. Penny and Margaret in the kitchen, Sam and Julian in the basement.

Penny and Margaret put away dishes.

PENNY

Again, that was a delicious meal.

MARGARET

Wasn't it? He really is a wonderful cook. I'd probably starve without him. I barely know how to make an omelette.

PENNY

How...long have you two been together?

MARGARET

Thirty-six years.

PENNY

Oh, wow. That's wonderful.

MARGARET

Thank you. It is impressive that we've managed to make it this far. Though we squabble often, I really do love him.

PENNY

Aw...

MARGARET

What about you?

PENNY

Wha- Oh, me and Sam...? Um...it's been about four years now. Well...we've known each other for about eight years...we, uh, went to high school together, and we had Algebra together freshman year...so...we've been friends for a while, but, um, didn't...actually start dating until college...when we had another class togeth-

MARGARET

Okay I get it.

(beat)

It seems like you started dating each other around the same age that Julian and I met.

PENNY

Really?

MARGARET

Mm-hmm. We met during our freshman year of college. I was in the Drama school, he was studying Biology. Our worlds should have never collided. But one night, at a party, I saw this tall, strikingly handsome young man standing alone in the corner of the room. We locked eyes, and I knew I had to have him. That night was...it was a wild night, to say the least. And now here we are, wife and husband.

PENNY

...Well, Sam and I can only hope to be together for as long as you and your husband have been...

MARGARET

You think he's the one?

PENNY

...Yes. Yes, I really do.

MARGARET

Hmm. Staying together this long is not easy, let me tell you.

PENNY

Oh...but at least you have each other to lean on during hard times.

MARGARET

The hard times arise because of that other person you're supposed to lean on. Listen, I know we live in a certain age. There are husbands and wives now, just "partners." But marriage is not a partnership. There is no equality here. It's a constant power struggle. You want to make your relationship with Sam last forever? Concede nothing. Don't ever give him an inch. Always keep the power in your hands. Always.

(beat)

Wine?

Shift to Julian and Sam in the basement. There are cages and jars full of various specimens. Surgical tools hang from a corkboard. A table covered in cloth sits in the middle.

JULIAN

You're lucky. This is a very privileged sight. I don't allow practically anyone down here. Not even my wife.

SAM

Why so secretive?

JULIAN

Because I need it. It's a space all for me. Besides it's the only place where I still feel free to flex my medical muscles, so to speak.

SAM

What?

JULIAN

Though I left my old profession, it never left me. So, I come down here a few nights a week to remember what it was like to...hmmm...indulge in the viscera of living, let's say.

SAM

...Uh huh...

Sam looks down at the table.

JULIAN

Ah, yes. My latest work.

Julian pulls the cloth off the table to reveal an organism in a cage with the body of a frog, but it's horrendously covered in fur. There is blood all over the cage. Sam recoils.

SAM

Oh my / God...

JULIAN

Aw, it died. Oh, well. I like to see how I can push the limits of what we believe to be biologically possible. For example, is it possible to imbue the common frog with the foraging abilities of a squirrel? I managed to keep the squirrel alive for as long as I could while slowly feeding it to a frog. Fresh, throbbing meat seemed to work best.

The squirrel's body had to be blended with a special compound mixture full of the correct amino- I won't bore you with all of that. Let's just call it the "recipe." Anyway, I successfully transferred characteristics of the squirrel to the frog, as you can see by its fur. Oh, is something wrong?

SAM

Please...cover it back up...I'm gonna faint, dude...

Sam takes a seat, gagging. Julian covers the specimen.

JULIAN

Are you alright?

SAM

Yeah...yeah...I'm fine. I just...blood and...body stuff kind of freaks me out sometimes. Like...generally being aware of how we're, just like...a bunch of goopy meat sacks with organs randomly packed inside.

JULIAN

Oh, really? The fact that we are goopy meat sacks is one of the fundamental tenets of life, though. I believe you have to confront that directly in order live fully. It's this awareness that sets us apart from the animals.

SAM

Cool, well...I try to avoid thinking about it...or seeing it...

JULIAN

Oh, dear. You really don't look that well.

Julian goes for a cabinet, opens it, pulls out a bottle.

JULIAN

Drink?

Shift back to Margaret and Penny. They're laughing and enjoying each other's company.

MARGARET

And then! After all of those takes, the director had the gall to approach me--right after showering my male costar with lavish praise.

My male costar, mind you, who stumbled onto set that morning an hour late, reeking of alcohol, and asked repeatedly for his lines to be fed to him--the director approached me and told *me* to be more professional. Like Jared, my costar. "Well, fine," I said. "I'll guess I'll act more like Jared." So, I did.

PENNY

What did you do?

MARGARET

On the next take, I stumbled into frame and slurred all my lines. And then I slapped Jared.

PENNY

Oh my God!

MARGARET

It wasn't that hard of a slap. The director was furious, of course. Anyway, I never worked with him again. Unfortunately, both he and my costar used that incident to turn the producers against me. No one at the studio would talk to me after that. A rumor spread that I was "difficult to work with," and that put a dent in my career for a while.

PENNY

Ugh...that's horrible...

MARGARET

The number of stories I could tell you...

PENNY

I wish I had at least one story about being discriminated against as a woman in the entertainment industry.

MARGARET

Penny! Don't say that.

PENNY

Sorry...it's just the wine. I...ugh...I'm frustrated. And maybe I feel just a little insecure in this moment because...I'm sitting next to Margaret Howell, TV star. And I'm a...a wannabe screenwriter who can't even write anything half-decent.

MARGARET

Stop. Stop talking about yourself like that. I can't stand that kind of negative self-talk. I was riddled with that syndrome when I was your age. It's no good. Unhealthy. You're more capable than you know. You just have to believe it. Look, if you want to create a career as a *writer*, in the *industry*, you have to start acting like you've already sold your screenplay for a million dollars.

These men who run things only speak one language, and that is unbridled, unearned confidence and swagger. That's the only way to get them to listen to you.

PENNY

Oh...I'm not sure if that's a language I can ever learn...or one that I really want to learn...

MARGARET

God...you remind me so much of myself. Except...sadder.

(beat)

Write me a script.

PENNY

...What?

MARGARET

I want you to write me a screenplay. We'll write it together. I'll help you out.

PENNY

Are you serious?

MARGARET

Yes. I've been searching for a certain kind of project I can sink my teeth into lately. Something I've never seen before. Something that will implant my name in a new generation of audiences. I could use a young voice like yours. So, why not? Let's help each other out.

PENNY

Oh my...I'm...um...I- uh.....

MARGARET

Just say yes, Penny.

PENNY

Yes!

Shift back to Julian and Sam in the basement.
Sam is pretty tipsy by now. Julian appears sober.

SAM

Well, there is this one girl I worked with who was absolutely high out of her mind every time she walked on set. The only way the director could get her not to, like, slur her lines was by basically injecting her with three Red Bulls every morning.

JULIAN

Oh, come on. Surely you have some more titillating stories than that.

SAM

I mean...no, not really. I've been pretty lucky, I guess. Every job I've had has, for the most part, been a really professional experience.

JULIAN

What about off set? Are you as "lucky" there too?

SAM

Uh...what do you mean?

JULIAN

Surely a handsome young man like you, who gets to work with gorgeous young women all the time, has had plenty a tryst with your costars?

Julian looks in a drawer and pulls out measuring tape.

SAM

Uh...no. Heh heh. Not at all. I wouldn't do that to Penny.

JULIAN

You don't have to play coy with me. I'll keep your secrets. It's just us boys down here. Plus, I'm dying to live through you, son. I've been married so long, I forgot what it was like to be a man your age.

SAM

I really don't-

Julian squeezes Sam's bicep, then he lifts Sam's arm up.

JULIAN

Flex for me, please.

Sam does. Julian wraps the measuring tape around Sam's bicep.

JULIAN

Oh, wow. Nice.

Julian starts to measure other parts of Sam's body: his chest, his waist.

JULIAN

Surely, with measurements like these, girls are probably throwing themselves at you!

SAM

I mean, a lot have tried to get with me...

JULIAN

And I'm sure that some of them have succeeded...come on, tell me about a few...

SAM

Seriously, Julian. I don't sleep around like that.

JULIAN

Then you and Penny must constantly be all over each other. Fucking every chance you get, right?

SAM

(shocked)

JULIAN

And I bet she loves it to...I see what you're packing in those skinny jeans. Ha ha! You certainly don't make any effort to hide what you got!

SAM

Jesus Christ.

JULIAN

How big is it?

SAM

...What?

Julian looks down at Sam's crotch then back up at Sam.

SAM

...I should go.

Sam exits.

Shift back to Margaret and Penny in the kitchen.

PENNY

Oh, this is so exciting. I don't want to stop talking with you...

MARGARET

Should we have some coffee then? There's still some in the pot. Who knows how long those two will be down there, so we might as well take advantage of this creative energy while we're here.

Penny goes to the counter and pours some coffee for both she and Margaret.

PENNY

I haven't felt this energized in....forever, I guess...I forgot what it was like to, to, to have fun with my imagination...do you want sugar?

Penny opens a jar next to the coffee pot and dips a spoon in there.

MARGARET

Oh, no! Not that one! That's rat poison.

Penny stops.

PENNY

...Why do you have a jar of rat poison on your kitchen counter...?

MARGARET

In case Julian and I feel like we need to poison each other.

(beat)

I'm just kidding. It's for the rats of course. We only keep it there for convenience. We're at war with those rodents. Anyway, I think we can start with-

Sam bursts through the door.

SAM

It's time to go, Penny.

PENNY

W-what? Now?

SAM

Yes. Margaret, thank you for having us over. It was lovely.

MARGARET

You don't need to rush out of here. Penny and I were still talking.

SAM

Sorry, but we really have to go.

Julian enters. Sam grabs Penny and rushes to the door.

PENNY

Uh, alright. Bye, Margaret. I-I'll call you!

Sam and Penny exit.

MARGARET

What was that about?

JULIAN

No idea. We were chatting downstairs, and then he said he had to leave all of a sudden.

MARGARET

That boy really is so rude. I like Penny, though. We really hit it off. In fact, we're going to collaborate on a script together.

JULIAN

Really? That's wonderful...

Julian goes behind Margaret and embraces her, gently kisses her neck.

MARGARET

Julian...? Where is this coming from?

JULIAN

I don't know...something about being around such young, beautiful company has aroused me...let's go to the bedroom. Actually, no. We can do it in here.

MARGARET

Ah...maybe not tonight, darling. I'm a little tired.

Julian turns her head so she's looking right at him. His hand trails slowly down her body.

The atmosphere around them completely shifts, like magic. It takes Margaret by surprise, but Julian is clearly in control. Something takes over Margaret, and she becomes hypnotized.

JULIAN

Oh, come now. It's been a while. We've both been working so hard. It will feel good to blow off some steam. Besides...you can tell me more about this script with Penny. I would love to help in any way I can.

MARGARET

Oh...when you put it that way...

They kiss. Passionately.

SCENE 5

At Penny and Sam's apartment. Penny and Sam enter.

PENNY

So...are you going to tell me what's going on?

SAM

Nothing. It's fine.

PENNY

It...doesn't seem fine. You didn't talk at all in the car. That's not like you...

SAM

I'm just tired.

PENNY

Sam...tell me.

SAM

It's really not a big deal. It's just...Why are, like, all of the important people in this industry also total creeps? I'm so sick of it.

PENNY

Did...something happen at Margaret's?

SAM

I...ugh...

PENNY

Sam, you can tell me.

Penny starts to rub Sam's back, but he moves away from her.

PENNY

Okay...I'm going to bed...

Penny starts to leave.

SAM

I'm sorry...Yes, something did happen. Julian, when he took me down to the basement, he...he just acted like a total perv. He got me drunk and kept touching me. He asked me about you and how much we...just asked me a lot of sexual questions. He asked me how big my penis is.

PENNY

...What did you tell him?

SAM

Nothing.

PENNY

Oh.

SAM

What?

PENNY

Nothing.

SAM

...That's when I ran up the stairs and got you.

PENNY

Oh...I'm so sorry that happened. What a bastard.

SAM

I take comfort in the fact that that is the last time I will ever see that man.

PENNY

Definitely...I'll have to be sure to avoid him whenever I can. He sounds awful to be around.

SAM

It should be easy to avoid him. We'll simply never go near those people again.

PENNY

Well...the thing is...Margaret, um...she asked me to help her with a project. To write a script for her...and I said yes.

SAM

No. You cannot ever interact with Margaret again. They're not welcome in our lives anymore.

PENNY

I-I'm sorry--again--about what happened. You should not have had to deal with that. Julian should not have done that to you. But...it's really between you and him.

SAM

What the hell are you saying?

PENNY

I just mean that Margaret and I are different people, and we can have a relationship separate from you or Julian...again, that should not have happened to you, and, / and I'm sorry,

SAM

I'm actually getting sick right now.

PENNY

But I want to write this script for Margaret. I need this, Sam. You know, I've been waiting for an opportunity like this for my whole life. This is my foot-in-the-door moment.

SAM

I can't listen to this.

Sam exits.

PENNY

But I don't have to see or talk to Julian at all! I can meet Margaret on the days when Julian isn't there. She'll understand, and, and...

Sam re-enters with a small bag and keys.

PENNY

...Where are you going?

SAM

My parents. I don't want to stay here tonight.

PENNY

Come on, Sam...

SAM

You're annoying the shit out of me right now. I cannot believe that, after what I just told you, you're willing to go back to that house tomorrow for a dumb script. I thought you'd be on my side.

PENNY

I am on-

SAM

What is this even for? No one cared about your work before. You think a washed-up old actress is really going to help your career now?

PENNY

People care about my work.

SAM

Oh right, you mean that shitty fifty-seat theatre company downtown where half of the house lights turned off in the middle of your show. A company, mind you, that didn't pay you for your play. No, *you* paid to put it on.

PENNY

It was important exposure.

SAM

Penny, no one was there. Have you considered that maybe you're just not cut out to be a writer? That if it hasn't happened now, it's not going to happen? That instead of chasing this dream that might never come true, you could--I don't know?--stick by my side and support me while I try to build on a career that's actually happening? Is your writing really more important than this relationship?

PENNY

...I have to find my satisfaction somewhere.

Heaviness in the air.

SAM

I'm staying at Mike's house tonight. Don't try to call. I won't answer. Bye.

Sam exits. Penny fumes silently.

SCENE 6

Back at Margaret and Julian's apartment, in the kitchen. Margaret is leaning against the counter. Julian is on the floor, groaning.

MARGARET

Julian, please. It's not a big deal. It happens, and it's not the first time.

JULIAN

But I was doing so well! I felt so...raw. Powerful. Virile. But then it all vanished, like the energy was suddenly drained from me. I can feel my body wilting...

MARGARET

We have pills, you know. And I can...I can help you if you need...

JULIAN

No. You shouldn't need to. You shouldn't even have to offer. It's my duty as a man to ensure that I'm always ready to satisfy you. And I couldn't even do that.

MARGARET

Julian, it's really okay-

JULIAN

But it's also your duty as a wife always to be ready to accept my advances.

MARGARET

What?

JULIAN

...Nothing.

MARGARET

Tell me what you said.

JULIAN

You used to be so soft to the touch, Margaret. But you've grown rigid. Where did you go? Even when I see you at your most delicate, I speak one word to you and your edges appear. Just now, even. It was like trying to hold ice. It's no wonder the heat left my body so quickly.

MARGARET

Am I hearing you correctly? Are you really trying to blame me for the fact that you couldn't get hard?

JULIAN

It takes two to be intimate, Margaret. I can't possibly shoulder the entire blame for my flaccidity. Perhaps you're *too* hard.

MARGARET

How dare you. I think you've forgotten who you're talking to. I don't recognize the man I married years ago. Where did he go?

JULIAN

You've neutered him. Left him writhing on the side of the road long ago. I feel so hollow now, and it's because of you! You do nothing but suck the life out of me, make me do endless work for your own benefit, while I'm simply left with the crumbs. I gave up everything for you! My money, my passions. A chance at a family.

MARGARET

I didn't make you do anything, you fool. It was all your choice.

JULIAN

Oh, don't pretend, Margaret. You have your ways, those subtle, manipulative ways. You hate me one moment then shower me with unyielding love the next, then force me to do whatever you want. You worm your way into my mind so expertly, it's...it's terrifying.

A pause.

MARGARET

(suddenly soft)

Julian, darling. We've always been a team.

JULIAN

No, no. You're doing it again. Trying to twist my feelings with that soft voice.

MARGARET

I know you've given up a lot, but so have I.

JULIAN

Stop...

MARGARET

But we have a dream A shared dream...to achieve greatness at all costs. Immortality. We promised each other this years ago. Remember?

JULIAN

...Yes.

MARGARET

Even if it meant burning down the whole world, we would see our names etched in the stars. Remember?

JULIAN

...Yes.

MARGARET

It really hurts me that you look at me like, like I'm some kind of monster. I...I thought we were in this together, but you've been harboring such venomous thoughts against me this entire time.

JULIAN

Oh...oh no. I...I didn't mean it. I...please, Margaret. Forgive me. I'm being such a fool. I'm...

MARGARET

I will forgive you...eventually. I always do. But tonight, I...I just can't.

JULIAN

Oh, Margaret. Margaret, please! I take it all back. I love you, Margaret. Truly. I love you, please forgive me.

MARGARET

I can't. Not tonight. I need to be left alone.

JULIAN

Alone?

MARGARET

Yes. Go. Leave me alone.

JULIAN

But...but where will I go? I can't possibly sleep on the street?

MARGARET

Well, I can't either. So, you need to go. Please. I know my love for you will return, but...I need space.

JULIAN

Alright. Alright, my love. I will go.

Julian tries to hug Margaret, but she steps away from him.

JULIAN

Good night, dear. I will return to you a better man in the morning.

Julian exits.

Margaret stretches, looks to shake something off. She grabs a glass and some wine and pours another drink, sits.

SCENE 7

At the park. It's dark and misty, early in the morning. Sam enters running. He's sweaty and exhausted. He stops near a bench and takes a breather.

Julian enters in the distance wearing a hoodie and silently watches Sam from the shadows. After stretching for a moment, Sam notices Julian.

SAM

Is someone there?

JULIAN

(stares)

SAM

You're acting like a creep, dude. Go away before I call the police.

Julian steps forward.

JULIAN

No, wait.

SAM

Julian? What are you doing here?

JULIAN

I had a feeling you'd be running here, and I wanted to-

SAM

Are you following me? Oh, hell no, man. Stay away from me, dude.

JULIAN

I want to apologize for my behavior last night. That's why I'm here. I clearly crossed a line.

SAM

You acted like a total pervert.

JULIAN

I know. I know. And I'm sorry.

Julian steps walks closer to Sam. Sam puts his hand up.

SAM

I'd like it if you stayed over there.

JULIAN

Okay. I would like to make it up to you. I'd be happy to talk to some friends of mine about you. They're working on a big, franchise film. Could be great exposure.

SAM

...Really?

JULIAN

Yes! Of course, of course.

Julian gets closer.

SAM

Why?

JULIAN

Recompense. For how I acted.

Julian gets closer.

SAM

I don't know...

JULIAN

Please, Sam.

SAM

I really need to go now.

Julian gets closer.

JULIAN

Okay, I'll let you go. Just...answer me, please. Will you let me help you?

Sam thinks about it.

No. SAM

No? JULIAN

SAM
No. I don't want your help. I really don't want to ever see you again, actually.

They're next to each other now. Something in Julian shifts.

JULIAN
I wish you would let me offer you my assistance...

SAM
I don't need it. Bye forever, Julian.

Sam tries to step past Julian, but Julian blocks his path. Sam tries again, but Julian darts in front of him again.

SAM
Really?

Julian looks past Sam with alarm, like something is behind Sam. Sam turns around.

Julian strikes Sam on the head with a billy club he had hidden in his pocket. Sam falls to the ground, still conscious but bewildered. Julian strikes him again and knocks Sam out.

Julian looks around, then drags Sam's body away.

SCENE 8

Julian and Margaret in their kitchen. Margaret is at the table, while Julian is finishing up preparations for dinner.

Julian looks different. His shoulders and chest look slightly more broad. A little more hair on his head, skin more radiant.

He brings a plate of salad and a ramekin of dressing over to Margaret.

JULIAN

Here you go, dear.

MARGARET

Thank you.

Julian picks up a bowl from the counter--this one with beef stew in it--and sets it on his side of the table. He sits.

They eat in silence for a minute. Then:

JULIAN

Do you like yours?

MARGARET

Yes, it's good.

More eating.

JULIAN

I, um...I want to apologize for last night. My outburst was unacceptable and embarrassing. I'm sorry for any pain I caused.

MARGARET

That's alright. You're forgiven.

Pause.

JULIAN

Is there anything you'd like to tell me?

MARGARET

No.

JULIAN

You made me spend the entire night outside.

Margaret lets out a long sigh. This is hard for her.

MARGARET
I'm...sorry, Julian.

JULIAN
I forgive / you.

MARGARET
Yes yes. Let's move on. What did you put in this dressing?

JULIAN
Some lemon and coconut milk. That's it.

MARGARET
It's delicious. Could I try some of your-

JULIAN
No.

MARGARET
Why not?

JULIAN
I, uh...this is pretty heavy, hearty stuff. A lot of meat and carbs. I thought you would perhaps enjoy something lighter instead.

MARGARET
Is this a comment on my weight?

JULIAN
What? No! Oh, God no! I'm only saying that I thought you would, ah, enjoy a salad more than this, uh...this slop I made.

MARGARET
Julian. I'm teasing.

JULIAN
Oh...haha.

MARGARET
You look different somehow. There's...I don't know. More of a glow to you.

Julian beams.

JULIAN
Really? You think so.

MARGARET

Yes. Well, maybe. It could just be the lighting in here.

A low moaning sound drifts through the kitchen. It seems like it's coming from beneath them. It's ghastly. Margaret looks around, confused.

They both stop eating. Julian looks terrified.

MARGARET

What in the world is that?

JULIAN

I, uh...I'm not sure.

MARGARET

It sounds like someone-

JULIAN

I'm sure it's just the pipes.

Margaret stands.

MARGARET

Is it coming from the basement?

Julian shoots up from his seat.

JULIAN

No! I-I will go investigate. Please, dear. Finish your dinner.

Julian quickly makes his way to the basement door, fiddling to unlock it.

MARGARET

You don't need to do that now, dear! Not in the middle of dinner. I'm sure it's nothing.

JULIAN

No! No. I'll check. Strange sounds in the house need to be taken care of immediately.

Julian exits into the basement. The moaning continues.

Margaret forks some leaves around her plate. Suddenly, she's startled by loud, banging sounds from the basement. Then, silence.

Margaret rises and moves to the basement door. She considers opening it, but then backs away. She turns to the stove instead, smells Julian's stew. Margaret grabs a spoon from a drawer and dips it into the pot of stew.

Right as she puts the spoon to her lips, Julian returns. He sees her at the stove and the air around him starts vibrating with an intense energy, like Julian himself is emitting powerful heat.

JULIAN

PUT THAT DOWN RIGHT NOW.

The spoon clatters out of Margaret's hand.

MARGARET

Dear Lord, Julian! Don't yell at me like that!

JULIAN

That is not your food. That (*re: the salad*) is yours. Now sit down and eat.

Margaret bristles.

MARGARET

Don't tell me what I can and can't eat, Julian. I'm not a child.

The air around Julian calms down.

JULIAN

I- I'm sorry, my love. I was being a bit selfish just now. You see, I was hoping to have leftovers for my lunch tomorrow. That's why I'm being stingy about the stew. Besides, I worked so hard on perfecting the dressing for your salad. So, please.

MARGARET

Whatever. I've lost my appetite anyway.

JULIAN

Please, darling, don't be mad at me.

Julian grabs her hand, but she rebuffs him.

MARGARET

Julian.

Julian grabs her waist this time.

JULIAN

Come on, my love. My dear. Let's just have a nice dinner...

Margaret tries to stonewall him, but he moves his hands over her body, gently prying apart her arms and stroking her neck.

Like before, something powerful takes over her, and the atmosphere around them shifts. She melts into it, hypnotized.

JULIAN

...And then...we can try again what we couldn't do last night.

MARGARET

Wow...

Julian turns Margaret toward him. He buries his face in her neck.

JULIAN

What do you say, dear...?

MARGARET

How are you doing this to me...?

JULIAN

Doing what...?

MARGARET

My entire body...like warm honey flowing through me...like I'm blooming...

JULIAN

I love making you feel this way...Shall we go to the bedroom?

MARGARET

...Yes.

SCENE 9

Margaret and Penny in the kitchen, writing.

PENNY

Athena?

MARGARET

No, too masculine.

PENNY

Oh...what about Medusa?

MARGARET

Too ugly. I couldn't pull that off.

PENNY

Well, um...what about Hera?

MARGARET

Hmmm...I don't know. Could I play her? Yes. But all of her myths are about her anger toward Zeus for constantly cheating on her. I don't want to play the eternally flustered wife who won't leave her terrible husband simply because she's married to him. Besides, she's quite a tragic figure too. Zeus raped her, but then she married him out of shame. Isn't that awful?

PENNY

I guess.

MARGARET

I just need the right story...What about Hecate? Goddess of crossroads, witchcraft, poisons...I could have a lot of fun with that. She was a triple goddess, representing the full scope of womanhood--the maiden, then the mother, then the crone. She embodied so much and held so much power, yet there are so few myths about her. As if no one knew how to capture the breadth of such a powerful woman in a story. And so, she was rendered a minor goddess by omission. But we could correct that. Give Hecate her proper due.

PENNY

(irritated)

Whatever. Let's just settle on something. We're wasting time.

MARGARET

Excuse me?

PENNY

Sorry.

MARGARET

I don't like how you're speaking to me. I thought we had a cordial relationship.

PENNY

We do, we do. I- I- I- didn't mean to-

MARGARET

I'm paying you to do this, remember? Generously. Though we've been friendly, I'm still your boss. I wanted to take a chance on you, help a younger artist gain her footing.

PENNY

I- I'm really sorry. I shouldn't have lashed out like that. I've just been...it's...

Penny cries. Margaret softens a little.

MARGARET

What's the matter?

PENNY

It's Sam. We got in a f-fight after the dinner. Then he left. He said he was going to his parents...but I called them, which I never do. He's not there. Even if he was...they probably wouldn't have told me...they hate me. I-I don't know why he would lie to me like this...We've gotten in fights before, but, but we make up pretty quickly after...This is different, though. He hasn't talked to me for days now. I've tried calling him, texting him. He won't...respond.

MARGARET

Oh dear...

PENNY

I'd be lying if, if I told you that I haven't been dreading this moment. I've been waiting for him to walk through the door and tell me he's finally become bored with me, that there are much better options out there. Sam is way out of my league anyway...I don't think he's ever actually desired me at all. I mean, physically...he doesn't...I can't seem to...there's always a distance between us. He's never...touched me...

MARGARET

Ever?

Penny shakes her head no.

PENNY

Most days, I just try to distract myself from how sad I feel by writing. It's the only thing I f-feel I can control.

MARGARET

I had no idea you were so miserable with him. Why on earth have you stayed with Sam all these years if you were so unhappy?

PENNY

I...I don't know...what else I would do with myself...Other than my, my writing...I don't really have anything. Sam pays for everything...He owns our apartment...We've known each other for so long...I guess...I guess I have no idea who I would be without him...I guess I would be nothing without him...

MARGARET

Stop. I hate hearing you talk about yourself like this. It reminds me so much of how I used to berate myself all the time for simply...existing.

PENNY

I'm only being honest...

MARGARET

You are such a sad little person. We must do something about this.

PENNY

I know...I should just let him leave...and move on.

MARGARET

Oh...no. I didn't say that at all. You need to get him back, of course. Don't let him convince you that you're not worthy of being chased. Penny, this is only temporary. He'll come back to you. Men always do. Because they need us. Not the other way around. Got it? *He* has nothing without *you*. Hold on.

Margaret rushes offstage.

MARGARET (O.S.)

If you had to describe how pallid your skin is, what would you say?

PENNY

Um...like a cheese cloth, I guess.

Margaret re-enters with a bag of makeup and a makeup mirror.

MARGARET

I'd say more like baking soda, as you have that powdery quality to you as well.

PENNY

That might just be dandruff.

MARGARET

Maybe. Now, hold still.

They sit at the kitchen table. Margaret starts to apply makeup furiously to Penny's face. Lipstick, rouge, eye shadow, white face powder...all of it is overdone and gaudy.

MARGARET

This is how you'll get Sam back and ensure that he'll never even think about leaving you again. Men are absolutely blind to beauty. They don't know it when they see it, but they can feel it. You have to make him feel it. Go like this (*Margaret presses her lips together, a la applying lipstick*). This will help you cut through to him. Of course, this is only the beginning. It's in your attitude as well. The way you carry yourself, the way you talk to him. You are obviously a bright girl, but you're entirely too meek as well. You need to assert your dominance. Think of this as your war paint. It will give you the power to claim your true self. The woman inside of you who is always hold the power. Now, look at yourself.

Margaret brings the mirror to Penny's face.
Penny looks, taking it all in.

MARGARET

What do you think?

PENNY

It's uh...wow...

MARGARET

Beautiful.

Penny becomes overwhelmed with emotion. She breathes heavier, begins to tear up.

Then, the moaning returns. A haunting sound from the basement. It stops.

PENNY

Is that Julian?

MARGARET

No, dear. It's only our pipes. We've been having some plumbing issues. Probably rats sabotaging our house again. Julian is at the park, running. That's his new hobby now.

PENNY

The park...I bet I'll find Sam there...

MARGARET

Yes! That would be the perfect opportunity to make him realize the mistake he's made.

PENNY

What, what do I do if I see him?

MARGARET

Nothing at all. If you do see him, pretend you didn't. Let him come to you. There is no way he could take his eyes off of you now. And when he approaches you and inevitably apologizes, don't accept it. Not until he's firmly back in your clutches. Not until you've convinced him that he needs to beg for your forgiveness.

PENNY

O-okay. I should go. I'm sorry about...everything today. We'll get back on track...

MARGARET

Don't worry about it. Now, go!

Penny exits.

The moaning returns. Deep and haunting.

Margaret tries to ignore it, but she can't. She fishes around in the drawers for a bobby pin and uses it to unlock the basement door. She descends...

SCENE 10

Split scene. Penny and Julian at the park;
Margaret and Sam in the basement.

Julian runs by. He's sweaty, but he looks even better than before. He stops, panting, at a bench and stretches.

Penny wanders in, wary. She's still wearing the makeup Margaret put on her, and she'll wear it from here on out.

PENNY

J- Julian?

JULIAN

Penny? Is that you? How lovely to see you here, my dear.

PENNY

H- Hi, Julian nice to see you as well. Um, you're looking...healthy.

JULIAN

Oh, yes, why thank you. I've picked up running recently. It feels good to get outside and get sweaty. Get the blood rushing through you.

PENNY

Yes, yes...Sam likes to run too.

JULIAN

Mm yes. That's how we first met him. Haha.

PENNY

Yeah, um...speaking of Sam. Have you seen him here? At all? I...came here to look for him...

JULIAN

Ahhhh no. Is...he gone?

PENNY

Yes. He left a few days ago...we had a fight. He's not answering his phone...I don't know where he is.

JULIAN

Mmmm...a lover's quarrel. Maybe it's best if you forget about him. Maybe he doesn't want you to find him.

PENNY

No...I can't just...let him go like that...

JULIAN

I doubt he wants to be found, Penny. Besides, if he is so willing to abandon a beautiful creature like you, then he doesn't deserve you.

PENNY

Maybe...

JULIAN

Did you...do something with your hair?

PENNY

Um...no. Not really.

JULIAN

Perhaps your makeup, then?

PENNY

Oh...yes. Margaret helped me with the makeup. I don't normally wear this much, but...yeah, I don't know. It's too much, isn't it? / I shouldn't wear this.

JULIAN

Oh, no not at all. Don't say that. I think you look gorgeous.

PENNY

R- Really?

JULIAN

Absolutely.

Shift to Margaret. She creaks carefully down the basement steps and finds the light switch, flicks the lights on.

The buzz of the fluorescent light fills the silence. Off to the side, there is a cot on which a dirty, bloody sheet covers a lump. Faint whimpering sounds come from it.

Margaret cautiously approaches the cot, then swiftly removes the sheet. She gasps.

Sam is there, bloody bandages wrapped around his head, his upper body.

He's weak, trembling, cowering in the fetal position. Chains around his foot tether him to the bed.

SAM

Please...don't...

MARGARET

Sam!

Sam looks up.

SAM

Margaret! Oh, Margaret. Oh my God. Oh, thank God you're here! Thank you thank you thank you. Please. Please! You have to help me. Get me out of here, please!

MARGARET

Wha- What on Earth are you doing here? You look horrible!

SAM

Your husband. That bastard! He took me at the park. Ambushed me. Took me here, and I've been trapped for days now. Oh, please just get me out of here.

MARGARET

What? No. Julian could not have done this. He's such a meek man. How could he-

SAM

He did do it, Margaret. He's a monster.

MARGARET

But why? Why on Earth would he keep you down here!

SAM

Because he's eating me!

Shift to Penny and Julian.

JULIAN

You must feel terribly lonely.

PENNY

No, well yes...but I'm mainly concerned. It's not like him to, to go radio silent like this...

JULIAN

It's because he's a coward. He isn't strong enough to face you like a man. It's such a shame that you spend so much time worrying about such an unworthy partner.

PENNY

No, he wouldn't...be so cruel...

Penny cries.

JULIAN

There there. It's alright, my dear girl...

Julian embraces Penny.

JULIAN

I know you need this.

PENNY

Th- thank you...

Shift to Margaret and Sam.

MARGARET

This is preposterous-

SAM

Look at me. He did this.

MARGARET

But why?

SAM

Because it's changing him. Haven't you seen it? He's taken bits of my scalp...some of my muscle up here...He's figured out how to make himself younger by...eating me alive.

MARGARET

I thought he looked different...his hair. No, I...this is unreal...

SAM

It is real, Margaret. Listen, soon enough there won't be anything left of me if I stay down here. This is, like, worse than death, okay?

Margaret mutters something to herself.

SAM

Margaret!

Margaret snaps out of it.

MARGARET

Oh, God...yes. Yes, of course. You poor thing. Your chain, how do I-

Margaret looks around for a tool to cut the chain.

SAM

Look in there! I think that's where he keeps his saw. Oh, thank you thank you thank you, Margaret! I know this might, like, ruin your life or whatever. But you're saving mine.

Margaret stops.

MARGARET

Ruin my life...?

Shift to Penny and Julian.

JULIAN

You need someone who will treat you right. With respect. And make you feel nothing but...ecstasy...

PENNY

Yes, that would be nice...

JULIAN

Are you feeling better now?

PENNY

Yes, I feel...good. Really good...throughout my whole body...

The atmosphere shifts. Penny is overcome with a powerful sensation, like Margaret before. Heavy breathing. Heat. She's hypnotized. Julian seems to expand before her.

JULIAN

I love that you feel that way...

PENNY

You look...like your glowing...

JULIAN

So do you...

They kiss.

Shift to Margaret and Sam.

SAM

Why are you stopping? He keeps his tools in there.

MARGARET

Please, Samuel! There's a lot to consider here.

SAM

What is there to *consider*?! He's killing me! You need to get me the hell out of here!

MARGARET

I will! I just have to be delicate about this. I need to get my affairs in order first...maybe go through Julian's Rolodex and make some calls, shore up some relationships / before he goes away...

SAM

You're thinking about your career?!

MARGARET

I'll have to find new representation, most likely. Though at my age...

SAM

Are you insane? GET ME OUT OF HERE!

Shift to Penny and Julian.

Penny backs away from Julian, shocked.

PENNY

No!

JULIAN

What's wrong?

PENNY

It's like...I had no control...

JULIAN

It felt good, didn't it? Giving into your instincts?

PENNY
I shouldn't have done that at all.

JULIAN
What are you so afraid of?

PENNY
I-I...

JULIAN
Haven't you ever indulged yourself before, Penny? I can help you. I can give you what you want.

Shift to Margaret and Sam.

MARGARET
Do not yell at me, Sam!

SAM
Margaret, I have to get out of here now. If Julian returns, he's going to kill me. Or you!

MARGARET
Right...I guess he *could* hurt me. I...I have to be calculated here. There's a lot at stake. I-I...have to think. I...the project...

Margaret begins muttering to herself. She slowly climbs the stairs.

SAM
Margaret!

The two scenes merge to become one, though both couples are still in their respective settings.

PENNY
I...

MARGARET
I...have to go...

Margaret ascends the stairs. Penny stands still.

SAM
No!

Come back to me!

JULIAN

Julian...

PENNY

Penny runs into Julian's arms.

Margaret, please!! Margaret!!!

SAM

You're mine...

JULIAN

Julian and Penny kiss passionately.

NOOOOOOOOOO!!!

SAM

Blackout.

END OF ACT I

ACT II**SCENE 1**

Margaret and Julian's kitchen. Margaret is putting her clothes back on. Julian sits, half-dressed, in a chair, looking satisfied.

Julian looks more muscular, more golden. More hair too. Margaret actually looks a little more haggard, pale, unkempt.

MARGARET

I never thought I would be someone who has sex in the kitchen.

JULIAN

Another round? I'm not quite finished yet...

MARGARET

No, Julian. We eat here.

JULIAN

I know...the twin aromas of food and sex fusing together. It's...erotic. Don't you think?

MARGARET

No.

Julian tries to make a move. Margaret slides out of his grasp.

MARGARET

Have you found any funding for the movie yet?

JULIAN

Not yet. These things take time, as you know.

MARGARET

I do, but I'm eager to get to work.

JULIAN

The script isn't even complete yet, right?

MARGARET

It's almost there. Just a few more pages.

JULIAN

I thought Penny had only recently finished with the first act?

MARGARET

Yes...how did you know that?

JULIAN

I overheard you speaking with her about the script one day.

MARGARET

But we only write when you're not here.

JULIAN

It was...a phone call. Anyway, I'd like a full script in hand. I won't be able to get support on an idea.

MARGARET

You can't pitch them on the idea? Isn't that your job?

JULIAN

I know how to do my job, Margaret.

Margaret restrains herself from saying something.

JULIAN

You've seemed very stressed out recently. I can feel the tension in your body, see it in your face.

MARGARET

What about my face?

JULIAN

That it's nothing less than radiant, darling. However, it has become more obvious how your worries are weighing on you. As well as the skin under your eyes. Perhaps you could come exercising with me? For the endorphins?

MARGARET

I don't run, Julian.

JULIAN

Well...I'd be happy to indulge you with a spa day. Or more makeup for your beauty. Or even...some minor cosmetic surgery if you'd like.

MARGARET

Cosmetic...I don't need to stuff my body with botox and silicone. Besides, I've always kept up with my appearances to get work, and I've done a bloody fine job so far.

JULIAN

Did I offend you?

MARGARET

You just called me ugly.

Julian slinks up to Margaret.

JULIAN

Margaret, dear...I'm so saddened that you think I would insult you in such a manner. Of course you're beautiful. I'm not suggesting that you aren't. Merely...I think that these...products, procedures...would only serve to enhance your natural beauty. Like sprinkling gold flakes on a luscious dessert.

MARGARET

Flakes?

JULIAN

I only want you to present your best self, darling. You know how these producers, these men, can be. It would only be a little nip there, a tuck here. Some cream under the eyes. Nothing much...just enough to avoid becoming...boring.

MARGARET

Boring? You have quite a lot of nerve, Julian-

JULIAN

You know, I've been having a lot of great conversations with these producer friends of mine. Not just about your project, but about several others that they've been working on. They'd love to have me on board. I could get a large cut of the profits. Managing your career, though, does take a lot of work, and at this point, it might be worth it to invest a little more of my time into other...potentially more lucrative projects...

MARGARET

You-

JULIAN

I'm only thinking about what's best for you, darling. You know the market. You have to stay interesting. You have to remain...as beautiful as possible.

Julian holds Margaret tight, look deeply into her eyes. She is enchanted.

MARGARET

Alright...perhaps...a little for the crow's feet. But that's it.

JULIAN

You could probably get a little something up here (*re: forehead*) too. You know, to smooth out the lines.

MARGARET

...Okay.

JULIAN

And, who knows? Maybe a little...facelift wouldn't hurt either.

MARGARET

.....Okay.

JULIAN

Good. My darling.

Julian exits. Margaret mutters to herself.

MARGARET

...don't *need* it, but...a little...

She scrambles for her phone and dials. Then:

MARGARET

Penny, it's Margaret. Please call back when you can. We need to finish the script as quickly as possible.

Penny wanders in, holding her phone to her ear.

MARGARET

Things have...our deadlines have moved up, so we must hurry.

SCENE 2

Penny stands in her apartment, listening to her phone. Julian enters, still half-dressed like in the previous scene.

JULIAN
Who's that?

PENNY
It's Margaret.

JULIAN
Ugh. What did she want?

PENNY
She called to say that...we need to finish the script soon. She sounded...panicked.

JULIAN
Did she say anything else?

PENNY
No. Why?

JULIAN
Just wondering.

PENNY
I don't know if I can take w-working with her for much longer...she's, well...

JULIAN
Don't hold back on my account. Whatever you're about to say, I've thought it all before.

PENNY
She's constantly changing her opinions on my writing. I had to rewrite the same three pages seven times until she felt they were exactly right...and even then, she'll probably change her mind next week. It's frustrating.

JULIAN
Welcome to my world.

PENNY
And now...now she's putting pressure on me to write faster...she expects too much.

JULIAN
She's projecting her own feelings of inadequacy onto you. Margaret frets constantly about her relevance, *her legacy as an artist*. And when she starts to feel as if that legacy will never be achieved, she makes it your problem. She's been blaming me for years about not having enough work to do. But the reality is that no one wants to hire her because she's really not a very good actress.

PENNY

But, but I thought she was wonderful in *The Toxicologist*.

JULIAN

Eh. She got lucky and found a role that was easy for her to do. If you knew her like I did, you'd see that the character she played in that show wasn't a character at all. It was her. A snarky, manipulative bitch. The only reason she got that job was because of my legwork. But I never got a thank you. I didn't get anything. For years.

PENNY

You...you were starved for so long. Why did you stay with her?

JULIAN

I...I don't know really. It all feels like a dream, to be honest. A nightmare, really. Like I was sleepwalking, in a trance, waiting for her to order me around. She treated me like a dog so much that one day it became normal, so I accepted it.

PENNY

Was she always like that?

JULIAN

No. In the beginning, it was wonderful.

Penny tears up.

JULIAN

What's wrong?

PENNY

I'm afraid of...ending up like her.

JULIAN

What are you talking about?

PENNY

Down the road...if we're still together...w-who's to say that, that I won't treat you the same way she treated you? That I'll turn into...her. I-I don't want to be like her.

JULIAN

You won't, my love. I promise you won't.

PENNY

But how do you know?

JULIAN

Because Margaret is a monster. You are nothing less than an angel, my dear.

They kiss.

JULIAN

Now, why on earth do you think you would turn into Margaret?

PENNY

I don't know, I...the more I'm a-around her, the more I feel...drained of myself. I feel myself getting colder...more bitter.

JULIAN

She's like a black hole.

PENNY

But, but I'm stuck working with her.

JULIAN

You can quit.

PENNY

I'm under c-contract with Margaret, though...It's pretty tight...

JULIAN

Nothing a good lawyer couldn't fix.

PENNY

Then what would I do? This was my moment to...work on a Hollywood screenplay...I've waited years for this. It's, it's all I've wanted for...my whole life basically. I'm finally here. I don't want to go back to square one.

JULIAN

Then I'll find you another job.

Small pause.

JULIAN

Better yet. I'll pay you to write a script for me.

PENNY

Are you serious?

JULIAN

Yes.

PENNY

You want me...to write a script...for you? To perform? Can you act?

JULIAN

Well, I've always been interested in the craft of acting. It looks fun. In fact, I think I'd like to take some classes.

PENNY

But...it takes years to be a good actor.

JULIAN

Oh, please. This whole industry is littered with terrible actors. It can't be that hard to find a job. Besides, I feel like I've learned enough in my years of being married to...her. I have to act every day when I'm with her.

PENNY

But Margaret-

JULIAN

To hell with Margaret. You'll never finish anything with her. I'll take care of freeing you from her clutches. Besides, working with me would give us more opportunities to spend time together.

Julian touches Penny. She flushes, overtaken with that powerful feeling. The atmosphere around them becomes charged.

PENNY

Oh, wow...well...I'll have to think about it...

JULIAN

Do it, Penny. You know how much fun you have with me...how much I make you cum...

PENNY

Oh...haha...I...actually don't...

JULIAN

Don't what?

PENNY

You haven't actually, um...made me...

The atmosphere abruptly shifts back to normal.
The spell broken.

JULIAN

I haven't- At all? But, but the sounds you make when we...they're so rapturous.

PENNY

Of course. It, it feels good...really good...to be touched like that, but...I haven't yet.

Julian breaks away and takes a moment to think.

JULIAN

This is unacceptable.

PENNY

It's really okay. We'll-

JULIAN

It's not okay! What kind of a man am I if I can't give you the pleasure you deserve? I have to do something about this. Penny, dear, the next time you see me, prepare / yourself for a night of ecstasy.

PENNY

Julian, it's really okay. You don't have to take it that seriously.

JULIAN

I will be the Cum King!

Julian exits. Penny takes a moment.

PENNY

Ew...

SCENE 3

In the basement. Margaret sits on the stairs, muttering to herself. Her face is covered in bandages. She has in her hands a plate of bread and a glass of water.

MARGARET

...the press might write a story...tabloid fodder...a little botox, only a little...more than that...attention...would be good for the project.

Sam stirs, panicked. Then he sees Margaret.

SAM

M-Margaret?

Sam sits up. He's covered in more bandages now, around one of his ears, covering one of his eyes, around his head. Around his body.

Oh, Sam.
MARGARET

What happened...to your f-face...?
SAM

A minor procedure.
MARGARET

Margaret approaches and sits with Sam on the cot. She offers him the plate.

Sorry it's not fancier. I...don't know how to cook. That's Julian's area of expertise. As you know...
MARGARET

Sam tries to sit up, then falls back down.

Sam...are you...You're drugged.
MARGARET

Morphine...
SAM

Please, drink. And eat.
MARGARET

Margaret lifts the glass to Sam's mouth and he sips slowly. She feeds him bits of bread.

G...get me out...
SAM

I'm trying, dear.
MARGARET

Whyyy is it taking so long? Just call the...police already...
SAM

Sam, it's a delicate situation for me, okay? I'm try-
MARGARET

SAM

Delicate? This isss an emergency. I'm dying!

Sam starts eating his bread.

MARGARET

Be patient. I will get you out, but...it's just delicate. You have no idea how these things work. How marriage works. Marriage is all about compromise. I can't just go against my husband the moment I find out that he's eating someone alive.

SAM

You're actually insane.

MARGARET

If I'm insane, then so is every wife on the planet. You're not a woman. You don't understand this. You weren't conditioned since...since birth to learn how to move through a world that doesn't know how to accommodate you. You didn't have to learn how to navigate the world because you are the world! I've had to bend myself every which way just to make it to this point. It took me years before I learned how to stand in my own power, to make people listen to me. To get what I want. And even then, it's a game. Even when I was a child, my father--Christ, even my mother--they would withhold food from me if my posture wasn't exactly perfect at the dinner table. Slap me if I spoke above a certain volume, and...Whatever. They taught me the game of being a woman early in my life. The game of marriage. It's a constant negotiation of power. And Julian is the only man I thought I had finally beaten in the game. But this, you...he's really surprised me here. So, I have to rethink my strategy, Sam. You see, I have to let him get what he wants a little bit so that I can get what I want. I mean, God, look at me! Look at what I have to do for my husband to keep him at bay. To, to keep him from ruining my career, my life. I have to tread cautiously. I have to. Or I'll lose everything.

SAM

Loo...look at you? LOOK AT ME! Look at what your husband isss doing to me! Tearing me apart bit by bit, until there's nnnothing left...He's even eaten my hair! I can't...believe you have the audacity to whine about your life when I'm litterrally decaying in f-front of you.

(beat)

You're a bitch!

MARGARET

Don't speak to me like that.

SAM

I can't believe that you would see me like this, and instead of helping me right a-away, you just think about yourself. You're as much of a monster as he is!

MARGARET

If you keep up these insults, I'll leave you here to rot.

SAM

Then I'll scream all night and day until it drives the both of you crazy.

MARGARET

Then he'll cut out your vocal cords!

SAM

Then...then just kill me...why am I still alive? Just end it. Kill me. Please. The sssscalpel, right there. / Please, please...

MARGARET

Sam. Sam! I will do no such thing.

(beat)

I am *not* a monster.

Sam crumples into himself and sobs.

MARGARET

Sam...I understand your frustration. I will help you, but...I need you to apologize.

SAM

What?

MARGARET

Apologize.

SAM

Why?

MARGARET

You've just insulted me, and I'm hurt. So, you need to apologize.

SAM

Are, are you serious?

MARGARET

Yes.

Pause.

SAM

I-I'm sorry.

MARGARET

For?

SAM

For...for insulting you.

MARGARET

I know you're suffering now, but if we're both patient, we'll come out on top.

SAM

Oh God...

MARGARET

I think all men should learn how to apologize to women at a young age, so it's good you're getting started now. I'm giving you a valuable lesson right now, you know. You'll thank me for this intel later when you and Penny tie the knot.

SAM

I'm not gonna m-marrying herrr.

MARGARET

What?

SAM

We don't love each other...I don't think we eeeeever did. Nooo, no, no. There hasssn't been any feeling between us for a long time.

MARGARET

Don't say that.

SAM

Margaret...We only ended up together because it's what ourrr parents, evvveryone around us in our little hometown expected us to do. It'sss what everyone does back there...so, yeah...maybe I do, in fact, know what it feels like to be conditioned to...conform to the world everyone else created around me. We're not a couple, not really. She thinks so, but I know...the truth. I was just playing the part to satisfy what was expected of me. Story of my life. Everyone loved to dote on me...put me on a pedestal, tell me how handsome I was, graze my arm or massage my back when I didn't ask to be touched. Only to later b-build a cage around me. I've only everrr existed to make others happy, to fulfill what they need of me. Buuut then all that u-unwanted attention stopped once I sstarted dating Penny. So maaybe I also stuck with her ffor protection. Suddenly, I was just *her* property, not the world's...But now here we aaare.

Penny and Sam, basically spent our childhoods together. We don't know how to be apart from each other...to explore other people...other kinds of love...

MARGARET

Are you not attracted to Penny? I don't think I could blame you if you aren't, honestly.

SAM

Yes. No. I don't know. Howww do I know if I like something iff...I have nothing else to compare it to...? I guess I don't...I've never even t-touched Penny...like...sexually...

MARGARET

Really? Ever? Are you...even attracted to women?

Sam laughs.

SAM

There it isss. Just because I don't find Penny appealing...you think I'm gay...I-I-I don't know. Maybe I am. I'll never get the opportunity to find out at this rate anyway. It doesn't matter. Women. Men. It's all so...vulgar. The...fluids and the bile and the cum and the blood and the...bodilyyy-ness of, of, of participating in life. In sex, in love, in pain, in death...all of it. So...vulgar. But it's what we do, I guess. As humans. One way or another...you're thrust into the nastiness of living, even if, if, try as you might, you just can't bear to accept it.

(beat)

I was being eaten alive long before I ever met you.

Margaret exits. Dr. J enters for the next scene...

SAM

Just kill me...kill me...

Sam repeats these words as the scene transitions.

SCENE 4

Split scene. Julian and Sam in the basement.
Margaret and Penny at Penny's apartment.

In the basement, Julian preps for another operation. Sam lies on the cot, watching Julian.

SAM

...Kill me...please...

JULIAN

Nope.

SAM

Please...why do I have to be alive for this?

JULIAN

I need you fresh.

Julian moves toward Sam with a syringe.

JULIAN

Give me your arm.

SAM

Wait.

JULIAN

Sam, I thought we were past this by now. There's no more need to struggle. It will all be over soon.

SAM

And then what? You'll kidnap and eat some other young man?

JULIAN

...I haven't thought that far ahead, but yes, I suppose I'll have to do that.

SAM

So, it will just never end?

JULIAN

I don't know yet. I can't know for sure right now if this...experiment will ever conclude. Maybe achieving immortality means there will never be an end to my hunger, but I'm willing to find out.

SAM

You're insane.

Shift to Margaret and Penny. A knock at the door. Penny rushes to it. She wears heavier makeup now.

PENNY

Oh God...I've been waiting for you all day!

She opens the door. It's Margaret.

MARGARET

You have?

PENNY

Margaret?

MARGARET

Yes, me. Who did you think it was?

PENNY

W-what are you doing here?

Margaret steps inside.

MARGARET

You've been ignoring me, and this seemed like the best way to get your attention.

PENNY

I-I-I-I-

MARGARET

I want to finish the script soon. I hired you to do this, and you're shirking your responsibilities. Why?

PENNY

I, um....I-I'm sorry, Margaret. I just haven't been, um, feeling well?

MARGARET

You look fine to me.

PENNY

Well, I, uh-

MARGARET

Penny. Do not lie to me.

Shift to Julian and Sam.

JULIAN

Frankly, Sam, you and whoever comes after you should be honored to be taking part in such an incredible process. You're sacrifice will ultimately help humanity. Imagine! No more death!

SAM

What “no more death”? You’re literally killing me! This entire thing is, is built on eating the young.

JULIAN

Well...no more death for me. For...people my age. We could finally stop the flow of time, the progression of the seasons. Everyone I’ve known has only ever been working toward a more perfect world, if only they didn’t lose their strength and die along the way. Finally, we can stay around to make that perfect world, and then keep it that way forever.

SAM

But, but what about...about me? Us? My generation? Future generations? We deserve a place here too!

JULIAN

Your generation? Useless. You kids have done nothing to contribute to the world. Just take and complain, then take some more. Rabid consumers, all of you.

SAM

What?! We’re not the ones who created this unsustainable infrastructure! This system that destroys the environment, exploits the poor, kills off those deemed undesirable! We’re the ones trying to fix everything that you and everyone your age ruined!

JULIAN

Ruined? We have only ever been pioneers. Everything and everyone that has come after us has been nothing but detritus. Unfortunate byproducts of the progress that *we* have made. Now enough stalling. You’re ruining my appetite.

Julian approaches Sam with a syringe.

Shift to Penny and Margaret.

PENNY

Ah, okay...Well, I, uh...I actually got another writing job. Yes, I’ve been commissioned by...someone else for another script. And it’s, uh, been taking up a lot of my time.

MARGARET

Who hired you?

PENNY

It’s uh...a pretty major studio.

MARGARET

Who? Columbia? Paramount? Warner?

PENNY

Okay, not major. They're a, a mid-sized company. They do a lot of indies. You probably haven't heard of them.

MARGARET

Try me.

PENNY

This really isn't a good time, I-

MARGARET

Penny. Whether or not you have actually lined up another screenwriting job, I was first. You have a duty to me to finish this script. With me. On my time. When I ask you too. Which I have done. Repeatedly.

PENNY

I, okay, yes. I really do have another script I'm working on, and, and it's a major deal, so...I just want to make sure I'm devoting enough time to it, so, so, it's just sucking up a lot of my...time. So, I can't get together with you as much to, to work on our script, so...

MARGARET

Penny, writers constantly juggle different projects. Your excuses are silly. We need to finish this script. Now. Or I'll fire you and sue you to repay your fees. And then some.

PENNY

Okay! Okay. I-I will manage my time better. I will finish this script, our script soon.

MARGARET

I want you to apologize to me.

PENNY

I-I-I'm sorry, Margaret.

MARGARET

Fine.

Shift to Julian and Sam. Julian wields the syringe.

SAM

No! NO!

Sam struggles viciously and bites Julian's hand. Hard. Julian screams and jumps off of Sam, drops the syringe. His hand is bleeding.

Sam leaps up and stands on the bed, ready to fight.

JULIAN

Maybe you would be better off dead.

Julian grabs a knife from the operating table.

SAM

No, wait!

JULIAN

I thought this is what you wanted.

SAM

I, I...no, I...please...

JULIAN

Get down.

Sam slowly falls to his knees. Julian gets closer.

SAM

Just, wait. Wait...at least tell me...what are you going to take this time?

JULIAN

Oh, this time, I need something very crucial...

Julian scans down Sam's body and looks at his groin. Sam looks down and then back up at Julian in horror.

SAM

Oh, God...no, you can't. No, no, why would you do that?

JULIAN

A young man who looks like you? I'm sure you've had plenty of sexual experience with tons of different women. And I...I need that experience. That bodily knowledge...

SAM

For Margaret?

JULIAN
Oh no. Not Margaret. Penny.

SAM
...What?

JULIAN
Yes, Sam. I'm fucking your girlfriend.

Shift to Margaret and Penny.

PENNY
Now, Margaret this really isn't the best time. I'm-

MARGARET
Why have you been ignoring me? If you were busy, you could have simply told me that, and we could have worked around your schedule.

PENNY
I-

MARGARET
And who did you think I was at the door?

PENNY
...That's personal.

MARGARET
Personal? I thought we were on personal terms with each other. You can tell me-

PENNY
Sam's coming back. Today.

MARGARET
Oh?

Shift to Julian and Sam.

SAM
Penny. No...

Julian moves to a counter and pulls out a rag from a drawer. He starts to soak it in chloroform.

JULIAN

I think she might even love me, and frankly I'd love nothing more than to give her pleasure. To know that she needs me, craves me...divine. But I'll need your member first.

Sam laughs, softly at first, then deliriously.

JULIAN

What?

SAM

You'll get no "bodily knowledge" from me you idiot.

JULIAN

...What?

SAM

I've never had sex. I've never "pleased" Penny. Never wanted to. Fluids and blood and sweat and cum...it's disgusting. I never wanted to be near any of it.

JULIAN

You bastard!

Sam laughs.

Shift to Margaret and Penny.

PENNY

Y-yes! He finally called me back. Lost his phone while on his way to the audition, and, and had a lot of trouble getting a new one. That's why he couldn't reach his agent either....yeah. Yeah, so I wanted to spend some alone time with him once he got here.

Pause. Margaret thinks.

MARGARET

Oh, that's...that's great news, Penny...Are you sure it's him?

PENNY

Yes, I am. He'll be here any minute, and I'd like to spend some time with him. Alone.

MARGARET

Well, I'd like to see him too, to make sure-

PENNY

No, Margaret! I hate to be rude, but could you...

Penny gestures to the door.

MARGARET

Sure. I'm glad to hear he's...safe.

Shift to Julian and Sam.

JULIAN

To be so young and handsome and virile and, and...to waste it. I hate people like you. Weak, weak men. Why have such a body if you're not going to use it the way nature intended? Pathetic!

Sam laughs some more. Julian approaches him again. Sam stops laughing and backs away. Julian raises the knife toward Sam.

SAM

What are you doing?

JULIAN

I came down here to perform an operation, and I'm not leaving until it is finished.

SAM

Didn't you just hear me? You won't get what you want out of it! It's pointless! Why?

JULIAN

BECAUSE I HATE THE KIND OF MAN THAT YOU ARE. YOU ENRAGE ME. AND I WILL TAKE WHAT IS MINE BECAUSE I OWN YOU. I OWN YOU! YOU BELONG TO ME NOW!

Julian puts the rag to Sam's mouth, Sam emits a muffled scream, but then he goes down.

Shift to Margaret and Penny.

MARGARET

Penny, I...

PENNY

Yes?

MARGARET

...Nevermind.

Julian bursts through the door.

JULIAN

Oh, Pennyyy?

Everyone freezes.

MARGARET

Wh-what are you doing here?

JULIAN

Margaret. I could ask you the same thing.

PENNY

Uh, uh, uh this, this is what I was talking about. The other script I'm w-writing is with...

MARGARET

With Julian?

PENNY

Yes, you see. B-because I didn't know if he had already told you, but...he wants to, to act now. And so he hired me to help him / with, with a movie-

JULIAN

Penny! Margaret, Penny is my lover.

Margaret staggers. Julian tries to catch her, but she slaps him away.

MARGARET

NO. Don't. Touch. Me.

Margaret goes to the door.

MARGARET

I am going to destroy you.

Margaret exits.

PENNY

Why did you tell her that? We could have convinced her-

JULIAN

No, we couldn't. She would have smelled through our lies from a mile away. Besides, I don't want to lie to her. I don't need to. I'm finished with her.

PENNY

But, but, I'm still working with her-

JULIAN

You don't need her anymore.

Julian embraces Penny.

PENNY

She scares me...what if she-

JULIAN

There is nothing to be afraid of, dear. Margaret is...weak. I will take care of her. Just as I will take care of you...and all of your needs.

Julian moves his hand down Penny's body, to her thighs. She falls for his magic. They kiss.

SCENE 5

Margaret at the park. Sitting at the bench.
Muttering to herself.

MARGARET

...he'll...burn for this...all of them...whore...

Julian enters.

JULIAN

Margaret.

MARGARET

Julian.

JULIAN

I would say it's nice to see you, but-

MARGARET

Fuck you.

JULIAN

And here I thought we were going to have a mature conversation about this.

MARGARET

I don't want to hear a word out of that vile mouth of yours.

JULIAN

You are the one who called me here to talk.

MARGARET

I called you here to be silent and listen to *me* talk, you fool.

JULIAN

I'm leaving you, Margaret. And I'm so happy that I'm doing this. Penny and I will live together. And we'll work together in harmony, as all couples should. And I'll pursue my dream of being an actor. And finally, finally there will be joy in my life.

MARGARET

You can't act.

JULIAN

Sure I can. I've acted like I've loved you for over half of my life.

MARGARET

No, Julian. I mean you don't have what it takes to be an actor. You have no spine, no ability to evoke an emotional response in anyone. You have nothing at all inside of you. Nothing. You're hollow.

JULIAN

If I'm hollow, then you were the one who hollowed me out. You...have whittled away at me until my heart shriveled into a tiny speck. God, I was so young and full of life when we first met. And you made me feel small. But with Penny, I feel big again. And it feels so good.

MARGARET

I didn't "make" you anything. You chose this life. To be my husband.

JULIAN

But I didn't! You manipulated me for all of these years. It was like you laid a curse on me...like witch that you are.

MARGARET

Do what, dear?

JULIAN

Manipulate me like that. I know you work. This is how you do it. You make me feel responsible for my own suffering when really you are the one making my life hell.

MARGARET

Really, Julian? You're acting like a child. And here I thought we were going to have a mature conversation. You are your own person. You had the power to leave me, but you never did. Pathetic men like you choose to have miserable lives because they are, in fact, inherently pathetic. To the core. And you need women like me, because we're the only ones who know how to make men like you useful. You're not going to escape that fact by running off with that slut.

JULIAN

You came straight to this Earth from Hell, didn't you...I'm done talking, Margaret. Goodbye forever, you decrepit bat.

Julian tries to leave.

MARGARET

I know your secret, Julian.

Julian stops.

MARGARET

I know what you're keeping downstairs. I know you're slowly killing that boy. And I'm going to let everyone know.

JULIAN

How long have you known?

MARGARET

Just today.

JULIAN

You're lying.

MARGARET

No.

JULIAN

I can tell when you're acting, Margaret. You've known for a while, haven't you? But you never said anything.

MARGARET

It doesn't matter.

JULIAN

I think you still need me. For your career.

MARGARET

...I don't need you anymore for that. I never really did.

JULIAN

Oh, please. You wouldn't be anywhere near where you are today without all the back-breaking work I've put into making your career.

MARGARET

Your work? As if I stood around and did nothing?

JULIAN

How hard is it really to stand in front of a camera and talk?

MARGARET

You have no idea what it's like to be me. To bear the weight of my life, and you never asked me either, seeing as how your only preoccupation all of these years was with your own annoying misery. If I wanted to take care of a mopey idiot who flagellates himself all day, I could have married a monk. At least then I would never have to worry about having gross sex with you.

JULIAN

You love having sex with me. I enthrall you.

MARGARET

Ha! You have no power over me. I can't believe you actually have the nerve to think that I need you to feel any kind of physical pleasure, as if, as if, I'm somehow an incomplete woman without your slimy member inside of me. I don't need you. I am all that I need! I've spent my entire life wading through a world built by men like you that was designed to kill women like me. I will never be killed. I am the killer!

JULIAN

If you didn't need me, then why did you even bother staying with me?

MARGARET

Because that is what a dutiful wife does. And I looked better to others as a married woman as opposed to single.

JULIAN

Oh, but Margaret. You had a choice. You could have left me-

MARGARET

And because I loved you, Julian.

JULIAN

Loved me...? You had a twisted way of showing it.

MARGARET

You may not believe me, but it's true. I loved you. Deeply. In my own way. I called you here because I am still willing to stick it out with you. We can move past this, still be the partners we were. I can still be a star, and you can be my star-maker.

JULIAN

It's too late, Margaret. The damage is done. I love Penny.

MARGARET

Then, then...let me still work with her, at least. I need her help. This project is...it's all I have left.

He considers it.

JULIAN

No.

A pause.

MARGARET

I'm telling the police. The whole world is going to know about your horrible little experiment.

JULIAN

And you think you won't be spared from the consequences? You're an accomplice now.

MARGARET

I'm just an innocent bystander. Your word against mine.

JULIAN

There's no way anyone would believe that. And how do you know Penny or Sam wouldn't rat you out once I'm arrested?

MARGARET

Sam is catatonic, Penny is an idiot, and the police will believe me because I'm a damn good actress.

JULIAN

You're not that good.

MARGARET

I'm telling. This all comes to an end now.

Julian lunges at her.

JULIAN

NO YOU WILL NOT. I know how vain you are. You're too much of a coward to jeopardize yourself. But! If you do say anything, I will come back here and slice you to bits. Slowly. A long, painful death.

Julian steps away.

JULIAN

I'm finished with you. Penny is all I need now. Though, at this point, I'm sure I could find two or three more pieces to wait for me in the wings. And now that I think about it, I'm finished with Sam too. I've taken everything I needed from him. He's all yours now.

MARGARET

Wh- what would I need with him?

JULIAN

I don't know. You can spend the rest of your days keeping him company down there. Figure it out.

Julian exits.

MARGARET

...bastard...and a whore too...burn it all down...burn it...I am the killer...

SCENE 6

Margaret sits alone in her kitchen. Penny enters. She carries herself differently, now. Stands taller. They stare at each other for a moment.

PENNY

...Hi.

MARGARET

Hi, Penny. Won't you sit?

PENNY

No. I can't.

MARGARET

I just want to talk, Penny.

PENNY

I'd rather stand.

MARGARET

Are you afraid of me, Penny?

PENNY

No. I just can't stay long. Julian is waiting for me.

Margaret pauses.

MARGARET

I think you are afraid. You lied to me about Sam. Why? Because you thought I would be angry with you? Do you lie to Julian like that?

PENNY

Don't lecture me about lying. You lied to him all the time.

MARGARET

I lied to him to control him, not to protect myself from his emotions, dear. That's the difference between you and me. I am not afraid to face the ugly feelings head on. Now, please. Sit.

PENNY

No.

A moment of silence. Then Penny sits at the table.

MARGARET

I want you to continue working for me. I want to finish our script together.

PENNY

Really?

MARGARET

I would really like it if we saw this project through to the end.

PENNY

Right...it's just...

MARGARET

Penny. Please. This is...my work. And my work is my life. It's very important to me. We were doing so well together.

PENNY

...We were.

MARGARET

Yes! We make a fantastic team.

PENNY

I did enjoy our writing sessions.

MARGARET

I did too. I did too. I think we were creating a story everyone would want to see.

PENNY

But I'm working for-

MARGARET

My hus- Julian. I know.

PENNY

He couldn't know about this.

MARGARET

We can keep it a secret.

PENNY

I don't want to keep secrets from him.

MARGARET

Are you afraid of him?

PENNY

No, it's-

MARGARET

Because he is nothing to be afraid of, dear. He's nothing at all. A pathetic man.

PENNY

He is not!

Pause.

PENNY

He told me this is how you treated him. Like he was a worm. You're horrible to him.

MARGARET

You don't know him like I do.

PENNY

I know him, Margaret. I know him very well. He's kind and lovely. Everything you aren't. And you don't deserve him.

MARGARET

Are you really in love with him?

PENNY

Yes.

Margaret cackles.

PENNY

Stop!

MARGARET

You stupid girl. Soon enough, he'll get bored with you. The novelty of being with a younger...mildly attractive woman will wear off. Then he'll cast you aside and move on to the next slut who comes his way.

PENNY

Don't project your own pitiful life onto me, you crone. I'm the most beautiful I've ever been, and with him, I feel like a real woman. He gives me so much...pleasure! And he loves it. He'll be mine forever.

MARGARET

You are much more of an idiot than I thought you were.

PENNY

And you're nothing but an old husk. I think everyone would be better served if you stayed inside forever and shriveled away in this apartment.

Penny stands up.

PENNY

This is the last time we'll ever speak to each other.

Penny walks toward the door.

I know where Sam is.

MARGARET

Penny stops.

What?

PENNY

Sam. I know where he is.

MARGARET

No...no, you don't. Sam is gone. He left me, he's, he's out of my life.

PENNY

Margaret gets up and goes to the basement door.
She opens it.

I have something to show you.

MARGARET

...I'm not going down there with you.

PENNY

Come with me. Now.

MARGARET

Margaret and Penny stare at each other.
Margaret descends the staircase alone.

Penny waits a moment. She walks toward the basement door, turns away, then walks back toward the basement door. She stops at the precipice.

Penny looks behind her and sees a knife on the kitchen counter. She grabs it and slides it in her pants. She descends the stairs.

SCENE 7

In the basement. Darkness. Footsteps, then moaning.

What was that?
PENNY

Watch your step.
MARGARET

P-Pen.....
SAM

Penny gasps.

Margaret?
PENNY

Penny.....
SAM

W-w-wait...
PENNY

The lights snap on. Margaret and Penny stand at the base of the stairs. On the cot is Sam, covered with a blanket in the fetal position. Trembling.

Penny screams.

Oh my God...S-Sam!
PENNY

She rushes to his side.

Wh-what happened to you?
PENNY

Oh...thank God...you're here. Please...get me out...
SAM

(to Margaret) You knew about this?
PENNY

I only just found out yesterday.
MARGARET

But he was with me all day yesterday...
PENNY

MARGARET

He...must have snuck out at one point. When he came here, he caught me trying to free Sam.

PENNY

Why didn't you say anything?

MARGARET

I was terrified that he would do the same to me.

PENNY

You were afraid of Julian? I find that hard to believe, considering how much you dominated him.

MARGARET

This time was different! He...found out that I knew, and he threatened me. He-he said he'd encase my feet in concrete and throw me in the river. I had no choice but to keep quiet. But now is the moment, Penny, that we can save Sam and destroy Julian!

PENNY

Wh-where would he find that much concrete...?

MARGARET

That's not what you should be focusing on right now!

PENNY

You only found out yesterday? But he caught you? Why would he let you walk away then, if he threatened to kill you?

MARGARET

I-I-That's not important, Penny. We need to get Sam out of here and leave, and then go right to the police!

PENNY

I'm not convinced this is Julian's doing.

MARGARET

You think I did this?

PENNY

I wouldn't put it past you. I've heard some pretty terrible things about you.

MARGARET

Don't let that snake of a man fool you, Penny. He drew you away from me to control you, fed you lies so you wouldn't find out who / he really is.

SAM

Please / help...

PENNY

Then why would he even do this?

MARGARET

Julian has been consuming Sam little by little to make himself younger. Haven't you noticed?

Penny thinks about it.

PENNY

Oh my God...

MARGARET

Now you see! I didn't want to believe it at first, but it's all true. Julian is a monster! We have to act now. I don't know what he'll do next. Or when-

Footsteps and a slow clap. Julian enters casually from the stairs.

JULIAN

Another thrilling performance, Margaret. Someone should give you an award.

PENNY

W-What are you doing here?

JULIAN

Acting class was canceled, dear.

MARGARET

You've been found out, Julian. Your horrendous little experiment is over. We're going to the police.

JULIAN

Oh, Margaret. Do that and I'll make sure you're locked away with me.

MARGARET

I've done nothing. And your constant threats and outbursts don't scare me anymore. Penny, do you see now how truly abominable he is?

JULIAN

(to Penny) Is this what she told you? That I threatened her? She's known about Sam for a long time but chose to do nothing because she was afraid of how this might hurt her and her career. Or whatever is left of it, that is.

MARGARET

He forced me to-

JULIAN

She's lying to you.

PENNY

Margaret, I...you could have done...*something*...

MARGARET

Listen to me. He could have killed me!

JULIAN

Quiet! Penny, she's trying to manipulate you. She's nothing but an empty husk of a woman.

MARGARET

Do not talk to your wife like that, you bastard! I am not empty. I am full of humanity, unlike you! You complain that you were trapped with me, but I was also trapped. God, if I could go back, I would have run away from you as quickly as I could. But I had no choice. I had to yoke myself to you to make the life I wanted.

JULIAN

So, you chose to stay and torture me instead.

MARGARET

Oh, you loved it. You *loved* serving me. What you're doing now? It's not you. It will pass. I know who you really are. Your only purpose was to serve me.

JULIAN

SHUT! UP!

Julian emits a forceful energy. Margaret cowers and Penny is overcome.

JULIAN

Penny, come with me. I can make all of this go away. Just...please. Come.

PENNY

But Sam...

JULIAN

That's not Sam. That's nothing.

MARGARET

Sam needs you, Penny. The man you actually love needs you.

Penny thinks about this.

PENNY

I love Julian.

Penny walks toward Julian, hypnotized.

Margaret absorbs this. She flies into a rage.

MARGARET

You whore!

Margaret lunges at Penny and grabs her hair. Penny struggles while Julian grabs Margaret. He releases Penny from Margaret's grasp and then strikes Margaret. Margaret falls to the ground, shocked.

PENNY

Julian!

JULIAN

We're leaving. Now!

Sam rises to his feet and emits a primal yell. Something animal. Julian and Penny freeze.

SAM

Look....at what he's done....to me....

The flimsy blanket that was covering him falls to his feet. His body is covered in bandages. The bloody bandages are wrapped around his groin, like a diaper.

PENNY
Oh my God...

SAM
He's...taken....everything...

JULIAN
That's nothing. Ignore him.

She steps away from Julian, his spell broken.

PENNY
What have you done?

JULIAN
It was all for you, dear. So I could be the man you deserved. So I could give you everything you desired.

Penny unveils the knife she hid in her pants. She brandishes it toward Julian.

JULIAN
Please don't be rash, dear. Listen to me.

Julian approaches Penny with his hand outstretched, but she swings at it. Julian recoils, holding his bloody hand.

JULIAN
You bitch!

PENNY
You, Margaret, all you two do is take and destroy. You're animals, both of you. I should...

Penny steps toward Julian. Margaret gets to her feet.

JULIAN
Wait. Wait!

PENNY
I can't believe how blind I've been. Like I was under a spell.

Margaret grabs a tray from the operating table and wields it above Penny's head.

JULIAN

You're mistaken, Penny. I was / only-

SAM

Penny!

Penny turns and sees Margaret. She swipes the knife at her. Margaret drops the tray and jumps back.

Julian grabs Penny's arms while she's distracted. They struggle for a moment, both holding the knife.

Then the knife plunges into Penny's stomach. They both gasp. Penny releases the knife, and Julian backs away with the bloody instrument in his hand, shocked.

SAM

Nooo!

Sam collapses to his knees, staring into middle space in a daze.

Penny stumbles away and then collapses to the floor. Julian drops the knife and grabs her before she can fall.

JULIAN

Oh no. No no no. Penny, listen to me. Just...just breathe, darling.

PENNY

Julian...

JULIAN

Put pressure here. You'll be okay. I can fix this. I can-

Margaret grabs the knife. She sneaks up behind Julian and holds it to his neck.

MARGARET

Get away from her.

JULIAN

Margaret, please. I can still operate.

MARGARET

I said move!

She presses the knife to his neck. Julian gets up. Margaret leads him toward Sam's cot, and places herself between Julian and Sam, who is still in a daze.

JULIAN

Do not let her die. I can save her!

MARGARET

I'll let you have her, Julian. But we're in this together now.

JULIAN

Right. Yes. Yes we are.

MARGARET

We can't let her leave here.

JULIAN

...What?

MARGARET

Your...experiment. I want in. I want her. In the recipe.

JULIAN

N...no. Margaret, please.

MARGARET

We can stay like this all day, and I'll let her bleed out on the floor. Or you can help me get what I want.

Julian twitches. He makes a move back toward Penny, but Margaret is faster. She slices at his face, and he backs up.

JULIAN

What do you want!?

MARGARET

Beauty.

Fine. Penny will stay here.

And?

And what?

Apologize.

...Jesus...I'm sorry! Okay.

For?

...For everything.

Perfect.

See you at dinner.

JULIAN

MARGARET

JULIAN

MARGARET

JULIAN

MARGARET

JULIAN

MARGARET

Margaret turns around and grabs Sam by the hair. She slits his throat. Sam falls to the bed. Julian stares.

Margaret goes to the stairs.

MARGARET

SCENE 8

Margaret and Julian's kitchen. Margaret is furiously scribbling on some paper at the table. She looks beautiful, radiant, unbandaged.

Julian fixes some breakfast on the counter. He is now bandaged where he get cut by Penny's knife. He looks haggard, not as youthful as before. Julian brings plates to the table.

Breakfast.

JULIAN

Thank you.

MARGARET

Julian sits down and starts eating.

Is the coffee ready?

MARGARET

Oh, oh, yes. I forgot-

JULIAN

It's fine. I'll get it.

MARGARET

Margaret rises and goes to the counter, pours a mug.

Sorry...

JULIAN

Julian reaches for Margaret's papers, but she catches him.

Don't. Even.

MARGARET

Oh!

JULIAN

Margaret brings the coffee to Julian and sits back down.

JULIAN

You haven't let me read a single word of what you've written. I thought this, this was supposed to be a project for both of us.

MARGARET

I don't want anyone to see it until I'm sure it's perfect.

JULIAN

I could help you.

MARGARET

No, Julian.

(beat)

Drink your coffee.

She glares at him. He sits back.

JULIAN

No coffee for you?

MARGARET

No. The caffeine will mess with my head. I need to concentrate right now. I'm nearly done revising this draft.

Slight pause.

JULIAN

Really, Margaret. I could offer some ideas if-

MARGARET

Julian!

Moaning from the basement. This time, it sounds like a girl.

Margaret rubs her temples.

MARGARET

Why is the world conspiring against me this morning. Let me finish this!

Margaret rises from the table, walks to the basement door, turns back and grabs the script-in-progress, goes back to the basement door, opens it.

MARGARET

QUIET!

The moaning stops.

Margaret turns toward the table and sees Julian drinking his coffee. She smiles.

MARGARET

Is it good?

JULIAN

Yes. Did you add something to this? Cinnamon?

MARGARET

No.

She sits back down.

MARGARET

You know what? I think I will read a little bit of this for you.

JULIAN

Really? Oh, please do.

Margaret picks up her script and flips through it.

MARGARET

This comes near the end of the play.

JULIAN

Play? Wait, I thought we agreed to star in a movie together, not a play.

MARGARET

I changed my mind.

JULIAN

Darling...I've been talking to *film* producers about this project.

MARGARET

We won't be needing their help anymore.

JULIAN

You have to keep me in the loop-

MARGARET

Don't tell me what to do.

(she looks at her script)

"You will meet me at the gate to darkness, and you will hear my arrival with the howling of the dogs. I know where you are going, but you do not."

JULIAN

Oh, it's wonderful. Very dramatic. Who is speaking?

MARGARET

Hecate, the witch. "I see your fate because I am all and everywhere, in the clouds, in the ocean, in the dirt you tread. So, walk to me, embrace me, please. Turning around now will do you no good."

JULIAN

To whom is she speaking? My character?

MARGARET

No. It's a monologue.

JULIAN

Oh (*coughs*)...well, can I hear some of the other characters' scenes?

MARGARET

No. "But beware. The daughters of Thessaly are everywhere. Will you rebuke them? Will you summon their wrath, the ancient magic, with your pride?"

JULIAN

Please? I would very much like to hear from more than just Hecate. I'd like to hear what you've written for me as well.

MARGARET

I didn't write anything for you.

Julian coughs hard, wheezes a little.

JULIAN

What?

MARGARET

There is no character for you in this play.

JULIAN

What do you mean? This is supposed to be for the both of us!

MARGARET

Not anymore. This is now a solo show. For me.

JULIAN

Wha...That's not what we agreed on at all, Margaret.

MARGARET

That's too bad.

Julian stands up, but falters and clutches his chest, wheezing.

JULIAN

You...!

He lunges for Margaret but falls to the floor. Margaret gets up from her chair and moves away. Julian crawls on the ground.

MARGARET

Please quiet down so I may read the rest of this to you.

JULIAN

I can't / breathe...

MARGARET

"Your father may have paved this road, but I was here when the ground beneath us was / first laid-

JULIAN

Oh God...

MARGARET

-the strata compounding over the bones of men who failed to win their immortality"

JULIAN

My coffee...you poisoned me...

MARGARET

Oh, it seems I confused the rat poison for the sugar, dear. We really should keep that somewhere else. Now, where was I...yes, the end.

JULIAN

What...is the p-plan, / Margaret...? Leave my body...to rot in the basement...?

MARGARET

"And I will be here when the last of you finally lies down to die." You can relate to that.

JULIAN

You won't be able...to live without me...

Margaret walks over to Julian, gets in his face.

MARGARET

“Because I am the eye of the moon that watches you / at night.”

JULIAN

My dear, please...

Julian writhes and struggles.

MARGARET

“I am the triple goddess, all-encompassing woman! I am the Manifester! And You! Are! Nothing!”

Julian dies. Margaret stares at him for a moment. She throws her script to the ground, papers flying.

Margaret sits in Julian’s seat. She takes his fork and stabs the sausage on his plate, looks at it. Margaret takes a bite.

Blackout.

END