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A Cycle of Farewells

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TRINITY COLLEGE

SENIOR THESIS

A Cycle of Farewells

Submitted by

KAILEY CARPENTER '17

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

2017

Advisor: Mitchell Polin

Reader: Sheila Fisher

Reader: Lucy Ferriss

Society is inescapable. It's how we choose to alter it that truly makes a difference.

CHARACTERS

BEATRICE - 18 YEARS OF AGE. FULLY EMBRACES THE WORLD IN WHICH SHE LIVES IN, WITHOUT ANY DOUBT TOWARDS ITS' MEANING. BEATRICE IS FORCEFUL, DETERMINED, AND FILLED WITH A SPIRIT THAT HER GUARDIAN WAS ALWAYS SLIGHTLY JEALOUS OF. WHILE SOME WOULD DESCRIBE HER AS SELFISH, SHE SIMPLY THINKS HER PRIORITIES ARE DIFFERENT.

ABIGAIL - 18 YEARS OF AGE. ABIGAIL IS A CONUNDRUM. SHE IS CONSTANTLY TORN BETWEEN HER WANTS, AND THE WANTS OF THOSE AROUND HER, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO HER BEST FRIEND, BEATRICE. SHE IS STRONG-WILLED, WHEN IT IS CONVENIENT FOR HER. MOST OF THE TIME, SHE CHOOSES TO STAY IN THE SHADOWS OF BEATRICE, THOUGH HER THOUGHTS WILL ALWAYS HAVE AN AGENCY OF THEIR OWN.

THEO - ~40 YEARS OF AGE. HE IS BEATRICE'S LEGAL GUARDIAN, AND WATCHES OVER HER WITH A CLOSE EYE, AS SHE IS THE ONLY REMAINING FAMILY HE HAS LEFT. THEY ARE NOT RELATED, THOUGH OVER THE YEARS THEY TEND TO FORGET IT. THEO DIDN'T GROW UP IN CLEOVILLE, AND STILL, AFTER SO MANY YEARS, IS ADAPTING TO THE PEOPLE THAT SURROUND HIM.

SETTING

A small town with too many questions than can't be answered. Surrounded by giant titanium walls, Cleoville encompasses its own political and economical system. Modeled after their idol, Cleopatra, the town remains blissfully unaware of the rest of the world. Calendar years are irrelevant, only the months are counted. People can live their lives while choosing to ignore the years that pass. The North American town keeps its' population completely level, creating a balance that needs to be remedied each time it falls towards one end. Suicide is not only acceptable, but encouraged. The older you are, the less respected you will be. Each towns person is encouraged to kill themselves in the most creative ways possible, and children are brought up to respect these rules. It's all they know, especially since no one leaves without special permission from a mysterious outside force.

TIME

Undisclosed future no more than fifty years from the present.

ACT I

Scene 1: Introduction.

Scene 2: Chosen.

Scene 3: Breathe.

Scene 4: Smoke Detectors.

Scene 5: Writing to Yourself.

Scene 6: I'll Do It.

Scene 7: After the Fall.

Scene 8: Announcement.

Scene 9: The Finale.

ACT II

Scene 1: This Is My Life.

Scene 2: Rosy Cheeks.

Scene 3: A New Face.

Scene 4: Fields, Cliffs, and Mountains.

Scene 5: I Killed a Girl.

Scene 6: When Can We Leave?

Scene 7: Hazel Eyes.

Scene 8: Sob.

Scene 9: The End / The Beginning.

ACT [1]

SCENE [1]

(The curtain opens on the interior of an old, church-like building. The lights mimic the multiple colors of sunlight that travel through the stain-glass windows raised high above the wooden pews. There are three walls: right stage, left stage, and upstage while the absence of a fourth side opens the stage for the audience's viewing. A single fluorescent light bulb hangs in the middle of the stage, above an altar, and it flickers with a silent intensity that slowly eats away at the audience. It is entirely out of place. The slight hum of the flickering light makes its way into the rest of the space. The atmosphere is a strange mix of warm and cold. Dust makes its way from the furniture and into the beams of light. THEO paces around the edges of the room, running his fingers along the wall looking for some sort of weakness. He tries each and every door handle, only to be faced with the same result - locked. BEATRICE sits on the altar playing with a sizable steak knife, flipping and turning it by the handle. She is wearing a blue, cleavage-bearing satin dress that falls all the way to the floor. A gold shawl made of the same material is draped haphazardly around her shoulders. Her hair is pristine. A gold headpiece lays on the crown of her head, similar to that of Egyptian royalty. Her face is flushed, and beads of sweat fall down her cheek. After a few

moments of silence, BEATRICE turns to THEO and begins to speak.)

BEATRICE

What's your favorite fairytale?

THEO

(THEO can't hear BEATRICE at first, or just ignores her entirely. To get his attention, she takes the handle of the knife and slams it on the altar, making a terrible *clanking* sound. THEO jumps and looks her way.)

What?

(BEATRICE sticks the knife into the table forcefully and turns more towards the man, swinging her feet beneath the seat, her heels hitting the base of the altar each time, creating a slow and steady rhythm that juxtaposes the flickering of the light above her.)

BEATRICE

What's your favorite fairytale?

THEO

(Turning away from BEATRICE and continuing his searching.)

Now's not the time.

BEATRICE

There are so many to choose from. So what's your favorite? I know you have one.

THEO

Stop it.

BEATRICE

Mine's Cleopatra. I think that's obvious by now.

THEO

(Stopping his movements.)

That's not a fairytale.

(THEO moves on to another wall and runs his hand along a small crack. When he can't find a large enough gap, he surveys the rest of the wall.)

BEATRICE

It is to me.

(BEATRICE hops down from the altar and begins to circle it as she speaks, running her finger along the edge.)

The way she took that snake and let it sink its teeth into her supple skin like someone sliding into their own bed after a long day. I wish I was there. I wish I could have seen it. To catch her tears as they fell down her cheek. I want someone there to catch mine.

THEO

If it happened, if it's not real, then it's not a fairytale.

(BEATRICE stops circling and looks defiantly at THEO.)

BEATRICE

Then I'll make my own. Do you want to be in it?

THEO

This is serious, Bea! Help me unlock this door. Give me the key-

BEATRICE

Once upon a time-

(THEO walks over to BEATRICE and grabs the arm that is holding the knife in a firm grasp.)

THEO

This isn't a time for games.

BEATRICE

(BEATRICE yanks her arm away, getting very close to cutting THEO with the blade. She puts down the knife and stalks towards THEO. She suddenly gets serious, her facial expression turning darker.)

This isn't a game to me.

THEO

It seems like it.

(Moving away again, THEO turns his back, though more cautious than before.)

BEATRICE

She killed herself in a mausoleum, you know?

THEO

Yeah.

BEATRICE

Everyone wanted to hear her voice when she spoke. Why don't you listen to me, then? Like they did to her. Everyone else did.

THEO

(Fed-up) What is it?

BEATRICE

Once upon a time...

(BEATRICE saunters over to THEO and hangs over his shoulder. THEO freezes when he feels her presence. She leans in close and speaks quietly.)

My whole town was murdered.

THEO

I know that.

BEATRICE

(Smiling, BEATRICE steps back.)

Ask me who did it.

THEO

I don't need to.

BEATRICE

Just ask me, please.

THEO

Shut up.

(BEATRICE runs over to the table and takes the knife. She leans her arm back and flings it in THEO's direction. The knife flies out of her hand and spirals towards THEO. It gets embedded into the wall. THEO dodges the knife in the last second and runs to a different corner.)

Are you crazy?

BEATRICE

You're not being very nice. For everything I've done for you. For everything that this world has done to me.

THEO

You did nothing but make my life a living hell.

BEATRICE

(Overlapping) I did nothing but give your life meaning for years on end.

THEO

I was fine before you.

BEATRICE

You wouldn't be here if you were *fine*, Theo. You're almost eighteen years deep in fucked up, I'm surprised you haven't realized that yet.

THEO

Fuck off.

BEATRICE

You're just as fucked as the rest of us, can't you see it?

THEO

I'm leaving. Now.

BEATRICE

What happened to "we," Theo?

THEO

I need to get out of here.

BEATRICE

We're never leaving. Don't you know that?

(BEATRICE takes a key from between her breasts, puts it in her mouth dramatically, almost seductively, and swallows.)

That's why it's a fairytale.

(BEATRICE goes to the wall and grabs the knife embedded in the drywall. She goes to the other side and starts to outline a wall in an ornate pattern,

trying to mimic the style of a mausoleum, all the while adding to the multiple carvings already in the wall. She steps back after the first outline and admires her work.)

This kinda looks like a mausoleum, don't you think?

(As THEO watches, BEATRICE takes the knife and mimics driving the knife across her throat. THEO turns to the audience before moving to a wall and crazily banging his fists against it.)

ACT [1]

SCENE [2]

(Interior of THEO and BEATRICE's house. The set consists of a living room and kitchen, attached by a wall, both with equal room. A door on the opposite side of the living room, stage right, leads to the bedroom, located offstage. The door nearest to stage left enters into the kitchen.)

(Enter BEATRICE through the kitchen door.)

BEATRICE

Theo!

(BEATRICE barrels through the kitchen and drops her backpack on the floor.)

Theo!

(She runs into the living room, and slumps her shoulders finding it empty. Taking her phone out, she dials THEO's number and hears his ringtone somewhere in the room. After a bit of searching, she finds his cellphone stuck between two couch cushions. She places his phone in the back pocket of her worn jeans.)

Idiot. The one time I have to tell you something important and you leave your phone at home.

(BEATRICE takes her phone and begins to dial a few numbers. She hears a slam, and then ABIGAIL's voice invades the stage.)

ABIGAIL

Bea!

BEATRICE

In here!

ABIGAIL

(ABIGAIL runs through the kitchen door, sees BEATRICE's backpack on the floor, and runs into the living room. She's

out of breath, both from the run from the school and the news itself. Her face holds an expression mixed between disbelief and panic. She stops dead in her tracks and stares at her friend for a few moments. The clock is ticking in the background.)

Is it true?

(BEATRICE smiles and nods her head, unaware of her friend's current emotions.)

They picked you?

(Another smile, followed by a laugh. BEATRICE shrugs her shoulders happily.)

They really picked you?

BEATRICE

Can you believe it?

ABIGAIL

(ABIGAIL looks around the room, trying to find anything else to focus on besides her elated friend.)

I had no idea you even entered.

BEATRICE

I didn't tell you cause I thought I would never be chosen. I mean, it's out of the whole town and the odds-

ABIGAIL

(ABIGAIL still refuses to make eye contact, planting a seed of doubt into BEATRICE's confidence.)

Of you getting it were astronomical, I know.

BEATRICE

I just found out today. I was going to call you after I talked with Theo.

ABIGAIL

I have no idea what to say.

BEATRICE

(There is a slight pause as BEATRICE tries to understand her friend's tone of voice. She gives ABIGAIL an

incredulous look.)
 Congratulations?

ABIGAIL

(ABIGAIL snaps back into the reality of the situation.)

Of course! Congratulations!

(ABIGAIL walks over to her friend and gives her a hug, somewhat reserved, almost melancholic. She releases her arms and turns around.)

Wow. I'm just... in shock.

BEATRICE

I'm sure you wanted it-

ABIGAIL

(ABIGAIL tries to play her off her feelings as meaningless, shrugging her shoulders, dropping her eyes to the floor, though she can't help the jealousy that continually enters her thoughts.)

Of course I did! Everyone did. That's the point, though. I had no idea you were into the idea. I mean, it's a really big deal. Life changing, you know.

BEATRICE

Of course I know. I wasn't going to enter, but decided to just throw my name in on the last day.

ABIGAIL

Are you going to accept?

BEATRICE

Of course I am. I have to, don't I? I don't have a choice now.

ABIGAIL

(Her voice is steady, determined.)

You always have a choice.

BEATRICE

I want to do this.

ABIGAIL

And you're ready for the responsibility? It shouldn't

be taken lightly.

BEATRICE

Of course I'm ready. I wouldn't have signed up if I wasn't.

ABIGAIL

I thought Theo talked you out of it.

BEATRICE

He did, at first. We agreed that I wouldn't.

ABIGAIL

So you put your name in without telling him?

BEATRICE

This is a good thing, Abby. Why are you trying to argue otherwise?

ABIGAIL

I just don't think you thought this through.

BEATRICE

Just be happy for me, okay? I know you wanted it, but think of it as an honor for you too. Your best friend will be famous. I'll be a town celebrity.

(BEATRICE turns her back.)

I just need to figure out a way to tell Theo. He'll be pissed.

ABIGAIL

He has every right to know that you went behind his back-

BEATRICE

(She locks eyes with ABIGAIL, refusing to back down, but pleading at the same time.)

Please, Abby, just be happy for me. I am. This is a *good thing*.

ABIGAIL

(Short pause.)

You're right, I'm sorry. I guess I'm just... disappointed.

BEATRICE

I understand, but be disappointed on your own time.

ABIGAIL

(There is a long pause as ABIGAIL tries to figure out what to say next. Not able to find any comforting words, she settles for a petty smile.)

How are you going to do it?

BEATRICE

Traditional. The experimental recreations just look tacky. I'm going to honor her by reenacting it exactly. Without the snakes, though. I can't stand them.

ABIGAIL

Isn't that the point? How will you do it?

BEATRICE

I have to think about it. I want to go out with a bang, you know? Really *emulate* our patron.

ABIGAIL

I wouldn't expect anything else.

BEATRICE

They gave me a letter with all the information.
(BEATRICE reaches into her pocket and pulls out a folded sheet of paper. ABIGAIL moves closer to her friend and begins to read over her shoulder.)

ABIGAIL

What does it say?

(She tries to grab it from her friend, but BEATRICE takes it right back, smiling, and begins to read the letter.)

BEATRICE

Dear Beatrice, Congratulations on being chosen for this year's "Suicide Watch," a celebration of the history of Cleoville and the values and ideals it holds. In honor of the 50th anniversary of our town's founding, you have been given the prestigious opportunity of recreating the death of our most

esteemed model and guardian, Cleopatra. You have the choice to do a traditional or more modern retelling of the historical event, and will be provided with all the necessary items when the time comes. The day of, you will be placed on a throne in the religious center of town and perform for the entire population. After your death, there will be a town-wide wake and funereal, followed by your burial alongside the other respected reenactors of our time. The honor bestowed upon you is tradition, and should not be taken lightly. In the event that you decide to withdraw your bid, you may choose someone to act in your place. If you are a minor, you will need a parent's consent to proceed with the ceremony.

On behalf of the mayor, the townspeople, and all of Cleoville, I wish you luck and good tidings. We anxiously await your death, and express true happiness that you may fulfill your life amongst our most valued guardian. All the best...

(BEATRICE looks confused, flips the paper around a few times, and then begins to fold it back to its original form.)

And it's signed by someone important, I'm guessing. I can't read their signature though.

THEO

(Stern and demanding, THEO yells loudly from offstage.)

Beatrice!

BEATRICE

You should probably go. This won't be a pleasant conversation.

ABIGAIL

Yeah. Come over in a bit? Dad's working on his newest project for our neighbor's suicide next week. He's testing it out on the dog later. Should be neat to watch.

BEATRICE

Yeah. I'll be there.

(ABIGAIL turns out of the room and reaches for the door to the kitchen

just as THEO pushes it open. She scurries past him, gives one last glance to BEATRICE, and then walks out. THEO walks closer to BEATRICE, a broken look on his face. His tall frame looms over her, casting a suffocating shadow.)

THEO

Why didn't you tell me?

BEATRICE

I was just going to. I came here right after and tried-

(THEO's phone rings loudly in Beatrice's pocket. She takes it out and places it in his hand. He looks at the caller and silences the phone before placing it in his own pocket.)

THEO

Why didn't you tell me you put your name in the suicide drawing?

BEATRICE

Because I knew you would be angry.

THEO

You were right. How the hell could you do this to me, Bea? What were you thinking? Do you understand what you've signed up for?

BEATRICE

I was thinking that maybe I can make this family seem important.

THEO

What are you talking about? We are important.

BEATRICE

To who? No one. Never has this family made a statement. Look at you! Forty and still alive? We're like lepers in this town. It's my turn to do something dramatic. Make our name actually mean something.

(The phone rings again. THEO takes it out of his pocket and silences it a second time. The object remains in his

firm grip.)

THEO

So killing yourself is considered "making a statement?"

BEATRICE

And a damn good one, at that. Don't you think? It's an honor to be chosen. I get to portray my idol in the most intimate of forms.

THEO

You're going to sacrifice your life for some fame?

BEATRICE

I'm doing this for you, Theo.

THEO

Then take your name OUT. For me.

BEATRICE

I can't do that. You should be grateful!

THEO

This is an incredibly careless action. Did you think about how this would affect those around you?

BEATRICE

I already signed the paperwork. I'm as good as dead.
(THEO sits on the couch. Taking in the silence, BEATRICE walks over to THEO and sits down next to him, tentatively. He looks at the floor while BEATRICE tries to take in his emotions. She grabs his hand. Her voice becomes softer, like she's saying goodbye.)

I have a chance to make a difference. Let me take it. Please.

THEO

You're all I got, Bea.

(A few moments of silence. The phone rings once more. THEO glances at the caller ID, recognition falling across his face. He flips the cover up and puts the device to his ear aggressively.)

I can't talk right now.

(BEATRICE turns around. When she isn't looking, THEO glances at the smoke detector in the far right corner. It's blinking green)

I'm dealing with it. I need more time-

(Pause for unknown response.)

I'll call you back.

(Putting the phone back into his pocket slowly, he turns to sit on the couch. He looks back at the smoke detector, and sees it is blinking its normal red. BEATRICE looks at him, forlorn. The tension in the room is palpable. Theo mumbles, talking more to himself than to Beatrice.)

I can fix this. I have to fix this.

(THEO stands up without looking at BEATRICE.)

BEATRICE

You don't have to fix anything. This is good.

(Without a word, THEO stalks out of the living room, passes the kitchen, and then slams the door closed. Left alone, BEATRICE un-folds the letter in her hand and reads it over again. She lets out a deep breath, and gives the faintest of smiles. She looks at the audience.)

This is good.

ACT [1]

SCENE [3]

(Interior of house.)

(The two girls are sitting haphazardly around the room. Their items are taking up a majority of the space. White carton's with red Chinese symbols lay across the table, with a few fortune cookies spread around them. BEATRICE grabs a cookie and gets frustrated when she can't tear open the wrapper. She takes a deep breath and sighs.)

ABIGAIL

Do that again.

BEATRICE

What?

ABIGAIL

Breathe. I won't get to hear it after next week. I just want to... Take it in. Remember it.

BEATRICE

...Okay.

(BEATRICE takes another big breath. She looks back at ABIGAIL, who is smiling. ABIGAIL takes a voice recorder from her pocket and places it between the two. She presses a button and the light goes on.)

ABIGAIL

Again.

BEATRICE

Okay, you're ridiculous. Why are you doing this?

ABIGAIL

Please? I just don't want to forget it.

(BEATRICE repeats her previous action, though adding a roll of the eyes. ABIGAIL takes the recorder and places it back into her pocket with a somber, yet thoughtful smile. She reaches for

her own cookie and pops it into her mouth.)

Do you ever think about the air?

BEATRICE

In what context?

ABIGAIL

...Air.

BEATRICE

I'm not following.

ABIGAIL

Okay. It's just... breathing seems so fucking strange, doesn't it? I mean, we're slowly filling our lungs with a substance that is emitted by the very organism we write on each day.

BEATRICE

What's with all the abstractness?

ABIGAIL

Just listen.

(ABIGAIL moves closer to BEATRICE and puts her ear right above her friend's breast, placing one hand delicately on her midsection. BEATRICE takes a deep breath after being prompted to do so.)

BEATRICE

We're not breathing in paper, Abby.

ABIGAIL

No, but we're breathing in a different product made from the same thing. Trees make oxygen, right?

BEATRICE

Yeah...

ABIGAIL

And they make paper.

BEATRICE

Yes.

ABIGAIL

What if everything switched? What if we needed paper

to breathe instead of trees?

(ABIGAIL places a stray piece of hair
behind BEATRICE's ear.)

BEATRICE

But we would still need the trees. You already said
it, we need trees for oxygen, and we need trees for
paper.

ABIGAIL

(ABIGAIL gets up and moves towards the
bookshelf in the corner of the room.
She picks up a random book by its spine
and carefully pulls it out.)

But what if we only needed paper for oxygen? That
would mean that the whole world would need to be
writing, or printing, or reading, every single day,
every hour, every minute, just to survive.

(ABIGAIL opens the book and starts to
flip through the pages.)

BEATRICE

What kind of way is that to live, though? Having your
face shoved in a book for the whole day.

(BEATRICE goes up to ABIGAIL and pushes
the open book into her friend's face
in a teasing gesture, just barely
touching her nose.)

ABIGAIL

You want to shove it somewhere else?

BEATRICE

Fuck off.

ABIGAIL

But really, imagine how smart everyone would be.
Ignorance would never exist again. Everyone would be
their own person, able to pick which books to immerse
themselves in each day. Reading becomes so much more
sustainable, individual.

BEATRICE

What if someone decided to only read romances for the
rest of their life?

ABIGAIL

Maybe meaningless sex will finally have a purpose.

BEATRICE

What does love have to do with sex?

ABIGAIL

Absolutely nothing. And that's just the point. If someone is more aware of the signs of love, then it would be easier to *not* fall into it, you know? Catching feelings would be a thing of the past. All the fuck, none of the love.

BEATRICE

That's not very romantic.

ABIGAIL

Well what do you want me to say? They would be able to identify all the different types of love that surround us. A smile, a glance, a touch, a breath... They could recognize each one as its' own separate entity.

BEATRICE

That's nice.

ABIGAIL

That's bullshit.

BEATRICE

What about science-fiction?

ABIGAIL

Dreams would run wild into the heart of imagination. People would be able to look at the stars and see something besides a landscape. A classroom would become a laboratory, a field becomes a rocket launch site. Setting becomes inherently familiar to us. And we would use it.

BEATRICE

Prose?

ABIGAIL

Would become poetry.

BEATRICE

Poetry?

ABIGAIL

Would become prose.

BEATRICE

I just feel like people would get sick of it.

ABIGAIL

People don't get sick of breathing.

BEATRICE

Yeah, because they have to do it to survive.

ABIGAIL

Exactly.

BEATRICE

What about tragedies?

ABIGAIL

Being alive becomes a blessing.

BEATRICE

History.

ABIGAIL

The past suddenly becomes the present.

BEATRICE

Graphic novels.

ABIGAIL

Our idea of art transcends into another level.

BEATRICE

What kind of level?

ABIGAIL

Have you seen porn these days? People can't get off without knowing the background stories of the characters. Why is she in the principal's office getting spanked? Why did he go to the doctor's office? Is he sick? Maybe that orgy was a dinner party gone really right. Who knows? But the story is always important.

BEATRICE

You consider porn to be art?

ABIGAIL

You don't?

(BEATRICE repositions herself on the floor, leaning up on her knees, tilting into the conversation.)

BEATRICE

Humor.

ABIGAIL

Knock Knock jokes become more sophisticated.

BEATRICE

Gothic fiction.

ABIGAIL

Black was always a great color. On me, at least. And you.

BEATRICE

Erotic literature.

ABIGAIL

Do I really have to explain the benefits of that?

BEATRICE

Mystery.

ABIGAIL

Something lost becomes something stolen.

BEATRICE

Horror?

ABIGAIL

Staying on your toes is never a bad thing.

BEATRICE

You're crazy.

ABIGAIL

I'm fucked up. There's a big difference.

(ABIGAIL takes the errant book she had pulled off the shelf and places it back next to the others. She takes the tips of her fingers and runs them along the rough edges of the bound novel. Beat.)

BEATRICE

What do we do? After we're done breathing?

ABIGAIL

Breathe some more. Just in a different place.

BEATRICE

Do you really believe that?

(BEATRICE leans forwards and unwraps a fortune cookie.)

ABIGAIL

I have to. I'm afraid of what would happen if I didn't.

BEATRICE

Here.

(BEATRICE throws ABIGAIL a fortune cookie. She unravels her own fortune.)

"You will learn from your mistakes. You will learn a lot today"... Useless.

ABIGAIL

Like your sex life?

BEATRICE

Fuck off.

ABIGAIL

Aren't they really bland though?

BEATRICE

Like *your* sex life?

ABIGAIL

The fortune and the taste. Both are really bland. I never have the energy to eat the whole thing. It's like eating the eucharist at church.

BEATRICE

(Disbelieving) You go to church?

ABIGAIL

I went once.

BEATRICE

(BEATRICE throws a chopstick at ABIGAIL, and she leans away quickly to

avoid it.)

You're right. You *are* fucked up.

(ABIGAIL sticks her tongue out.

BEATRICE points to the fortune in her friend's hand.)

Open it.

ABIGAIL

I hate these things. They're pointless.

BEATRICE

Read the fortune or I'll eat your cookie.

(ABIGAIL wiggles her eyebrows at the suggestive innuendo. BEATRICE throws the other chop stick.)

Just open it.

ABIGAIL

Fine.

(ABIGAIL cracks open her fortune cookie and spends a few seconds reading it. Startled by the small note, she re-reads it, but can tell that BEATRICE is getting impatient.)

BEATRICE

Well? What does it say?

ABIGAIL

It says... People are naturally attracted to you.

BEATRICE

Yeah right, let me see.

(BEATRICE gets up and moves towards ABIGAIL. ABIGAIL does the same, but takes a step back to avoid BEATRICE.)

ABIGAIL

I'm serious!

(She throws the cracked, uneaten cookie at BEATRICE.)

Here, have the rest of my cookie. (Suggestive again) I know how much you wanted it.

(BEATRICE hits a carton on the coffee table and it spills over)

BEATRICE

Shit. I'll be right back.

(BEATRICE leaves through the kitchen door, not paying any attention to ABIGAIL as she passes her. BEATRICE enters with paper towels in her hand.)

Nothing spilt on the rug, did it?

ABIGAIL

No, I didn't see anything spill.

BEATRICE

Are you sure?

ABIGAIL

Yeah. It's fine. We're fine.

BEATRICE

Okay. Let me just clean this up.

ABIGAIL

Let's go to the wall tomorrow.

BEATRICE

(BEATRICE stops cleaning, placing the used paper towels next to her.)

No. Why would you want to do that?

(ABIGAIL raises her fortune towards BEATRICE, having placed it delicately between her index fingers and thumbs. BEATRICE leans forward to read it.)

"Curiosity kills boredom. Nothing kills curiosity."

ABIGAIL

Maybe we'll find something new tomorrow. A hole, or a sliver. I don't know.

BEATRICE

Security will be up everyone's ass, a new baby's coming in.

ABIGAIL

Why do they keep sending new ones? We got one last week.

BEATRICE

Because three people off'd themselves last week too.

And with the ceremony next week, you know the rules. They need to keep the population even. Once I'm gone, they'll bring in another new kid. That's how it works.

ABIGAIL

Then people need to start spitting out babies before they take a knife to the chest.

(Beat.)

BEATRICE

Your dad make anything new this week?

ABIGAIL

Some device that fills your body with enough air and gas that you eventually explode into flames.

BEATRICE

Neat.

ABIGAIL

He's done better.

BEATRICE

Who's it for?

ABIGAIL

Some guy down the street. He's a transcendentalist.

BEATRICE

(BEATRICE reaches over and collects the damp towels from ABIGAIL.)

I'll throw these out.

(BEATRICE exits to the kitchen, and then returns. While she's gone, ABIGAIL loses the humor in her voice and sits in silence, thinking. The moment that BEATRICE walks through the kitchen door to the living room, THEO enters the kitchen from offstage. He's about to enter the room to say hello to the girls when he stops after hearing ABIGAIL's question.)

ABIGAIL

Do you ever wonder who "they" are?

(THEO freezes, his hand on the door.)

BEATRICE

What do you mean?

ABIGAIL

"They're" bringing a new baby. "They" need to keep the population even. Who the hell is "they"?

BEATRICE

I... don't know. But I don't see how it's relevant.

ABIGAIL

Do "they" even exist?

(THEO drops his hand and slides closer to the door.)

BEATRICE

Well there has to be someone out there, or else we wouldn't have new people coming in all the time.

ABIGAIL

But what's out there?

BEATRICE

More world? I don't know.

ABIGAIL

Well who does? Everyone in this God-awful town is so... content with being ignorant it makes me sick.

BEATRICE

Well I'm one of those ignorant fucks, so lets keep the insulting to a minimum.

ABIGAIL

You're the perfect example.

BEATRICE

Of what?

ABIGAIL

You enter this contest that *they* created, and now you have to kill yourself.

BEATRICE

It would have happened eventually. And I *voluntarily* entered. No one forced me.

ABIGAIL

How do you know that?

BEATRICE

Because I'm aware of my own thoughts.

ABIGAIL

That's not the point. You're losing your life just because they say it's okay.

BEATRICE

I'm doing it because I want to. What brought this on?

ABIGAIL

I don't know. Someone put candles on their birthday cake in school today. She said "That's what they do." I asked her how old she was. She said she was "sixteen or seventeen." I looked at her and said, "You don't know?" She asked, "and you do?" And that's the thing, I don't know. I don't know how old I am. I don't even know what fucking year it is.

BEATRICE

Because it's not important. If it were, we would know.

ABIGAIL

But why? *Why* is it not important?

BEATRICE

Because... I don't know.

ABIGAIL

Exactly.

(ABIGAIL stands up and begins to pace across the room. Each time she gets close to the kitchen door, THEO prepares to move away.)

I just want to know who they are. Meet them. Ask them why they're telling my friend to kill herself.

BEATRICE

Enough of the dramatics, please.

ABIGAIL

I'm just being truthful, is all.

BEATRICE

The only way you meet them is going face-up inside a body bag.

ABIGAIL

I know. (Pause) Sometimes my mind wanders too far for me to reach and I just... grasp at the air that isn't there.

BEATRICE

(BEATRICE takes ABIGAIL's hand and place it on her own cheek.)

Then grasp at something that's real.

ABIGAIL

Only for a few more weeks.

(BEATRICE gives her friend a look, reminding ABIGAIL of exactly how somber the conversation had turned.)

You're right. I'm sorry.

BEATRICE

Help me pick this shit up. Theo will freak if he sees the carpet with rice all over it.

(The lights in the living room dim. Eyes are drawn to THEO as he stands near the door, trying to comprehend the curiosity of both girls. His face holds concern. For what, though, he isn't quite sure.)

ACT [1]

SCENE [4]

(Interior of house.)

(ABIGAIL and BEATRICE are sitting on the worn couch watching the television while THEO sits in the kitchen on his computer. Currently playing is a documentary on Cleopatra. BEATRICE is sitting taking notes, while ABIGAIL stares, uninterested in the program. Without any introduction, she dives into the conversation.)

ABIGAIL

I went to the wall yesterday.

BEATRICE

What?

ABIGAIL

Yeah.

(BEATRICE grabs the remote and turns the television off. ABIGAIL remains staring at the screen in some sort of daze.)

BEATRICE

With who?

ABIGAIL

No one.

BEATRICE

You went to the wall by yourself?

ABIGAIL

(She remains careless in her tone of voice, though her words betray her interest.)

Calm down. I just wanted to see the new baby.

BEATRICE

That's a terrible idea, Abby. If you got caught-

ABIGAIL

By who?

BEATRICE

I don't know, but if you did-

ABIGAIL

I didn't.

BEATRICE

They would have put you in prison.

ABIGAIL

What "prison"? We live in a prison, if you haven't noticed yet. Everything is monitored. Everyone is watching everyone. They've essentially trained us to guard ourselves. I can't sleep because this whole town is claustrophobic.

BEATRICE

What are you talking about?

(ABIGAIL gets up abruptly and moves towards a smoke detector that's blinking on the wall. She runs into the coffee table in her haste, and the sound gets the attention of THEO.)

ABIGAIL

When I was a kid, my mom used to tell me that there were video cameras in the smoke detectors, to make sure that I wouldn't color on the precious family wall. But it was true.

BEATRICE

It's a smoke detector.

ABIGAIL

It could have a camera *inside*.

BEATRICE

Abby-

ABIGAIL

(Pulling an arm chair under the detector, which is blinking bright red) See the color? It turns green when it's watching. It'll turn; you just need to get its attention.

(ABIGAIL starts banging on the wall
right below the detector)

BEATRICE

It's not doing anything. It's not recording. You need
to go lay down.

ABIGAIL

It will! I've seen it before. I swear, it will...

BEATRICE

How can you be sure?

ABIGAIL

I'm not crazy, Bea. I swear I'm not. Lately, I've been
feeling like somethings off. Haven't you? I want to
question more. I want to be *allowed* to be curious.

BEATRICE

I know. I'm asking the same questions you are. The
only difference is that I don't have to worry about
the consequences.

ABIGAIL

I don't want to feel like this anymore.

BEATRICE

You know, Theo used to tell me this story when I was
younger. He said that you appreciate the warmth the
less you have of it. He used to walk out in the snow
with one foot covered in a fur boot, and the other
completely barefoot.

ABIGAIL

Wouldn't you only recognize your cold foot though?

BEATRICE

Not if you focus on the warm one instead.

ABIGAIL

I don't think I understand.

BEATRICE

You have complete control over what you want to feel.
No one else can tell you otherwise.

ABIGAIL

So you're saying that I can act crazy and it's okay.

BEATRICE

I'm saying, if you want to be curious, then I'm right behind you.

(Beat.)

So what did it look like? The baby?

ABIGAIL

Small. So small.

BEATRICE

Was it ethnic? It's getting to be too white here.

ABIGAIL

It looked Spanish. Maybe Italian?

BEATRICE

Interesting. They're going to keep doing that. Bringing in babies to keep the population level. Do you ever wonder who's going to replace you when it's your turn? I think about it all the time. More and more as the anniversary gets closer.

ABIGAIL

No one. No one will replace you.

BEATRICE

They'll bring in someone new.

ABIGAIL

I won't let them.

(Long pause. ABIGAIL and BEATRICE look at each other.)

How many days?

BEATRICE

Ten.

ABIGAIL

Are you ready?

BEATRICE

Yeah. I have been for a while. All this stress has built up into this beautiful moment, and I can't close my eyes without picturing myself on that altar. I dream about it so much sometimes I think I'm seeing the future. A future where it's just me, and then one where I'm gone. I can't tell which one I'm looking

forward to the most.

ACT [1]

SCENE [5]

(Interior of house.)

(BEATRICE is doing work at the kitchen table, a glass of water sits in front of her. ABIGAIL's bag and schoolwork sit in front of one of the kitchen chairs.)

BEATRICE

What are you doing in there?

ABIGAIL

(From the bedroom. Not yet on stage, we here the muffled voice of ABIGAIL.)

Planting a bomb.

(ABIGAIL enters the stage through the door holding a dress.)

Can I borrow this?

BEATRICE

Keep it. I won't need it.

(ABIGAIL takes the hem of the shirt that she is currently wearing and pulls it over her body. She then unbuttons her jeans and pulls them all the way off. She's left in a flesh colored bra and black panties.)

We have a room to do that, you know?

ABIGAIL

That would require me to actually move into that other room, so this will do just fine.

(ABIGAIL takes the dress and pulls it over her head. Once settled, she looks towards BEATRICE for her opinion.)

Yes?

BEATRICE

Yeah, looks good.

(ABIGAIL reaches into the pocket of the dress and pulls out a worn piece of paper. She unfolds it.)

What's that?

ABIGAIL

I don't know. It's your dress. It was in the pocket.
Must have been through the wash a bunch of times.

BEATRICE

I haven't worn that dress in years. Let me see it.
(BEATRICE stands up and walks over to
ABIGAIL. She reaches out to take the
note and drops it by ABIGAIL's feet.
BEATRICE gets down on her knees and
picks it up.)

I can't make out what it says.

ABIGAIL

Let me see.

(ABIGAIL holds out her hand to her
friend, but BEATRICE ignores it.
ABIGAIL gets down on her knees and
looks over her friend's shoulder.)

BEATRICE

Is that an "i" or an "l"?

ABIGAIL

Neither. I think it's a "t".

BEATRICE

Maybe they're not letters at all. They might be
numbers.

ABIGAIL

How can you tell?

BEATRICE

I can't. That's the point.
(THEO enters the room casually. The
girls get up when they receive a rather
questioning look from him.)

ABIGAIL

Is that even your handwriting? It looks messier, like
a man's. Maybe Theo wrote it?

(ABIGAIL turns to THEO and shows him
the note.)

Did you write this?

THEO

Let me see.

(THEO walks over and reaches for the paper, but BEATRICE grabs it quickly out of ABIGAIL's hand and crumples it in her palm.)

BEATRICE

It doesn't matter. My eyes hurt. I'm going to throw it out.

THEO

I'll do it.

(THEO takes the paper away from BEATRICE and walks over to the garbage can. Once BEATRICE and ABIGAIL get back to the table and turn their backs, THEO shoves the paper in his pocket quickly, and then walks back over.)

ABIGAIL

Have you ever written a letter to yourself?

BEATRICE

That's random.

ABIGAIL

Have you?

THEO

(THEO begins to rummage through a cabinet looking for a glass. He reaches for one.)

You did. I remember sitting with you at the table when you wrote it.

BEATRICE

When I was a kid. I don't think I could form full sentences back then. It's irrelevant now.

ABIGAIL

Well, I don't think so.

BEATRICE

You probably couldn't even read the handwriting. I'm pretty sure I wrote it in white crayon to make it even more secretive.

THEO

You wouldn't even let me read it.

(He takes a pitcher of water from the refrigerator and pours the contents into his glass.)

ABIGAIL

Do you remember why you wrote it?

BEATRICE

...No, I can't think that far back.

ABIGAIL

What did it say?

BEATRICE

(Annoyed) I don't know! I told you already. It doesn't matter anymore.

(BEATRICE gets up and goes into the living room. THEO and ABIGAIL share a confused look. ABIGAIL grabs the almost empty beer bottle on the kitchen table and follows BEATRICE into the next room. THEO remains in the kitchen, listening to the conversation in the next room.)

I don't even know where I put it.

(BEATRICE grabs a book from the coffee table and places it back onto a bookshelf.)

Who knows what weird place a five year old would leave a sheet of paper. It was probably just thrown in the garbage.

ABIGAIL

That's a shame.

BEATRICE

Things get lost. We just have to create new ones.

ABIGAIL

Memories get lost. We can't recreate those.

BEATRICE

If they're lost, they were probably meant to be forgotten. It's like what they say about certain trauma victims: the event was so life-altering that

they unconsciously choose to forget it.

ABIGAIL

Where did you hear that?

BEATRICE

I read about it.

ABIGAIL

We don't have trauma victims here. The town's idea of trauma is not picking up dog shit from someone's lawn.

BEATRICE

My point is, whatever I wrote about is inherently unimportant because I can't remember it.

ABIGAIL

Or you were programmed to forget it.

BEATRICE

I'm not a robot.

ABIGAIL

Yes you are. And so am I. It's just, sometimes I feel like I'm not choosing what my actions are. Don't you ever feel like you're not in control of your own choices? Like your whole life has been mapped out until your very last breath?

BEATRICE

Everyone does things without thinking, but other times we're completely aware. Look.

(Beatrice takes a pillow from the couch and throws it across the room)

No one made me do that.

(Abigail takes the empty beer bottle and throws it against the wall. It shatters into multiple pieces and falls onto the floor. Beatrice looks at the damage.)

What the fuck, Abby?

ABIGAIL

No one made me do that. Does that mean I'm a rebel? Or maybe someone did. I don't know. I just feel like I'm not... me. Sometimes I can't control what I do. How I feel... Don't you ever feel so angry that you're

afraid of yourself? Of your own actions that haven't even happened yet.

BEATRICE

You're angry.

ABIGAIL

Which means whatever I'm saying is nonsense, right?

BEATRICE

Don't put words in my mouth.

ABIGAIL

I'm just tired. Of everything. And I don't know how I'll survive in this world without you.

BEATRICE

Then go home, close your eyes and go to sleep.

ABIGAIL

Yeah. Yeah, that's probably a smart idea.

(ABIGAIL runs her hand through her hair, grabbing at the strands nearest her scalp. She takes a deep breath and nods to herself. Looking at BEATRICE, she gives the faintest of smiles, and begins to exit the room. THEO moves away from the door so the girls aren't suspicious of his eavesdropping. He goes to the kitchen table, places his earbuds in, and begins sorting through a variety of paperwork.)

BEATRICE

Hey, before you go, I want to run something by you.

(ABIGAIL stops and turns around.)

ABIGAIL

What's wrong?

BEATRICE

Nothing. I just want to make sure the ceremony next week goes well, is all. I have an idea. It's a bit extreme, but I think it will create a memory that will remain in this town's history for long after I'm gone.

(BEATRICE grabs her friend's hand and brings her over to the couch, sitting

as close as possible.)
I was reading up on historical documents and accounts
to make sure this ceremony is in direct relation to
the ones that the Egyptians performed years ago.

ABIGAIL

That's good. People will appreciate that.

BEATRICE

That's what I'm thinking.

(Light pause.)

I... I have this, idea.

ABIGAIL

What is it?

BEATRICE

It involves you.

ABIGAIL

(More insistent) Again, I ask, what is it?

BEATRICE

Human sacrifice.

ABIGAIL

Yeah, that's the whole point of the ceremony.

BEATRICE

(Hesitant pause.)

Aside from my own.

ABIGAIL

I'm confused.

BEATRICE

Way back when, when royalty would die-

ABIGAIL

I don't need a history lesson, Bea-

BEATRICE

Just hear me out, okay? Way back when, they used to
perform human sacrifice after a monarch would die.
Servants would kill themselves in order to serve the
Pharaohs in the afterlife.

ABIGAIL

You don't have a servant.

BEATRICE

But I have a close friend.

(It takes a few seconds for ABIGAIL to fully comprehend where BEATRICE's train of thought is headed, but when she finally understands, ABIGAIL pulls away and stands up abruptly.)

ABIGAIL

Absolutely not! Are you crazy?

BEATRICE

You said yourself that you wanted to be involved.

ABIGAIL

Yeah, I wanted to be the person honored. I wanted to be Cleopatra, not her fucking servant!

BEATRICE

(BEATRICE stands up and moves opposite ABIGAIL.)

But you would be honored! Can't you see?

ABIGAIL

You can't ask me to do this. Not as a friend, not even as a human being.

BEATRICE

How come you think this is so farfetched? Look at what I'm about to do next week.

ABIGAIL

But you're asking this of *me*. You can make decisions regarding your own body, but don't you dare take responsibility for mine.

BEATRICE

I thought you'd be-

ABIGAIL

What? Excited? Honored?

BEATRICE

Well, yeah. You talk so much about how you wished it

was you up there on that altar instead of me. I'm giving you an alternate solution.

ABIGAIL

I can't think straight. I need to leave.

BEATRICE

Maybe that's a good idea.

(ABIGAIL moves away from BEATRICE and walks towards the door.)

I thought you would appreciate it!

ABIGAIL

And bow down at your feet? Fuck you.

BEATRICE

You ungrateful bitch, I'm trying to help you.

ABIGAIL

I never asked for your help, Bea. I'm just fine on my own.

BEATRICE

You never talk about it.

ABIGAIL

What?

BEATRICE

Suicide. Why don't you ever talk about it?

ABIGAIL

Why don't you stick to your own death and leave my life out of it.

BEATRICE

You never talk about. You avoid the subject like a bee sting. You can't run away from it, Abby. It's inescapable.

ABIGAIL

Yeah? What about Theo? He never evens murmurs the word without cringing. How can he stand living with you?

BEATRICE

Your whole family is alive! Just because I'm not a coward doesn't make me crazy. It makes me *normal*.

ABIGAIL

So just because I don't want to sacrifice myself for you makes me a coward?

BEATRICE

Not for me; for the town. Don't you want to be apart of something bigger than yourself? Don't you want to be remembered?

ABIGAIL

I want to live the life that was given to me.

BEATRICE

Then you don't belong here.

ABIGAIL

That's what I've been saying all along. You just refuse to listen.

(ABIGAIL gives her friend one last downcast look, turns, and leaves without another glance. A few seconds go by as BEATRICE looks at the door. THEO cautiously walks in, forcing BEATRICE to look down at her feet.)

THEO

Everything okay?

BEATRICE

No.

THEO

Can I do anything?

BEATRICE

No.

(Short pause.)

Actually, yes. Answer a question.

THEO

Okay.

BEATRICE

Why haven't you killed yourself yet?

THEO

(THEO is stunned into silence. BEATRICE

has never asked him such a blunt question before. He remains quiet for a few seconds, unsure as to how to answer the question. He shifts his feet and looks down at the floor, trying to buy himself time, or possibly distract BEATRICE, but he has no such luck.

There's a lot to that answer, Bea.

BEATRICE

But why haven't you?

THEO

It's not what I'm here for.

BEATRICE

What are you here for then?

THEO

Are we going to start talking about the meaning of life now?

BEATRICE

Don't bullshit me, Theo.

THEO

Then stop asking these questions!

BEATRICE

Will you ever kill yourself?

THEO

Christ, Bea.

(He doesn't say anything, thinking she will continue talking. But she just stares at him with an intensity that makes his head hurt and his eyes water.)

No. Probably not.

(BEATRICE nods in understanding, keeping her face as emotionless as possible.)

BEATRICE

I guess I have to make up for that, huh?

THEO

You don't need to make up for anything.

BEATRICE

You're like Abby. You don't belong here.

(BEATRICE looks up at THEO and then walks out. THEO's eyes follow after her, but he makes no move to stop her from leaving. He's left in the room alone.)

ACT [1]

SCENE [6]

(Interior of house.)

(ABIGAIL walks into the kitchen, where THEO is sitting with his hands in his head. He looks up when he hears the door slam shut.)

ABIGAIL

Is she here?

(THEO nods his head towards the next room, letting out the smallest of sighs, feeling his breath fly through his lips and into the air.)

She still going through with it?

(He nods again.)

THEO

Yeah. The closer it gets, the more motivated she becomes.

ABIGAIL

(ABIGAIL takes a breath and stares at the living room door.)

Is there any chance I can try and talk her out of it?

THEO

It's tomorrow. Her mind is made up.

ABIGAIL

I guess so.

(Beat.)

Are you going to go watch it?

THEO

Are you?

ABIGAIL

I don't want to... but I will.

THEO

You're stronger than I am.

(BEATRICE is sitting on the couch reading a book. ABIGAIL walks into the room slowly, calculated, like she

doesn't want to wake a caged animal.
 BEATRICE notices her friend's approach
 and looks up. They stare at each other
 for a few moments.)

ABIGAIL

You were right. I don't belong in this place. It's
 suffocating me, and I don't know what to do anymore.

BEATRICE

(BEATRICE goes back to reading the book
 on her lap. ABIGAIL tries once more to
 reconcile with her.)

I'm sorry you feel that way.

ABIGAIL

I want to belong.

BEATRICE

(BEATRICE looks up slowly and takes in
 the disheveled, apologetic appearance
 of her friend. She closes the book,
 finally giving ABIGAIL the attention
 she deserves.)

You already do. I didn't mean what I said before.
 You're just lost, is all.

ABIGAIL

Help me find my way out.

BEATRICE

That's what I'm trying to do.

ABIGAIL

Everyone talks about the light at the end of the
 tunnel. I can't see mine. I don't think it's there.

BEATRICE

It is. Let me guide you.

(ABIGAIL moves closer to her friend.
 BEATRICE stands up and joins her.
 ABIGAIL pulls her bag to the front of
 her body, and takes out a thick book.)

What's that?

ABIGAIL

A detailed account of sacrificial suicides in the

Egyptian era.

BEATRICE

But why-

ABIGAIL

I'll do it.

BEATRICE

(Unsure that she heard her friend correctly, BEATRICE pauses.)

Really?

ABIGAIL

This is my way out of the tunnel.

BEATRICE

Do you know what you're committing to?

ABIGAIL

Completely. I want to be a a part of it.

(BEATRICE grabs the book with both hands so that the two girls are joined in the middle by the thick document.)

I bookmarked the chapters that I felt would be helpful.

BEATRICE

This is... fantastic, Abby. Thank you. Really. This is...

ABIGAIL

You only die once, right?

BEATRICE

(With a sudden burst of newfound energy, BEATRICE smiles.)

Let's go through it.

(Both girls move to the couch and place the book on the coffee table.)

Did you find anything particularly interesting?

(ABIGAIL opens the book towards a page that had been marked.)

ABIGAIL

The book touched on a variety of religions. I found the one regarding the servant sacrifice in the back.

It's called a "retainer sacrifice."

BEATRICE

I know that. I was the one who came up with the idea in the first place. Tell me something new. Something... attention grabbing.

ABIGAIL

We don't have that much time to divert to another tactic, Bea. The ceremony officially begins in (looking at her watch) twelve hours. It just turned midnight.

BEATRICE

I don't care. I want this to be memorable.

ABIGAIL

I think it's already pretty memorable, Bea. This is the first time two people have killed themselves on the same day in.... well, ever.

BEATRICE

The bigger we go, the better it will be.

(BEATRICE reaches for the book on the table, ripping the pages out of ABIGAIL's hand.)

Give me that.

ABIGAIL

Chill out, Bea.

BEATRICE

Do you understand what I'm doing?

ABIGAIL

Of course.

BEATRICE

Then don't diminish the severity of the action by telling me to "chill out." It's childish and unneeded.

ABIGAIL

(Taken aback) Sorry.

BEATRICE

(Flipping furiously through the pages, BEATRICE finally lands on a specific

chapter, her eyes smiling with anticipation as she reads.)

I found it.

ABIGAIL

What?

BEATRICE

Our smoking gun. I found the idea that will grab everyone's attention.

(ABIGAIL takes the book hesitantly from her friend's hand and begins to read the page pointed out to her. Her eyes skim the lines, until she finally understands what she's reading, and pulls away.)

ABIGAIL

NO.

(THEO hears the emphasized word and gets up to listen at the door.)

BEATRICE

You didn't even get to read all of it.

ABIGAIL

Are you *fucking* crazy?

BEATRICE

I'm innovative. And it makes sense.

ABIGAIL

In what world? You're talking about homicide.

BEATRICE

Is it really considered homicide if it's a child, though? Maybe you have to reach a certain age before it's considered "murder." We watch children be brought in here each week. If we catch the one coming in tonight, then no one will miss it.

ABIGAIL

What is wrong with you? I thought you were crazy for throwing your name in the bid, and then asking me to participate, but you've reached a whole new level of fucked-up.

BEATRICE

(Taking the book out of her friend's hand, she begins to recite.)

"Children would be sacrificed by their parents, each time hoping the Gods would grant them the opportunity to commit such an action again." According to this, their parents would burn them alive in the arms of a bronze statue, hoping for good tidings and prosperous years under the command of their Gods.

ABIGAIL

We don't have Gods.

BEATRICE

But we have a Goddess. She seems like the only one who appreciates my sacrifice at this moment.

ABIGAIL

Bea, this is over-the-top insane. You don't even have any children.

BEATRICE

I would argue that all of the kids in this town are my children. I am emulating their idol after all, aren't I?

ABIGAIL

EMULATING. You're not Cleopatra. Get that into your thick head. This ceremony is eating you alive.

BEATRICE

Fuck off. This is *my* day.

ABIGAIL

You want to be a leader, you have to act like it.

BEATRICE

I am. Why can't you see that? I can be a subtle leader, guiding them through the ceremony with the wave of my hand.

ABIGAIL

You're about as subtle as a shotgun, Bea. Even you know that.

BEATRICE

This is a good idea. You just wanted to be the one to

come up with it.

ABIGAIL

Killing a child?

BEATRICE

Don't you get it? Up until now, murder has never been committed between the walls that surround us. People die by their own hands, not the hands of others. I need to feel the power of life in my palm. I want to watch the soul of someone slowly seep out of their body and into the threads of my clothing. This town has been living in the same state of stagnancy for the past 200 years. I need to be the one who changes that. (Pause.) I was chosen for a reason.

ABIGAIL

You were chosen out of luck.

BEATRICE

Is that what helps you sleep at night?

ABIGAIL

What's happening to you?

BEATRICE

I've finally found my place. It's time I help you find yours.

(BEATRICE pulls a steak knife from the waistband of her pants. She takes the blade and slowly touches the cold metal to ABIGAIL's cheek. She drags it down and places the handle into ABIGAIL's hand.)

Let's go.

(Grabbing the empty hand with her own, BEATRICE pulls ABIGAIL out the door without looking back. ABIGAIL, on the other hand, glances at the knife in her palm the entire time. The girls exit and THEO is left staring at the closed door. He takes his phone out of his pocket, dials a few numbers, and puts the phone to his ear.)

THEO

Something's wrong.

ACT [1]

SCENE [7]

(Interior of house. The lights are off. BEATRICE and ABIGAIL walk in swiftly, bypassing the kitchen and going straight to the living room. ABBY is crying softly. BEATRICE walks to a lamp and turns it on. A dim light encompasses the girls and we can finally see their faces. BEATRICE walks over to ABIGAIL, who is covered in streaks of blood, and pushes her down on the couch.)

BEATRICE

Abby, stop it! You have to stop crying.

ABIGAIL

I can't!

BEATRICE

Calm down, you'll wake the neighborhood. This isn't helping anything.

ABIGAIL

Is he listening?

BEATRICE

I don't know.

(Both girls stop speaking and listen for any signs of breathing. Once satisfied that no one is in the room with them, they begin again.)

He's probably out.

ABIGAIL

We shouldn't have come back here. They'll hear us, I know it.

BEATRICE

They won't, it's fine.

ABIGAIL

Did anyone follow us?

BEATRICE

Abby-

ABIGAIL

(Screaming) Did anyone follow us?

BEATRICE

No Abby, breathe, please. You'll work yourself into a panic attack.

ABIGAIL

You're telling me to breathe? After what we just-

BEATRICE

We did what was needed to be done, that's all. Things will change now, isn't that what you wanted? To get everyone's attention?

ABIGAIL

That's what you wanted!

BEATRICE

Abby, I swear to fuck, if you go and rat-

ABIGAIL

I won't, I won't! I just- I've never felt like that before.

(ABIGAIL moves to the wall with the light switch and swiftly lifts it up. Once they illuminate, BEATRICE immediately moves towards the switch and turns them off, bathing them in darkness once more.)

BEATRICE

I can tell.

ABIGAIL

She was just sleeping. In her little crib. She looked like a glass doll wrapped so tightly in those blankets. They were monogrammed, you know? With her initials. The fabric was so soft. The blood just sunk right into it.

BEATRICE

Peacefully. She didn't feel a thing. We did, though. Didn't you feel *her* slip away from her little body and

into ours?

ABIGAIL

You're sick.

BEATRICE

So are you. You enjoyed it. You just don't want to admit it.

ABIGAIL

Why did you make me do this? I thought you were my friend.

BEATRICE

I am, Abbs. Don't you feel like you belong now?

ABIGAIL

(Despondent more than anything else) The music box, it was so haunting. It's all I could hear. I can't get that melody out of my head.

BEATRICE

No one heard us.

ABIGAIL

I slit her throat. Right down the middle.

BEATRICE

You did. It felt good, didn't it?

ABIGAIL

I didn't feel any resistance. Her skin was so... pliable.

BEATRICE

She didn't have enough time to develop tough skin from this sick world we live in.

ABIGAIL

It looked painless.

BEATRICE

It was, I promise.

ABIGAIL

No one has ever done this before.

BEATRICE

We're the first. We initiated a change. We're pioneers.

ABIGAIL

Murder isn't on the list of crimes committed.

BEATRICE

That's because no one else has ever done it. Until us.

ABIGAIL

No one's been arrested for it?

BEATRICE

No one.

ABIGAIL

Why is that?

BEATRICE

We're conditioned not to. Why murder someone else when we can murder ourselves? It's so much easier. Less violent.

ABIGAIL

It was so easy. Easier than I expected.

BEATRICE

That's a good thing.

ABIGAIL

Is it though?

BEATRICE

People will wake to a new world tomorrow.

ABIGAIL

She was just a baby.

BEATRICE

She'll be considered a prodigy. A sacrificial lamb that will be honored.

ABIGAIL

I can't feel my hands.

(BEATRICE grabs ABIGAIL's hands between her own two, feeling how chilled they had gotten from the air outside. Her

hands are not wet, but are tinged with
the scarlet color of blood.)

BEATRICE

Embrace the numbness. Soon you won't feel your whole
body. You won't feel the weight of the world sitting
atop your fingertips.

ABIGAIL

I don't like it.

BEATRICE

Yes, you do. Don't let your body control what your
mind should think.

ABIGAIL

How do you know that?

BEATRICE

Because I jump back and forth between that same
argument.

ABIGAIL

I don't think I can.

BEATRICE

Just close your eyes.

ABIGAIL

I'll see her.

BEATRICE

You don't have to.

ABIGAIL

How are you so calm?

BEATRICE

...I don't know.

ABIGAIL

Why can't I stop shaking?

BEATRICE

I'll sleep on the couch. You take my bed.

ABIGAIL

What about the blood?

BEATRICE

It only got on you. Get in the shower. I'll throw your clothes in the fireplace.

ABIGAIL

She didn't even scream.

BEATRICE

God dammit, Abby, stop fucking talking about it.

ABIGAIL

What if they saw?

BEATRICE

Who?

ABIGAIL

"They." What if they saw?

BEATRICE

If they did, we'd be taken already. Now, please, just get in the shower, turn the water as hot as you can, and scrub until your skin is so red it's screaming, okay?

(ABIGAIL nods her head. BEATRICE grabs her shoulders hard and shakes.)

Say it!

ABIGAIL

Okay.

BEATRICE

Good. Now go. I'll check on you when I'm finished.

ABIGAIL

...Okay.

(ABIGAIL exits the stage through the bedroom door. She grabs the doorknob with her bare hand, then recognizes the blood all over the handle. She takes her shirt and uses it to wipe off the blood, then opens the door as slowly as possible. She walks in and closes it behind her, now offstage and out of view of the audience. The sound of a shower starting is heard throughout. BEATRICE is over in the center of the

living room attempting to light a match and throws it into the fireplace. Once she gets one lit, she takes a few seconds and stares into the flame, prominent on stage due to the dimness of the stage lights. She drops the match in the fireplace and the flame builds into a steady rhythmic fire. BEATRICE stares at the flame, taking the bloodied knife from the waistband of her pants, and placing the blade near the orange flames. She's enamored by the drops of blood that peak on the edge of the metal and then fly into the flame, like Kamikaze pilots. The bedroom door creaks open and ABIGAIL stands in the doorframe.

BEATRICE

Abby?

(BEATRICE stands up tentatively and moves towards the bedroom door. ABIGAIL takes a few steps forward and BEATRICE stops moving.)

Go take a shower. You'll feel better.

ABIGAIL

(ABIGAIL shakes her head and holds in a sob deep in her throat, not wanting to look so weak in front of her friend, her partner.)

I can't do this, Bea.

BEATRICE

You already did. There's nothing you can do to change your actions.

ABIGAIL

I can't handle this.

BEATRICE

It's just another step on your journey. Embrace this feeling.

ABIGAIL

If I embrace it anymore, I'll be shoved into a black hole with no way out. And you'll be the person who

pushed me.

BEATRICE

Please, don't be upset. That wasn't my intention.

ABIGAIL

(ABIGAIL's face is immediately filled with malice.)

Because your intentions were so pure, right?

BEATRICE

What are you talking about?

ABIGAIL

You used me this whole time.

BEATRICE

I would never do that. I'm helping you-

ABIGAIL

Helping me what? You claim to be a leader, while you just move me closer and closer to the edge until it's too late for me to take a step back and reevaluate my position. You've backed me into a corner.

BEATRICE

We don't have time to talk about this, Abby.

ABIGAIL

No, *you* don't have time to talk about this. Because *you* were the one who put your name in. *You* were the one chosen, not me. I didn't want any part in this. You convinced me that I was lost, missing in space. But I'm not.

BEATRICE

And you had to murder someone to figure that out? Listen to yourself. Don't let distress control your thoughts.

ABIGAIL

It's not. I finally feel like the clouds have cleared.

(She moves closer and, unconsciously, BEATRICE takes a step nearer to the fire.)

I feel lighter.

BEATRICE

Take a shower and wash all that blood off. I can't stand to look at you right now.

ABIGAIL

You don't like this? But I did it for you. You'll look like it tomorrow.

BEATRICE

It's different when it's not your body.

ABIGAIL

Why?

BEATRICE

Step back. You're not yourself.

ABIGAIL

This is me, though. This is me, guided by you. Isn't that what you wanted? A constituency to follow your every move. A cult to worship you? You thrive off of silent attention; looks and glances give you strength. I wonder, was Cleopatra as narcissistic as you?

BEATRICE

Abby-

ABIGAIL

You know so much about her, can't you answer? Or do you just not want to talk about anyone but yourself?

BEATRICE

Stop.

ABIGAIL

Tell me. Did you want me to kill the kid because you didn't have the guts to do it yourself?

BEATRICE

You don't understand-

ABIGAIL

I should tell everyone what you made me do.

BEATRICE

You promised to keep your mouth shut-

ABIGAIL

A promise is meant to be broken.

(ABIGAIL bolts over to BEATRICE, grabbing her by the shoulders, and pushing her towards the fire. BEATRICE grabs her friend's hair, attempting to pull her face back and stop the attack.)

BEATRICE

(Panicked) What are you doing?

ABIGAIL

You want to be legendary? You want to be remembered? Why not be the first person killed before their own ceremony? Be the victim you were always meant to be.

(Lunging once more, ABIGAIL shoves BEATRICE's shoulders. BEATRICE grabs her friend's arms as they touch her upper body and, shifting the momentum and center of gravity, dips below, and twists her body, sending ABIGAIL falling into the fireplace. As the flames consume her, she screams and gurgles for help. BEATRICE just stands and watches until her friend is silent.)

ACT [1]

SCENE [8]

(Blank stage. BEATRICE walks out and stands in a center spotlight. She takes a few moments to compose herself, before beginning to speak AT the audience.)

BEATRICE

(Whispers) Mine will now be yours.

(Full voice) Mine will now be yours.

Fellow citizens, I gathered you here in hopes of creating history. As you are well aware, in the dead of night, mere hours ago, my friend, my servant, Abigail O'Shannon, sacrificed herself in my honor. I watched as she carefully reached her hand out to touch my cheek, and fell swiftly onto her blade; the very blade used earlier that night in the sacrifice of an innocent soul. While attempting to plead for the child's life, Abigail expressed her fiery passion to further enact the past, sacrificing the child to the Gods as Cleopatra did many years before. While I do not condone the murder held at the behest of my lifelong friend, her intense feelings brought about a radical, yet beautiful idea that can't seem to escape my mind. I must die only when my thoughts are clear, my head is straight, and my mind devoted. In order to do this, I pray you grant me the opportunity to clear my mind of the thoughts that plague me.

I fully admit to wanting to reenact our guardian's death to it's fullest potential in the traditional manner; yet I feel lonely. While I understand that Cleopatra felt the same, her devoutness to her people, in certain senses, went farther. I cannot fathom completing this action without the inclusion of my dearest friends. For this exact reason, I have a radical, and innovative, proposition for all of you.

Join me.

Join me, please. Make history with me. If I am the

sole person to die, then I only make the smallest of contributions to our town. But, if you all join me in this action, Cleoville will be put on another spectrum entirely. Imagine our name in documents, museums, mausoleums. Imagine. The respect. The great respect that will follow each of our names. Can you think of a better way to honor your founder?

I understand what I am asking of you. And with such little time to decide. But maybe this was purposeful. I refuse to allow Abigail's death to make so little an impact on our town. I refuse to allow *my* death so little impact as well. But with you. You can make your life mean something. Don't wait for history to happen. Our lives are our history. We have the power to create and destroy. And by ridding ourselves of this world, we take away its power to destroy us. Can't you see it?

Take a moment and think. Think about the people next to you. Your colleagues. Your children. We have a chance here. To all celebrate the same death in a way unlike any other. We can call it our mutual birthday, being born into the afterlife at the exact same moment. You're children will never have to know the burden of growing older. They'll never have to see your death happen in front of them. We'll die the same way we lived.

Together.

And I know you're skeptical. I was, too. The moment I saw Abigail lie her tiny body on that knife, I felt the breath rush out of my lungs quicker than I believed to be anatomically possible. But she did it for me. And now I'm doing this for her. Let her life mean something. Let your death mean something.

Die with me. I've laced the water with poison that will slowly let the air escape from your lungs without giving any back. Take that last breath holding your loved ones. Share this with me.

Mine will now be yours. Ours.

The Gods will have it thus; my master and my lord I

must obey.

ACT [1]

SCENE [9]

(Interior - Church. The set is identical to that of Scene 1, signaling a continuation of the introduction.)

BEATRICE

This kinda looks like a mausoleum, don't you think?

(As THEO begins his assault on the door, she moves back towards the altar. Her feet shuffle down the isle and make it to the steps. As she moves, more lights illuminate the stage, and bodies are visible to the audience. They are piled amongst the pews, and spread along the aisles. She looks up at the large statue of Cleopatra, hands raised with an open palm facing the ceiling, centered above the altar and mimics her pose, throwing her arms up and her head back. With the little energy she has left, she screams for an elongated period of time before stopping and falling to the ground on her knees. THEO takes in the sight and allows his eyes to wander lethargically up to BEATRICE.)

THEO

(Pleading) Bea... Please.

BEATRICE

Are you going to say something else?

THEO

Are you going to turn around?

BEATRICE

And face you now? I'd rather die.

THEO

You're going to anyway. Die.

BEATRICE

So what did you think?

THEO

Do you really care what I think?

BEATRICE

No. I don't.

(BEATRICE turns around and faces THEO. She takes the knife and begins to carve an intricate image into her skin, right above the pulse in her wrist, mimicking the hieroglyphics spread throughout the stain glass windows of the building. The cut is thin, but enough to draw the slightest bit of blood from beneath her soft skin.)

THEO

Drop the knife, Bea.

BEATRICE

I like it. It gives me comfort. The blade is so cold. I can barely touch it without shivering. It makes my blood feel chilled.

THEO

It's making me nervous.

BEATRICE

You? Or them?

THEO

What are you talking about?

BEATRICE

Stop it. Please. Stop with the lies. I can't take anymore.

THEO

You don't want to do this.

BEATRICE

You don't know what I want. How dare you assume what I want. What I need. I don't even know the answer to that.

THEO

Because I know you. I. Know. You.

BEATRICE

Based on what?

THEO

Time. All the time that we've spent sharing the same space, breathing the same air. That time matters.

BEATRICE

Time means nothing in a world like this. Time is merely a temperature that allows us to feel the heat of the sun on our skin. It determines when we sleep and when we wake. It means nothing to anything else.

THEO

How can you say that?

BEATRICE

I look at you sometimes and don't recognize the person I've lived with for the past however many fucking years we've been together. I feel this constraint in my chest every time I look at you. And it eats at me. It eats at me every morning when I wake up, and doesn't stop until I get in bed each night.

THEO

You're confused.

BEATRICE

We're all confused! Do you even know why you're here? Why they brought you here?

THEO

To watch you. To make sure you didn't do anything like this.

BEATRICE

Then you failed.

THEO

Not entirely. I can still stop this. Stop you. Bea, think. Think about what you're doing. To yourself. To this town. Just think.

BEATRICE

I've been thinking my entire life. It doesn't stop. Even when I'm dreaming, I can't stop my brain from spinning. I need answers.

THEO

Okay, ask me then.

BEATRICE

What is this town?

THEO

It's an experiment.

BEATRICE

What kind of experiment?

THEO

A social one.

BEATRICE

What do they want to know?

THEO

Why you do what you do, and how it affects everything else.

BEATRICE

That's specific.

THEO

It's all I can tell you.

BEATRICE

Are people watching us now?

THEO

Yes.

BEATRICE

Right now?

THEO

Yes.

BEATRICE

My whole life?

THEO

(Hesitation) Yes.

BEATRICE

But why? Why destroy thousands of lives? The scale on which the damage reaches is catastrophic, and no one seems to care. So this place, my whole world, is it real?

THEO

This isn't your whole world, though. There's so much out there that you don't know. So many places you haven't seen. You can't possibly base the rest of the world on the minuscule areas that are conditioned into having some sort of meaning.

BEATRICE

But that's not my world. This is. And it isn't real.

THEO

Technically speaking, no. It's not.

BEATRICE

All these people...

THEO

Know just as much as you do.

BEATRICE

Meaning they know just as little as I do. Collateral damage.

(BEATRICE moves up the altar and runs the knife along the altar.)

I've been cheated. Out of everything. Out of a life, out of my own thoughts.

THEO

All of your thoughts have been your own. Don't question that.

BEATRICE

But how can you know that when I've been guided into everything? Don't you think I deserve some answers? My life has been lived in this tiny particle that floats in an empty world. Sometimes I look up at the sky and think the stars are laughing at me. The sun only wants to rise in order to see me suffer my daily conundrum

of a social life. Rain doesn't wash away my sins; it creates them. It's as though my life should be filled with so much substance, yet it feels so lifeless. Soulless.

Empty.

THEO

Put it down, Bea.

BEATRICE

Am I real?

THEO

Of course you are. Everything about you-

BEATRICE

Then why don't I feel like it?

THEO

Because you were taught not to.

BEATRICE

(BEATRICE takes the knife and watches it gleam in the sunlight that comes through the windows. She takes the knife and delicately presses the tool against the softness of her skin, creating the slightest of hills on the underside of her forearm.)

If I cut myself, will I bleed?

THEO

Like every other human. You're no different.

BEATRICE

I've been categorized with this group of strangers for the entirety of my life. What if I want to be different for a change?

THEO

You've always been different.

BEATRICE

No, you've always been different. Were you hired to be here?

THEO

Yes, I was.

BEATRICE

Was it worth it?

THEO

Of course.

BEATRICE

Where are you from, really? Cause you're not from here.

THEO

New York. The City.

BEATRICE

Why would you come to this piece of shit town? It's a big change.

THEO

It was a nice change.

BEATRICE

I want to go there. Away from this place.

THEO

You can't do that if you're dead.

BEATRICE

What else is there, though? I can't get out of here.

THEO

Yes you can. They're on their way. Right now. And both of us are going to walk thorough the doors of this church, past the wall, and into the world.

BEATRICE

They're coming?

THEO

Right now.

BEATRICE

(BEATRICE looks at him quizzically.)

Why didn't they stop me before?

THEO

I don't know.

BEATRICE

Yes you do. Why didn't they stop me?

THEO

(Hesitating) They wanted to see what would happen.

BEATRICE

After I killed all those kids? If I would kill myself?

THEO

No, they knew you wouldn't be able to do that.

BEATRICE

Why the hell not? I thought you said I always had control over my own choices.

THEO

Not when it comes to suicide. That's why I'm here.

BEATRICE

To stop me?

THEO

To make sure we never got to that position in the first place. But they screwed me over by giving you the bid.

BEATRICE

Jokes on you, then.

THEO

Jokes on me.

BEATRICE

Abby was right all along. Every move was monitored. Every thought was calculated. I want my agency back.

THEO

You've never lost it.

BEATRICE

What would happen if I died? Right here. Would they call the experiment a failure? Would they lose all meaning in their life? Will they finally know what it feels like to realize all of your daily work, living,

was for absolutely nothing?

THEO

STOP IT.

BEATRICE

I don't know if I want to go out there anymore. I'm not normal. I wouldn't survive.

THEO

You're fine, Bea.

BEATRICE

I killed all those people. And I enjoyed it. I don't feel regretful or desolate. In fact, I feel more together than I have in a long time. Maybe Abigail was right, promises were meant to be broken.

THEO

You didn't have a choice. They guided you into it.

BEATRICE

No they didn't. I wanted their attention. I bask in it. It gives my life meaning.

THEO

You got it.

BEATRICE

But I already had it in the first place, Theo. Fuck! They picked me. They picked me right off the bat. I didn't need to do this.

(BEATRICE looks around at the dead bodies littering the stage.)

Oh my god! What the fuck did I do?

THEO

Calm down.

BEATRICE

Look at this. Look around you! All these souls didn't stand a chance.

THEO

Neither did you!

(BEATRICE looks around and, once again, falls on her knees screaming at the top

of her lungs. THEO runs towards her, but she stops him with a wave of her knife. She points it between his eyes.)

BEATRICE

I feel so conflicted.

THEO

Put it down, Bea. Please, just, put it down.

(THEO tries moving closer to her, but she takes the knife and places it atop her vulnerable wrist.)

BEATRICE

I'm content. I'm panicked. I'm overjoyed. I'm despondent. I don't know what to feel anymore.

THEO

You don't have to know. Just feel.

BEATRICE

It's overwhelming.

THEO

But you regret your actions, don't you?

BEATRICE

I can't tell anymore.

(BEATRICE's hand begins to shake, just the slightest amount, as she lets her eyes wander across the room.)

THEO

Don't look at them.

BEATRICE

They're so peaceful. (Pause) I want to be as peaceful as they are.

THEO

I don't know what to say anymore.

BEATRICE

You don't have to say anything. Some things make sense, and other things... they're like distant memories, trapped in the past. You want to piece them together like a puzzle, but none of them fit. And so

now you're stuck with all of these useless, lifeless memories that have no place next to one another, but you just can't get rid of them. They're always there. Haunting you. Teasing you. Taking your breath away.

THEO

I feel so helpless when it comes to you.

BEATRICE

Finally.

THEO

They don't care whether you live or die.

BEATRICE

I know. That's why they're not here yet, trying to break down the door.

THEO

For years, now, I've been told to keep you alive. Keep you sane and malleable.

BEATRICE

You half-succeeded.

THEO

I wasn't supposed to get so attached to you.

BEATRICE

I have that effect on people, it's not your fault.

THEO

I thought my life was over the second I stepped into this place.

BEATRICE

Now look at you, trying to talk *me* down from a ledge. How ironic.

THEO

I feel like our lives run on irony lately.

(Beat.)

BEATRICE

Can you smell the poison?

THEO

No.

BEATRICE

Maybe because this world is so poisonous, you've gotten used to it.

THEO

Maybe.

BEATRICE

I have to go soon.

THEO

(Emotional pause. THEO looks around to divert his eyes, but falls right back to BEATRICE.)

I know.

BEATRICE

Just... tell me one more thing. What were your plans? Before I put my name in the bid.

THEO

You would finish school. After that, if I was still able to keep you alive, we would have left.

BEATRICE

Cleoville?

THEO

Yeah.

BEATRICE

But no one leaves.

THEO

No one was murdered, but you changed that, didn't you?

BEATRICE

That was Abby-

THEO

Cut the bull, Bea. I know it was you. (Pause.) I watched you throw her into the fire.

BEATRICE

(Calm) Why didn't you say anything?

THEO

And scare you even more? That would have been

detrimental.

(THEO looks around the room.)

If that's possible.

BEATRICE

Where would we have gone? After we got out.

THEO

I don't know. Maybe a big city. Maybe a rural town. I was going to ask you what your preference was. If you wanted to go to college. Travel the world.

BEATRICE

I would have never made it out.

THEO

I'm starting to realize that. I guess you weren't the only one that was lied to.

BEATRICE

I'm too mentally fucked up to leave this building, let alone the area.

THEO

Who knows? Maybe with time-

BEATRICE

I would have become even worse. Don't lie to yourself now, Theo. It's not worth it.

THEO

I guess not.

BEATRICE

I found your audiotapes.

THEO

What?

BEATRICE

You recorded almost all of our conversations. Did you really think I didn't notice?

(THEO remains silent, but continues to look at BEATRICE. She laughs, emotionlessly, and turns her head away.)

You know what really pisses me off? The fact that you

act like you were forced to record all of our conversations, but you weren't.

THEO

Of course I was. For observational purposes.

BEATRICE

I heard you talking on the phone with them once. I didn't understand it until now, but it finally makes sense. They kept saying, "Record what is relevant." I thought they were talking about music or something. I ignored it. But now it makes perfect sense.

Abby and I were inspired. We did the same thing, recorded our deepest thoughts. Distinctive memories. I hooked them up to the audio in this decrepit building. It's on a timer. You'll hear it eventually. Depending on when you get out.

(Contemplative pause.)

THEO

I did exactly as I was told.

BEATRICE

No, you went farther. You used to stand outside my door when I was crying. I thought you were being supportive, but you were just being a creep. Recording everything.

THEO

That's not true.

BEATRICE

My tears were relevant? My breakdowns were important to the cause? You just liked listening to other people suffer so you wouldn't feel so alone in this world.

THEO

You don't understand.

BEATRICE

Then enlighten me.

THEO

Day after day, I lived with this secret. I was the one person that stood out from everyone else.

BEATRICE

Bullshit. You didn't stand out. You lived your life just as everyone lived theirs.

THEO

I never attended any suicide parties-

BEATRICE

Neither did Abigail. Look where she is now. Lying in our fucking fireplace like burnt food that fell through the cracks of a grill.

THEO

You grew up here. I was transplanted.

BEATRICE

I don't need your sob story.

THEO

You have to understand what my motive was.

BEATRICE

All I understand is that each conversation we had, which I thought were private, just between the two of us, are now circulating through the arms of every observer.

THEO

It wasn't meant to be like that.

BEATRICE

All of my feelings are null and void.

THEO

You can't think like that.

BEATRICE

Don't tell me what to think. Just because they control you doesn't mean that I'm the same.

THEO

They don't control me.

BEATRICE

My life begs to differ.

THEO

I can't stand you talking like this. Like our

relationship doesn't matter.

BEATRICE

It doesn't. You made it that way.

THEO

I didn't have a choice.

BEATRICE

Yes you did. YOU DID. Don't you dare say that. I didn't have a choice. Abby didn't have a choice. We were raised here. In this fucked up society with its fucked up values. You could have made a difference.

THEO

That's why I'm here.

BEATRICE

You cheated me out of a childhood.

THEO

I gave you the only childhood you'd ever have.

BEATRICE

Does that make you feel better? Help you sleep at night when I'm rolling through the myriad of confusing thoughts that never seem to end?

THEO

Why are you interrogating me like this?

BEATRICE

Because this is the only private conversation we've ever had!

(Beat.)

I'm leaving. You've known that since the beginning. You didn't talk me out of it. And now you get to watch.

THEO

(Pleading) Don't make me see this. Just let me out.

BEATRICE

No; you don't deserve that.

THEO

Beatrice. Let me out. Please.

BEATRICE

Let your bosses come and save you. I need to save myself.

THEO

No, Bea, STOP.

(BEATRICE picks up the knife and lets the blade hover over her left wrist. THEO takes a panicked step forward.)

BEATRICE

The closer you come, the deeper I cut, the faster I die.

THEO

You don't want to die quickly, though. We both know you want me to watch you, suffering.

BEATRICE

Not everything I do is for you, Theo.

(BEATRICE takes the knife and digs it into skin, lightly at first. Once attuned to the feeling, she presses harder and watches the blood seep from the wound and around the blade.)

This is for me.

(THEO moves in protest, but she points the blade at him.)

Don't.

(She moves to the other arm, and repeats the motions. She raises it high, letting the blood drip down her arm and off of her elbow.)

This one can be for you.

(She observes her bleeding arms with fascination, following the stream down her forearm and onto the carpet below. Her hand becomes weak and she drops the knife.)

Is this what she felt like?

(Once the knife drops, THEO runs towards BEATRICE. He rips a piece of his shirt in two and places the cloth over both of her arms to stop the bleeding. She just laughs, emotion clear in her eyes. She slips one arm

out of his hold, and gently places it atop THEO's.)

It's done.

THEO

(THEO moves to grab her free arm again, but she skillfully avoids it.)

We can still stop it.

BEATRICE

(BEATRICE takes a hand and places it on THEO's cheek, smearing blood across the distinctive bone beneath his eyes.)

It's done. Help me up.

(She motions towards the altar. THEO hesitates for a moment, and then grabs her delicately by her waist, lifting her up. Once in place, she settles down and smiles at THEO.)

That wasn't so bad, now, was it?

THEO

(He keeps his hold on her, making sure that she doesn't fall over. BEATRICE grabs the bloody pieces of cloth and lets them fall to the ground.)

You're killing me, Bea.

BEATRICE

I'm killing myself.

THEO

Is this what its come to?

BEATRICE

It was meant to happen. From the moment I was born. It's fate.

THEO

There's no such thing as fate.

BEATRICE

Don't say that. Fate is so easily blamable. I would rather leave everything to destiny than take responsibility for all of my actions. Wouldn't you?

THEO

It's the easy way out.

BEATRICE

There's no "easy" way, Theo.

THEO

(Motioning to her arms) You make it look that way.

BEATRICE

It's just a single step, is all.

(BEATRICE falters, swaying slightly to the side before finding her balance once more. THEO hops onto the altar, sitting side by side. His shoulder rests behind her back, keeping her from falling.)

THEO

Let me get you out. Please.

BEATRICE

This *is* my way out.

THEO

We'll travel. Anywhere you like. Go to the beach. You've never been to a beach before.

BEATRICE

I'll be there soon enough.

THEO

You have to stop talking like that.

(BEATRICE closes her eyes and smiles at Theo's words.)

BEATRICE

Tell me about it. The beach. What does it feel like?

THEO

Endless. Like the freckles on your cheek. Or the lashes that fan your eyes. The sun casts a million shadows before the clouds get the chance to hide them with their own. Water would drip off each strand of hair like a leaky faucet, until all you can feel is the dry salt on your skin.

BEATRICE

It sounds nice.

(BEATRICE drops her head to his shoulder.)

THEO

I'll take you there. One day. That's a promise that I'll keep.

(Long pause. We hear the wind outside as it echoes across the floors and walls of the church. With little strength, BEATRICE lifts her head and looks towards a window, watching as the moonlight drifts through the colored panes.)

BEATRICE

Do you remember that one time when I was a child? When I woke up, scared to death that the moon was going to take me away, away from you, away from the world, and douse me in darkness until... I couldn't even recognize myself.

THEO

You were paralyzed.

BEATRICE

I thought that if I moved, I would be more noticeable from space. So I stayed still, and silent.

He grabbed my hand through the gap in the metal fence, and I felt the damp pads of his fingertips caress the palm of my enclosed hand. His face... It was hidden behind a shadow of light splayed across his eyes, forcing me to shield my own with my unoccupied hand. And I cried. Because I knew that I was dreaming. I knew it, and I felt it cut deep. I knew that this very real emotional investment was all fake. It felt like I was being betrayed; my own mind was cheating me from something that would have never happened. And right as I felt him pull my arm forward, towards him, towards the beyond, my eyes opened. I went to grasp his hand and instead got a fistful of cheap cotton sheets damp with hours of sleepless nights. I felt the trickle of a single salt-ridden tear drip into the smallest corner of my mouth, creeping onto my tongue, and

disappearing forever.

In that moment, I was no more than a tear wanting, waiting, to be absorbed... To be absorbed by the world.

(Beat.)

Part of me wants to go back to that moment. When I was scared of the irrational. Reality is filled with so much more horror. It scares me to think that I didn't even see all of it. Only a tiny piece. If the tiniest sliver of life made me end mine... How do people get to live so old? It doesn't make sense to me.

(Beat.)

That day, you told me, if I ever felt like I was being taken, I could tell you. Taken by anything. A thought. A mindless memory. An action. (Pause) Myself.

(BEATRICE opens her eyes and looks up at THEO. He's staring at her, unwaveringly. With the last of her energy, she lifts the corner of her mouth up, and then leans her head against THEO once more. She closes her eyes.)

I'm being taken.

(BEATRICE's body slowly slumps against THEO. He grabs her and holds her close. A single tear falls down her cheek, and he quickly, and delicately, catches it with the tip of his finger. He stares at the dampened skin. Shoving his face into her hair, THEO's body begins to shake as sobs overtake him. The flickering fluorescent light provides the only illumination. It flickers, until it finally loses the fight and goes out. The stage is dark. CURTAIN.)

END OF ACT 1.

ACT [2]

SCENE [1]

(Church - interior. Lights up. The set remains the same as the end of Act 1. Bodies lay all over the floor and pews while BEATRICE's body lays slumped on the altar with care, presumably by THEO. THEO is standing in the middle of the stage, both hands laying limply at his side. His fingers wiggle for the sake of movement, but everything else is still. He stares at the audience, as if unsure of where he is, or who he is.)

ABIGAIL (Audio only)

This is my life, but not my body.

(THEO is startled to hear ABIGAIL's voice. There are a few seconds of silence in which THEO reacts to the sudden intrusion. He looks around, trying to find the source of the voice, but realizes that the speakers lay in various points of the set, seeming all-encompassing. He can't get away, and is starting to finally realize it.)

BEATRICE (Audio only)

This is my life, but not my thoughts.

(THEO turns towards BEATRICE's dead body, looking briefly at her, and realizes that her body hasn't moved from the position he left her in. He turns quickly so as not to see her body so distorted on the altar.)

ABIGAIL (Audio only)

This is my life, but not my voice.

BEATRICE (Audio only)

This is my life, but not my choice.

(THEO steps over a few bodies and sits on the steps of the altar. He places

his knees in front of them, and listens carefully.)

I used to read letters from the Civil War. Between husbands and wives. Sisters and brothers. Mothers and sons. Lovers. All types of relationships split between the words that littered the vulnerable pieces of paper, traveling for days, weeks, months if lost, until finally reaching their destinations. Can you imagine the bloodshed those letters saw? The mutilation and dismemberment of relationships happening in specific moments in time. Many of those letters were lost. Torn in space, never getting exactly where they were supposed to go. A million messages lost to time.

In this specific account, there was a wife. She had written to her husband during a battle at the beginning of April. Shiloh, in Tennessee. She wrote him everyday. But this day was different. Because as she ripped through the pages with her pen, bullets ripped through her husband's body like raindrops in a pond. The second she signed her name could have been the very moment he took his last breath. And she sent that letter with hope spiraling in her hands thinking past tomorrow, and the next day, and the next.

(While BEATRICE's body lay dead on the altar, a live version of her walks onto stage left. THEO doesn't see nor hear her live voice, but only recognizes the recording. His head rests in his hands and he does not look up. A spotlight opens on live BEATRICE, while a red light bathes her dead body on the altar.)

People can be in different places.

ABIGAIL

(ABIGAIL walks onstage, skin charred and clothing burnt. She remains on the edges, away from THEO. As with BEATRICE, THEO cannot see nor hear her. A spotlight illuminates ABIGAIL.)

At different times.

BEATRICE

And still be-

BEATRICE & ABIGAIL

Connected.

(Spotlight out on BEATRICE. She goes dark and exits offstage. The red light on her body remains in place.)

ABIGAIL

Why is this meaningful?

(Light static plays as the first audio ends. Spotlight out on ABIGAIL. She goes dark and exits offstage. THEO lifts his head up, perusing the set.)

THEO

Why *is* it meaningful?

(THEO turns to dead BEATRICE.)

Do you know?

(Slight pause.)

Of course you don't.

(He walks closer to her, placing a hand on her shoulder with his own, simulating movement. Her body simply returns to its original position. He stares at her, memorizing her position, before turning.)

You left me here alone. To die. You're too clever for your own good.

(THEO grabs her foot, noticing that her laces have become untied. He carefully places her foot on his knee, and begins to knot them.)

I guess I can only blame myself, you know? I raised you to be that way.

(He finishes, then places her foot back.)

Does that mean I facilitated my own loneliness?

(THEO walks upstage, using the center aisle.)

Right here-- this (spreading his arms out) is all my doing.

(He waits for some sort of external reaction. When nothing happens, he lets his arms fall and slap against his

thighs. He strolls around the room, getting more comfortable with the loneliness that surrounds him. He picks up a random water bottle from the floor, next to a deceased towns person, and brings it to his nose. He sniffs it, grimaces, and then tosses it back to the ground.)

ACT [2]

SCENE [2]

(ABIGAIL walks onstage, dressed normally, without any sign of injury. She moves upstage and leans against a single pew. Spotlight opens on her. She speaks directly to the audience.)

ABIGAIL

March 3rd, year seventeen.

(THEO is once again started by the sudden voice. ABIGAIL takes a deep breath and speaks to the audience.)

It tapped my rosy cheeks, that memory of mine,
Hard enough, I wish you knew.
My fingertips lain atop my thigh,
My toes drowning beneath the dew.

From whence I came is a mystery,
Buried far beyond my reach.
And though I try, I cannot see
The loneliness of each.

There's this memory in my head, I can't get it to leave. It's like a catchy song that you don't know all the lyrics to. It just plays, over and over, but with resounding gaps that never get filled. And it's the oldest memory that I have, the farthest I can think back. I've tried piecing it together, but all I have is this bridge that I can't seem to finish building, making the crossing near impossible.

This memory, it's so...blurry. At certain points, I can remember specific words that were used in the conversation. But I was only one, maybe two, so I don't understand a lot of it. It was a bright room. Very white. Clean. It smelled like bleach, it was so clean. I remember looking down and being able to see my reflection on the clear white tile. The fluorescent lights irritated my eyes, so I never looked up, I just sat, in my little patent leather shoes, moving the tips of my feet just to hear the squeak from underneath me.

I see this woman. She kneels, right in front of me, but I can only recognize the dimples that appear every so often at the corner of her mouth. A delicate chain blocks the multitude of scars on the underside of her wrists. She picks me up beneath my arms and lifts me into the crook of her waist. Soft music plays in the background, fingers tapping against the keyboard of a computer. My heartbeat lags at a steady rhythm, and I can feel it through my fingertips. I feel it thump in the hallow space between my ears and my head. It's peaceful. Like a deep drum. Suddenly, a door creaks open and sunlight seeps through the crack as it gets larger and larger, until I can only see brightness. And then... Nothing. It's gone. (Pause) Imagine having that repeat in your head day after day, always ending in darkness.

You'd be taking meds too, believe me.

(End of audio. Spotlight goes out and ABIGAIL disappears.)

THEO

That's not fair. You, both of you don't get to act like you're the only ones affected. You don't know the pain of getting older while everyone else dies around you. Relationships were pointless.

(THEO turns to BEATRICE's dead body.)

You were the only thing I invested myself in because you were the only thing I *could* invest myself in. Your problems were not your own.

They fell heavier on me.

ACT [2]

SCENE [3]

(BEATRICE walks to center stage.
Spotlight. She speaks to the audience.)

BEATRICE

Welcome to my thoughts, Theo. You have your recordings, and I have mine. And while you were too selfish to share, I have decided to let you in on mine and Abby's deepest thoughts.

Enjoy.

(Static sounds from the speakers
signaling a change in recording.)
(Beat. BEATRICE takes a single step
downstage.)

Sometimes my mind wonders in so many different directions that I can't keep track of where I'm going. How far can thoughts run through my mind until they disappear completely? I go deeper and deeper into my head that I get lost and it takes me hours to get back to where I was. The intensity becomes so unbearable, until all I want to do is let it out. But I don't know how to. I peel back layers of skin to reveal nothing but red matter beneath my muscle. Time becomes too immeasurable and it scares me more than anything I can ever imagine. Why does the clock move forward so quickly, each tick mocking my very essence until all that's left is nothing but my memories laying stark on the dirty rug beneath my feet? I wonder how long it will take me to finally realize that I can't change anything. I can't help the innumerable number of wrinkles that will eventually form on my face, my hands, my mouth, the mirror, and I want them there. I want to trace them with my fingernails until they sink so deep I can't recognize myself anymore. Because isn't that what we all go for?

I don't want to recognize myself anymore. I want to wake up every day with a new face until I eventually run out of ideas and wake up with no face at all. A slate that will always be empty, fresh with possibility without commitment.

A year ago, all I wanted was to find happiness

somewhere in this town. Now I just want to find *something* somewhere *out* of this town. There's nothing here but sex and death, none which brings me the stinging amount of pleasure that others feel in their bones. My body aches with the hope of another day far away from weapons of such massive self-destruction.

Mom always said that begging was "unladylike."

I'm going to do it anyway.

Watch me.

Watch me.

(Spotlight on BEATRICE goes out.)

THEO

Watch me.

ACT [2]

SCENE [4]

(ABIGAIL walks on stage, casually, running her fingertips along the edges of the wooden pews. She closes her eyes and leans her head back. The lights dim into a slight spotlight.)

ABIGAIL

June 5th, Year fifteen.

Grieving has lost its' meaning. It's no longer a verb, it's just... a word. I've grieved for myself so many times that I don't think I'm capable of self-pity anymore.

I'm sick of feeling inadequate. It's suffocating. And... And I feel as though I can't do anything about it.

(ABIGAIL moves towards THEO and sits down next to him.)

I grew up here. It's all I've known. We've been taught about the outside in school, and I've managed to wrangle information out of my parents, but, for the most part, we're all kept in the dark. Like animals at the zoo, we're placed in this town and taught that it's normal. Is it? Is it normal? There's no way to answer that. It's almost nice, not having to question things. Opportunities are handed to us.

We don't question it. We've never questioned it. In fact, I can't think of *anyone* questioning it. Why is that?

Abby and I found a business card on the sidewalk once. It was all torn, barely readable. No one would pick it up because it was so dirty. Theo told us to throw it away. Me, well, being *me* decided to stuff it into my pocket. I was really young, but I could read enough to understand the words that were printed. It didn't have any names on it, just "The Facility" and a room

number. Room 506. Of course, I couldn't pronounce the "c" as an "s", so I constantly referred to it as "The fa(k)lity." I still don't know what it means, but I can't stop thinking about it.

Fa(K)ility.

Fa(K)ility.

Fa(K)ility.

It stays in the darkest recess of my brain and makes itself known at random points in my life. Somedays I'll forget it exists, others it's all I can think about.

(Pause. Moment of contemplation.
ABIGAIL walks offstage.)

BEATRICE (Audio only)

Sometimes I think of this field. It's beautiful. Yellow daisies litter the grass. It seems infinite, flying across the horizon faster than I can comprehend. I lay down, close my eyes, and just listen. But then, when I'm completely comfortable, the field turns into a cliff. Or a ledge. Or a mountain. Maybe all three at once. And I realize something. We see these things, these drop-offs, and we run. The more we see it, the faster we move. Our lives thrive off the soundtrack of our own fears. We live for that moment that our hearts stop beating. I think back and realize that I'm not close to the end. And even though I haven't made it to the end yet, I can taste it... And it's exhilarating. You get used to it. Theo did.

THEO

I never did though. Not now. Not before.

ACT [2]

SCENE [5]

(Entering from opposite sides of the stage, BEATRICE and ABIGAIL look at each other and dive into another memory.)

ABIGAIL

I don't want to feel like this. I know what I'm thinking isn't allowed. No one questions. That's just what happens. But each day I wake up and feel off... Like something is ready to explode inside me and fill the world with questions that can't be answered.

BEATRICE

You don't know what you're talking about.

ABIGAIL

What do you mean?

BEATRICE

You're scared of your own shadow.

ABIGAIL

I can't help it.

BEATRICE

You sure as hell can, you're just too much of a coward to realize it.

ABIGAIL

I killed a girl.

(THEO abruptly pauses the tape. The girls freeze in the same position. THEO looks back at them and walks over. He takes his previous seat between them, and presses play. He speaks to himself.)

THEO

Why?

(The girls unfreeze and continue their dialogue.)

BEATRICE

For answers.

ABIGAIL
She was an innocent.

THEO
Both of you were too!

BEATRICE
Aren't we all?

ABIGAIL
It will even out though.

THEO
Even out?

BEATRICE
How?

ABIGAIL
You'll be dead.

BEATRICE
Only to you.

THEO
And to me. But only because you killed everyone else.
Christ, Bea. What did you do?
(He looks around.)
What did you do?
(Beat.)
I need to get out of here.
(BEATRICE moves to the edge of the
stage, into darkness.)

ACT [2]

SCENE [6]

(ABIGAIL moves to center stage and addresses the audience.)

ABIGAIL

March 8th, year seventeen.

My dad was reading the newspaper this morning. He talked about this article. It was pointless, just a columnist using gossip as a space filler. But my dad made this comment about how people can't hide anything from anyone in this town, just because it's so small. But then I had this thought... I mean, I've known these people my whole life. If this town is so small, why doesn't anyone leave? I've wanted to travel, but those ideas always just cancel themselves, and I never think twice about it. Just the fact that I never thought about *made* me think *more* about.

When I went to school, I tried asking Bea about it, but she didn't understand. She couldn't put the words together in her mind. It's like the word "leave" has a specific limitation in each person's head. I think leave, I picture moving past the wall. Bea thinks "leave," and she pictures leaving the room. Two completely different explanations that can't coexist together without confusion. It's like when someone is solving a complicated calculus problem. It looks like another language to one person, but is inherently familiar to the other. A see-saw that can never be balanced.

(She begins to pace.)

I... I realized something today. I don't know where it came from, but I had this thought during class. So, there's no history. I mean in general of course there's a history of life. I know that there were events that happened long before I was born; but all I know is this little town and these big walls and I have no idea what's outside. What if there's history happening right now, right this second, and I don't know about it because I'm contained here. I don't even know where "here" is. These walls, they're tall, impenetrable and apparently, it's keeping whatever's

outside from coming in but, and here's where the cliché comes in, what if they're keeping us inside? No one leaves. No one. We're like our own fucking country. I talked to my parents a little. And when I mean "little", I'm talking about the grunt that I got from my mother and the nonexistent look I got from my father. These dreams, of the outside, they make me sad. I don't want my whole life to feel like it's just one big memory. Sometimes I feel like someone just licked their thumb and wiped my entire life from the human timeline. Everything is so blurry all of a sudden. I don't know. Maybe I am going crazy.

(BEATRICE moves to the other side of the room and sits in the position that ABIGAIL began the scene in. ABIGAIL moves towards center stage.)

In our history class, we were talking about the Civil War.

(BEATRICE enters the stage dressed as a teacher, holding onto a long pointer. A chalk board rolls out on stage after her and into a small spotlight. The TEACHER pulls down the map of North America and outline the different battles and movements of the soldiers.)

My teacher pulled down a map atop of the chalkboard and began to point where each individual battle took place. At the end, she asked-

BEATRICE

Does anyone have any questions?

ABIGAIL

I raised my hand immediately and said, "I do. Where are we on the map?"

BEATRICE

Excuse me?

ABIGAIL

She looked at me like I had five heads, so I asked again, "Where are we on the map?"

(ABIGAIL takes a few steps towards the TEACHER and BEATRICE takes one step

back from her student. BEATRICE turns to the board and pulls a second map of the Earth on top of the previous one.)

She took a few seconds, and then pulled down the world map, and pointed to North America.

BEATRICE

(Pointing to North America) We're right here. Any other questions pertaining to the war itself?

ABIGAIL

She tried to ignore the suffocating feeling that invaded the classroom, but I wasn't done. My question wasn't answered. I raised my hand again (raising hand) and said, "No, what I meant was, where are we on the continent of North America?" She stared at me again. She was angry. She looked at me and said-

BEATRICE

If this is a joke, I don't appreciate the humor.

ABIGAIL

I didn't understand. Why would she think this was some kind of joke? "No," I said, "I'm being serious. Where in North America are we?" She took a few seconds to try and comprehend the meaning behind the question.

(BEATRICE turns to the board and rolls up the world map, leaving the North American map on the board. She stares at it, moving her pointer slowly over the entirety of the map.)

Anyone could tell that she was having a sort of mental battle. Intellectually, she was confused. Such a simple question should be answered without a second thought. But nobody had asked her before. I was the first. But the heartbreaking part didn't come till she answered. She turned towards me, folded into herself, and dropped the pointer to her hip. Her face downtrodden, she looked at the class and said-

BEATRICE

I... I don't know.

ABIGAIL

(The light on the chalkboard and BEATRICE goes out, leaving only ABIGAIL

drenched in light. She takes a deep
breath and looks at the audience.)

Where are we?

(ABIGAIL exits.)

THEO

I DON'T KNOW. I don't know. I don't know if we're
still part of this fucking world. Everything is so...
distorted.

ACT [2]

SCENE [7]

THEO

Your eyes were hazel. It fascinated me. The way that light, sound, and emotion play into the inherently different colors of your irises. The green was my favorite. Specks, the tiniest of specks; gold bled into the high-status emerald living the good life between black and white.

One day, I found a disposable camera on the sidewalk, just lying there. I grabbed it and snapped a picture of you when you weren't looking... I should get them printed. Those eyes should never be forgotten. I need to see them one last time.

(THEO moves towards BEATRICE's dead body that lay unmoving on the altar. Just as he gets there, he second-guesses his actions, and turns swiftly away. He pulls a picture out of his pocket and glances at it.)

That's the beauty of pictures, though. It doesn't have to be the last time.

(Pause. THEO drops the picture on the ground without another look.)

You hated photographs. Being in them and taking them, it didn't matter. You told me that each picture captured a part of the subject's soul. Just a tiny part, but a part nonetheless. And that person could never get it back. The soul would just snap off like a dead rose petal...peeled away. Millions of pieces floating through the camera, creating a meaning between all those truths and lies.

BEATRICE (Audio only)

Did you?

THEO (Audio only)

Did I what?

BEATRICE (Audio only)

Believe that taking a picture grabs a piece of the soul from the subject.

THEO (Audio only)

I haven't taken enough pictures yet.

ACT [2]

SCENE [8]

(Audio comes through the speakers. It is silent at first, calming, and THEO closes his eyes to embrace it. Ten seconds in, we hear the slightest of sniffles on the audio tape. THEO opens his eyes, trying to comprehend what he's hearing. The sniffing gets louder, until we hear sobs build and build into the sound. BEATRICE's cries get louder. The sounds are almost muffled because of the sheer volume.)

THEO

(Looking at BEATRICE's body) You recorded this?
 (Pause for more crying over speaker)
 Are you trying to torture me?
 (Pause for more sound.)
 Why are you doing this to me?
 (The crying gets fainter. THEO's recorded voice appears.)

THEO (Audio only)

Subject inconsolable after hearing the news that she wasn't chosen.

THEO

What?

THEO (Audio only)

Subject refuses to speak to anyone, including me. I'm beginning to get concerned.

THEO

I did this?

THEO (Audio only)

Will confer with the psych unit tomorrow morning. Until then, I will stand outside her door and watch for any suicidal activity.

(The sound of crying becomes louder until it is almost unbearable. THEO listens to the sobbing until he is on the brink of tears. He runs to the door and starts to jiggle the handle

aggressively. He grabs a book from a pew and begins to slam it down against the handle, but does no damage. He resorts to kicking the door as hard as possible, but it still won't open. He beats his fist, then shoulder, then head, then slides down the door and onto his knees. The crying stops abruptly. All is silent.)

ACT [2]

SCENE [9]

(THEO lifts his head when he is overcome by the lack of noise. He stares at the lightbulb that swings lightly over the altar, completely burnt out for before, and can't help but to relate to the feeling. There is an uncomfortable amount of silence on stage. Finally, a voice comes through the speakers.)

BEATRICE (Audio only)

Theo?

(THEO puts his hands on his head, doing his best to ignore the sound of BEATRICE's sweet voice, knowing that he'll never hear it live again.)

It's okay to be upset, Theo.

(Pause.)

Are you tired of listening to these recordings yet?

(THEO picks his head up, the reference to the recordings grabbing his attention.)

This isn't a memory. I made this recording for you. For this exact moment. I knew you would make it this far.

(THEO stands up, slowly, sluggishly.)

I know you a lot better than you think. All this time, you were watching me. Did it ever cross your mind that maybe, just maybe, I was watching you too?

There's no way out of here. The doors are locked. No one can get in. You can't get out. You're trapped. And now you finally feel what it was like to be suffocating within your own mind, day in and day out, for eighteen hellish years. These dead bodies, all of them, mirror the poisonous thoughts that never seemed to leave, no matter where I was.

By this point, I've been taken. But that was my goal all along. I hope the guilt you feel is slowly festering inside of you. I hope you feel an ounce of the isolation I did. Let yourself embrace the loneliness you surely feel at this moment. Glance

around at everyone in the room and feel the lifelessness crawl from every single body and into your soul. Because you only have one way of escaping. And I'm going to help you.

Go to the altar.

(Hesitant at first, THEO walks over to the altar, stepping over the bodies that lay in his way.)

Look at my position. The way that I'm lying. Stare as long as you want, seeing if I'll breathe. But I won't, I assure you.

(THEO follows the voice's instructions.)

Reach for my wrist and bring it eye-level. Look at the veins that no longer pump blood. Feel how chilled my skin is, bathed in the iridescent ice of the moon.

(THEO drops her dead wrist and looks up at the ceiling, as if communicating to the voice coming from the speakers.)

THEO

Why are you doing this?

(THEO grabs one of BEATRICE's shoes from her foot and throws it at the window. It doesn't break.)

Make it stop.

BEATRICE (Audio only)

Take my knife. It will be on the floor next to my body.

(THEO freezes.)

Take it.

THEO

I won't be like you.

BEATRICE (Audio only)

Take it.

THEO

I won't do it.

BEATRICE (Audio only)

Take it. It's your only way out. We both know that.

THEO

I can't.

BEATRICE (Audio only)

It's your only way out.

(THEO moves closer to BEATRICE. His
body is shaking with un-released sobs.)

(Softer) Take it. Be with me. Be with everyone.

(THEO grabs the knife.)

THEO

I don't think I can do it.

BEATRICE (Audio only)

You can do it. Have faith.

THEO

I can't.

BEATRICE (Audio only)

Don't doubt your progress.

THEO

Why are you doing this to me?

BEATRICE (Audio only)

Do it. I'll keep talking. Distract you.

THEO

Why are you doing this?

BEATRICE (Audio only)

(Overlapping with THEO) Do you ever think that maybe,
just maybe, you see better with your eyes closed.

Those senses don't get used as much as they ought to.

I love smelling the air-

THEO

Stop-

BEATRICE (Audio only)

Tasting the sun, when we're lucky enough for it to
come out. Hearing the trees wrestle with the wind
until they bounce back in imperfect harmony.

(THEO begins to scream while the
recording plays.)

My eyes only seem to bring confusion. Hurt. Fear... I

don't know. At what age does that disappear? Does it ever?

(THEO takes the knife in his hand and raises it across his wrist.)

Don't you think I deserved some answers? My life has been lived in this tiny particle that floats in an empty world. Sometimes I look up at the sky and think the stars are laughing at me. The sun only wants to rise to see me suffer my daily conundrum of a social life. Rain doesn't wash away my sins.

It creates them.

It's as though my life should be filled with so much substance, yet it feels so lifeless.

(His hands begin to shake. The voice gets louder.)

I didn't want to turn into an errant thought. You leave and you'll be completely forgotten. Are you content with that? I never was. Be content with your choices.

(THEO stares down at his wrist.)

(Louder) Do it.

(Louder) Do it Theo.

(THEO moves a step away from the altar, facing the audience completely.

BEATRICE's dead body suddenly comes to life and sits upright.)

BEATRICE

(Screaming) Fucking do it!

(THEO looks at the audience and starts violently coughing, covering his palm over his mouth. When he finishes, he pulls his hand down, and a puddle of blood is visible to the audience. He starts to laugh again, more violently. In an instant, bright lights illuminate the stage and blind the audience to the point where the stage cannot be seen. The lights go back to normal, but the coughing has stopped. THEO lies motionless on the floor. BEATRICE's now live body moves from the altar and over to THEO. His eyes remain open, but

entirely lifeless. BEATRICE stands over him, arms still bloody from when she "slit" her wrists. She looks down, disappointment clear in both her face and her body language.)

Fuck.

(Contemplative pause.)

Theo.

(After a few seconds of agonizing silence, the "dead" bodies on the floor begin to move ever so slightly. They groan, stretch, and crack their unmoved muscles. BEATRICE turns towards the live, rising townspeople.)

It's done, everyone. Time to clean up.

(People start to exit the stage, helping others up and chatting as they do so. The doors open easily. BEATRICE is alone for a second, before ABIGAIL enters, a new set of clothing and no visible injuries.)

ABIGAIL

(She looks at her friend, trying to be as supportive as possible, yet her emotions of sorrow and heavy-heartedness are evident in her tone of voice.)

That was quicker than I thought.

BEATRICE

I didn't think he'd actual do it.

(ABIGAIL moves next to BEATRICE, both looking down at THEO's dead body.)

ABIGAIL

It's disappointing. All those years...

BEATRICE

(To herself) Yeah, all those years.

ABIGAIL

They're going to come in and take his body in a few minutes. Do you want me to stall them? Give you some time alone?

BEATRICE

(Solemn) That'd be nice, thanks.

ABIGAIL

Come outside when you're ready.

(ABIGAIL turns to leave. BEATRICE kneels next to her former guardian. When ABIGAIL reaches the edge of the stage, she turns back.)

Did you really think he was going to be different? The others before him did the same thing.

BEATRICE

I guess not. I had hopes, though.

(Pause. BEATRICE places her hand on THEO's chest.)

Maybe the next one will be different.

ABIGAIL

Maybe. We'll have to see.

(ABIGAIL exits. The lights fade into a spotlight on BEATRICE and THEO on the ground. The hanging light above them, that had been dormant for the act, slowly fades up, dimly lit. BEATRICE looks at it, and then back down at THEO.)

BEATRICE

(Softly whispering to herself)

From Whence I came is a mystery,
Buried far beyond my reach.
And though I try, I cannot see
The loneliness of each.

(The lights begin to fade. BEATRICE continues to chant her poem in a cycle, until finally all the lights are out.)

And though I try, I cannot see
The loneliness of each.

(CURTAIN.)