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Insomniacs

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TRINITY COLLEGE

Senior Thesis

INSOMNIACS

submitted by

KIRA MASON 2018

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

2018

Director: Michael Preston

Reader: Ciaran Berry

Reader: Barbara Karger

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AFTERWORD

“I Guess I’m a Romantic After All: Style as Substance, Humanity in the Inhuman,
Visibility in Darkness, Truth in Absurdity, and Reality in Fantasy”

INSOMNIACS

CHARACTERS:

MICAH: The Intellectual, early 20's male or female

WREN: The Achiever, early 20's, male or female

EMERY: The Artist, early 20's, female

BLAIR: The Giver, early 20's, male or female

REESE: The Performer, early 20's, male or female

SETTING:

Your typical liberal arts college. And an atypical forest.

TIME:

The present. But also a little shaky.

ACT I

Prologue: Lying to a Professor

Center spotlight on a clear, plastic chair.

(MICAH steps into the spotlight and takes a seat.)

MICAH

Hi Professor, how's your morning been? ... Oh, you know, just a little stressed, senior year and everything... Between my thesis... I'm kinda stuck, but there's still plenty of time... Yeah Professor Klatt trusts that I'll figure it out too... Just with the added stress of med school applications... No, I know my grades and test scores and the recent publication can get me in anywhere, it's just... it's just a lot of paperwork... Yeah, and then there's the research with Professor Miller... Yeah, a really great opportunity. He can be a little... high strung, yeah, that's the word, great opportunity though... Um, two other classes, but one of them is just for my art requirement so... Yeah, Intro to Music Theory... I really like it actually, the way it breaks down something so complicated into a neat formula...

If only there was a way to do that with everything...

(Slight lighting shift, MICAH changes posture.)

I know that everything going on in my head is just electrical signals, chemical reactions. I could break it all down into those, tell you exactly what's happening, but for some reason that doesn't make it any better. I just want the thoughts to stop spinning, the world to stop spinning. I'm sinking, Professor, but you don't know because my grades know how to float. And as long as I can sit here and speak in formulas, you'll never know.

(Lights change back, MICAH resumes original posture.)

Okay. Well. Thank you, Professor, good luck with the Intro class!... You too, Professor.

(Lights up on the rest of the stage to reveal WREN, EMERY, BLAIR, and REESE frozen in separate poses.)

If there was just one thing I could grip onto...

MICAH walks around WREN, who remains motionless.)

Some people thrive on stress. They're fueled by the burn out. But I... well... I fizzle into smoke. Poof. Gone. A disembodied brain not cut out for this world. I can't keep fighting to stay somewhere I don't belong...

(MICAH walks over to BLAIR.)

MICAH (CONT.)

Some people live for others. They heal everyone else's pain to ignore their own. I may be pre-med, but I'm no healer. I'm not warm or magnetic. I'll never be anyone's favorite person. If I disappeared, would I so much as make a ripple?

(MICAH walks over to EMERY.)

Some people can at least fall apart in style. Their breakdowns are artistic, their inability to fit in is trendy. They never actually lose control. But I don't have that kind of flair to fall back on. The minute I misstep, miscalculate, the minute I fail... I have nothing... I *am* nothing.

(MICAH walks over to REESE. There is more hesitancy, more pain here.)

Some people are so good at pretending everything is fine that they can even convince themselves. But I've never been good at pretending. I'm completely transparent. Everything that I am is right on the surface, screaming to be noticed... but... No one sees me when I'm here... would they see me if I left?

(MICAH waves a hand in front of REESE'S face. REESE remains frozen.)

I know it's selfish. I know I should try harder. I know I should be stronger. Louder. More... well... anything. But the thing is... I'm already a ghost.

(MICAH strikes chair and exits.)

Scene 1: Caffeine

Stage right. A counter with a typewriter representing a cash register, a blender representing a coffee maker, a sewing machine representing an espresso machine, flower pots as coffee cups, etc.

(WREN and EMERY stand behind the counter, EMERY practicing latte art, and WREN drinking coffee.)

WREN

Whatcha making?

(EMERY ignores the question, focusing on the art.)

Ookayy let me guess... umm... a vagina?

(WREN takes a large gulp of coffee. EMERY shakes head and continues. WREN slams down the coffee cup in triumph.)

EMERY

That's a record.

WREN

Ya think? Welll I bet you that I can make and finish another one even faster.

(pumps coffee into a cup.)

I bet you all the tips from our dream-team morning rush shift that I can drink another red-eye in under a minute.

(WREN heads for the espresso machine.)

EMERY

Another red-eye? Are you crazy?

WREN

Depends. You into crazy?

EMERY

Wren, it's not even 8 AM yet. The only fantasies I'm having are of going back to bed. Alone.

(EMERY turns away from WREN, who continues making a drink, pulls out phone, reads for a moment, then drops the phone, hands shaking.)

WREN

Whoa, hey, caffeine jitters are my thing.

(EMERY stares blankly into space, lost in thought.)

WREN

Emery? Emmmmery.

(Beat. EMERY doesn't respond.)

What's wrong?

EMERY

Check your email.

WREN

What? I checked it like five minutes ago—

EMERY

Check it again.

WREN

Ummm can you maybe tell me what's—

(WREN notices EMERY'S expression, cuts off, and carefully picks up phone like it's a bomb. WREN opens and reads email.)

I... I don't understand... this doesn't make any sense. It's got to be a mistake or something, I mean Micah Schmidt? No, impossible, we were both just featured in this admissions brochure, and we talked about internships and grad school and the future and Micah was going to discover the cure for Alzheimer's or something. I mean what why how did this—

EMERY

--Suicide.

WREN

--happen. (pause) Wait, what?

EMERY

"Tragic and unforeseen incident." Not "accident," "incident." If it was medical, they would've just said so, right? And if it was a murder, there would be concern for our physical safety. But this language...

WREN

No... No. I mean that's logical and all, but it doesn't make any sense!

EMERY

Doesn't it? I mean it's not something I ever considered, but it's one of those things that you hear, and you're suddenly like, *of course*—

WREN

What are you saying? You thought Micah might commit suicide? Suicide?

EMERY

No, I just said it never occurred to me... but y'know... hindsight.

WREN

Okay, just back up, okay? Micah was the posterchild for excellence. Literally. Like in an admissions brochure literally.

EMERY

And don't you think that's a lot of pressure? And suffocating? And—

WREN

Ummm I think it sounds like graduating with an actual future. You know what makes *me* feel suffocated and under pressure? Student loans. The job market. The housing market. I mean you're gonna be an artist, right? Don't you know more than anyone—

EMERY

That not all stress is so practical and tangible.

WREN

Fine. Fine. But we don't *know* that's what happened. So let's push off this little existential crisis until we do.

EMERY

We studied together, all the time. And I never gave it a second thought. How it started... what it meant—

WREN

Um probably a shortage of tables?

EMERY

And it became this thing where we'd just sit across from each other, not talking much, just sort of feeding off each other's intense focus... like we'd created a force field around the table or something.

WREN

Mhmm yeah, ya know, I bet it was a real force field, and Micah was a superhero who died fighting crime. Crazy? Yes. Crazier than suicide? Maybe not?

(EMERY doesn't respond, holding the milk pitcher over the latte, hands shaking, WREN grabs the milk pitcher from EMERY'S hands before it spills everywhere.)

Whoaaa, easy there.

(WREN points to the latte art)

WREN (CONT.)

Hey ummm is that a rose?

EMERY

What? Oh, um, yeah.

WREN

You made that? Really? Just now?

EMERY

Did you not just see me—

WREN

That's amazing! Where did you learn that? Because I've watched hundreds of latte art tutorials on YouTube, and that is like... wow.

EMERY

I don't know... I just kinda did it. I draw a lot of roses. They relax me. Usually... not right now. I think I'm going to be sick.

WREN

You're gonna be fine. We're all gonna be fine. Everything is fine. We're just gonna play fun barista serious barista like always, and I'll do the whole small talk thing while you do more of that milk foam witchcraft, and we'll earn a bunch of tips, and as long as we keep moving and carry the fuck on—

EMERY

Wren please stop talking.

(WREN shuts mouth but starts frantically tapping jittery fingers on the counter.)

And moving. For the love of god just stop... all of... everything.

(An awkward pause.)

WREN

You think the school needs help planning a memorial? Because I'm really good at planning things. You could make some kinda mural in Micah's honor—

EMERY

--I don't know if I'd be able to—

WREN

Which a cappella group would have memorial songs in their repertoire?

EMERY

Probably none of us?

WREN

And we could put flowers in beakers because chemistry! Well neuroscience, but—

(EMERY puts hands on WREN'S shoulders.)

EMERY

Wren. Breathe.

(EMERY breathes. WREN follows reluctantly, almost as if in pain.)

This is so fucked. What do we do?

WREN

I mean...

(WREN looks around)

This is the most comforting place I know, tbh... but if you wanna go, I can, you know—

EMERY

No... no, that's okay. I can stay.

WREN

Ya sure?

EMERY

Mhmm.

(WREN gives EMERY a tentative, awkward hug. Just as EMERY starts to hug back, WREN pulls away.)

WREN

Sooo um can you get another brew of the breakfast blend going? I high-key drank it all.

(EMERY gives WREN a look.)

What?

(Blackout.)

Scene 2: Blood

Stage left. A table covered with blank clipboards and a white tablecloth that blood drive advertisements are projected onto.

(BLAIR and REESE sit behind the table, eagerly pointing to clipboards, calling out to unseen passersby.)

BLAIR

Hi, would you like to donate blood?

REESE

Excuse me, are you interested in donating blood?

BLAIR

Please donate blood!

(pause, BLAIR shivers)

Did you hear that echo? This silence is so eerie; it's like the whole room is haunted.

REESE

It kind of is, isn't it? But it'll go back to normal soon.

BLAIR

Huh. That's kind of haunting in its own way.

REESE

I didn't mean... I'm sorry. Did you know Micah?

BLAIR

A little. We both worked in the tutoring center together.

REESE

That's something.

BLAIR

I guess... I'm often pretty good at reading people, and you can learn a lot from watching someone tutor, but I never got a read on Micah. You didn't know him/her, did you?

REESE

Me? Nah, I mean it's a small school so a little in passing, but no.

(Beat.)

Tell you what, let's liven this thing up. We could all use a laugh or two today, right?

BLAIR

What are you going to—

REESE

Excuse me, you there, yes you, do you have blood running through your veins?

BLAIR

Oh no, please don't—

REESE

You do? Perfect. So follow up question: are you a decent human being who likes donating to good causes?

BLAIR

I really don't like this.

REESE

Great, me too. So you can sign up right here. Thank you so much.

(to BLAIR)

Well would ya look at that.

BLAIR

Very impressive, if not somewhat in bad taste.

REESE

It can't be in bad taste if it's for a good cause.

BLAIR

Um—

(REESE quickly selects a new victim)

REESE

Hey, do you like helping people in need? No? You don't? Well that's real shitty, but I admire your honesty.

BLAIR

Harassing unsuspecting strangers, how charming.

REESE

You want charming? I'll show you charming.

(calls out)

Hey there, put down your number for the blood drive and pick up mine!

Oh wow you did not just say that.

BLAIR

Ready for this one?

REESE

(calls out)

Hey what's your type? I'm AB positive that you're mine.

You're going to be a politician, aren't you?

BLAIR

Only after my acting career takes off.

REESE

I can't tell if you're joking or not.

BLAIR

Me either.

REESE

Who are you? Reese McCoy?

BLAIR

You tell me.

REESE

(BLAIR laughs.)

I'm serious. Didn't you just brag about being good at reading people?

Well, yes I did, but—

BLAIR

But nothing. What are you getting out of this fancy liberal arts education if you can't support your claims?

REESE

Hmm I could also see you as a snazzy corporate lawyer.

BLAIR

That your reading?

REESE

No... Are you sure you want me to do this?

BLAIR

REESE

Do your worst.

BLAIR

You adjust unusually quickly to the people around you... it's almost like you're living in an improv game, putting up different personas. And so it makes sense that you're dying to know how I perceive you because, to you, my perception *is* your identity.

(REESE is speechless.)

I'm... I'm so sorry, I did not mean to get so personal in the middle of the student center.

REESE

No, no worries, I pushed you... and it was really... interesting... and y'know there's probably a bit of truth in there. We all put up personas, right?

BLAIR

Right. Of course.

REESE

And what about you?

BLAIR

Me?

REESE

No, sorry, I was talking to that rando over there. Yes, you, Blair Adams. What's *your* deal?

BLAIR

I don't really have a... deal.

REESE

Except worrying about everyone else's. What are you, an O negative?

BLAIR

Hey! I can't help it, I just—

REESE

I'm teasing. (pause) Don't worry about mine though, kay?

BLAIR

When people tell me not to worry about something it usually makes me more concerned.

REESE

Concern gives you wrinkles. I can see one forming riiight...

(spins index finger in a circle then taps BLAIR'S forehead)

REESE (CONT.)

There.

(BLAIR fights a smile.)

Trying not to smile also gives you wrinkles.

BLAIR

I think you're overestimating my sense of vanity.

REESE

Vanity is an underrated quality. You know why the deadly sins are called the deadly sins?

BLAIR

Why?

REESE

Cause no one would have any reason to live without 'em.

BLAIR

That's definitely not it.

REESE

It makes sense if you don't think about it. And you know, thinking causes—

BLAIR

Wrinkles.

REESE

I was gonna say acne.

(turns out, calls out to another passerby)

Hey you! Looking to lose a pound by doing absolutely nothing? Donate blood!

BLAIR

It's okay to be sad, you know.

REESE

I told you; I didn't know Micah.

BLAIR

I know, but still... The loss of life, of potential, is an inherently sad thing.

REESE

Well *I'm* still alive. And I'm not going to fall apart for someone who isn't.

(Beat.)

REESE (CONT.)

Sorry; that sounded way less insensitive in my head.

BLAIR

No, I understand what you meant.

(calls out)

Sign up for the blood drive!

REESE

Blair...

BLAIR

You're right, Reese. We should focus on the lives we *can* save. (calls) Donate blood!

REESE

Are you a good person? Sign up to donate blood! No, you're a garbage human? Well guess what, garbage people can donate blood too!

(Blackout.)

Moment: Lying in Counseling

Center spotlight. The same clear, plastic chair covered in pillows with inspirational messages.

(BLAIR sits down, settles in, waits for a moment, then speaks.)

BLAIR

Hello, how are you? ... Pretty good, though obviously I just found out about Micah, so that was... a little difficult... We worked in the tutoring center together... I don't know, we only talked directly a few times but mostly only overheard one another's sessions. We had very different styles. Micah was smarter than me, no doubt, but wasn't the best tutor. Oh god, can I say that? I shouldn't say that... Right yes, I know this is safe space, I just feel bad... Why? I don't know, I don't like saying bad things about anyone, and especially not someone who must've been really struggling... I like seeing the best in people. But then, maybe if I'd seen the worst I could've...well I don't know... And it's been so strange walking around campus. There's just this silence... it's so thick you can feel it.

How do *I* feel? I don't know...

(Slight lighting shift, BLAIR changes posture.)

So there's Micah.

(MICAH enters, dramatically acting out each part of Blair's narration.)

And Micah is brilliant. And quiet, but not like, scary troubled loner quiet. Just quiet. And I never really sensed any pain around Micah... I guess I never really sensed anything... And then suddenly, Micah's dead, and it makes me question everything.

(MICAH dies dramatically.)

Like my roommate Wren.

(WREN enters and acts out Blair's narration.)

I don't want to diagnose people, but Wren is a little... anorexic. And addicted to caffeine... and stress. But at this point, I feel, I don't know... de-sensitized to it. Like, that's just how Wren is, you know? That's how Wren functions, and Wren is functioning well. Extremely well. And for the life of me I can never get a read on what he/she is feeling because he/she never stops to feel anything. And whenever I try to talk about it, I'm afraid I'm being annoying or pushy or judgmental, so then I just drop it. But does that make me an enabler? And if something ever were to happen...

(WREN dies dramatically.)

It would kill me. And for whatever reason, I can't seem to get away from people who are just so used to avoiding themselves and denying their own problems. Like Reese McCoy.

(REESE enters and begins acting out Blair's narration.)

BLAIR (CONT.)

Reese is someone you would think just floats through life. Attractive, friendly, probably lives in a bubble. But then today, in light of everything, I was getting the strangest feeling, like something is off with him/her... like it's all just an impressively elaborate façade. And it's so easy to get swept up in all of it... Reese has this way of making you feel important... wanted... I wouldn't be the first. Apparently Reese has broken quite a few hearts. Like Emery's.

(EMERY enters and stands beside REESE. They both act out the narration.)

I don't know her that well; we have this art outreach program together, but she's pretty closed off. I've never gotten a read on her, which is rather unsettling now that I think about it. Anyway, they seemed like the perfect couple, but I had a feeling it wouldn't work—she's so reserved and kind of... well... and Reese is so bubbly and nice—and eventually it all went up in flames, and now they hate each other.

(EMERY and REESE kill each other simultaneously and die.)

I don't think I could stand it if anyone ever hated me like that.

(Lights change back, BLAIR adjusts posture.)

Sorry, what did you say? Oh, yes, I'll be sure to practice self-care this week.

Scene 3: Cocaine and Xanax

Stage right. A presentational row of fun-house mirrors.

(WREN and REESE stand in front of the mirrors, addressing the audience.)

WREN

Thank you so much for your attention. We're going to pass you all on to Erika now for your tour if you'll kindly filter out into the lobby.

REESE

Have a great day, and best of luck with the application process!

(WREN and REESE wave goodbye and mutter "thank you's" with forced smiles. They turn as though watching people leave, wait for a moment, then turn to each other and sigh.)

WREN

That was roughhh. Look at my hands, I am pumped with adrenaline right now. Like full fight or flight mode.

REESE

Can you believe people already knew? And that one woman?

(committing to an impression)

"What's going on at this school that makes high-achieving young people kill themselves?"

WREN

I'll give her points for bluntness, that's for sure.

REESE

I can dodge most of that stuff like a pro, but that one... yikes.

WREN

No but your response was perfect. 10/10 for crowd control.

REESE

I sure hope so cause I completely blocked it out. Great refocusing on your part though, using it to transition to campus resources.

WREN

Wren and Reese lie to people's parents: a new segment sponsored by caffeine and uhh, let me guess... cocaine and Xanax?

REESE

(flustered) I... I don't know what you're talking about.

WREN

Niceee. You're crushing it.

REESE

Have you eaten today?

WREN

Mhmm I had an apple and a pack of almonds after I went to the gym this morning, and let me tell you, I'm feeling alive as fuck.

REESE

Classic.

WREN

Okay, whatever, I don't need your judgment. I'm the picture of health.

REESE

I'm not judging.

WREN

And neither am I. You do you, y'know? I mean, Emery would kill me for saying that, but—

(REESE looks away, WREN cuts off.)

Yikes. Are things still—

REESE

Yup.

(awkward pause)

WREN

Sooo do you think you'll ever get on good terms? I mean, life's short, and y'know now might actually be the perfect time to—

REESE

Have you met Emery?

WREN

Hmm okay yeah you make a valid point...

(Beat.)

Well are you doing okay anyway? Like with the whole Micah thing?

REESE

Oh, yeah... I didn't really know Micah that well.

WREN

Yeah me either. Although we were both interviewed for this admissions brochure the other day, and it was all about our futures and stuff. I mean, talk about irony.

REESE

Yeah. Crazy.

WREN

I can't imagine deciding to end it all like that. It's not an option for me, y'know? It can't be. I'm connected to too many things to just like, give up like that. I mean I'm not saying that Micah gave up or anything, that's not what I mean, I just... well... I've just always kept moving, y'know?

REESE

Yeah... same. Whatever works, right?

WREN

Whatever works.

(REESE shakes it off, perks up, and adopts an entirely new attitude:

REESE

Well it's been real, but I've got an internship to go to and people to schmooze.

WREN

You are the best schmoozer I know. What do ya do over there?

REESE

Social media. Development. Classic millennial things.

WREN

Love it. Someone's gotta come up with the clever Insta captions.

REESE

For sure.

(REESE starts to exit, then looks back.)

Take it easy Wren, okay?

WREN

Yeah sure, you too.

(Blackout.)

Scene 4: Thoughts

Stage left. A stylish glass table covered in clear notebooks and folders.

(EMERY is reading and taking notes with intense focus. MICAH enters and sits down across from her without a word, opens a book and starts to scribble furiously. After a moment, EMERY looks up and gasps. MICAH looks up.)

MICAH

What's wrong?

(EMERY says nothing, blinking rapidly.)

EMERY

Oh my god. What... how...

MICAH

Nice to see you too.

EMERY

Calm down, Emery. Just calm down. Breathe. Focus on your reading.

(EMERY looks down at the book, takes a deep breath and looks back up. MICAH stares at her.)

Fuck.

MICAH

I believe the phrase you're looking for is "I'm sorry."

EMERY

What?

MICAH

You failed me. You failed Reese by trying too hard, you're failing Wren by not trying enough, and you failed me by not trying at all.

EMERY

I—

MICAH

I was right here, and you never noticed. And now you'll never be able to forget me.

EMERY

I am sorry Micah... I wish I could go back—

MICAH

You can't. You can't change the past. You can't fix this. You're a failure, Emery. You failed me. You're failing everyone. You're failing yourself.

(EMERY buries her head in the book, trying to focus.)

Bury your head in a book all you want; it won't save you.

(MICAH grabs her face and forces her to look.)

There's no escaping what's already inside of you.

(EMERY pulls away and the lights go black for a moment. When they return, MICAH is gone. EMERY slams the book shut and rushes offstage. Blackout.)

Moment: Lying to Your Parents

Center spotlight.

(REESE paces in the spotlight, holding a deck of cards as a cell phone.)

REESE

Mom, Mom, calm down, calm down... Mom, you can't believe everything you read on "The Facebook." It's all getting blown out of proportion. We aren't all suddenly in immediate danger just because one person decided to... Of course I would tell you if... I'm still the same happy kid I've always been, you don't have to worry... My voice isn't shaking, Mom, that's just the phone reception... What do you mean I sound different? I don't sound different. You're paranoid, Mom... Yes, please, tell me that story about your brother's coworker's nephew's friend...

(Lights change, REESE pulls away from phone)

What am I supposed to say? "Mom, I'm not fine. Mom, I'm never really here, I'm always in this fog of... whatever, and every word is a struggle?" How stupid and whiny would that be? "Mom, I'm just going through the motions and don't see a point anymore bla bla bla." "Mom I'm not who you think I am. I'm not who anyone thinks I am. But I hate the real me, and you would too." What am I, an angsty cliché? "Mom I feel toxic. I can't stop hurting people. Micah was my friend... my best friend... and I... I really fucked up this time, Mom.

(Lights change, REESE picks up the phone)

Yes, I'm here... I'm fine, Mom, I promise. Are *you* okay? ... I miss you too... I've gotta go, okay? ... I love you too, Mom.

(Blackout.)

Scene 5: Paint

Stage left. The same glass table covered in blank pieces of paper. A large standing mirror is behind it.

(BLAIR and EMERY carefully tape the papers to the mirror.)

BLAIR

Do you ever feel like Ms. Weill is... I don't know how to put it...

EMERY

The fucking worst?

BLAIR

That's one way. I know she cares a lot and wants to push them to do their best and everything, and I'm sure she's got her own issues to deal with, but she's just so mean!

EMERY

It's third grade art; they shouldn't be worrying about what's right and wrong.

BLAIR

Exactly! I don't like seeing little kids so stifled. Especially today, thinking about...

EMERY

Yeah. They'll have plenty of chances to learn all about self-doubt and self-loathing when they're older.

(awkward silence)

I mean just look at these paintings, they're depressing as fuck.

BLAIR

Well I don't know, I think they're kind of cute... This kid put a smiley face on the sun, do you remember doing that?

EMERY

And this kid was told not to paint the sun that way because *this* way is more realistic. I remember *that*.

BLAIR

It does look really nice...

(EMERY glares at BLAIR)

What's that look for?

EMERY

Can you just let me have this moment without trying to make me see the bright side?

BLAIR

Oh... sure, of course. If you want to talk—

EMERY

I hate talking. I hate people. You know what I like? Art.

(EMERY walks behind mirror and retrieves two paintbrushes and a few cups of red paint.)

BLAIR

What are you doing?

EMERY

Making art. Wanna join?

BLAIR

You're upset, and all of your feelings right now are completely valid. Feel what you need to feel, but know that there are a lot of healthy ways to express those feelings, and this may not be—

EMERY

Oh my god shut up.

BLAIR

I know I sound annoying, but I'm just trying to keep you from doing something impulsive that you might regret later—

EMERY

Impulsive? I wish. Actually, I've been thinking about doing this for the last two hours. And right now, I'm carefully plotting out my artistic masterpiece.

(EMERY dips the paintbrushes in paint and waves one at BLAIR.)

You know you want to. Think of it as... catharsis.

(BLAIR takes the paintbrush and sets it on the table.)

BLAIR

Put down the paintbrush, Emery.

(EMERY flicks it at the hanging pieces of paper.)

EMERY

Oops. It slipped.

BLAIR

And I bet that felt really good and like it was exactly what you needed, so we can just pretend it was an accident and—

(EMERY flicks more paint at the papers.)

EMERY

(flick) One for me. (flick) One for you. (flick) One for Micah.

BLAIR

Alright, that seems like a good stopping point.

EMERY

Hmm, I don't know, it feels a little uneven...

(EMERY does one final, dramatic flick.)

Okay now I'm done.

BLAIR

Emery, those were little kid's drawings!

EMERY

Drawings they had no say in.

BLAIR

They also didn't get a say in having paint splattered on them.

(Beat. EMERY lets that sink in.)

EMERY

Let's just... let's just get out of here. I'll deal with this later and make sure everyone knows you had no part in it, okay?

BLAIR

That's not what I care about.

EMERY

What do you care about? The kids? Me? I'm fine. I'm great. Never better, actually.

BLAIR

I know we aren't exactly... friends friends, but you don't have to shut me out. We all got that news this morning, we're all dealing with it in different ways—

EMERY

You want me to talk? My acquaintance who was probably actually my friend just committed suicide. My friend who wants to be more than that is currently intaking more caffeine than calories. And my ex who I'm just doing my best to tolerate can't stop self-medicating with who-knows-what. This is just paint. Washable paint. Visible paint. I'm so sick of everything being invisible, you know?

(BLAIR is speechless for a moment.)

BLAIR

I'm so sorry, Emery. Do you... want a hug?

EMERY

Yeah um I'm not really a hugging type... But thanks.

(Awkward pause)

You must think I'm insane. And a total bitch.

BLAIR

I don't think you're insane.

EMERY

But you *do* think I'm a bitch.

BLAIR

I think you try really hard to be a bitch, but you're not actually.

(EMERY looks down, then away, then pulls out phone.)

EMERY

I'm late for class. Don't worry about all... (gestures) this, I'll deal with it later.

(EMERY rushes off. Blackout.)

Scene 6: Sweat

Stage right. A blank white screen/backdrop. Strobe lights flicker throughout the scene.

(WREN, headphones in, zoned out, runs in place. MICAH enters and starts jogging in place off to the side. WREN catches MICAH out of the corner of eye, peaks over, turns back, starts to sprint in place then stops, yanks out headphones, breathless. MICAH stops running and looks at WREN.)

MICAH

Yikes, are you good?

(WREN screams.)

Sooo... is that a no?

WREN

I'm fiiiiineee; I'm just developing psychosis from sleep deprivation. Or having an aneurism. Or a stroke. I need to google these symptoms.

(MICAH stares blankly at WREN.)

No, this is not—You're dead. I know for a fact that you are dead.

MICAH

Ughhh I know. But I look so alive, don't I? Almost as alive as I looked two days ago...

WREN

It just doesn't make any sense. You were going to get your PhD.

MICAH

Wanna know a secret? I got so hung up on one question that I flunked my GRE's.

WREN

But you... you were gonna cure Alzheimer's or something.

MICAH

Yeah well I hit a road block in the first section of my thesis, and I never went any further. But the real question is, where are *you* going, Wren?

WREN

Uhhh management? Law school maybe?

MICAH

Hmm yeah or burnout. You ever google *those* symptoms?

WREN

Okay, that's it. You need to go. I don't have time to be talking to ghosts.

(WREN tries to turn away, but MICAH grabs WREN'S shoulders)

MICAH

You're right. It's only a matter of time before your skin starts to rot and everyone sees you for the walking corpse that you are.

(WREN collapses in MICAH'S arms. Blackout.)

Moment: Lying to The Health Center

Center spotlight on an oddly shaped chair that makes it difficult to sit up straight.

(WREN sits in the chair, a little unsteady.)

WREN

No really, I think I was just a little dehydrated. I forgot to carry my water bottle around, and it was warmer out than I expected this time of year... Global warming is a crazy thing, isn't it? ... Yeah no I ate... Right, yeah, I've got a fast metabolism, lucky, right? ... It just gets ahead of me sometimes... My blood pressure?... Right yeah that runs in the family, not much I can do about genetics, y'know? Could be worse I guess... Anyway, I've got some work to do before night class sooo if I could just go...? ...Yeah, I'm sure... It was just a fluke thing...

(Lights shift, WREN changes posture.)

The thing is...

(WREN checks phone)

Ooh actually I super don't have time for a dramatic monologue, sorry.

(Lights shift, WREN gets up quickly, maybe a little too quickly.)

No really, I promise I'll take it easy. Have a nice day!

Scene 7: Feelings

Stage right. There is a faint projection of a tutoring center onto the backdrop.

(BLAIR faces the backdrop deep in thought. MICAH enters. BLAIR turns and gasps.)

MICAH

How was your shift?

(BLAIR looks around in panic.)

You were always such a great tutor.

(BLAIR stutters, unable to speak.)

The phrase you're looking for is "thank you." You're not very good at that, are you? Accepting compliments. Accepting help. Because you're just so selfless, aren't you? You just like to give and give and give and never take.

BLAIR

Who are you? You aren't Micah...

MICAH

You think you knew so much about me, do you? Sweet sweet Blair, if you really knew what I was going through, you would have clung to me like a leech.

BLAIR

What do you mean?

MICAH

Oh come on Blair, you *thrive* on other people's pain. It makes you feel useful and grounded and just so damn *good*.

BLAIR

That's not true.

MICAH

Again, I think what you meant to say was "thank you." You get off on comforting sad people, and I've unleashed an orgy of sad people. You're welcome.

BLAIR

That's disgusting.

MICAH

Maybe. But, tell me, what do you think would happen if you stopped pretending to be a saint for, I don't know, three seconds?

BLAIR

I don't pretend to be a saint, I don't think I'm a saint, I just—

MICAH

Right, of course not. So what do you think would happen? Humor me.

BLAIR

I don't know, and I don't want to know.

MICAH

Are you afraid it'd be too much fun? Too freeing? Too natural?

BLAIR

Please leave me alone.

(MICAH wraps a hand around BLAIR's throat.)

MICAH

I hate to break it to you, Blair, but I'm not the demon you're afraid of.

(MICAH releases. BLAIR drops to the ground, shivering.)

Scene 8: Music

Stage left. A counter painted to look like a piano and a plastic bag painted like a backpack on the floor.

(EMERY sits at the piano with a laptop, humming, searching for the note on the piano, then looking back at the laptop.

REESE enters. They exchange glances, then look away, then look back. It is awkward.)

REESE

Forgot my backpack.

(EMERY nods.)

Rehearsal went well today... sort of somber, but everyone was focused, so... that's a plus?

EMERY

(dryly) I guess.

REESE

Arranging a new song?

EMERY

Maybe. I don't know.

REESE

Well... what song is it?

EMERY

It's a mashup.

(REESE waits for EMERY to elaborate. EMERY doesn't.)

REESE

How are you holding up?

EMERY

Fine.

REESE

You sure?

EMERY

Nope.

(Awkward pause. They both start to say something. They stop. Another awkward pause.)

EMERY

Why are you lying to everyone about your friendship with Micah?

REESE

Wow. Um, I don't know? Maybe I'd prefer to mourn alone?

EMERY

And just to clarify, by mourn you mean medicate?

REESE

Jesus, Emery. Is this really the right time to lecture me?

EMERY

Isn't it? Micah is dead, and you're headed towards a joint-funeral.

REESE

Right, okay, and you're the picture of sanity, huh?

EMERY

No, I'm not. Because I'm not a fucking picture; I'm a person. A real person.

REESE

What does that even mean?

EMERY

Nothing.

(pause)

You know what people would say at your funeral? Reese was such a warm, energetic, cheerful friend and role model, full of so much life, love, passion. And they'll grieve for a person who never existed.

REESE

And what about *you*, Emery? You know the real me, right? Tell me, would you grieve at all?

EMERY

You're already dead to me.

(Beat.)

REESE

How long have you been planning that line?

EMERY

Two months? Maybe three?

REESE

Wow. Long time.

EMERY

Yeah, it fell a little flat, didn't it? It would've had way more zing a month ago.

REESE

I don't think a lack of "zing" is really your problem.

(Awkward pause.)

Look, I could use a friend right now, and even though you won't admit it, you could too. Can we please just try to be friends?

EMERY

Depends, do you want a real friend, or do you want someone who will smile at you in rehearsal and improv stupid little "bits" with you and pretend everything is fine?

REESE

Would that really be so impossible?

(EMERY snorts.)

I'm serious. Tell me it wasn't easy to slip into banter like that. Tell me it didn't feel nice.

(EMERY looks away.)

Swallow your pride for two seconds, and you might find it's a lot easier to get through the day.

EMERY

Stop sabotaging relationships, and you might find it's a lot easier to get through life.

(REESE is speechless for a moment, then laughs bitterly.)

REESE

You're such a bitch.

EMERY

You wanna go there? You're so *nice* Reese. So fucking nice. But if you think smiling at strangers makes up for treating the people who care about you like shit, you're an idiot.

REESE

I didn't want to hurt you, Emery. I was trying so hard not to—

EMERY

No, I understand all the fucked-up reasons you did what you did, and yeah, I even still care about you in spite of it all, but I refuse to play nice. I refuse to play any of your games or ride your crazy self-destructive roller coaster. And if that makes me a bitch, then fine, yeah... I'm a bitch!

(Lights flicker.)

What was that?
REESE

I don't know...
EMERY

Did you... No...
REESE

No.
EMERY

Never mind.
REESE

(Awkward pause)

Well, this was a great talk. Hope your little speech felt good.

It did.
EMERY

Great.
REESE

Perfect. Are we done here?
EMERY

Are *you* done?
REESE

Oh I'm *so* done.
EMERY

Great. I have work to do.
REESE

So do I.
EMERY

(REESE snatches backpack and exits. EMERY returns to the piano.)

Moment: Lying to a Higher Power

Spotlight on same setting.

(EMERY sits at the piano outside the spotlight, plucking out notes. After a moment, EMERY bangs on the keys, then gets up and paces into the spotlight.)

Dear God, or gods, or whoever is screwing with my life. It's almost like someone is sitting in a coffeeshop somewhere, sipping a chai latte and musing, "what else can I do to make Emery break?" And yeah yeah I know that's an incredibly self-centered way to view everything, it's just... I don't care anymore.

(Lights shift. Emery changes posture.)

But the thing is, I do care. I care so much—too much—about everything. And I've never let go, never really lost control, always clenched all my muscles trying to contain this... this surge...

But what if... for just a second...

(Emery raises a hand and the spotlight flickers in and out. Sparks shoot out. We hear glass shatter.

WREN, BLAIR and REESE appear onstage, scattered, absorbed in their own routines, WREN does crunches, BLAIR reads and takes notes, REESE binge-eats.

EMERY waves one hand, and time speeds up. They perform their routines at hyper-speed. EMERY waves another hand, and time slows down. They perform their routines in slow motion. EMERY waves both hands, and time stops. They freeze. EMERY collapses, overcome by the power. Blackout.)

Scene 9: Wine and Pizza

Stage right. A messy twin bed slightly overlain with the projection of a neat bed.

(WREN continues doing crunches. There is a knock on the door. WREN ignores it, too focused. BLAIR enters, holding a box of pizza and a bottle of wine.)

BLAIR

I ordered pizza.

(WREN stops, and stares at the pizza with slight disgust.)

It won't kill you. I promise.

WREN

Mmmm are you sure about that? Because if it's from Papa John's, honestly all bets are off.

BLAIR

You're impossible.

(BLAIR lays the pizza box open on the floor, moves around clutter to sit on the bed, and opens the bottle of wine, taking a swig straight from the bottle.)

WREN

Ooh straight from the bottle. 12/10 for class.

BLAIR

It's been a long day.

WREN

No, I totally feel you; it was the longest day. Today was an entire week in one day.

BLAIR

It's been years. I'm pretty sure I'm now in my thirties.

WREN

You've aged well, my friend.

(Beat.)

BLAIR

Wren... I care about you, and with everything that just happened, I'm worried that... that you... You know what? Let's skip that part. This thing you're doing, what's it about? I'm pretty sure it's more complicated than body image, or control, or a complicated relationship with food. So what is it? What is it that's eating away at you?

WREN

Wow, bonus points for the new approach. I love how you totally combined your knowledge with this tough love no nonsense tone that still like, recognizes and validates an internal struggle. You are going to be a great therapist someday.

(BLAIR groans and takes a long swig of wine.)

BLAIR

You're so frustrating, you know that? This whole thing just makes me so... thirsty...

WREN

Whoa whoa whoa what? I um, wow, I think of you like a sibling... and I thought we were on the same page about—

BLAIR

No, god no, we are on the same page... I don't know why I said that... I'm just literally very non-sexually thirsty right now...

(BLAIR takes another huge swig of wine.)

WREN

Are you trying to tell me I'm driving you to drink?

BLAIR

No, this... this isn't helping... I need water.

(BLAIR runs offstage leaving WREN confused.)

WREN stares at the pizza intensely. Finally, WREN picks up a piece and takes one slow, tortured bite. Suddenly, WREN is devouring the pizza like a wild animal.

BLAIR returns chugging a bottle of water. They gape at each other.)

WREN

Is it dry in here?

BLAIR

Definitely. My throat feels like sandpaper.

WREN

Yeah no my skin feels like it's gonna crack off or shrivel up or whatever skin does when it's dry...

(WREN takes another piece of pizza and starts smearing the grease on his/her skin, then sees BLAIR staring, and stops, curling the pizza into a ball and shoving it in his/her mouth. WREN speaks with a full mouth:

I don't know what's happening to me.

BLAIR

Well... when was the last time you had pizza? Or any food at all?

WREN

Ummm I don't know if that's what it was...

BLAIR

Of course that's what it was.

WREN

Maybe don't tell me what I'm experiencing, okay?

(BLAIR finishes the water bottle.)

BLAIR

This isn't working... I must be getting sick.

WREN

Gross, don't get too close to me. I high-key can't get sick right now.

(WREN bites into another piece of pizza.)

I need meat. Do you have any meat?

BLAIR

You're a vegetarian. Your blood must be so fresh... and caffeinated...

WREN

Uh okay... That doesn't really answer my question...

BLAIR

What was your question?

WREN

Ummm... I don't know... There's so much flesh on your bones...

BLAIR

There are so many veins under your skin...

(pause)

WREN

I need...

BLAIR

I need...

(BLAIR and WREN lunge at each other and start making out in a violent, clumsy way. BLAIR bites WREN'S neck and sucks. WREN pulls away and bites into BLAIR'S shoulder. BLAIR struggles to get back to WREN'S neck. WREN pushes BLAIR off.)

What the

BLAIR

fuck.

WREN

(Blackout.)

Scene 10: Vomit

Stage right. The bed is now draped with a reflective blanket/cover.

(REESE kneels on the floor, hugging a metal trash can. There is a knock on the door. REESE pulls the trigger and vomits. MICAH enters hesitantly.)

MICAH

Sorry I... I didn't mean to... are you sick?

REESE

Are you serious?

(MICAH stares wide-eyed at REESE)

Stop haunting me.

MICAH

Um... sorry...

(MICAH turns away)

REESE

Sorry, that was mean... I just need to be alone right now, okay?

MICAH

Yeah... of course...

(REESE turns back to the trash can, then looks back at MICAH.)

REESE

What are you still doing here? ... You leave and then you—

MICAH

Kill myself? Yeah, this isn't a flashback; it's a haunting. Now *this* is a flashback.

(Lights flicker. MICAH pulls REESE up onto the bed, and they sit next to each other.)

REESE

What are you still doing up?

MICAH

I don't sleep much. I can never turn my thoughts off. Do you have trouble turning your thoughts off too?

REESE

Nah, I'm just a night person. And also a morning person.

MICAH

I don't think that's a thing.

REESE

Sure it is.

(pause)

So what kind of thoughts keep you awake?

MICAH

What thoughts don't keep me awake? Equations I haven't solved yet, and ones I invented, black holes, alternate dimensions, things I wish people would say to me, things I wish I could say to people...

REESE

Why don't you just say them? What's the worst that could happen?

MICAH

No one would listen.

(REESE stares at MICAH, confused.)

Reese, you have such a strong presence, and I... I fade into the background like I'm not really there at all.

REESE

That's not true. You're one of the smartest people here... and one of the few who might actually leave a mark.

MICAH

And my mark will be a list of achievements and awards... not a person.

(pause)

And say I don't leave behind those things? Then... then I'm just nothing at all.

REESE

Sounds kinda peaceful. That's basically what nirvana is, right?

MICAH

Uh... not quite...

REESE

Well um...

(REESE pauses, then puts on a cheesy grin and jokes)

REESE

You want identities? I've got plenty.

(MICAH forces a laugh. MICAH begins to actually laugh with a sort of sinister hysteria.)

REESE

Micah? Are you okay?

MICAH

No, I'm not okay. I'm dead, asshole.

REESE

This isn't you... You were kind and gentle and—

MICAH

And miserable. And *you* pushed me away and brushed off my pain with stupid jokes.

REESE

I was trying to cheer you up. I thought I was helping.

MICAH

How many times have you told yourself that today? Believe it yet?

(REESE is speechless.)

You're so good at lying to yourself. It's fine; maybe if I'd had your talent for self-deception, I'd still be here. Nothing wrong with being in the business of self-preservation... though your methods are a little questionable.

REESE

Can you just say what you came here to say?

MICAH

I could... but the words would be more valuable coming from you.

REESE

Fine. I wasn't there for you when you needed me... or in the way that you needed me, and now you're dead. And I blame myself for that. Is that what you want to me say?

MICAH

I'm not here to play the blame game; I just want you to be honest.

REESE

I know I should tell people we were friends... it's not that I'm embarrassed or anything—

MICAH

Wow, I didn't think you were, but now I'm starting to.

REESE

I just feel guilty.

MICAH

Why?

REESE

I told you; I wasn't there for you.

MICAH

And why weren't you?

REESE

I missed the signs I guess... I didn't understand how serious—

MICAH

Wrong. Try again.

REESE

I wasn't looking for the signs because I was too wrapped up in my own shit.

MICAH

No, but getting warmer.

REESE

Fine! I noticed the signs, and I brushed them off. But I never imagined you would—

MICAH

I don't think you're giving your imagination enough credit.

REESE

I didn't know—

MICAH

Of course you knew. Because you *know*. You get it. And *that's* why you let me turn into a ghost right in front of you... isn't it?

(pause, REESE looks away)

You couldn't risk showing me what you really are, not even to save me.

REESE

And what am I?

MICAH

You already know that.

REESE

I don't want to play this game anymore.

MICAH

But the game is just getting started.

(REESE gets up and turns away from MICAH.)

Go on, turn your back on me *again*. Stare out at the full moon and tell it you never knew me. It doesn't matter. I can still see what a monster you are. And the moon can make *everyone* see.

(REESE howls in pain. MICAH grins. REESE turns back in horror, and sinks down, contorting in anguish around the trash can. REESE vomits violently.)

Enjoy being both a night creature and a morning person.

(MICAH exits, leaving REESE writhing on the floor. Blackout.)

Scene 11: Moonlight

A suggested forest. Very colorful.

(EMERY enters barefoot with wild hair, flowing black layers of clothing, and claw-like nails and wanders around, mumbling.

REESE howls from offstage.

BLAIR enters with pale skin, dark reddish purple circles around her eyes, and tight, dark or red clothing. BLAIR spots EMERY, sneaks up from behind and goes for the throat. EMERY whips around, raises a hand, and BLAIR sinks to the ground, weakening.

WREN enters with sickly greenish skin, sunken in eyes, looking generally disheveled. WREN stumbles towards BLAIR, but EMERY grabs WREN in fascination. BLAIR gets up and runs towards both of them, and they fight sloppily for a moment.

REESE runs on, naked, panicked. They all stop and stare for a moment.

MICAH enters calmly, weaving between them.)

MICAH

Welcome.

(End of Act I.)

ACT II

Prologue: Seeing the Truth

The forest.

(WREN, BLAIR, EMERY, and REESE stand frozen, neutral.)

MICAH walks between them and stops at WREN. MICAH taps WREN, who snaps into a zombielike pose but remains frozen.)

MICAH

Some people thrive on stress. They're fueled by the burn out... until it starts to burn through their skin. They avoid their thoughts for so long they don't know how to think anymore... That was never my problem. I was all thoughts all the time—a disembodied brain not cut out for this world.

(MICAH walks over and taps BLAIR, who crosses both arms over his/her chest like a vampire in a coffin.)

Some people live for others. They heal everyone else's pain to ignore their own... until they get addicted to it, and they ignore their own heart so long it stops beating, and they don't even notice... Not me. I couldn't stop noticing the hole in my chest.

(MICAH moves to EMERY. With a single tap, she hunches like a hag.)

Some people can at least fall apart in style. Their breakdowns are artistic, their inability to fit in is trendy. They never actually lose control... But that control comes at a price. A sort of... freezing that never lets you move on... We may be more similar than I thought.

(MICAH walks over to tap REESE, who falls down on all fours, head tilted up like a howling wolf.)

Some people are so good at pretending everything is fine that they can even convince themselves... until the truth inside them starts to battle its way to the surface. But I've never been good at pretending. I'm completely transparent. Everything that I am is right on the surface, screaming to be noticed...

(REESE howls. This wakes everyone from their freeze, and they explore the positions they find themselves in.)

REESE shivers and scampers off.)

WREN moans and stumbles off.

BLAIR lunges for EMERY'S neck. EMERY snaps around, waves an arm, and BLAIR falls back and runs off. EMERY approaches MICAH.)

EMERY

Micah? What are we doing here?

(MICAHA stares blankly at EMERY.)

EMERY

What's going on? We must be in the woods for a reason. What is it? A task? A quest?

MICAHA

The harder you try to succeed the sooner you will fail.

(MICAHA exits.)

EMERY

But that doesn't make any sense! Fail at what? Micah! Micah, come back!

(EMERY produces a spellbook, as if out of nowhere.)

You can't hide from me! I'll draw you out with a spell!

(EMERY flips through the spellbook, tapping the page excitedly when she finds the spell.)

I just need a corpse...

(WREN moans from offstage. EMERY runs off, determined. Blackout.)

WREN

BRRRRRAAAAIIIIIIINNNNNNNSSSS

(WREN bites EMERY'S head. She cries out and tries to bat WREN away.)

EMERY grabs WREN'S face, holding it away from hers and accidentally rips off some of WREN'S skin.

WREN moans. EMERY gags and shakes the skin off her hand.)

EMERY

Okay don't panic; I can fix this for you. There must be a spell.

(EMERY goes for the spellbook. WREN snatches it from her.)

WREN

Booooooooookkkkkkkk.

EMERY

Yes, that's a book... a very important book, so if you could just hand it over...

(WREN rips out one of the pages.)

Look I know you haven't actually opened a book since freshman year and somehow still have a 4.0, but that's not what you do with—

(WREN starts gleefully ripping out the pages.)

Seriously, Wren, stop it. Without that book, I can't—

WREN

BOOOOOOOKKKKKK

(WREN tears the spine open, and the pages fly everywhere.)

EMERY

NO!

(EMERY drops to ground desperately trying to pick up the pages.)

WREN

BRAAAIIIIIIINNNNNNNNNNSSSSSS!

(WREN goes straight for EMERY'S head. EMERY panics, throws her hands out, panicking, and zaps WREN with her powers.)

WREN moans and shakes violently, his/her eyeball falling into EMERY'S palm. She gags again.)

(WREN moans. EMERY puts her hands on WREN'S shoulders.)

EMERY

Wren! Breathe.

(EMERY breathes.)

WREN

Bbbrrreeeeaaathe

EMERY

Close enough. Okay now hold still. I'm just going to pop this sucker back in...

(EMERY tries to put the eyeball back in WREN'S eye, but WREN thrashes around, trying to bite her hand.)

Stop that I'm trying to help—

(WREN moans and bites EMERY'S hand. She drops the eyeball.)

Ow! Okay fuck this, you're on your own.

(EMERY goes towards one side as BLAIR enters, blood dripping from the mouth, splattered on his/her clothes.

BLAIR sees EMERY and hisses. EMERY sees BLAIR and screams.

EMERY heads towards the other side just as REESE enters, also covered in blood and wearing dead rabbit furs.

REESE sees EMERY and howls. EMERY backs away.

BLAIR, REESE, and WREN close in on her, covering her in blood, animal fur, and skin. They start tearing up the loose pages and smearing those with blood as well.

EMERY raises her arms, cries out, and everyone freezes. She grimaces, wipes herself off and exits.)

Scene 2: Claws and Fangs

A sexy forest, the trees curved like
naked silhouettes.

(REESE prowls through the forest, still covered in blood and animal skins.

BLAIR lurks through the shadows, still covered in blood.

They sniff each other out and meet.)

Reese. Hi.

BLAIR

Hey... uh... come here often?

REESE

Where is *here* exactly?

BLAIR

Uh... the woods? It was just a dumb line—

REESE

And what happened to you? You look like you got attacked by a wolf or something.

BLAIR

Something like that... What about you? Trip to the dentist gone wrong?

REESE

(BLAIR doesn't respond, but stares at REESE, distracted.)

Blair?

Sorry... I was distracted by your pulse... it's racing...

BLAIR

(defensive) How do you know that?

REESE

I can hear it... And I can see the vein throbbing in your neck...

BLAIR

That's so... hot...

REESE

(BLAIR laughs uncomfortably.)

Sorry. That was—

BLAIR

No, no worries, you're fine.

REESE

No, *you're* fine.

(BLAIR laughs again, then sighs, looking REESE up and down.)

What?

BLAIR

Nothing... nothing...

REESE

Blair.

BLAIR

Reese.

REESE

Your pupils are dilated.

BLAIR

And you're blushing.

(REESE and BLAIR step closer. They take deep breaths in through their noses.)

REESE

Mmmmm mint. Roses. And... is that licorice?

BLAIR

Maybe it is. Now you... you smell like musk, cedar... and ooh bourbon... I don't know if I want to taste your blood or your—

REESE

I don't know if I want to tear you to shreds or tear your clothes off...

(BLAIR and REESE walk around each other like predators stalking prey.)

BLAIR

Must hunt—

REESE

Must hump—

(They pounce on each other, making out violently.)

(BLAIR pins REESE to the ground and bites REESE'S neck. REESE howls as BLAIR sucks his/her blood.

REESE flips BLAIR over and starts tearing at his/her clothes, half-ripping, half-biting them off sloppily and inefficiently.)

REESE

I want—

(REESE claws at BLAIR.)

BLAIR

I need—

(BLAIR runs her fangs along REESE'S skin.)

EMERY runs straight into this scene.)

EMERY

What the hell is going on?

(REESE growls at EMERY, biting the hem of her clothing.

BLAIR grabs EMERY'S wrist and pulls her down, tracing the veins up her arm.)

BLAIR

You're so tense... Just relax...

(BLAIR rubs EMERY'S shoulders and bites her neck.)

EMERY/REESE (IN UNISON)

I've/She's never been good at that.

REESE

But I know just where to massage...

(REESE tries to undress EMERY while BLAIR sucks her blood. EMERY, failing to shake them off, zaps both of them.

BLAIR and REESE convulse for a moment, then orgasm.)

EMERY

Jesus Christ I've got to get out of here...

REESE

(if male) You can ride my broomstick all the way home.

(if female) Don't you want my pussy, Witch?

EMERY

Okay, wow, you are not allowed to flirt with me. Especially not like that.

REESE

Sooo many rules. (to Blair) She's so uptight.

BLAIR

We can fix that.

(BLAIR and REESE circle EMERY.)

EMERY

Nope no no nope. This is a terrible dream, and I'm choosing to wake up from it right now.

(EMERY squeezes eyes closed, then opens them to find REESE and BLAIR on opposites of her neck and freaks out.

WREN enters and stumbles towards them, confused. REESE and BLAIR start making out with WREN, who moans with pleasure.

EMERY takes advantage of the opportunity to slip away. Blackout.)

Moment: Tasting the Truth

(Spotlight on BLAIR.)

BLAIR

I don't really know how to feel about being a vampire... It's not like me, at all. I'm not the kind of person who would take pleasure out of something that causes pain to another human being... I'm a healer... And now I'm just more like the medieval kind that sucks the plague out of you with leaches...

(BLAIR pulls WREN into the spotlight and starts drinking WREN'S blood, alternating between speaking and drinking.)

Wren's blood is a little bitter... probably from all the coffee... or the fact that he/she is a zombie. Wren definitely got the short end of the mythical creatures stick, and if all of this turns out to be real... and permanent, well that'll really suck for Wren.

(BLAIR pushes WREN out of the spotlight and pulls REESE into it and starts drinking REESE'S blood, alternating between speaking and drinking.)

Reese's blood is much sweeter... though it's got a sort of woody aftertaste. Reese is definitely a werewolf. I don't think he/she has fully embraced that yet. I mean, sure, werewolves are sexy and fun in pop culture, but the reality is completely different. Reese is in for a rude awakening.

(BLAIR pushes REESE out of the spotlight and, with great effort, drags EMERY into the spotlight and drinks her blood, alternating between speaking and drinking.)

Emery's blood is really hard to get at, but it's so rich... so many complicated flavors... and carbonated with magic. There's so much she could do with all that power, but she's so afraid of losing control it's holding her back.

(EMERY struggles against BLAIR, who continues to suck her blood.

EMERY screams and the lights flicker. Blackout.)

Scene 3: Hunger

A candy forest. Everything is edible.

(WREN stumbles through the forest and gets stuck on one of the candy trees.
WREN moans.

(REESE sniffs his/her way onstage, then bumps straight into WREN.)

REESE

Wren! Hey! What... what are you doing?

WREN

Stuuuuucccckkkkk

REESE

Yeah I know we're all stuck in the woods, but what are you doing right now?

WREN

STUUUUUCKKKK

REESE

Ohhhh you're stuck to the tree... made of... candy? Oh my god the trees are made of candy!
Everything is made of candy!

(REESE runs around like an excited puppy, trying to lick all the trees.

WREN moans and thrashes about, trying to get free.)

WREN

Hunnnnnngggrryyyyy

REESE

We probably shouldn't...

WREN

Awww

(REESE'S stomach growls)

REESE

Then again... we could take a little... moderation, right?

WREN

Modderrraaationnn

(WREN turns and starts to nibble at the tree he/she is stuck to.)

(REESE breaks off chunks of the forest, starting with tiny pieces that get a little larger each time.)

REESE

Or a lot.

(REESE breaks off a comically large chunk. WREN breaks free.)

WREN

FREEEEEEEEEEE

(They both begin to ravage the forest like vultures.

REESE, still not satisfied, eyes WREN and picks at some of WREN'S loose skin.)

REESE

You don't mind if I take some of this, do you?

(WREN moans and bites REESE, who howls.

They pull back, pause, then begin biting themselves.)

This is fine, right?

(WREN shrugs/moans, and they resume biting themselves.

EMERY enters.)

EMERY

Wren? Reese? Are you... eating yourselves?

REESE

Go away Witch, we're fine!

WREN

FIHHHHIINNNNNNNEEEEEEE

EMERY

Yeah no auto-cannibalism is not what I would call fine.

(EMERY steps towards them, and REESE runs to WREN.)

REESE

Oh no. Wren, we've made a terrible mistake!

EMERY

It'll be okay, let's just—

REESE

--We've walked straight into the witch's trap!

EMERY

--get out of here... Wait, what?

WREN

TRAAAAAAAAAAPPPPPPPP!

REESE

I see what's going on here. You want to lure us to your cottage, stuff us in cages, fatten us up—

(WREN moans in horror.)

And eat us!

EMERY

I'm not the enemy here! I'm just trying to keep you from eating yourselves.

REESE

Right, so that *you* can eat us!

EMERY

No!

WREN

WIIIIIIITTTT*TTCHHHHHH

(EMERY groans in frustration. Lights flicker.

WREN and REESE run away, spooked.)

Scene 4: Control

A realistic forest background.

(EMERY enters in a frenzy.)

EMERY

Micah! Micah, I know you have to be controlling all of this, so please just show yourself!

(MICAH sneaks in from behind EMERY.)

You know what? I'm done. I quit. I'm not playing this stupid game anymore. I'm just going to sit right here until sunrise.

MICAH

Sure you are.

(EMERY turns, sees MICAH, and screams.)

Someone's on edge.

EMERY

I'll show you on edge. What the fuck is going on? None of this makes any sense. Why am I surrounded by sex-crazed auto-cannibals?

MICAH

Were you expecting something more normal?

EMERY

No, I just—I was expecting something with a purpose. What am I doing here?

MICAH

It would appear you're failing. Like always.

EMERY

How can I be failing if there's no task?

MICAH

Everyone else has been going with the flow, giving in to their most basic human needs—

EMERY

You mean animal needs?

MICAH

No—

EMERY

But—

MICAH

Stop. Just stop trying to control all of... everything.

EMERY

But I don't know how to do that.

MICAH

How about letting someone else drive?

EMERY

What?

(MICAH seizes her, taking hold of her arms. She shivers, then goes limp like a puppet.)

BLAIR enters, prepared to fight for EMERY'S blood. MICAH pushes EMERY towards BLAIR, speaking as EMERY'S lips move.)

MICAH/EMERY

Here. Take it.

BLAIR

Is this a trick? There's something off about you... I can sense it.

MICAH/EMERY

No trick. I promise.

(MICAH forces EMERY to pick up a rock and slice open the palm of her hand. MICAH holds EMERY'S hand out to BLAIR.)

Go on. I know you're craving it.

(BLAIR hesitates, then seizes EMERY'S hand and drinks from it desperately.)

Can you hear my heart? How heavy it is? How weighed down? Can you taste my fear of failure, rejection, and—

(EMERY yanks herself free and runs away from both MICAH and BLAIR.)

BLAIR

Emery, where are you going? What's wrong?

MICAH regains control of her as WREN enters. MICAH forces EMERY to grab WREN and pushes her into a kiss. WREN moans happily.)

MICAH/EMERY

I want you, Wren. I ache for you. I'm just so afraid... afraid I'll destroy you or you'll destroy me.

Moment: Hearing the Truth

(Spotlight on REESE. EMERY is frozen on the ground.)

REESE

So what am I supposed to say? “I’m sorry I hurt you”? What good does that do? “It was never about you; it was about me and my need to ruin everything good that comes into my life”? Lame. “I could feel you getting close to the real me, and I was afraid... for me... for you...” Gross.

(REESE moves, and the spotlight follows REESE over to the frozen WREN.)

What am I supposed to say? “That thing we just did was not fine? Nothing we do is fine? We’re not fine”? Then what? We have a meaningful conversation where we both agree to try out therapy?

(REESE scoffs.)

We don’t talk about that stuff for a reason.

(REESE moves and the spotlight follows REESE over to the frozen BLAIR.)

What am I supposed to say? “I’m not attracted to you at all”? “I actually find you annoying”?

(imitating BLAIR)

“Then why would you flirt with me Reese?”

(imitating himself/herself)

“Because I flirt with everyone Blair. Because it makes people like me, and I like the validation of people flirting back.”

MICAH’S VOICE

What don’t you just say these things? What’s the worst that could happen?

REESE

Everyone would hate me as much as I hate myself.

(Blackout.)

Scene 5: Shadows

A shadowy forest.

(EMERY enters cautiously, struggling to see. BLAIR enters after her, also unable to see her.)

BLAIR

Emery, are you here?

EMERY

Who said that?

BLAIR

It's just me, Blair.

EMERY

Oh. Sorry I'm already a little light-headed from my last donation.

BLAIR

Actually I came to see if you were okay... Except I can't *see* anything...

EMERY

I'm fine. Great. Living the dream.

(EMERY and BLAIR back up into each other and jump, startled.)

BLAIR

I think you're confusing dreams and nightmares.

(Beat.)

I know Micah made you say and do all those things. But they were also true, weren't they?

EMERY

I don't want to talk about this.

BLAIR

You're the one who said she was so sick of everything being invisible. You're the one who gives people shit for not being themselves, but—

EMERY

Why don't you go find a coffin to sleep in and leave me alone?

BLAIR

I'm not just going to leave you alone in the dark.

EMERY

Well... what if I make a fire?

(EMERY feels around on the ground for kindling.)

BLAIR

Can't you use magic? There must be an illumination spell.

EMERY

Um... *lumos*?

(EMERY waves a hand. Nothing happens.)

Guess not.

BLAIR

Harry Potter? Really?

EMERY

Well Wren tore up my spellbook, so I'm a little in the dark on this whole magic thing. Pun intended.

BLAIR

What about the... zapping...?

EMERY

Yeah that just kind of happens.

BLAIR

You can't control it?

EMERY

Of course I can... I'm just... still working out the bugs. Why do you care? Are you afraid of the dark?

BLAIR

You can't control it.

EMERY

And you're afraid of the dark! A vampire who's afraid of the dark. That's really inconvenient.

BLAIR

Isn't everyone at least a little uncomfortable in total darkness?

EMERY

Not me. I love it.

BLAIR

Emery, I may not be able to see you, but I can hear your heartbeat. It's erratic... but heavy...

EMERY

At least it's still beating, vampire.

(BLAIR fumbles in the darkness trying to find EMERY, who falls back into the shadows and disappears.)

BLAIR

Emery?

(EMERY cackles. BLAIR follows the sound. EMERY cackles from the opposite direction.)

Where are you?

(BLAIR runs into a tree and touches the branch.)

Is this you?

(An erratic heartbeat pounds, louder and louder.)

Emery, I know you're there. Please, let's find our way to a clearing. It's so dark I can't even see my own hand in front of my face.

MICAH'S VOICE

Can't hear your own heartbeat either. How do you know *you're* there?

BLAIR

Who said that?

(REESE howls.)

Reese?

(WREN moans.)

Wren? Are you here?

(EMERY cackles.)

Emery? Where is everyone?

(BLAIR'S voice echoes repeatedly. *Where is everyone. Where is everyone. Where is everyone.* Blackout.)

Moment: Speaking the Truth

(The spotlight shines on WREN. WREN moans, cowering from the light, trying to escape it, but it follows him/her. WREN sighs.)

WREN

Ummm... I... ummmm... UGH! I really don't have time for this! I have a paper due tomorrow!

(WREN groans and tries to break free of the spotlight but finds he/she can only move in slow motion.)

Fine! Fine. Fine. You want a monologue? Here's a monologue.

(WREN takes a moment to collect himself/herself, then dives in:

Sometimes... sometimes this fear, this voice that tells me I'm worthless and everyone hates me, this surge of memories of every terrible, awkward, regrettable moment in my life, this black hole of uncertainty engulfs me like a heat wave, a dry heat that makes me want to claw at my throat and shed my skin. But I won't give in to it... I can't give in to it. I just have to push forward. I just have to try not to think about it. And if I keep piling on things, I'll never have to be alone with my thoughts. If I keep moving, I'll never have to sit alone with my feelings. And the less of me there is, the less I'll have to avoid.

(Beat. WREN takes an exaggerated breath.)

Now can I please leave this fucking forest?

(WREN tries to escape the Spotlight, but it continues to follow him/her. WREN moans in agony.)

Whaaaaaat? What more do you want from me? Listen you stupid spotlight, I just wanna graduate and find a decent job and pay off my student loans and maybe eventually be able to buy a house and be a real person, and I mean, maybe by then we'll have a new president, and the two-party system will be destroyed, and capitalism will crumble, and everything will be fine. I'll be fine. Right?

(WREN looks at the Spotlight for permission to go. The Spotlight doesn't move.)

I mean, in the grand scheme of things, I don't matter. At all. So why would I waste my time on trivial stuff like thinking about things... or caring about people... I'm just trying to survive, y'know?

MICAH'S VOICE

Surviving isn't living.

(WREN looks around for MICAH. Blackout.)

Scene 7: Reflections

A forest of mirrors.

(BLAIR weaves through the mirrors, completely disoriented. MICAH pops out from behind one of them.)

MICAH

Boo!

(BLAIR jumps back, crashing into a mirror.)

BLAIR

Where are we? Where is everyone?

MICAH

You must be getting thirsty.

BLAIR

No... just lonely.

MICAH

That's what I said. Thirsty.

BLAIR

That's not—I'm fine; I'm just lost. I keep thinking I see an exit, but then it's just a reflection of my surroundings...

MICAH

You don't show up in the mirrors, do you?

BLAIR

Do you?

MICAH

No. But I'm dead.

BLAIR

Then what am I?

MICAH

A vampire.

BLAIR

What does that mean?

MICAH

You tell me. You're the one who brags about being good at reading people.

BLAIR

Well that's different, I read other people, not—

MICAH

Read the person in the mirror then.

BLAIR

But I don't show up in mirrors.

MICAH

You'll never find your way out of here if you can't see your reflection.

BLAIR

So we're stuck here?

MICAH

Well... *you're* stuck here.

BLAIR

But you just said—

(MICAH ducks behind and mirror and disappears.)

Micah? Micah you can't just leave me here! Please come back; I need—I can help you! There must be a reason you're here... something you need?

(BLAIR walks towards one mirror to find MICAH standing in it. MICAH adopts BLAIR'S posture. MICAH speaks as BLAIR speaks:

BLAIR/MICAH

Attention?

(BLAIR moves an arm up and down and watches MICAH mirror him/her.)

BLAIR/MICAH

Affection?

(BLAIR and MICAH jump in unison.)

BLAIR/MICAH

The feeling that you're loved, needed, wanted...

(BLAIR reaches out for MICAH, who reaches out, but then falls back, disappearing again. BLAIR'S hand hits the mirror and he/she gasps.)

Is that me?

(BLAIR stares at his/her reflection for a moment, then tears away and exits.)

Scene 8: Warts and Fur

The same forest of mirrors.

(EMERY, now fully transformed into a hag and completely unrecognizable, hobbles onstage. She catches sight of her reflection in the mirrors and hisses at it.

REESE, now fully transformed into a wolf, scampers onstage on all fours. REESE catches his/her own reflection in the mirrors and, thinking it's another wolf, growls at it preparing to attack.

EMERY notices REESE and approaches, putting a hand on his/her shoulder. REESE snaps at her, growling.)

EMERY

Reese?

(REESE howls and attacks, and EMERY zaps him/her. REESE recoils, whimpering.

EMERY regains control and kneels down to REESE'S level, holding out a hand.)

Reese. It's me.

(REESE registers this and slowly becomes more human.)

REESE

Em... Emery?

EMERY

Hi.

(Long, awkward beat.)

REESE

Well shit. We used to be such a hot couple.

(Beat. EMERY laughs, which turns into a cackle, which turns into a hacking cough.)

Uh... you good?

EMERY

(clearing throat) Yeah... Sorry. Reese?

REESE

Yeah?

EMERY

Is that all we were to you? A hot couple?

REESE

No!

(Beat.)

A little. Yeah. But I did care about you Emery, and I know you don't believe me, but I still do.

EMERY

Wish I could say the same.

(REESE snorts.)

What?

REESE

I know you do. You shouldn't; I was so shitty to you. But that's just you, you know, you're not the witch you think you are, you're—

EMERY

Let's go back to the part where you started admitting how shitty you were.

REESE

Can't we just move on?

(EMERY looks away. REESE cracks a smile and gestures to her appearance.)

I mean, it's been what, eighty years?

EMERY

Can you please take this seriously?

REESE

Or maybe you could take things less seriously. Just look around, Em. This is absurd.

EMERY

Absurd? Why do you think we're here, Reese?

REESE

Acid? Shrooms?

EMERY

Micah is dead. And maybe that doesn't mean anything to you—

REESE

It's not that—of course it—but why do I need to fall apart over it? Why do I need to advertise how much it hurts—

EMERY

Because human beings have feelings! And if you keep them bottled up forever, they'll keep haunting you.

REESE

What do you know? Your "bottle" might look a little different than mine, but it's still a bottle.

(Beat. EMERY glances at a mirror.)

EMERY

Yeah, you're right. And all the shit you put me through still haunts me.

REESE

What am I supposed to say to that?

EMERY

I don't know! Maybe you could just let me feel? Let me be mad? Let me be a witch.

(Beat. EMERY faces a mirror, trying to recognize the hag in the reflection.)

REESE sighs and faces the mirror, trying to recognize the wolf in the reflection.)

REESE

I'm sorry I cheated on you.

EMERY

Go on.

REESE

With a professor...

EMERY

You're barely scratching the surface, wolf.

REESE

Um... also for flirting with your sister?

(EMERY turns away from the mirror.)

EMERY

You what?

(REESE grimaces and slowly turns towards EMERY.)

REESE

You didn't know about that?

EMERY

No!

REESE

Well she looks so much like you it was basically a compliment.

EMERY

What is wrong with you?

REESE

I don't know, you tell me! What else did I do wrong, Emery?

EMERY

You know for a dog, you're not very good at digging.

(Beat. They glare at each other. EMERY sighs.)

Let's go a little deeper. You used my insecurities against me to make me feel small. You gaslighted me and convinced me everything was my fault. You dragged me through hell and back, but it was all just a joke to you. You said something cruel; you were just joking. I tried to talk about something that upset me, and--

EMERY/MICAH'S VOICE

--you made it into a joke. You couldn't handle any of my darkness because it reminded you too much of your own.

REESE

I... I don't know what to say—

(BLAIR and WREN emerge holding pitchforks, lit torches and rope.)

BLAIR

There's the wolf!

WREN

And the hag!

EMERY

Wren, you can talk!

(EMERY takes a step towards them, but BLAIR and WREN point their pitchforks at her.)

REESE

Blair? Wren? What's going on—

BLAIR

It talks! The demon! Burn it at the stake!

EMERY

Okay no one is burning anyone at the stake, let's just take a breath—

WREN

Burn them both! We all know witches are the devil's servants!

EMERY

What? Wren, you're an atheist.

WREN

Don't try to seduce me, hideous hag.

(WREN grabs EMERY and starts wrapping the rope around her.)

EMERY

This was always very different in my imagination.

(WREN gives EMERY a confused look, then pokes her with the pitchfork.)

WREN

Silence!

(BLAIR ties up REESE.)

REESE

Stop, both of you! It's me, Reese, and that's Emery!

WREN

Impossible!

BLAIR

You look nothing like Reese and Emery.

WREN

Nothing at all. Reese and Emery are hot. You two hideous creatures won't be hot until we torch you!

REESE

Wait! I can prove it's me, okay? Ask me something only Reese would know!

BLAIR

What's your blood type?

REESE

Um... AB positive I think?

BLAIR

Wrong. Reese is AB negative. I've tasted it.

REESE

Shit that's right...

EMERY

Seriously, Reese?

REESE

Okay okay, ask me something else!

WREN

Which substances were you under the influence of during our last info session?

REESE

Um... I... I don't remember... Adderall... and codine...?

WREN

Also wrong. Cocaine and Xanax was the correct answer.

EMERY

Are you kidding me.

(MICAH appears.)

MICAH

How did you know Micah?

(All look around, then back at REESE. BLAIR and WREN exchange glances and smirk.)

BLAIR

Go on, answer.

(REESE sighs.)

REESE

Micah and I were friends. Maybe best friends. We met in that freshman seminar for super-nerds... back before I lost forty pounds and my virginity and discovered fun and drugs and... and anyway we used to hang out at night when neither one of us could sleep and just... talk. I could never talk to anyone the way I could talk to Micah. Except maybe...

(REESE glances at EMERY.)

But that was different... And I could feel Micah getting too close, so I pushed him/her away because well... that's what I do. I hurt people who care about me, and I push people away who need me. I flirt with people to feel good about myself, and I enable other people's problems to ignore my own.

(Beat. All gape at REESE. MICAH slips away.)

WREN

Actually that was a trick question. Reese didn't know Micah.

BLAIR

And that didn't sound anything like Reese. Reese is nice and friendly.

WREN

And literally anyone but whoever that was.

BLAIR

Burn them!

(BLAIR and WREN push REESE and EMERY onto opposite sides of one of the mirrors. WREN holds up one of the torches dramatically.)

REESE

No! Micah, vouch for me! Micah?

EMERY

This is ridiculous! You're a wolf; just attack them!

REESE

And you're a witch, just use your powers!

(REESE bites BLAIR and breaks free.

EMERY zaps WREN, but a little too intensely. WREN drops the torch and falls to the ground, convulsing.)

EMERY

Wren? No no no, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to—

(REESE has returned to wolf mentality and tries to attack EMERY.

EMERY screams, lights flicker, and she shocks REESE. BLAIR, close by, also gets hit by the zap. They both collapse, convulsing.)

NO!

(Blackout.)

Moment: Melting

(Spotlight on EMERY over WREN'S body.)

EMERY

Fuuuck no fuck. I never meant to do that. Wren? Wren, get up! It's fine. It's fine. You'll be fine.

(EMERY checks for a pulse desperately.)

Come on come on come on, you have to have a pulse. You probably just have poor circulation between you don't eat... or because you're a zombie... Fuck.

(Beat. EMERY starts to hyperventilate, then stops herself.)

It's not too late. I can just do CPR...

(EMERY looks at her hands, horrified.)

Or shock you back to life... Or make it even worse...

(EMERY moves to BLAIR.)

Blair, I'm so sorry. I was always such a jerk to you, and you didn't deserve it. You definitely didn't deserve this... I have to fix this. I can control time... maybe I can rewind it...

(EMERY tries to move her hands, but they're shaking too much, and she slams them on the ground in frustration.)

REESE whimpers, and EMERY goes to his/her side.)

Reese? Reese I'm sorry; I swear it was accident. I didn't want this for you. I really wanted for you to come out of this whole mess okay... better even... And I... I ruined everything!

(EMERY starts to sob and dig her claws into the ground, having a full-blown meltdown.)

Get yourself together, Emery. This doesn't help anyone.

MICAH'S VOICE

It might help you.

EMERY

I can't do this. I can't do this anymore. I can't keep trying to fix everything and keep myself from breaking.

(EMERY releases a shrill, animalistic, satisfying cry and collapses beside REESE.)

Beat.)

(REESE stirs. Still in wolf-mode, he/she nuzzles up against EMERY and licks her cheek.)

EMERY sits up and sees REESE.)

EMERY

Reese! You're okay!

(REESE licks her face like an excited puppy.)

Ahhh... okay that's enough licking. I'm a cat person.

(REESE arches his/her back, stretches, howls, and scampers off.)

WREN moans. EMERY goes to him/her.)

Wren?

WREN

Emmmerryyy... What happened? I don't remember anything.

EMERY

Um... you tried to burn me at the stake, and I zapped you.

WREN

Hmm. Sounds like a casual Tuesday to me.

(Beat. WREN touches EMERY'S gray matted hair. She winces.)

Soooo... This is a look... I kinda like it.

EMERY

Gross. I look gross.

(WREN shrugs and gestures to his/her missing eyeball.)

WREN

Join the club. And anyway... it's your brain I'm after.

(EMERY stares at WREN, speechless. WREN moves towards EMERY, who pulls back apologetically.)

EMERY

Well, in that case, I better run.

(EMERY gets up, starts to exit, then looks back at WREN and smiles. Blackout.)

Scene 9: Freezing

A wintry forest.

(BLAIR and WREN are in the same positions as before. BLAIR starts to sit up, shivering. WREN goes over to BLAIR, also shivering.)

How are you?
WREN

C-c-c-cold...
BLAIR

M-m-me t-too.
WREN

What h-happened?
BLAIR

I'm n-not sure... Something involving f-fire...
WREN

Fire sounds n-n-nice right now.
BLAIR

Y-y-yeah... H-how d-did we get here? W-we were just—
WREN

How d-did we get in the woods in the f-first place? What are we d-doing here at all?
BLAIR

N-no c-clue... Well...
WREN

Well...?
BLAIR

Well M-Micah's dead, and m-maybe we weren't so f-far away.
WREN

S-still aren't... It's f-freezing. I d-don't know how much longer we can surv-vive this.
BLAIR

Surviving isn't enough... we h-have t-to... to live!
WREN

(WREN stares off into space, deep in thought. BLAIR waves a hand in front of WREN'S face.)

BLAIR

Wren? You're sc-caring m-me.

(BLAIR grabs WREN'S face, and WREN snaps out of it and grabs his/hers back.)

WREN

We have to live!

BLAIR

W-what?

(WREN pulls BLAIR up.)

WREN

I... I need to get my heart beating for something... anything... I need to start caring about shit. And you... you need to start listening to your own heart!

(WREN is now bouncing up and down with excitement.)

What do you call that thing where you have like a sudden realization that changes everything?

BLAIR

An ep-p-piphany?

WREN

Yes! An epiphany! I've never had one of those before... I just lost my epiphany virginity!

BLAIR

Cong-gratulations?

WREN

Thank you! Wow I feel so warm and alive... like actually really alive!

BLAIR

Th-that's g-great...

(WREN heads for the exit.)

WREN

I have to go. I have to ride this wave of...

(WREN looks back at BLAIR, sitting helpless and freezing, and comes back.)

I'm a terrible friend, aren't I?

BLAIR

N-no of c-course n-not.

WREN

Oh my god I'm the worst friend. And you're such a good one. You're always trying to help, and I'm soooo stubborn, and what have I ever done for you? Nothing! Literally nothing. But I'm gonna change that. I'm gonna get you out of the cold, Blair.

BLAIR

You really don't have to—

WREN

Soooo what is it?

BLAIR

What's what?

WREN

This thing you do where you worry about everyone else and avoid yourself, what's it about? Because I've been literally running away from my problems for years now, so I get, I do. But my problems *aren't* yours. So what is it for you?

BLAIR

W-wow. B-bonus p-points for the approach...

WREN

Blair, you're freezing to death. You don't have time to deflect.

BLAIR

I... I d-don't kn-kn-know!

(Beat. WREN has another idea.)

WREN

Do you trust me?

BLAIR

M-mostly?

WREN

Good enough. Now hold still.

(WREN grabs BLAIR and with a zombie-like ferocity, rips BLAIR'S heart out. WREN holds the heart, about to bite into it, but then restrains himself/herself.)

BLAIR takes a moment to register what's happened, then freaks out.)

It's fine. It's fine. You'll be fine. Look, your heart is right here. Now you can't ignore it!

BLAIR

What the—what is wrong with you?

WREN

I've already figured out what's wrong with me. Your turn.

(WREN thrusts the heart at BLAIR.)

Listen.

BLAIR

Do I have to?

WREN

Umm yeah this is literally a life or death situation sooo

(BLAIR sighs and takes the heart, holding it to his/her ear.)

BLAIR

It keeps changing pace... like it can't figure out its own beat. And it's... it's empty... like... like knocking on a hollow tree. The sound is so... so haunting and... and sad.

(BLAIR stares at the heart for a moment, entranced by its sound. Suddenly, she shakes her head and pulls away.)

N-no no that can't be what my heart sounds like. Why would it sound like that?

WREN

I don't know. I'm sorry.

BLAIR

You should be sorry! This is your fault! Why would you do this to me? Why would you make listen to that terrible sound?

WREN

I'm sorry!

(Beat. BLAIR glares at WREN.)

No, wait, no, I'm not sorry. I had a feeling it was the right move, and I trusted it. And I was right to. We both know you had to hear that, Blair.

(BLAIR shoves the heart at WREN.)

BLAIR

Put it back. I can't listen to it anymore.

(WREN hesitates.)

(demonic) PUT IT BACK!

(BLAIR fights WREN, and WREN shoves the heart back in BLAIR'S chest. BLAIR collapses, breathing heavily.)

BLAIR

It was so sad... How did I never...

(BLAIR starts to shake, and WREN steadies him/her. Light shift.)

WREN

Hey look, the sun is starting to rise.

(BLAIR looks up. Blackout.)

Scene 10: Hands

The woods at daybreak. Light streams through in pockets, blindingly bright.

(REESE lies in the fetal position, naked, and returned to human form. MICAH enters and stands over REESE.)

MICAH

(somber) Boo.

(REESE wakes up, startled, squinting.)

I thought you were a morning person.

(REESE remains on the ground, pulling knees into his/her chest, trying to hide his/her nakedness.)

REESE

Is it all over?

(MICAH says nothing but sits beside REESE calmly.)

MICAH

Do you feel human?

REESE

I... yeah, I do.

MICAH

What's it like?

REESE

Like... well... like being naked and waiting for your eyes to adjust to the light.

(REESE raises a hand in front of his/her face, trying to block out the light.)

MICAH raises a hand in front of his/her face.)

MICAH

When you look at your hand, does it feel like yours?

REESE

What?

MICAH

I see the aura around it, the little golden V's of light in between the fingers. And that's all.

(REESE looks at MICAH confused, then studies his/her own hand.)

REESE

I see it waving to people I barely know. Giving high fives to people I barely like. I see it shaking, blurry, warped...

(REESE rotates the hand, palm facing in.)

I see the lines, the tiny creases... My fingerprint.

(MICAH rotates the hand, palm facing in.)

MICAH

My hand looks so smooth. Like it couldn't possibly leave a fingerprint.

(REESE'S fingers curl, and his/her index finger points straight at him/her.)

REESE

I see my finger going towards my throat. It knows exactly where to pull the trigger.

(MICAH's fingers curl into a hand gun, pointed straight at him/her.)

MICAH

I see my hand placing the barrel in my mouth. It knows exactly where to pull the trigger.

(REESE drops hand.)

REESE

I was myself for just a second, and no one recognized me.

(MICAH takes REESE'S hand.)

MICAH

I did.

REESE

I was so afraid of you really seeing me that I refused to really see you. And maybe if I had... for just a second...

MICAH

Reese. Having someone else see you still isn't the same as seeing yourself.

(Beat.)

I thought all of this would make people finally see me. I thought I could make more of an impact dead than I could alive. But now... now I'll never see my reflection in a mirror. I'll get an epitaph on my grave, but I'll never get to write my own story. I'll never get to say all the things I should have just said. And I'll never feel my hand in someone else's.

REESE

I'm so sorry, Micah. There has to be something I can do.

MICAH

You have move on to the real world. And I have to move on beyond all this.

REESE

But if all this is possible, then you have to be able to—

MICAH

I can't.

REESE

How do you know that? You can't just give up—

MICAH

Reese. I already gave up.

REESE

Well... well fuck reality! Fuck the real world! Let's just live in the woods.

MICAH

I wish we could.

(REESE starts to cry. MICAH hugs REESE.)

REESE

I should've told everyone you were my friend. My best friend. And I should've told you how much you meant to me. I know I didn't act like it, but... but you were my favorite person.

(MICAH pulls away, speechless.)

I'll never forget you.

MICAH

Try not to forget yourself either.

REESE

Bye Micah.

MICAH

Goodbye Reese.

(Lights become brighter and brighter. REESE howls. MICAH exits. Lights return to normal, and REESE realizes MICAH is gone. Blackout.)

Epilogue: Sleep

Blank stage.

(WREN enters and sinks to the ground.)

WREN

Epiphanies are like caffeine. At first, they get you hyped and jittery... and then they work their way through your brain, and you get a headache. And crash. So, for the first time since you can remember, you blow off work. And class. And ask for an extension on your paper. And you go to sleep. Rest in peace, Micah.

(WREN curls up and falls asleep. BLAIR enters and sits.)

BLAIR

Hearing everyone's heartbeat sucks. Hearing your own sucks worse. It feels like you're bleeding everywhere, on everyone and everything. So, for once, you don't answer your texts. Or your snapchats. You don't check on your roommate to make sure they're eating. You just go to sleep. Rest in peace, Micah.

(BLAIR curls up and falls asleep. EMERY enters and sits.)

EMERY

Having a meltdown hurts. Your body collapses in on itself. And suddenly you're liquid. Like paint. Spilling out on the floor, staining everything around you, waiting for someone to either wash you away or turn you into art. But maybe not everyone will splatter you all over the walls.

(EMERY glances at WREN.)

So, for once, you let your resting bitch face rest. You put on sweatpants. You let go of the past and the future, and you give in to sleep. Rest in peace, Micah.

(EMERY falls asleep. REESE enters, mostly human.)

REESE

I don't know if I'll turn into a wolf again. And I don't know who I'll be while I'm human. Pretending to be someone I'm not is as addictive as the drugs I use to help me pretend. But I can't pretend none of this ever happened. So, for once, I won't try to lighten the mood with a joke, or assure everyone that I'm fine, or tell another lie.

(REESE whimpers.)

Maybe I'll finally learn how to sleep. Or maybe I'll finally wake up. But Micah won't. *Micah is dead.* Gone. Forever. Resting is only peaceful if you can wake up at the end of it.

(REESE kneels and howls.)

(End of Act II.)

I Guess I'm a Romantic After All: Style as Substance, Humanity in the Inhuman,
 Visibility in Darkness, Truth in Absurdity, and Reality in Fantasy

Insomniacs—originally titled *The High-Functioning Club*—began with the characters. Like *The Breakfast Club*, I wanted to tell a story linking five distinct personalities. I've always been fascinated with archetypes and personality types, and when I stumbled across the five Taoist elements and their generating and controlling relationships, it felt like the perfect basis for a group play. I developed a vague understanding of the personality types that correspond to the five elements—metal, water, wood, fire, and earth—and five archetypes of high-functioning college students—the Intellectual, Artist, Achiever, Performer, and Giver—were born. Roughly six months later, my characters have outgrown these descriptors, but I kept them because, at their core, I think they still resonate.

While I wanted people to be able to empathize with my characters, I didn't necessarily want them to be the most likeable, especially in the beginning. In contrast with the heavy subject matter, I wanted them to be witty and superficial, a bit like the characters in an Oscar Wilde play. In doing a dramaturgical project on *The Importance of Being Earnest*, I came across Tara Maginnis's "The Importance of Being Artificial: Style as Substance in *The Importance of Being Earnest*," in which the costume designer for a production at the University of Alaska discusses how Wilde's characters substitute style for substance and applies this interpretation to her costumes.¹ I had this article in mind as I developed my own characters, and I drew from Maginnis's choice to clothe her actors in translucent layer piled on top of translucent layer when describing the set. For each character, I broke down how their individual perceptions of substance were uniquely warped. Emery's substance is carefully crafted and stylized, Reese's is performed, Blair's is projected onto others, Wren's is completely skewed, and Micah suffers from a lack of substance altogether. Their warped views of

¹ Maginnis, Tara. "The Importance of Being Artificial: Style as Substance in *The Importance of Being Earnest*," *TD&T: Theatre Design and Technology*, 38, no. 2 (2002): 58-61.

reality become visible in the set around them, from projections of objects that aren't there to the painting over or misuse of objects that are. Meanwhile, many of the scenes are named after actual substances that range in terms of visibility. Paint, for example, is functional because of its visibility, while thoughts are never visible, and blood is almost always internal but striking when external. Ultimately, the physical issue of visibility in *Insomniacs* is an extension of the issue of emotional visibility, particularly for high-functioning mental illness and substance abuse problems.

To push this idea further, I discovered that transformations into mythical creatures would take everything that is invisible about their individual problems and externalize them. Each of the creatures are, in their own way, visual manifestations of everything the characters do not want to see in themselves, or let others see. The unhealthiness of Wren's "healthy" habits becomes visible in his or her zombification. The selfishness of Blair's seemingly selfless desire to help others is expressed in her transformation into a vampire, as his or her emotional need to leech off others' emotions manifests into a physical need to suck their blood. Emery's struggle to control her emotions is translated into her struggle to control her magical powers, and her equally controlled aesthetic is stripped away in her transformation into a hag. Reese's desire to suppress his or her true identity, which comes with immense grief and guilt, is metaphorically represented in the uncontrollable shapeshifting into a werewolf, leaving Reese both visibly monstrous and completely naked. Finally, the emotionally genuine but unnoticed Micah becomes a ghost, a figure that is often either transparent or completely invisible. However, Micah is arguably more visible as a ghost than he or she has ever been before. For all of these characters, their mythical creatures not only symbolize their internal struggles with identity and mental illness, but they also straddle lines between life and death, human and inhuman. I felt that only in becoming these creatures could my characters learn what it is to be alive and to be human before they meet the same fate as Micah.

I'm certainly not the first to use these creatures as physicalized metaphors for less visible issues. Shelley's *Frankenstein*, for example, uses Frankenstein's monster as the embodiment of Dr. Frankenstein's repressed impulses and desires. Two hundred years later, witches, vampires, and werewolves have taken over pop culture and are often used as metaphors of growing up, bullying, being Othered, etc. I think a lot of that deeper meaning is easily overshadowed by the glamorization and sex appeal of these creatures in modern literature and film. I wanted to take the beautiful, sexy creatures seen in *Twilight*, *Vampire Diaries*, and even in *Harry Potter*, and return them to their more primitive forms. As I learned in *Magic in Ancient Rome*, vampirism, lycanthropy, and zombification, though recently glorified in pop culture, have historically been connected with various diseases. And on that note, I think there is also a comparison to be drawn between the modern glorification of these creatures and that of eating disorders, substance abuse, and depression—all of which are diseases. As a rejection of this glorification, I turned to the visceral and the gory, drawing inspiration from the Grimms' fairytales, which are stunningly graphic and ripe with psychological metaphors. In addition, gore, despite its technical complications, has a long history in the world of theatre; horror and gore onstage were first popularized in the early twentieth century by the French theatre, *The Grand Guignol*.² I tried to refocus the thrill and shock factor of this kind of theatre in a way that lets my characters explore the primal nature of their creatures, while helping them embrace their healthy human urges and reject their unhealthy, repressive tendencies. Through gore and physical transformation, they are forced to literally see their problems. Once again, visibility is a huge factor, as the characters struggle to see or recognize themselves in mirrors, confront their physical hearts, and see their own hands.

Ironically, this visibility is facilitated by darkness and confusion of the woods at night. This is an inherently Romantic concept, and as much as I spent sophomore year making fun of

² Gross, John. "Book of the Times; How the Grand Guignol Made Fear Popular." *The New York Times* (1988).

Wordsworth and co., it seems I've internalized the Romantic connection between wilderness, darkness and truth. My specific influences for the fantastical, absurdist, dreamlike setting of Act II range from traditionally Romantic texts like *The Nutcracker* to *Alice and Wonderland* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, all which interpret night and the woods as sources of truth, of human nature, and of emotional intelligence. *Alice in Wonderland* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in particular, use this kind of setting to free characters from society and structure to allow for an emotional journey. In contrast with the highly structured world of logic, wit, and lies in Act I, the forest of Act II depicts a world of absurdity, emotions, and truth. This factors heavily into the monologues, which, at school, consist of a pattern of lying to various unseen authority figures, but in the woods, become individualized expressions of truth. As Emery searches desperately for meaning and purpose, and Wren looks for affirmation from a spotlight, it becomes apparent that the truth has nothing to do with "right" answers; the truth comes in small chunks as part of a much larger experience. In the beginning, the characters are goal-oriented, mistake external achievements for internal wellbeing, and their scheduled tasks take precedent over any emotional requirements. The woods frees them of all this; there are no tasks, no logic, only a journey guided by impulse and reactions to a shifting environment.

Professor Preston pointed out that this seemed to be a metaphor for transitioning from college to the "real world," where there is no clear path, where no one tells you exactly what to do, and where you have to figure out who you are and what you want. I had a lot of trouble writing Act II because I, like Emery, craved a clear and direct path to the end. But the moment I had Wren tear up her spellbook—which initially played a much larger role throughout the act—the forest became rich with creative possibilities. And just as their college experiences are warped versions of my own, their journey into the forest reflects my own mental journey of approaching the post-grad world. A huge part of this journey is a shift from one's actions being dictated by others—including authority

figures and peers—to dictating one’s own actions. When, in my third rewrite of Act II, I stripped away my characters’ *Into the Woods* inspired quests, I forced them to be intrinsically motivated, to—with the help of one another—engage in their own self-actualization. The difference between this “real world” forest and a fairytale forest is that transformation comes not from another person recognizing you, but from you recognizing yourself. I wanted it to be clear that for all of the characters that although being seen or being loved is important, it is not as important as seeing and loving yourself.

The idea of self-love and self-awareness was significant in my attempt to tackle suicide. From *Thirteen Reasons Why* to *Dear Evan Hansen*, suicide is a popular subject right now, and it is frequently being framed in terms of the effect of death on the living. *Insomniacs* follows this trend, for better or for worse. However, I’ve noticed that recent discussions of suicide have been troubling in their attempts to assign blame, either to others for provoking an individual to commit suicide, or to the suicidal individual for their selfish refusal to live for the sake of others. I, like Micah, “don’t want to play the blame game; I just want you to be honest.” While the characters’ deal with guilt as part of the grieving process, they are ultimately only held responsible for saving their own lives. Micah’s suicide is about Micah’s inability to recognize his or her own value, and it is about Micah’s warped view of reality on account of depression and disassociation, but it is not about revenge or selfishness. It is tragic and unfair, and there are no answers for it beyond visibility and awareness. There is no clean solution to suicide in this play, just as there are no direct paths or answers in the forest. I’m still a little concerned that this play falls into the trap of glorifying suicide for its eye-opening effects. However, I like to believe that the logical relationship I’ve drawn out here is: suicide necessitates a wake-up call, but it is not necessary for one to occur.

The title *Insomniacs* was merely a gut reaction, a filler thrown in because I couldn’t stand the terrible, after-school-special title, *The High Functioning Club*. However, the more I wrote, the more it

grew on me. Reese and Micah are literally insomniacs, but I think all of the characters are symbolically insomniacs via their inability to surrender control, to address their most basic human needs, and to “rest in peace.” Their decisions to sleep at the end represent an end to this symbolic insomnia. But this is only half the equation; the other half, the half that Micah can never complete, involves learning what it means to be awake and alive.