

CONTINUUM,  
or  
Child of Sorrys

by Alina Jacobs

**CAST****THE PAST**

EMMA ECKSTEIN

THE ANALYST

THE PHYSICIAN

FRAU DOKTOR

YOUNG BOY

**THE PRESENT**

JUDITH

COLLEEN

LESLIE

JONATHAN

PEDESTRIAN

**THE CONTINUUM**

NARRATOR / TRAVELER / USHER

CHASE

YOU

+Various voices, shadow people, etc.

**Note:** The cast ideally should comprise of 6 or 7 actors with live speaking parts.**Note:** For all intents and purposes, the Analyst is Sigmund Freud and the Physician is Wilhelm Fliess. However, no excessive cigar handling, corny fake accents, nor other crass semiotics may be herein employed. The actors cast need not resemble their characters' historical counterparts. We need not try to re-create Vienna 1894, but let Vienna 1894 come to us.

**PRE SHOW**

*It's you!*  
*It's me!*  
 ?????  
*It's the pre-show*  
*Enter an Usher.*

USHER  
*(to You, the audience, You are on your phone)*  
 Quit gaming  
*(thinks to rephrase)*  
 Stop playing around  
 No, I mean,  
 Quit Gaming

*You make a 'who, me?' gesture.*

USHER  
 You yes you,  
 I saw you  
 What was it, you were manipulating little bodies on strings  
 A regular Gepetto  
 you gave them names and personalities  
 heh  
 Of course you can't give anyone anything really  
 I saw you.  
 Now don't say I didn't  
*(weirdly aggressive)*  
 Make me say it huh?  
 You wouldn't because you're scared, you'd hate to see me cry you'd hate to see me  
 Mmm what?  
 Sorry.  
 We're all very happy to be here? Happy and lucky??  
*(a moment)*  
 Sorry  
*(pause)*  
 Oh yes  
*(laughing, knowing)*  
 Yes.

*Exit the Usher.*  
*Your heart is beating a little too fast. You feel as though your hat is on too tight, though you may not actually be wearing a hat.*

*Fluorescent lights beam. Your eyelids cannot stay open all the way, You have to keep adjusting them. Time moves very slowly. Very silent, the silence is bearing down on You. But obviously it's never truly one hundred percent silent, only silent enough as to make those of Us with tinnitus feel singled out. There is the sloshing of your organs, at the very least.*

*The walls are blank white, so is the ceiling. You don't look at the floor, it could be a hole and you could be forever falling. Even though it's probably not.  
Clicking of heels across the tiled floor.*

YOU (*thinking*)  
Why did they put two U's in Vacuum  
vack cūm  
no  
not a single other word with two U's

*You're thinking very hard.*

YOU  
Latin, never liked it.

*A tall shadow person appears next to You. They mouth a name that is not yours but maybe belongs to someone you once knew. They are gone.*

*Clicking of heels across the tiled floor.*

*A short shadow person somewhere in space. Their face is de-completed. They are gone.*

*Sniffles and inhales at 30-second intervals, seemingly unattached to any particular body.*

*You turn around and see CHASE sitting at a picnic table behind you. He is cracking walnuts.*

CHASE  
Yeaaaah. They got him in the sleeper, again.  
Yeah. That's where he is.  
We take our issues seriously round here.  
Make a finger gun round these parts,  
they'll break every bone in your hand

*He almost makes a finger gun for emphasis but decides against it.*

CHASE

Jed, poor Jed, they got him in the sleeper again,  
He made the mistake and they really did a number on him.

YOU

What number?

CHASE

Reminds me,  
We don't much like numerologists round here, they stripped numbers of their natural aesthetic beauty.

YOU

Okay, we can agree on that.

*(Silence)*

I said we can definitely agree on that.

*Silence. Chase continues cracking walnuts. Day turns into night.*

CHASE

I just could tell you weren't from around here.  
I don't know how I know but I can always tell...

YOU

I feel so alone.

CHASE

We're most certainly not alone.  
*(gestures to the audience)* and we have all these good people with us,  
Of course they're totally hopeless, look at their dopey eyes. They don't feel anything,  
But they're happy.  
Souped up on Ativan, probably.

YOU

Just like my mother. *(silence)* And yours?

*Chase looks down, cracks a walnut.*

CHASE

Last of the thalidomide babies.

YOU

You?

CHASE

My mother.

YOU

Europe?

CHASE

No, here, clinical trials. And she was the last one,

So she was calm since birth. Very relaxed.

She was a pretty lady, a *bella donna*—

And how relaxed was your mother?

YOU

I—I—

CHASE

Or might you have been hatched?

YOU

What?

CHASE

From an egg? Humpty...? Anyhow.

Jed's in the sleeper, ah, maybe he'll get out.

I've even started to miss him even though it's only been a day.

And then there was the time before that time before—

and then there's Ted, he and Jed, they're, uh, you know, twins...

*(Quieter)* But maybe the rules were built around us, huh?

*(normal volume)*

Did you see—

*He motions to something. Lights flicker, the whole room shudders.*

*Dust gets in your eyes.*

*Chase is gone, visibility is now poor, a very dark grey.*

*Clicking of heels across the tiled floor.*

*A small lamp turns on somewhere in the space, though it is far away from You.*

*You sit on top of the picnic table, You are cold and lonely. You rub your upper arms and try to remember. You don't.*

*Sound from a radio, it is a waltz, You hold yourself like a slowdancer. You hum a tone to underscore the song.*

*Pieces of paper float from the ceiling. They scatter all over. You feel sorry for whoever has to clean them up later. Clicking of heels across the tiled floor.*

*A thought beams into your mind.  
You snap your fingers.*

YOU  
Continuum!!

### SCENE ONE—MASTURBATION

*Vienna, 1894. Two sofas. EMMA ECKSTEIN walks from one sofa to the other with much pain. Her body is bent and twisted. She wears a simplified white dress that suggests the presence of supportive undergarments. A repetitive piano theme plays.*

NARRATOR  
Masturbation, well it's  
the wilting of the flower  
a breakfast in bed  
Stained sheets, done in for good,  
for ever  
Rotted insides  
Dull inner voice

ANALYST (*voice*)  
dysmenorrhea almost 30 years of age  
Trouble walking, mostly confined to the sofa  
From a prominent family, father, mother, sister, brother,  
one of them is friends with Kautsky—

NARRATOR  
—parched and thinning, caustic and backwards  
give way  
to a wise baby  
i.e., a clairvoyant  
tapping into a deeper sense, it can solve riddles.  
months and months and months  
three months, thusly, in gaol,  
little indentation in the skin, the heart escaping, going, going, going, going,  
your computer is not your dog,  
vidual weeping  
secrets underneath.

*Emma seems to hear this one. She stops, seeing, thinking.*

NARRATOR

My name is sacrifice

And when I open my mouth, this is what happens:

*Emma opens her mouth, she closes her mouth.*

NARRATOR

a foetid odor...

white lumps

You had the inclination to rock like a baby

Swimming in thoughts, dreaming of correspondences.

You could be crying into his shoulder,

wet spot on his armpit, mad as hell at the fridge poetry, the answers,

the future is fucking the future is eggs in a basket

Look to your left, *(she does so)*

Look to your right. *(she does so)*

*(pause)*

—well it's,

a year ending in a particular number...

*Unable to continue walking, Emma collapses onto whichever sofa she is nearest, she embraces the cushions.*

EMMA

*(whisper)*

I remember eating an earthworm.

*Labored breathing. A change indicated with lighting.  
The Analyst sits on the other couch across from Emma, who is staring off into the distance.*

ANALYST

Emma

Emma

Emma

Fraulein Eckstein?

Did you know that half of Europe can fit in the American state of Texas?

*A pause.*

EMMA

Yes.

ANALYST

Oh yes?



EMMA

I read it... somewhere...

Is this going to be over soon?

ANALYST

These things tend to take—well no one knows! That's the beautiful thing, we have no idea

No one has any idea. But we have hypotheses, we have some case studies such as—

EMMA

What am I doing wrong?

ANALYST

Such as Breuer and—

Well it's not important.

Well it is quite important, but let us not get too hung up on it. Right?

EMMA

I must be doing something wrong or I would be better by now.

ANALYST

And?

EMMA

And maybe, maybe I don't listen, I don't learn and I can't understand the fact that I am doing something wrong and that's why I am still in pain.

ANALYST

Always in pain?

EMMA

Yes.

ANALYST

I believe you.

NARRATOR

Believe in who?

Whoooo??

ANALYST

Pain is rarely just pain, what with the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things—

EMMA

...Fine.

ANALYST

When you're in pain, what comes to your mind?

EMMA

Needles, needles and—  
Knives.

ANALYST

Very good.  
And a, a, kitchen? What does that make you think of?

EMMA

I don't know.  
I don't know.  
This is ridiculous.

ANALYST

Give it a chance.

EMMA

No this is ridiculous. It's been three years, this childish exercise, it doesn't—  
It doesn't mean anything.  
You say you're a scientist.

ANALYST

It is my background.

EMMA

And yet, you do not heed or listen to results.  
How much longer are we going to repeat the same questions, the same fake answers?

ANALYST

What's fake about your answers?

EMMA

Nothing, just—

ANALYST

But you said—

EMMA

I'll say anything, nothing means anything—

ANALYST

You're a grown woman, Fraulein Eckstein. You could always stop these sessions.

EMMA

My mother would be so upset, she thinks well of you.  
And otherwise has given up on my condition.

ANALYST

Yes your condition.  
Your condition your condition your condition...

## SCENE TWO—KEPLER

*Berlin, late 1894. The ANALYST and the PHYSICIAN sit together in a park. Sounds of birds. As the two of them speak, they clasp and unclasp each other's hands without thinking.*

ANALYST

*(manic love)*

Because I feel so so fucking good, how did you even—

PHYSICIAN

*(equally manic)*

It was really quite simple,

ANALYST

And of course it's difficult you know, what with the pulling out and the condoms distorting and cramping the release of the energy from the body, causing neuralgia on a mass scale, it's—

PHYSICIAN

Simple cauterization and touch it up with a little—

ANALYST

But she's already had five and we both said no more  
What was it that you—

PHYSICIAN

Touched it up with a little cocaine—

ANALYST

Because you're a genius  
You're a Kepler of our time

PHYSICIAN

Oh, you shouldn't—  
Who was—

ANALYST

No I mean—

Anyone who is that, or has any designs on—or can imagine a genuinely different way of doing things is going to be rendered a—

PHYSICIAN

Did you know—

ANALYST

Crank—blaguer—hopeless case—horny for rejection—a flop, a clown, et cetera—

PHYSICIAN

Did you know then men have periods too? The realization came to me recently. And they are 23 days, you may remember, the woman's period—

ANALYST

Oh I—

PHYSICIAN

Is exactly 28, no more no less. And births, deaths, major events, all circumundulate from these intervals. Haven't you noticed how a woman will start menstruating at the moment of her mother's death?

ANALYST

Come to think of it—

PHYSICIAN

I've been able to predict deaths now, from chronic disease, infirmity et cetera, by basing it off of the start of menstruation. And I've been—

ANALYST

Come to think of it, there are certainly, co—what look like, on paper, coincidences—

PHYSICIAN

I've been able to regularly get *very* close with these predictions, which happen to intersect with my other theory—

ANALYST

Oh right—

PHYSICIAN

The relationship between the nose and the *Geschlechtsorgan*...

ANALYST

(winking)

And the organ's role in our *Gesellschaft*.

PHYSICIAN

A boy I looked at—

ANALYST

My wife she just doesn't—she's just not very interested, when it comes to alternative paths of insertion—

PHYSICIAN

Attacks of singulitis and night terrors, unwanted erections—

ANALYST

Meaning the mouth—her mouth, she doesn't like to—

PHYSICIAN

Occurring eighty-four days apart, which is three times 28, the female period—

ANALYST

*(generous)*

Fascinating.

PHYSICIAN

It's so hard to ignore, the connections are so clear.

Everyone thinks I'm crazy now.

Numerical relationships are unprovable, they say,

You're not even a real surgeon, they say—

ANALYST

But you, you cured my angina. I haven't felt so good in a long time. It's such a weight off my—

Don't listen to them, they don't know—say, could you come to Vienna, around Christmas? I

have a patient I've been seeing for, well quite a while now, at least six-hundred days, abdominal pains, depression—

PHYSICIAN

A hysteric?

ANALYST

Well technically. We could say that. Sure. She's very smart, from a good family. But she's in so much pain, and nothing seems to help. And you worked a miracle on me, so, and—the so-called doctors, experts, would have her hysterectomized or ovariectomized, relics of a more brutish, ignorant period—

PHYSICIAN

She masturbates?

ANALYST

I believe so.

PHYSICIAN

Dysmenorrhea is exceedingly common in masturbating women.

ANALYST

Of course.

But, still—

PHYSICIAN

For you, I can try, do what I can. A small operation, not unlike yours, though a little different. Honestly, it's kind of new, kind of cutting edge. I've never actually done it before but really there's no risk, no liability. And it should relieve the tension somewhat. But she has to end that regrettable practice, or she will never recover. *(Pause)* Unmarried?

ANALYST

Yes.

PHYSICIAN

A deviant?

ANALYST

Not to my understanding, besides the self-love—

PHYSICIAN

At her age—

ANALYST

But otherwise, unless she has a secret lover of some kind—

PHYSICIAN

I mean—

She does have a bosom and a bottom, no?

ANALYST

Certainly a bosom, surely a bosom. Of bottoms I take no heed.

PHYSICIAN

But Doktor—

ANALYST

Never take heed, honestly.

PHYSICIAN

But—

ANALYST

Willie.

PHYSICIAN

—But my good sir

Surely one cushes while one pushes??

Or at least wants to??

*They look at each other for an extended moment.*

ANALYST

Genius.

### SCENE THREE—PHYSICAL FORM

*Vienna, January of 1895. Emma, the Analyst and the Physician at a dinner table. The Physician gesticulates wildly as he speaks, although we cannot hear what he is saying. Emma stares at him admiringly. A long hum in the air.*

NARRATOR

Look at her,

Look to the right,

Look to the left,

Look as she opens her mouth,

Look how her eyes dart from side to side

What is it about the blade that excites her?

Whatever does she know about the laceration of the nasal cartilage?

Tonight she'll go home and, once her mother retires to bed, fondle herself on the sofa, dreaming of knives and incisions.

PHYSICIAN

*(kissing Emma's hand)*

It was very nice to meet you.

And tomorrow, the operating table.

ANALYST

*(raising his glass)*

A very happy New Year!

NARRATOR

You will not hook us on sugar water

and you would have to hook us

Continually a suicidal export

Bulk and breadth,

grain and milk

40404040404040

Dripping at the sides,  
the physical form, useless, useless and bloated, bitter coins,  
sour spots under the tongue.

#### SCENE FOUR—POST-OPERATION

*Emma alone on the operating table. Her face is heavily bandaged.  
She is in a confused blissful state.*

EMMA

I cannot explain. How did I get here? 600 days at least,  
My sister talks about the emancipation of the heart but she has a husband,  
Childbirth has mangled her leg  
No one knows anything  
We're all just stumbling,  
Well Therese certainly is *(a small laugh)*  
I shouldn't laugh.  
It's serious *(a small, sour laugh)*  
*(her eyelids flutter shut)*  
Maybe we'll get the vote in twenty years and I'll be—fifty  
*(silence)*  
Emancipation of the heart, of the flesh, emancipation from the flesh...  
I would doze off but I know my dreams will be miserable.  
My brother talks about the rights of the workers, rights of the Jews...  
*(silence, a whisper)*  
...i am the child of your child, brain child and crippled, athena godmother of censure  
*(a small giggle)*  
I don't know what any of this means.

*Enter a Traveler from the Future. They are dressed very  
practically.*

EMMA

Where did you come from?  
Have you been here this whole time?

TRAVELER

I mean I just got here.  
I'm from 200 years in the future.

EMMA

That's a long time!

TRAVELER

Well I've started to see it as a continuum, so it's kind of neither here nor there.



EMMA

When do we get the vote?

TRAVELER

Who's we?

EMMA

Austrian women of course. Not that that the vote is the main or the only—

TRAVELER

Austrian...women...

Let me rack my brain, ah, it's coming.

To be honest I never learned about it in school, but I'd say about twenty years.

EMMA

*(satisfied)*

I knew it.

My analyst is a genius.

He's working on an aetiology of—

TRAVELER

*(shrugging)*

He's alright.

EMMA

You've heard of him?

TRAVELER

Oh, yeah. He's doing fine, he's okay but not so fine, he's out of fashion but he had his moment.

EMMA

And you've heard of me?

TRAVELER

Uhhh

EMMA

Everything, everything turns out okay?

TRAVELER

They'll say she's really smart, really motivated  
first to do something, or uh, first woman to do something...  
but they really did a number on her face  
maybe forever.

EMMA

What number?

TRAVELER

*(going on, oblivious)*

And really her whole story is like one of those that are sosososo uhh specific?

and really has just no currency like zero

and they're going to confuse you with Sabina whatshername

who at this time is about nine or ten years old

and You and Your Analyst are twinning in the stars, and the world is covered in white ashes.

Oh and you're not going to believe this about the—

EMMA

*(quiet whisper)*

Write our names in the dust.

*Lights flicker. The Traveler is gone. Emma caresses her thigh through her dress. Inhales. She then thinks otherwise, slaps her own hand. Deep exhale. Enter the Analyst, high on cocaine.*

ANALYST

Emma

Emma

Emma

Fraulein Eckstein

We're going to the theatre!

*Pulsating music as we plunge into darkness.*

## SCENE FIVE—MONTAGE OF BLOOD

*The Analyst and Emma at the theatre. Emma's face is still bandaged, but less so.*

ANALYST

My wife is pregnant.

I don't know how it happened.

This is a disaster, I'll be bankrupted, living destitute.

She resents me

because I made her give up her superstitious customs, didn't let her have her sabbath candles,

This is her revenge.

But what was I supposed to do? You do or you don't you do or you don't.

Very little free will involved.

Anyway.

EMMA  
I'm sorry to hear.

*The Analyst grabs her hand delicately.*

ANALYST  
You are a very brave girl.

*The play occurs, we hear the following voices:*

VOICES OF ACTORS (*voice*)  
Yeah they  
got him in the sleeper again.  
Yeah  
That's where he is.

ANALYST  
I've seen better actors at funerals.  
Is this supposed to be a comedy?

*Annoyed shushes from behind.*

VOICES OF ACTORS (*voice*)  
(*child voices*)  
Come back Little Women  
Come back Little Women  
Come back, Little Women

ANALYST  
Utter brutes  
They're butchering the text!  
Sometimes, I envy Lincoln.

*Emma laughs, the laugh turns into a sneeze, her nose hemorrhages  
horrifically.  
Screams, gasps of dismay.*

EMMA  
Help me.  
Help me!

*The Analyst faints.  
Lights come down and come up again.  
The Analyst is sitting in a chair, looking sickly, FRAU DOKTOR  
hands him a glass of cognac, he tenderly sips it, slowly coming to  
life again.*

FRAU DOKTOR

How are you still so sensitive when it comes to blood?  
Your wife has given birth five times, has she not??

ANALYST

*(drinking ruefully)*

Soon to be six.

*Frau Doktor exits and re-enters with a hardened piece of something in her hand. She drops it on the Analyst's lap. He flinches, nearly spills his cognac (if there's any left).*

FRAU DOKTOR

There you have it.

Half a meter of gauze.

From the inside, yes the inside of Fraulein Eckstein's nasal cavity.

Your beloved beloved forgot to remove it before stitching up her nose.

ANALYST

I may not have any surgical knowledge,

unfortunately,

but surely he would know, he would...

He just left it in there??

FRAU DOKTOR

Yes.

Oh by the way, her heart stopped, just now it seems,  
for a matter of seconds.

But her eyes were open the whole time.

*Later. The couches. Emma's face is heavily bandaged.*

EMMA

A three.

ANALYST

Five

EMMA

Fifty-five

ANALYST

Uh, 670.

EMMA  
Zero

ANALYST  
One

EMMA  
Zero  
(*pause*)  
Zero

ANALYST  
Piston?  
Stencil?  
Uh

EMMA  
Zero

ANALYST  
Uh  
Uh  
Witch?

EMMA  
People are talking about me.  
They're saying he wasn't even a real surgeon.

ANALYST  
That's not true.

EMMA  
I know.

ANALYST  
He cured my angina.

EMMA  
True.

ANALYST  
I have the utmost respect for him.

EMMA  
(*a small voice*)  
So do I.

ANALYST

He traveled all the way from Berlin, being in a foreign city, it can, uh, put on a lot of pressure. Makes it harder to focus, mistakes happen. And I'm sure any and all lingering residual...issues will go away on their own. Why wouldn't they?

*Emma nods. A small circle of red appears on her bandages, it grows slowly but steadily. The Analyst watches transfixed, Emma does not notice.*

EMMA

A shop, to buy candy,  
Two men in there, they laughed at me and looked at me as though they remembered me from somewhere  
I was twelve or so,  
One of them said to the other that my blouse was cut in a certain peasant fashion  
And that it complimented by breasts  
which, according to him, were cups of pudding  
or perhaps two buchteln  
I wanted to throw up, I was seized with the desire to weep and ran from the store,  
It was just shame,  
and the pain was enormous, even then, went all the way down  
All the way down through my legs.

*Her bandages are solid red. Sound of wings flapping.*

NARRATOR

Believe in the angels  
Distilling a bottle of pure regime change  
before the broad mass of drainage and puncture,  
crunching the numbers.  
In you I believe,  
Believe in who??  
Who??  
All things coming into possibility.

*Dim lights. The Analyst composing a letter.*

ANALYST

My dear Willie—  
No—  
My good, good friend—  
Hmm.  
(Pause.)  
I hope this letter finds you well.

I was quite upset for a moment about Fraulein Eckstein and her condition  
 But I'm over it now.  
 Not dwelling on it.  
 I mean,  
 It was...  
 The smell alone, I wish you could have been here to—  
 Well you can probably imagine.  
 Of course, you know better than I, who is just a lay person in this regard—  
 And surely none of this was any of your doing  
 I'm not blaming you,  
 She almost died  
 But don't think for a second I would blame you.  
 However—  
 We did her a disservice.  
 It could have been that there was nothing wrong with her in the first place.  
 And I have only the utmost sympathy and regret for our Child of Sorrys.  
 But don't dwell on it.  
 I'm sure you did the best you could, under the circumstances.  
 Anyway, everything else, okay, you could say. I'm writing page after page. You're right, I  
 always manage to be productive with a little stress on my back.

*Later 1895. Emma's whole face is bandaged, only her eyes and lips are visible.*

ANALYST  
 Which was it this time?

EMMA  
 A bone chip, this time.  
 It flew across the room, expelled.  
 Don't look so squeamy. It was just a bone chip.

*She makes an attempt at laughter, but doesn't try too hard, of course.*

ANALYST  
 Easy, now.

EMMA  
 I'm not laughing anymore.  
 Right.  
 I wanted to tell you.  
 I remembered something.  
 When I expelled the bone chip.  
 A shop, to buy candy.

ANALYST

You've said this already.

EMMA

You were listening?

ANALYST

I'm listening.

EMMA

I hate to go into shops alone.

ANALYST

Was it the same—?

EMMA

No.

Or...?

No.

Not sure.

I was eight.

The storekeeper grabbed at me.

At my—*(she indicates her genital region)*

But at the time I didn't think anything.

I let it pass.

ANALYST

That's very interesting.

#### SCENE SIX—A DREAM

*July 1895. Dream lighting, the Analyst is rapidly writing in his journal.*

ANALYST

It was a large party in a banquet hall, I was supposed to be hosting,

I knew I was a host because of my vaguer than vague sense of responsibility, latent anxieties and attachments to all the formless guests, of which there were many.

The ceilings were very high,

I looked over my shoulder and I saw—

*He turns to see Emma, who is again pacing (as if sleepwalking) between the couches. Her bandages are gone and her face looks normal. He puts down the journal for a moment.*

ANALYST



—Oh my god, is that  
 Anna Hammerschlag?  
 She's my patient, her husband died and now she's—  
 Or at least, she looked a lot like Anna Hammerschlag,  
 But in the dream, her name was Irma and she reminded me, she reminded me that she was still in  
 so much pain,  
 Which made me so mad!  
 If you've still got pains, it's on you! I said. By now, it's your fault.  
 All the things we were all saying to you!  
 At first we all felt so bad for you, but we're really quite sick of it by now,  
 After all I've done for you!  
 And she kept harping on, my throat, my abdomen, she whined.  
 Anyway,  
 She did really look quite terrible.  
 So I said, very authoritatively,  
 Open your mouth, Irma!  
 And she was very reluctant  
 Open your mouth, Irma! What are you hiding? Dentures?  
 Do I have to pry your jaws apart??

*Emma opens her mouth. The Analyst nearly stumbles.*

ANALYST  
 and INSTANTLY  
 Instantly, a foetid odor, just like death  
 Rank, unhygienic death  
 I nearly fainted, nearly awoke from the dream  
 But I didn't  
 I was blinded and regained sight almost immediately.  
 All down the length of her throat were these white lumps, these rancid sores.  
 Some of which were curly...  
 looked almost like the turbinate bones in the nose.  
 I shook her,  
 Irma  
 Irma Irma Irma!  
 I wanted to cry  
 I called over my friend, Doktor M,  
 Who, incidentally, was also in attendance,  
 And showed him her diseased throat  
 He shrugged,  
 It's an infection,  
 It's not your fault,  
 Just one of those things  
 that come and go as nature intends.  
 Now let's give her a shot of trimethylamine.  
 I took the syringe in my hands,

I took great pains to ensure it was clean.  
But maybe it hadn't been.

*Emma slinks away into the background.*

ANALYST

Anna

A palindrome

A mirror onto itself.

An excellent name, if it's a girl.

*Exit the Analyst. Emma compulsively humps the arm of the couch.  
She consumes the couch with her body. Fade to black.*

## SCENE SEVEN—SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

*Dim lights, a Bachelorette pad, contemporary. Niche items but not distasteful. We are located in a city that has more than 100,000 but less than half a million inhabitants.*

*JUDITH sits on the floor beside COLLEEN who sits on a futon, we can imagine it to have a Japanese minimalist-style wooden frame. They are nearing 40 and are pouring white wine from a cardboard box into two neat mugs. A music video representing some bygone era plays on the TV, we can hear it but not see it.*

COLLEEN

You don't understand it.

JUDITH

I don't think I ever will.

COLLEEN

It's just one of those things. You have to be initiated, it has to happen by a certain age or it just won't. It's a kind of intensity that only happens at that stage of a person's development.

Of course, you move on, life suddenly changes, and then all your friends are goddamn horse girls. Apples in cheeks, mile high mouths, smelling that one particular way, it gets caught in their long hairs.

I started on a pony.

JUDITH

What was its name?

COLLEEN

His name was... his name was... oh it's in there somewhere let me think.

JUDITH

*(spitting out really fast)*

I'm noticing something off about—

*The music video auto-plays to the next one, both Colleen and Judith cringe in disgust.*

COLLEEN

Oh no, nope, nah...

This is her flop album.

*She fast forwards to the next one. It is an ad. More disgust.*

VOICE OF THE AD *(voice)*

CLAIM YOUR COMPENSATION,

PAIN AND SUFFERING, ENDLESS GRIEF,

VICTIM OF GANGSTALKING? ILLICIT RELATIONSHIPS WITH UNDERCOVER  
FEDERAL AGENTS?

CALL TODAY TO CONVERT YOUR MISFORTUNE INTO—

JUDITH

You don't pay for this shit?

COLLEEN

Ach, leave me alone.

They already own the world, they don't need my ten whatever per month.

JUDITH

Tally up all the pain, the seconds of the ads before the skip button of mercy pops up, that's a considerable amount, no?

Wouldn't it be almost worth it?

COLLEEN

That's a totally completely utterly unfair premise! It's not a deal, it's a goddamn hostage negotiation.

JUDITH

But sometimes you just have to pay the ransom?

Would you pay a ransom, for me?

COLLEEN

For you?

JUDITH

For instance.

COLLEEN

I don't negotiate. Period. Because when I negotiate I always lose.

*The next ad comes on—*

VOICE OF THE AD (*voice*)

Moon rocks! Silvery-soft heavy metals, make your smart-device function so smooth, so, so, so  
(*breaking character somewhat*) Oh god I just want that rare earths monopoly back—  
rare moons rather—  
The CHINES—

*Colleen presses 'skip' on the remote. A very high energy italo disco track plays.*

COLLEEN

The pony was tan. He bit me.

JUDITH

And you blamed yourself.

COLLEEN

Probably. (*a realization*) Otto! That was his name.

*Judith refills her cup.*

JUDITH

I call everything what it is.  
The giftededs, the talentededs, the pregnanteds, the paegentry  
so-called "political correctness" comes to grab my ass when I'm on the toilet.

COLLEEN

That's why you gotta check before you squat.  
Did you read my new piece—

JUDITH

(*sipping wine through a straw*)  
Mmm yeah.

COLLEEN

Were you were gonna say—before something about your—

JUDITH

I was just wondering like, do you cut? Do you cut a single word?

COLLEEN

Oh my godddd.

Look at me,  
 Look at me,  
 biiiiitch.  
 Did I not go to college? Did I not attend the workshops?  
 Lord help me if I don't cut.

JUDITH  
 Lord help both of us.

NARRATOR  
 Iowa'd into irrelevance  
 into posteriority, into water, into forgetfulness,  
 into air  
 Wearing a mantra, but ugly.

COLLEEN  
 I would rather die than do your job.  
 I think I would literally pass away.  
 You can be a sicko too, you know.

*A phone buzzes. They try to ignore it, but impulse wins out. We determine it's Colleen's phone, she opens her simultaneous video-chat app.*

LESLIE (voice)  
 I'm returning your call.

COLLEEN  
 Leslie.

*Colleen swivels the phone around the room. Judith pauses the song.*

JUDITH  
 Hi Leslie.

LESLIE (voice)  
 You called and I'm—

COLLEEN  
 Yes, I remember, oh, why did I, what was it about, ah, it's escaping me.  
 But how are you Leslie? What's going on with you?

JUDITH  
 We never see you anymore.

LESLIE (*voice*)  
Hi Judith.  
Is that Judith?

COLLEEN  
Our very own.

LESLIE (*voice*)  
I would like to come by, and soon. But, of course, what with my heart condition, all the blood thinners I have to take—just standing up can be very taxing and—

COLLEEN  
Let me find my glasses, I want to see you more clearly.

*Colleen starts to look around for her glasses.*

LESLIE (*voice*)  
I've got to go and make dinner. I just wanted to return your call.

COLLEEN  
Well it was nice talking to you. We miss you very much.  
The blood thinners, don't stop taking them, you know, I heard that bad things can—

LESLIE (*voice*)  
Miss you too—

*Leslie hangs up.*

JUDITH  
Bye, Leslie!  
(*Pause.*)  
Jesus.  
Do you think it's real?

COLLEEN  
What?

JUDITH  
Her heart condition?

COLLEEN  
I don't know.  
I don't fucking know.  
I mean she's always been a little dramatic, she can get really caught up in—but a heart condition?

JUDITH

Everyone's got something these days.

COLLEEN

True...

JUDITH

Joni's got Morgellons.

COLLEEN

Joni? What are you—you mean Joni Mitchell?

*Judith nods.*

COLLEEN

But—

JUDITH

Yeah, I read, on the internet—and the article was totally giving her shit about it too—

COLLEEN

Because no one has Morgellons. Jesus Christ. I mean, what, little invisibles fibers popping out of your skin?

JUDITH

*(shrugging)*

Chronic Lyme too.

COLLEEN

Naturally.

JUDITH

I mean, I don't know for real, obviously, I just heard. Not that I believe everything on the internet.

But, I'm just saying like, with Leslie...

No one ever wants to say, oh it's ALLINYOURHEAD...

Of course we are poisoned to shit, anyway, plastics in our blood, and like, what about the wif?

COLLEEN

What about it?

JUDITH

Well that's the thing, no one knows, and how could they, it hasn't, hasn't been enough time, I wouldn't trust anything either.

*Colleen sarcastically examines her own hand.*

COLLEEN

Oh sweet Joni, I've got them too. Hand me a microscope.

JUDITH

Leslie used to be fun though.

COLLEEN

Yeah.

JUDITH

I don't remember how it started with her.

COLLEEN

Me neither.

Maybe she just needs a little—

JUDITH

Love and encouragement?

COLLEEN

Something like that, give her some confidence in herself.

Maybe?

*A moment of silence.*

JUDITH

I think Jonathan's been replaced.

COLLEEN

By what?

JUDITH

I don't know.

An imposter with preprogrammed memories.

A robot with uploaded images.

Something is very wrong.

COLLEEN

This is why I don't do cohabitation.

JUDITH

I'm serious.



COLLEEN

Okay, well? What makes you think—I mean what evidence—?

*Judith accidentally (?) spills her wine, she ruefully tries to mop it up with the edge of her sweater.*

COLLEEN

Not like that oh—

JUDITH

It's just pinot grigio.

COLLEEN

Oh sweetie—

*Colleen gets up to look for a paper towel.*

JUDITH

Did you know—

*Colleen returns with a roll of paper.*

COLLEEN

Here.

JUDITH

Did you know they made a Jackie Chan movie—

COLLEEN

They made so many goddamn—

JUDITH

In the 90's,

Called *Operation Condor*. Technically it was *Armor of God 2: Operation Condor*.

COLLEEN

Really?

*(Judith nods)*

Huh.

Weird.

Why would they call it that?

*Judith silently grasps at the air. Flashes of white and blue light. The music videos roll on.*

NARRATOR

Keyword recognition,  
 search engine optimization.  
 Looking for the thing that's missing,  
 but how do you look for the thing that's missing?

### SCENE EIGHT—JUDITH AT HOME

*An open-concept kitchen/living room. Same city. Judith enters, it looks like she may perhaps have recently been crying. Sound of footsteps with an unusually long decay time. She turns on the sink and washes her hands. She dries her hands. She fills the electric kettle and turns it on. A moment. She presses her ear to the walls. Nothing.*  
*JONATHAN, 35, enters from the opposite entrance.*

JONATHAN  
 Still no sign.

*Judith silently acknowledges him. She goes to a cabinet and rifles through boxes of tea.*

JONATHAN  
 Would have heard something by now if there was something to hear, you think?  
 It's been a month now since we put up the posters.

JUDITH  
 Stupid rat. And dirty.  
 We should have chipped her.  
 She's yours. Was yours, originally.

JONATHAN  
 I miss her.

JUDITH  
 I miss her too.  
*(to the aether)*  
 Come back, Little Women, come back Little Women.  
 She was never an outdoor cat. Never stopped her from having fleas though.  
 The raccoons probably made short work of her. Poor baby.

*The kettle dings. Judith pours herself a cup.*

JUDITH  
 You want?

JONATHAN  
I'm good.

JUDITH  
Did you see the mailman today?

JONATHAN  
Yes.  
Around two.  
I see him every day come to think of it, always the same time too, he's got it down to a science.  
He's nearly bald now.

*Judith pretends she isn't staring at Jonathan's hairline.*

JUDITH  
He's kind of strapping, no?  
Of course that doesn't contradict what you said.

JONATHAN  
Of course.

JUDITH  
What's his name again?

JONATHAN  
Wayne? Or is it Wade?

*Silence. Judith sips her tea.*

JUDITH  
I don't understand how you can just sit at home all day.

JONATHAN  
I'm working.

JUDITH  
Even so.  
You work sitting down. I sit down sometimes but not at home.

JONATHAN  
I've been trying to stand more. I'm gonna get a standing desk, it's better for the circulation.  
Actually can I borrow your car tom—

JUDITH  
Yeah yeah, sure.

JONATHAN  
Thanks babe.

JUDITH  
I guess there's something about it that's just  
Not natural?  
You wake up and roll out of bed and you're there, you're there already.  
Work means a place you can shit at that's not your home.

JONATHAN  
Work, home, home, whatever. If you can shit somewhere with impunity, you can call it home.

*Judith thinks to say something, instead she silently sips her tea.*

JONATHAN  
I had the most keen realization today.

*A somewhat fraught silence.*

JUDITH  
I can't imagine.

JONATHAN  
This morning I turned around and I noticed the sunlight.  
Sometimes you—such as when the blinds are closed you don't notice—when you're away from  
the sun, from any natural light—  
And I realized everything is covered in dust.

JUDITH  
Yeah no shit.

JONATHAN  
Like I said, I avoid the sunlight, I avoid opening my eyes even a little bit. I keep them trained on  
specific things or keep them totally shut after all.  
And in the light of the afternoon sun...the floors, the shelves, those in between spots... I tried to  
remember, what IS dust? Oh, oh right, it's bits of our hair and skin and shit like that it's little  
decayed pieces of US it's us, rotting. It's history in micro form.

JUDITH  
So...  
Did you clean it?

JONATHAN  
And I realized that as long as we go on living dust will keep accumulating there will always be  
more dust and removing it or mitigating can only be this sis—sissyfied task and those air

purifiers don't do anything they're just like the air fryers totally unnecessary money-sucking modern interventions made of, I don't know, plastic and (*whispers*) slave labor? It's suffocating, don't you think?

*Silence. Judith sips her tea.*

JONATHAN

A little bit, don't you think?

JUDITH

I'm going to bed.

JONATHAN

Good night.

JUDITH

Good night.

*Judith exits to bed.*

*Jonathan takes out his phone and starts texting. He seems immediately much happier.*

JONATHAN

Well it certainly looks very nice.

Yeah.

*(Pause.)*

Oh you don't have to do all that.

I mean, you look nice without it too, but you don't have to do all that—

Just tell me about your day.

*(short pause)*

Me?

Oh.

*(Pause.)*

I don't really have words.

To describe.

Let me send you an image.

It's a painting by, well I can't remember who.

I think you'll like it.

One sec.

*(hits 'send')*

Yeah.

I've been thinking about us in a simpler life,

Our ancestors from way way back, in their tiny villages,

well yours from not as far back,

living in a different way.

*(Pause.)*

Hello?  
Hello?  
Yulia?

*After a few minutes, he too retreats offstage to the bedroom.  
Silence, lights stay where they are.  
A shadow person emerges from a crawlspace above the  
refrigerator. They daintily crawl down to the floor, walk to the sink  
and pour themselves a glass of water ☺*

## SCENE NINE—GLOBAL TURN-OFF

*The bedroom, around midnight. There is a lamp on. Jonathan is  
fingering Judith under the covers, they are both wearing soft PJs.*

NARRATOR

A little old crone says:

*(in the voice of the little old crone)*

Bear ya own bad news

I keep telling them, the protocols, the protocols,

I'm always yelling at them to respect the fire safety protocols

Do they need a tragedy?

Are they begging for one?

You never hear about the fires where nobody died.

Remember that now...

JUDITH

*(whisper)*

I saw so many things.

JONATHAN

*(whisper)*

I didn't see anything.

JUDITH

*(an even quieter whisper)*

Is it really you.

Tell me is it really you.

JONATHAN

It's really me.

*Judith fakes an orgasm. She brushes his hand away and rolls onto  
her side, as if to sleep.*

JONATHAN

On a scale—

JUDITH

Stop. Don't be like—

JONATHAN

I'm just trying to—

JUDITH

A medium! Thanks.

Now don't ask me that again, or I'll start faking it.

And then you'll never know what's real and what's not.

*Judith turns off the lamp. The stage is dark.*

NARRATOR

Shit covered dancefloor.

Real social cannibals.

A colossal global turn-off.

Switch in the brain, a little switch, in the brain.

Cross it out, cross out the last thirty or so years,

Cross out the anno Domini, go back to sleep, wake up in the Bronze age,

Ah honey, it was all a dream, we'll smelt so much bronze in the morning.

Back to sleep, back to sleep.

Wake up again in the center of the sun, fusing.

**SCENE TEN—ELIJAH**

*The shell interior of a 3D printed apartment. But it is printed badly and the finish is a stale gray, maybe it is unfinished in this regard. A doorbell rings. Judith steps into our view without waiting for someone to open the door.*

JUDITH

Part of me enjoys this.

*Implied pandemonium, shouts, groans. Judith is unfazed. She addresses the pandemonium.*

JUDITH

Now don't fret,

After all, I could be Elijah.

This isn't me talking, this is the court. We tried to reach you so many times, but you never showed up, so now we're here.

You could have been dead for all anyone knew—

or too high to pick up the phone.  
 And your kids—yes don't think I forgot—because this isn't about you at all really it's about them—and a certain lack of you—

*Sound of plates being smashed. Judith pretends to clutch her imaginary pearls.*

JUDITH

Oh me, Oh my,  
 I have to write all this down, now.  
 Not trying to be a downer here, not trying to darken your day, not trying to shit on a birthday cake—  
 But *do* you remember your child's birthday? (*pause*)  
 I'll stay awhile? Just a little bit, not to *impose* or anything,  
 And if I am imposing, it's not my doing, it's merely the order of the court.  
 Now this is in their interest, the interest of the CHILD  
 —remember, the child??  
 Now am I going to have to dig through the trash? Or are the needles still scattered on the floor?  
 (*disapproving*) That carpeting. That carpeting.  
 Yes, speaking of the child, where is (*she checks her paperwork*) he? And his brother?  
 Jason, come out Jason, come here Jimmie, here boy, here boy.

*Sounds of isolated weeping.*

JUDITH

Look, I—  
 I'm sure this will all be resolved soon  
 There was part of you, I think, I can assume there was this part of you that was never ready to be a father. That would rather not have. I—

*Judith rapidly scribbles on some forms on her clipboard, she presents them, when no one takes them she leaves them somewhere, places them on a surface.*

JUDITH

After all, these practices are protracted.  
 Nothing happens immediately,  
 Not until all the documents are reviewed, of course.  
 And who says little Jason, little Jimmie, wouldn't enjoy a nice vacation  
 We haven't lost a child in a group home recently  
 Everything you hear isn't necessarily true,  
 And you wouldn't want one to miss the other,  
 You know, twins,  
 You know how it is.  
 I had a twin once. She drowned in a swimming pool.  
 A Florida or California pool. Just hairs away from the actual ocean, but in a pool.



We fished her out with one of those leaf skimmers.  
 Her face, it was, there was something about it, as though it had been de-completed.  
 Really the worst way to die,  
 I wish someone was paying attention. We all do.

*Clicking of heels across the tiled floor as Judith turns and exits.*

**NARRATOR**

Of prophets and saints,  
 thrice unto and that  
 what will be will be  
 all that is old becomes new again.

**INTERMISSION**

*House lights turn on.  
 Two children enter with a banner that says "intermission."  
 We're drinking (water) and thinking.  
 We're texting all our family and friends that we love them.  
 A few other children walk around, selling merch, healthy snacks,  
 promoting season subscriptions, etc. They can be surprisingly  
 aggressive.*

*Enter the Usher.*

**USHER**

It's nice with the lights on isn't it?  
 We can really see ourselves.  
 Everyone here has such a severe look on their faces, it's acute it's chronic it's terminal.  
 It's beyond the beyond.  
 Ummm...  
 How did you all cry those bitter tears? You were so pliant so genteel so urbane, so within the  
 realm of peace and honesty just a moment ago.  
 I don't know you at all I  
 Don't know you at all I  
 would rather forget about it.  
 Remember it but once as the neuron travels to the part of the brain where it goes to die  
 But I still think about it when  
 I still think about it when I.

**SCENE ELEVEN—THE INTERSPHERE**

*Silvery moonlight. Jonathan within the nexus of pathways. VR  
 goggles on, he's in it, he's so in the loop.  
 He silently communes with the inter-sphere. The world goes  
 squiggly, we blend into each other.*

*Lights rise somewhat. Clicking of heels across the tiled floor. He brushes himself up. Mouths to various audience members:*

JONATHAN

*(mouthing)*

Most likely

to be

predestined

to.

I

Remember.

*He walks off. A gentle hum, interspersed with harsh bursts of white noise.*

*The sun comes up.*

## SCENE TWELVE—THE AETIOLOGY OF HYSTERIA

*1896. A spotlight on a blank wall: shadow puppets. One resembles a man posing with a cigar, another is one with a cane. Voices of a YOUNG BOY and Emma Eckstein.*

EMMA

Who's that one.

The one with the—

YOUNG BOY

Oh haven't you heard, he's a crank, a *blagueur*

And every Jewish housewife in this city who has a son or daughter in the International is obsessed with him for some reason.

Though personally I don't think he's very dialectical.

EMMA

No, no, I meant the other one.

YOUNG BOY

That's Krafft-Ebing. He's an expert on paresthesia—

That means perversity.

Heehee.

EMMA

When does it get good?

YOUNG BOY

What?

It doesn't.

He's about to present his paper. And everyone is going to hate it.

*(pause)*

He thinks witches are real. But in a secular way.

EMMA

Krafft-Ebing?

YOUNG BOY

No the other one.

Apparently the witches are neurotic and their broomstick is the great Lord Penis.

Or something like that.

EMMA

*(small voice)*

Weird.

YOUNG BOY

What happened to your face?

EMMA

What?

YOUNG BOY

What happened to your face?

EMMA

Oh. It was nothing.

YOUNG BOY

Huh?

EMMA

It was just one of those things.

*The two figures subside. They are replaced with a giant hand.*

ANALYST

*(voice)*

Gentlemen!

I am prepared for no one to believe me tonight.

But I have made a discovery, one of immense scientific relevance.

We all know that you cannot ask a corpse how it died.

But the answer is in there, somewhere,

It would be equally wrong to assume the origins of any sickness, any condition are unknowable.

The seed of knowledge is buried within.

Gentlemen, in the past three years I have uncovered compelling evidence of the origin of this condition, several thousands of years old that we currently call hysteria.

As you know, we have been following Charcot's line, which states that hysteria is essentially hereditary, with some unknowable environmental factors thrown in.

In eighteen of my hysterical patients, there were near-identical instances, for instance, the onset of these disorders was all the same—

A seemingly innocuous encounter or image, something that lacks what I would call traumatic force, triggering the onset of hysterical symptoms

But how?

These memories if studied further, lead down a further path to previous, more significant memories.

Digging out these memories is a protracted process, we cannot just demand them or just ask the right question. It often takes months or years.

*A knife slices the fingers off the hand. The severed fingers twitch around.*

ANALYST

*(voice)*

But almost all these memories are essentially similar,

They are all some kind of sexual attack in childhood, usually by an adult,

sometimes by another child, who have almost always suffered previously at the hands of an adult in a similar fashion.

We know these things happen, but my research suggests they are much more common than we think. It may be as many as one in ten, one in every five of the population.

The child victim bears the violence and the desire of the adult, a burden they are too immature to handle, and hysterical symptoms are but the overflow, the pain rising over the walls.

Observe some common hysterical symptoms—painful urination, disgust at food, vomiting, sensations of choking—do all these not seem to correlate to the parts of the body affected in the assaults themselves?

Whether it is the memory itself or the mnemonic image, the thing itself or the act of remembering it—that which triggers the onset—I am not yet sure.

Surely, some of you may object to this conclusion.

For instance, what about those who can recall such scenes from childhood yet do not become hysterical? Yet, the tubercle bacterium is all around us though not all of us come down with tuberculosis. But all of those with tuberculosis have been exposed to said bacteria. The frequency and commonality of an etiological factor does invalidate it, and all of eighteen patients shared the same experience.

*The knife and hand are replaced by a giant mouth and an onion. The mouth opens and closes. It tries to swallow the onion, but it is a struggle.*

ANALYST

*(voice)*

*(confident)*

I cannot imagine for a moment that this discovery will be ultimately unappreciated by the psychiatric community.

*Again the two original figures.*

EMMA

What's he saying?

YOUNG BOY

He's saying it sounds like a fairytale.

Like a scientific fairytale.

*(Pause.)*

Can I have twenty groschen?

EMMA

For what?

YOUNG BOY

Bockwurst.

EMMA

...Sure.

### **SCENE THIRTEEN—MONTAGE OF BLOOD II**

*Stage still in darkness. A low whimper that reverberates.*

NARRATOR

There has to be a place you can go,

live out your days,

without having to be looked at,

without having us to look at you.

You are our shame,

Our shame visualized

To look upon you is to look upon a scar,

a tear in the fabric of reality.

*A small light on Emma Eckstein. She sits in profile with only the left side of her face visible.*

NARRATOR

Look to your left,

Look to your right.

Look to your right.  
Look to your right.

*She painfully does so, we can see that her nose has partially collapsed.*

NARRATOR

—well it's,  
a year ending in a particular number...

*The rest of the lights rise. It is January 1897. Emma and the Analyst are playing chess. They are arranging their pieces.*

NARRATOR

which was already, by now, FIFTY years go  
can you imagine?  
Nineteen ninety was [fifty] years ago.  
Sit in your kiddie pool, that's what it is  
it's pooling, a subtropical or semi-arid pool,  
blood pooling, brain fluid pooling in sweetness,  
fluid of empathy and understanding,  
clasps onto your forearms.

ANALYST

They really don't know anything, in fact they are impervious to—maybe even clinically so—  
clinically terminal fools—

EMMA

I pricked my fingers  
It was me  
I know there is no omnimalevolent being  
that evil only resides in the mind and is not vested in a single body  
I know that it was me that pricked my own fingers, it must have been, nothing else makes sense.  
But—  
Someone sucked up the blood  
Someone who wasn't me.  
(silence)  
and put a piece of candy on each fingertip.

ANALYST

A dream?

EMMA

No.

ANALYST  
A memory?

*Emma nods.*

EMMA  
It still hurts after all this time.  
My—

*She indicates her nose.*

ANALYST  
Well it's—  
It's nobody's fault.

EMMA  
I know.

*They move their pieces. Time has passed.*

EMMA  
I dream of giant snakes.

ANALYST  
Of course you do.

EMMA  
That's an illegal move, it can only move four spaces.

ANALYST  
Oh I thought I started on the white square.

*She moves his piece over a square for him.*

EMMA  
Have I said it before?

ANALYST  
What?

EMMA  
About the dream—?

ANALYST  
Sorry I  
I'm a little distracted.

EMMA

There's a stone lodged in my spine, I only notice it when I'm trying to go to bed.  
Sometimes but not always.

*They move their pieces, about a week or so passes.*

EMMA

One of them has always been shorter than the other.  
And it has caused me nothing but trouble.

ANALYST

Though surely—  
The labia majora?

EMMA

Yes.

ANALYST

Surely it would still function, normally.

EMMA

I guess.  
I don't really know  
what constitutes—but—

ANALYST

You can still achieve—

EMMA

Yes.  
I just don't know why and it bothers me to no end. It's so very frustrating.

*Pause. Sounds of inhales and exhales, seemingly unattached to any particular body.*

EMMA

Do you hear that?

ANALYST

What?

EMMA

Bodyless breathing.  
Probably just my—



*She very subtly motions to her collapsed nose. The Analyst pretends not to notice.*

EMMA

The absence of the mnemonic image is what is tormenting me.

The absence of the why and how and who.

But

I remember eating an earthworm, being fed something that looked like an earthworm.

And one has always been shorter than the other

But surely they wouldn't.

They're progressive.

They're modern.

*(pause)*

It would have been a long time ago.

ANALYST

You know I've always been against that, the Brit Milah,

Untold psychic damage against the men of our tribe,

historically speaking—

imagine!

A superstitious custom really,

seems so unnecessary

I mean you wouldn't cut the tail off a dog would you?

Or would you.

*Long silence.*

ANALYST

What do you know about the mnemonic image anyway?

EMMA

Heard about it somewhere.

ANALYST

Where?

EMMA

I don't remember.

*They move their pieces. A long hum in the air.*

#### **SCENE FOURTEEN –MNEMIC IMAGE**

*September 1897, the Analyst composes a letter.*

ANALYST

I know this is abrupt, but I no longer believe my own theory of the sexual aetiology— and I appreciate your willingness to humor me for the time I was convinced of it. Acts of perversion against children are just simply not common enough to justify it, for one. My patients cannot distinguish between early childhood memory and unconscious desire. What the essential truth is, I do not know. But, and this surprises me, I feel so clean, almost proud, now that I am steering away from the wrong path.

*(Pause.)*

You'll never believe this, Willie.

Or maybe you will—

Allow me to apologize for my harsh language towards you, whenever that was, after the operation all those years ago.

Things are so clear to me now.

I couldn't stand Eckstein's suffering any more than you could, it was like a ringing in my ear, took it out on myself, and you, of course. I became bitter.

But now I understand it correctly.

This woman, so jam-packed, so full-to-bursting with corrosive phantasy—

She would lie in the infirmary and somehow, to bring my attention, to call me there, a dream of hers, she would command herself to bleed.

You know it's possible.

She is heavy with longing, and has always been a bleeder, cutting herself, pricked her fingers, and associated the drops of blood with candy, candy can only be sexual pleasure, obviously, ephemeral and self-inflicted, experiential cathexis.

She has some delusion as well, that she was circumcised as a child, she has always imagined some rot inside herself, and was eminently pleased when her menstrual pains validated this belief. So we—we can only—imagine! How pleased she must have been when you supposedly “botched” her surgery!

Phantasies like little fibers, blades of grass, cutting, poking upward through her skin.

*(Pause.)*

I was so fixated on childhood trauma scenes, I lost the plot a little bit, allowed myself to be led astray.

I'm glad we can put this behind us.

NARRATOR

Better as one, to not, know better

Better as one to not know better, know better no longer.

## SCENE FIFTEEN—PARASITES

*Late 1897. A young girl patient on the Sofa, who is maybe implied rather than real.*

*Silence. Emma's face is in profile, she is wearing reading glasses with small, round lenses.*

EMMA

*(a small voice)*

You should be crying

A wet spot on my armpit  
Swimming in thoughts of  
Of...

Whatever you see above you while you're paralyzed in bed?

No?

Daydreams are parasites that invade your mind. As a girl you're particularly susceptible to them.  
Take it from me,  
or don't  
we'll, we'll, we'll work on it next time.

*Sound of birds chirping.*

### SCENE SIXTEEN—YOUR CHILDREN ARE NOT YOUR CHILDREN

*A bus stop. Late afternoon. Judith is waiting, all her notebooks and clipboards in her shoulder bag. She sways in the breeze. A Pedestrian also waits. A moment. Judith looks down the road, nothing. She rubs her arms. She takes out a cigarette and smokes it. After a few puffs she puts it out and smashes it with her shoe.*

PEDESTRIAN

Yeah, I'm frustrated too.

JUDITH

Huh?

Oh.

Well.

I've been trying to smoke less, only on very rare occasions, to make it feel special I guess.

I thought about vaping but it's so undignified.

But it's good to want something beyond your control, right?

To desire something objectively bad for you.

That's very essentially human.

A machine wouldn't do that.

*(pause)*

The fucking buses in this city, goddamn.

PEDESTRIAN

Kind of a constipation situation.

JUDITH

Congestion?

*The Pedestrian shrugs.*

JUDITH

Downtown maybe.

PEDESTRIAN

Everyone takes their car.  
Modernity's token of shame.

JUDITH

Yeah, so do I. But today I loaned it to my boyfriend, he's going to pick up a standing desk.  
He usually sits around at home.

PEDESTRIAN

Joblessness affects us all, makes us beg for the lowest possible scraps, wastes human potential at large, which is a resource, just like oil or natural gas or precious metals or arable land...

JUDITH

Well he's not exactly unemployed, but yea, his human potential is definitely being wasted.  
That's why he's getting a standing desk.  
To waste time at an even more expedient rate.  
Also for the uh, circulation of the blood?  
He's very employed, to be sure.

PEDESTRIAN

What does he do?

JUDITH

Administrative stuff?  
To be honest, I'm not really sure. Something about simulated environments?  
I don't really get it.  
Might have to with the uh, algorithm? A big algorithm.  
He definitely send a lot of emails, knows something about software.  
(*annoyed*) He's very in the loop. I kind of hate it.

PEDESTRIAN

Of course, who wouldn't?

JUDITH

Though I guess he has to be,  
Or something.  
I must be simple, old fashioned.  
Relatively speaking that is.

PEDESTRIAN

Me too, I put boxes in the back of a truck and then I take boxes out of different trucks.

JUDITH

Nice.

PEDESTRIAN

It's very important. How do you think the commodities make their way to the shelves?

JUDITH

I work for CPS.

PEDESTRIAN

Oh.

JUDITH

That's Child protect—

PEDESTRIAN

I figured—

JUDITH

Yeah, it's mostly sitting at a desk as well. But not all the time, I work in the field too.

*Awkward silence.*

JUDITH

Yeah. I, um, I do take the kids away.

If that's what you're wondering.

It's mostly fine, sometimes people yell at you, but I'm pretty used to that.

Most days it's desk work. I woke up from a haze and now, now I am the orphanmaker, I render the parents unfit. Or rather the court makes the final decision.

But, really, most days it's just desk work. But not at home. *(tiny uncomfortable laugh)*

All my friends get so freaked out when people yell at them, like drivers on the road or I don't know crazy or so-called crazy people downtown, at the mall or whatever, their cortisol levels spike all over the place, but it doesn't affect me like that, really.

There was this one time we, they—lost someone and gave the family someone else.

It was a big fiasco, a lot of people lost their jobs.

It was just one of those things—

It ceases to be my problem and then it ceases to be my business and then it ceases to be accessible knowledge and then it ceases for anyone to know, rather quickly so...

So I can only assume it kind of happens all the time.

But like, children die in their parents' custody all the time,

I mean, it's literally dangerous to be a child. God, it's dangerous to be lying in your crib the wrong way, babies will just suffocate themselves.

PEDESTRIAN

You do it to your own people?

JUDITH

Yeah?

PEDESTRIAN

You do it to other peoples?

JUDITH

Yeah.

Mostly, but yeah.

But not disproportionately or anything—

PEDESTRIAN

I think—

JUDITH

You probably think a lot of—

PEDESTRIAN

I would not be able to live with myself—

JUDITH

I believe it was Khalil Gibran who said—

PEDESTRIAN

I mean nobody's perfect—

but they're—the parents are victims?

They're just trying live

If I were you—

JUDITH

I believe it was Khalil Gibran who said—

PEDESTRIAN

Sorry, um, I don't think we can have a conversation about this.

I don't think this is something I feel comfortable just conversing about.

JUDITH

What, you think it's contagious?

*The Pedestrian spits in her face.*

## SCENE SEVENTEEN—SPRING

*Vienna, 1910. Emma and The Analyst are older now. Emma's face is still disfigured, but she has learned to style herself in accordance with it, angle herself strategically. They look at each other expectantly.*

NARRATOR

It's starting to smell like spring.  
Little nips forming in the bud  
shortened or elongated  
buried and supine  
dirt piling,  
with real social phanatics  
their heads to their heads to their hearts.

ANALYST

So here we are again.

EMMA

Yes.

*They look at each other expectantly.*

EMMA

You read my—

ANALYST

Oh yes, your book.

EMMA

On the sexual education of children—

ANALYST

Yes, it was, it definitely has my stamp of approval.

EMMA

Thank you.  
I value that stamp.  
Really.

*She smiles, he's uncomfortable.*

EMMA

And your family?

ANALYST

Oh, fine.  
Anna needs to put on some weight,  
We're sending her to the countryside so she can focus on eating.  
She looks like a little twig! Haha!

EMMA  
And Willie?

ANALYST  
Oh, him.  
We had a bit of a,  
A misunderstanding, really, but he's still, uh,  
He thinks I gave his secrets to someone else.  
His "secret" of periodicity, ha, remember that?  
As though I would entreat someone to copy hogwash!  
Ah, well.

EMMA  
...hogwash.

ANALYST  
And you, writing a book.  
Seeing patients. How's that?

EMMA  
It's alright.  
I don't really want to talk about it.

ANALYST  
Very well.

NARRATOR  
It's starting to smell like spring,  
soon they'll be shooting out their sleeves,  
digging mass graves, but small ones,  
medium size, for the home market  
put a grave in every home.

ANALYST  
Emma.

EMMA  
Yes.

ANALYST  
Stand up.  
*(pause)*  
Stand up, Fraulein Eckstein.

EMMA  
I can't.



ANALYST

What?

EMMA

I'm sorry,  
I'm sorry this time.

ANALYST

What are you talking about?

EMMA

...It's starting to smell like spring.

ANALYST

Emma, what are you—  
What did you do?

EMMA

*(a small voice)*

I had an operation.  
My friend's advice, she thought it might help this time.

ANALYST

What kind of—

EMMA

I'm not sure, exactly. They said it would finally make it okay.  
But now—

ANALYST

I don't believe you.  
You're beyond help, I cannot do anything for you anymore.  
Yes, we built psychoanalysis on your back, on your nose,  
You appreciate nothing,  
You've smited the basis of this profession,  
You gave it up, all of our work.  
You gave it up for the surgeon's blade, for the pedestal of the operating table!  
What a surprise! I should have known it would keep calling you back.  
You want to punish me? For retracting the thesis?  
The theory was wrong, it was a necessary misstep!  
A misstep on the road of destiny!  
Things get tossed by the wayside, that's a precondition for getting anywhere.  
Do you understand me??  
You want a dick!! That's literally all you want. You want to castrate a man and take his member!  
A putz! A shmekl!

*(pause)*

You got me speaking Yiddish.  
I'm really disappointed in you.

*Emma is emboldened by her own silence.*

ANALYST

*(tears in eyes)*

You're very ill, Emma.  
Very sick and ill.

### SCENE EIGHTEEN—LANES

*A lazy Sunday afternoon. Colleen's living room. Colleen is on the phone. Small piles of laundry on the floor, some of which have already been folded and stacked.*

COLLEEN

A large—

JUDITH

*(a hissing whisper)*

Medium.

COLLEEN

*(to Judith)*

We'll save the leftovers.

*(on the phone)*

a LARGE with uh, spinach, mushroom—

wait, just wondering, what kind? Oh, yes cremini, ok.

*(to Judith)* Cremini okay?

JUDITH

Which ones are those?

COLLEEN

Uh they're kind of brown, kind of white, small but not that small?

JUDITH

Fine.

COLLEEN

Mushroom yea. And ricotta, yes.

Okay. Twenty minutes, cool.

Cash, yeah.

Great.

See you then.

*Colleen hangs up the phone and resumes folding her laundry.  
Judith grips a cup of water with hands of steel.*

COLLEEN

The great thing about laundry is, you can never finish it.  
There's always going to be more laundry to do.  
Makes you appreciate your own mortality.

JUDITH

I'm gonna burn his skin with a lighter and see if he flinches, I'm gonna disappear for days on end, I'm gonna bleed out orange and blue right in front of his big dumb eyes I—

COLLEEN

Seems a little unnecessary.  
Let's say yes, you're right about everything, now what?

JUDITH

I—

COLLEEN

What do you want? The house? You're a renter, it's not like you have any property of contention.

JUDITH

We might one day.

COLLEEN

Sure.

JUDITH

I want him to tell me I'm right—

COLLEEN

For sure—

JUDITH

And for him to mean it.

COLLEEN

And I think that's a perfectly ambitious goal. Power to you, hun.

JUDITH

The real Jonathan was never this passive.  
There's no other explanation.

COLLEEN

Umm—

JUDITH

It used to be better.

I know it was better at some point.

*(Pause.)*

Sometimes I can't believe things are the way they are.

COLLEEN

But they are.

Right?

Have you seen my latest article? I call it, "Towards a Cushion for the Pushin—Desire and Dissonance in the Era of the Booty."

JUDITH

What pushing exactly? I thought this was more of uh

COLLEEN

More of what?

JUDITH

I don't really think of, well—I don't know...

COLLEEN

I like the way it sounded, and besides—

JUDITH

Booties in *Clit Weekly*, huh? You've really expanded—

COLLEEN

It's not *Clit Weekly* anymore, these days we're calling it *Luvv Weekly*—I'll get a really passive-aggressive email from Martha for calling it that.

JUDITH

Sad days,  
another tragedy.

Goodbye clits, goodbye.

COLLEEN

Oh they're not going anywhere, the clits, we're just not, not centering—

It's not even worth—

JUDITH

*(a small laugh)*

You're getting soft, Colleen.  
Anesthetized.

COLLEEN

Look look look, Judith. Sweetie.

We're about to celebrate our 39<sup>th</sup> birthdays for the second time. I can't be bitter every fucking hour of every day, I'll turn into a raisin and a prune and then I'll be nothing at all because my insides and outsides will have collapsed and eroded. We get old, and there's nothing anyone can do—like what, are you gonna punch your pillow for giving you wrinkles? Yes, anesthetize me, just a little bit, why the hell not? Who would say no to that? What were we even, I can't remember how we started this—

JUDITH

Can I smoke in here?

COLLEEN

Enjoy your wrinkles!

*The doorbell rings.*

COLLEEN

That was fast.

*Colleen is about to get up and open the door when Leslie enters, wearing a hoodie and leggings. She clutches a large rectangular cell phone in her hand. She is shaking and quivering.*

LESLIE

The door was open.

It was open so I just came in.

COLLEEN

Leslie.

JUDITH

We haven't seen you in—

LESLIE

I know.

Oh god I know I know I know.

COLLEEN

It's good to see you.

LESLIE

Guys. Guys, guys. *(a tiny laugh)*

I was gonna, gonna say—

JUDITH

Where are you coming from—

LESLIE

I walked.

COLLEEN

Wow. You must be doing better Leslie, if you walked all the way from—

JUDITH

And you hair looks, uh, done.

LESLIE

Thanks.

COLLEEN

We just ordered a pizza. We got a large, Judith thought we shouldn't get a large but—  
We actually thought for a sec that—

JUDITH

Can you eat pizza? It has gluten.

COLLEEN

It'll be here in like fifteen.

LESLIE

Oh. I don't know if I'll—  
But thanks for offering.  
I'm not a flight risk haha  
That's what they said.

JUDITH

Jesus.

COLLEEN

What do you mean?

JUDITH

Yeah you never go out, I mean it's not, even a—

LESLIE

It's a split sentence, tomorrow I'm going in for a few months.

JUDITH

Into prison.

LESLIE

Yeah-ah. Not jail, prison, technically prison, but I pled guilty immediately so it's not gonna be so bad. A few months and then probation. And um, everyone says the DA doesn't care about cyclists so.

COLLEEN

What the fuck.

LESLIE

Everything happened so fast, I just wanted, just wanted to say goodbye.  
Because I guess I missed you two?

*(pause)*

One of the new bike lanes downtown, I—  
swear they just made them recently, I  
Don't remember them being there.

My eyes started to dim, my ears were ringing,

I couldn't take a good breath, like a good, sufficient, airy breath.

The light was cutting out, I heard this clicking,

maybe it was the sloshing motions of my insides, the fluids in my skull, the ones everyone has.

And I swerved into the—into someone.

I panicked and I drove away a little and then tried to drive back.

There was blood on my windshield.

But maybe we craved contact?

Maybe the lanes were built around us?

COLLEEN

Oh Leslie, Leslie...

*The three of them hold each other. The doorbell rings. Nobody moves. The doorbell rings again. Slow fade to black.*

*In the darkness:*

NARRATOR

Most likely to be predestined to.

See how plainly the knife fits, what a usual, ordinary type of wound.

Erase the names on the chalkboard please

Open the windows and throw the curtains in the wash please

A sour taste in one's mouth

A feminine rot

A lifetime, the second or third once-in-a-lifetime,

a global foreshortening,

a going to the dogs,

cornered and shamed by an utter disbelief in You  
(who?)

Failure by reason of LACK and the LACK carries into any ability to understand, to make sense  
of—

all your nooks and crannies silently sweating,  
your function gain'd  
your nurses wept.

#### SCENE NINETEEN—THE TIDES

*Judith's home. Unnatural stillness in the room. Jonathan on the floor, curled up in a ball. He's fast asleep. She's mad as hell.*

JUDITH

*(a terse whisper)*

You coward,  
you warm beer,  
you hashed tag,  
you most numb nut.

What have you done with him?

Or was it you the whole time? and they've done something to me?

Replaced me with a copy.

A copy with opened eyes.

Or dropped me into a copy world.

Say something!

For fuck's sake!

Every day, the day we met replays in my head, how your eyes followed me down that hallway,  
unblinking.

Not your eyes,  
whoever's eyes,

HIS eyes.

Maybe I'm irascible

Fuck it!

Sue me!

Find the poison in my bloodline, in my star sign!

*(normal volume)*

Say something!

*Silence. She is about to kick him in the stomach. Before she can do so, he wakes up with a start.*

JONATHAN

Ah!

Oh my god.

Judith.

I just had the most terrible dream.



*He lets out a small laugh and stands up slowly. Judith is silent, unmoving. He suddenly shouts in horror, nearly doubles over.*

JONATHAN  
Oh god.  
It was no dream.  
Oh god.

*He starts to cry, Judith is extremely unamused.*

JUDITH  
What the fuck Jonathan.

JONATHAN  
Oh my god  
Oh my god you haven't heard.  
I can't break it to you.  
Uh uh uh  
Go online or something!

JUDITH  
What are you—

JONATHAN  
Actually don't go online!  
It's already been too long,  
going online would just make it worse—  
Or—or do whatever you want!  
I—I can't tell you what to do.  
Umm! Umm!

*He is pacing in anguish and fear.*

JONATHAN  
Okay, well, let's start at the beginning. Um, the space race! Yes. We all know that we never actually won the space race, just happened to have gone, reportedly, to the m—*(short cry of pain)* okay, uh, uh let's not start at the beginning! If the beginning is even the beginning—no, um,  
if anything thing it's more like a contin—continuu—

*He stares anxiously at the window.  
Mild hyperventilation, he gets it under control*

JONATHAN

And well okay there was the uh the Berlin Conference of 1885, and where are the conferences in?? literally any other part of the world?? Anyway, so to avoid continental war in Europe—not that that ended up—like they were like we need to decide who can control which parts of Africa for the—because otherwise we’ll—oh well that doesn’t—um and then post-independence, uh they knew, the countries would wanna go independent that at some point it became inevitable so they strung together all these contracts with their private companies which seemed like dozens or hundreds but really like less than ten probably—to maintain exclusive control to extract the minerals—so... but anyway! Everyone has to pick a side eventually! Right?

JUDITH

Right?

So—

JONATHAN

*(increasingly upset)*

So! Okay. No one ever signed the goddamn treaty the goddamned treaty of 1979 saying no one would ever own the moon, no one could hide their weapons there, well a few parties signed by no one relevant to space travel so—and what I’m trying to—and they’ve been mining the shit out of it because, because most rare earths on earth these days are in China and since they got handsy with their mining rights—it just so, incidentally, coincides with the fact that there are a bunch of rare Earths on the moon! What the fuck! So they six or seven or however many private companies have been mining the shit out of it and okay, it’s just, but like like like, Why?? Well!?! the Nazis lost in order to win, to found NATO, like fuck, shit, of course only one or two countries get to enjoy “economic miracles,” how lucky, positively lurvely for—and OH GOD THEY BLEW IT UP AND NO ONE KNOWS WHY they blew it up, probably they were mining it so hard it went boom they never signed the moon treaty the moon accords, or or or—

JUDITH

What—

What are you on about?

Some goddamn *Planet of the Apes* shit—

JONATHAN

*(continuing)*

Or maybe like in this vein, not to discount it’s just maybe—so they MAYBE did a false flag where they blew up the moon and blamed it on—but they made it like actually THEY blew up the moon and are saying that WE –not we–the space force, or someone, someone with the higher powered—did it as a false flag. Everyone accuses each other! So when you search ‘false flag’ that’s the narrative that comes up! Like it was the stockpiles the atomic or hydrogen or proton stockpiles maybe, maybe they were aiming for something else and hit—

JUDITH

Honey!

Drink some water!

JONATHAN

*(out of breath somewhat)*  
Okay, okay.

JUDITH

You went wild on your mid-day coffee, babe.  
you know you're supposed to moderate that shit,  
and now you're in a lot of pain.  
Drink some water, flush out your system a little.  
For fuck's sake.

*She leads him to the sink, hands him an empty cup. She motions for him to fill it. He does. He takes a sip. He leaves the tap on, she turns off the tap for him. A moment.*

JONATHAN

No  
Didn't work.  
She's still gone.  
Oh god oh god.

JUDITH

Look sweetie, I know you really gave yourself a big shock.  
You kinda just  
Traumatized yourself with your own imagination.  
You're too much in the goddamn loop—  
All this *Dr. Strangelove* or whatever type nonsense—  
is just you, craving, for some end-of-the-world escape route,  
a crystalized vision?  
And your cravings turn up as dust.

JONATHAN

*(whispers)*  
Moon dust.

JUDITH

*(ignoring him)*  
I mean, fucking FREUD who was so wrong, decidedly so wrong about traumatic phantasies, was just wrong enough to appear slightly right on the other side:  
As in, you've dazzled yourself with fantastic images on a digital interface and they've left you scarred, left you unable to think for yourself—

JONATHAN

Look out the window.

JUDITH

What good would that do?

JONATHAN  
Look out the window.

JUDITH  
This is ridiculous.

JONATHAN  
Just—

JUDITH  
Fine!

*She goes to open the blinds. We can see the outside world for the first time. It is dark without any light. Silence as we take it in.*

JONATHAN  
Well?

JUDITH  
Well? So?

*She cranes her neck trying to look out at different angles.*

JUDITH  
Okay well.  
None of this means anything.  
Surely it's the New Moon.

JONATHAN  
Is it?

JUDITH  
Maybe? I don't fucking know.  
I don't keep track of that shit.  
Never have.  
I don't know when I really even looked at it last.  
Always took it for granted, honestly.

*They sit in silence for a moment. Suddenly Judith winces.*

JONATHAN  
What?

JUDITH  
I'm sure it's nothing.

*(a short cry of pain)*

JONATHAN  
Babe.

JUDITH  
The tides.  
Oh no.  
It's the tides isn't it?

*A short cry of pain, she feels something in the seat of her pants.*

JUDITH  
It doesn't make sense.  
It doesn't make any sense.  
I haven't bled for years.  
The IUD.  
It's impossible.  
Ohhhh.  
*(Silence)*  
She's really gone, isn't she?

*Jonathan nods. Blood starts to drip on the floor.*

JUDITH  
It's really you isn't it?

JONATHAN  
Yes.

JUDITH  
It always was?

JONATHAN  
Yes.

*A long silence. The blood forms a little pool. Maybe in a heart shape.*

JUDITH  
Jonathan.

JONATHAN  
Yes.

JUDITH

I'm ready to listen to you.

*He has nothing to say. They wait around. A radio in the distance, it plays a waltz but the actual song is inaudible due to the heavy static.*

JUDITH

*(forcing it out)*

I'm worried

I think

I think I've become very hard to get along with.

I'm worried that recently I've become a very unlikable person.

*Silence.*

JONATHAN

Judith, that—

—That really turns me on.

*Blackout.*

## EPILOGUE

*Lights up on the Usher playing the accordion. They play long, languid tones.*

USHER

*(singing)*

I NEVER KNEW WHAT TO SAY TO YOU

I NEVER KNEW WHAT TO SAY TO YOU

I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD MAKE THIS MISTAKE

AND I NEVER THOUGHT IT COULD HAPPEN THIS WAY

AND I NEVER KNEW HOW TO TELL IT TO YOU

'CAUSE I NEVER KNEW WHAT TO SAY TO YOU

*Repeat as necessary.*

**END OF PLAY**

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